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Book Review

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Suleiman, M., & Abu-Lughod, R. (2014). *In spite of being white: The plight of Arab Americans*. Natural Sciences Publishing Corporation. ISBN: 978-0-692-21426-8

In Spite of Being White: The Plight of Arab Americans is timely in its delivery, and is a must read by scholars and laymen to understand the historical background of today's global events that are occurring in our cities, towns, and communities in the United States, and abroad on the continent of Europe and the Middle East. Suleiman and Abu-Lughod, through the context of social justice, take us on a journey through the lives of Arab and Muslim Americans, and their difficulties with the complex issues of race, religion, philosophies, ethnicity, culture, customs, sexism, and the sociopolitical perspective that have shaped our views in the United States. Additionally for further in-depth study, authors Suleiman and Abu-Lughod have given the educator rich internet resources, interactive videos, and learning tasks at the end of each chapter. It is an excellent long overdue multicultural text that is in an easily to understand format which brings the reader closer to understanding the Arab and Muslim community.

More importantly, this literary journey is a rich tapestry of major historic events of a world civilization, often considered to be the "cradle of civilization," that places Arabs and Muslims in the center, socio-politically, geo-politically, and religious-doctrinally. The Arab World is cradled between two continents Africa and Asia, and its sphere of influence extends west to the continents of Europe and North America. This tumultuous but beautiful region is the birthplace of three major religions Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, that intersect, overlap and influence one another with differences and similarities in practices, customs, religious and philosophical beliefs, principles and views. We are reminded of the important and significant contributions that Arabs and Muslims have made to the world as a people and as individuals in astrology, mathematics, medicine, art, architecture, music, literature, linguistics and philosophy.

The authors eloquently discuss the unfair treatment of Arab and Muslim Americans that are often depicted in the movies and entertainment, the mainstream news media outlets, print and social media and the socio-cultural symbols such as the headdress of the hijab and burqa. It would be naïve of us to think that only Arabs and Muslims live in the Arab world, and here we find many other ethnic, racial, religious, and linguistic minorities that include, but are not limited to the Kurds, Druze, Copts, Assyrians, Armenians, Blacks, Berbers, Kildanis, Bedouin, Yazidis, Jews, and Christians that are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.

In the United States, Arab and Muslim Americans struggle to break free of the stereotypical views of their communities, and have been consistently discriminated against over decades as they immigrated here for a better life; prejudices against their communities have been incredibly intense after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Arab American children in the United States public schools have, in particular, bared the brunt of prejudice and discrimination as they attempt to assimilate and acculturate themselves into the American way of life. Educators need to have a strong background in history, cultures, customs, language and religion to understand fully how to instruct Arab American students, and how to be sensitive to their needs as world events unravel causing increased bullying and discrimination against them. Educators should embrace multicultural and intercultural communication with Arab and Muslim children and their parents not only for their professional growth and knowledge but also to promote greater understanding between the students in their classrooms. Educators must understand the linguistic differences of Arab children and how it can be a barrier to learning English. Educators must understand that it will take time for Arab children to simultaneously learn both a second language and content subject material. Unfortunately, many times these children are recommended for special education if they are not learning quickly enough to our pace of the curriculum, standards, and content. Educators must understand why Muslim girls dress in their traditional and customary clothing and prevent harassment and intimidation of them.

The authors discuss Arab and Muslim patterns of immigrations so that the reader has a heightened historical perspective of when Arabs and Muslims began to immigrate to the United States and from what countries. Chapter 3 gives us a mini history lesson by delving deep into the immigration patterns of Arab Muslims, Arab Christians, and Arab Jews and the motives of why they left their native countries of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Sudan, and Yemen to name a few. For us to move forward in understanding the Arab and Muslim patterns of immigration, including the current exodus of people from Arab nations, we must understand and acknowledge the socio-economics, socio-political, persecution, and unimagined poverty of their countries, and why they are leaving in hopes of a better life elsewhere. As educators, we must address the ugliness of discrimination and prejudice and realize that not every Arab is a rich oil sheik.

No discussion of the plight of Arab and Muslim Americans would be complete without a recounting of the events of September 11, 2001. Since that point on the historical timeline, Arab and Muslim Americans have been discriminated against and scrutinized over the horrific and acts committed by Muslims. The authors give us rich vignettes full of personal descriptions of hate crimes that been committed against Arabs and Muslims in the United States. It gives us an urgent sense to build bridges and not walls to ease the tensions between Arabs and Muslims in the United States. The real life scenarios give educators a vehicle to understand the Arab and Muslim students and to assist them in assimilation into the fabric of American life. In light of events here in the United States and abroad, the media has depicted Arabs and Muslims with very powerful negative visual images which fuel hatred and contempt. Suleiman and Abu-Lughod give us implications and lessons of the power the media has in portraying Arabs and Muslims on a global stage, and its impact on this deep rooted complex issue.

The plight of Arab and Muslim women cannot be ignored, and Suleiman and Abu-Lughod illustrate with sensitivity the oppression and discrimination that this sector of our population is

confronted with on a daily basis. Chapter six clarifies the role of women in the Arab and Muslim community, and how the traditions, culture, customs, belief systems, and religions have influenced their role and place in society. The reader is educated on a positive note how Arab and Muslim women are moving forward in leadership roles in a wide range of occupations and careers.

Chapter 7 is one of the most important and critical ones in the book, as Suleiman and Abu-Lughod discuss in detail the Arab-Israeli Conflict and its impact on Arab and Muslim Americans. This one chapter in the book is a must read for everyone who is attempting to understand, the socio-political, geo-political, and religious divisions with the never-ending conflicts in the region. The authors explain in simple terms the historical background and the complexity of the conflict and why solutions to peace have been so difficult.

In conclusion, the authors Suleiman and Abu-Lughod have skillfully depicted the plight of Arab-Americans, in a straight forward easy to read format. The presentation of each chapter throughout the book gives us real-life vignettes of the struggles of Arabs and Muslims in America. The book lets us visualize and reflect upon what we as a community of humanity can do better in understanding our fellow citizens that are dealing with unparalleled atrocities on the global stage. This is a must read in any multicultural or cross-cultural class setting, and should be a part of all teacher credentialing programs and sensitivity training of public safety officers and governmental organizations

In Spite of Being White by Suleiman and Abu-Lughod is an excellent resource and a must-read to understand the trials and tribulations and the rich history and culture of our fellow Arab and Muslim Americans.

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