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The Institute of Current World Affairs  
4 West Wheelock Street  
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755

HHA-11 1995  
MIDEAST/N. AFRICA

## Part 2

# From Palestine to Palestine: A Diaspora Journey

BY HISHAM H. AHMED

JERUSALEM, Israel

May 1995

The hopes and personal ambitions of many Palestinians were dashed as a result of the catastrophe they experienced in 1948. The lives of many were damaged beyond repair. Others, however, reshaped their futures in accordance with the developments of the time.

Dr. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, a refugee from Jaffa in 1948, went on to become a distinguished political scientist. He left a crumbling Palestine in 1948 as a refugee. Now he has returned to help rebuild his homeland as a leader and scholar. What follows is part two of his life narrative.

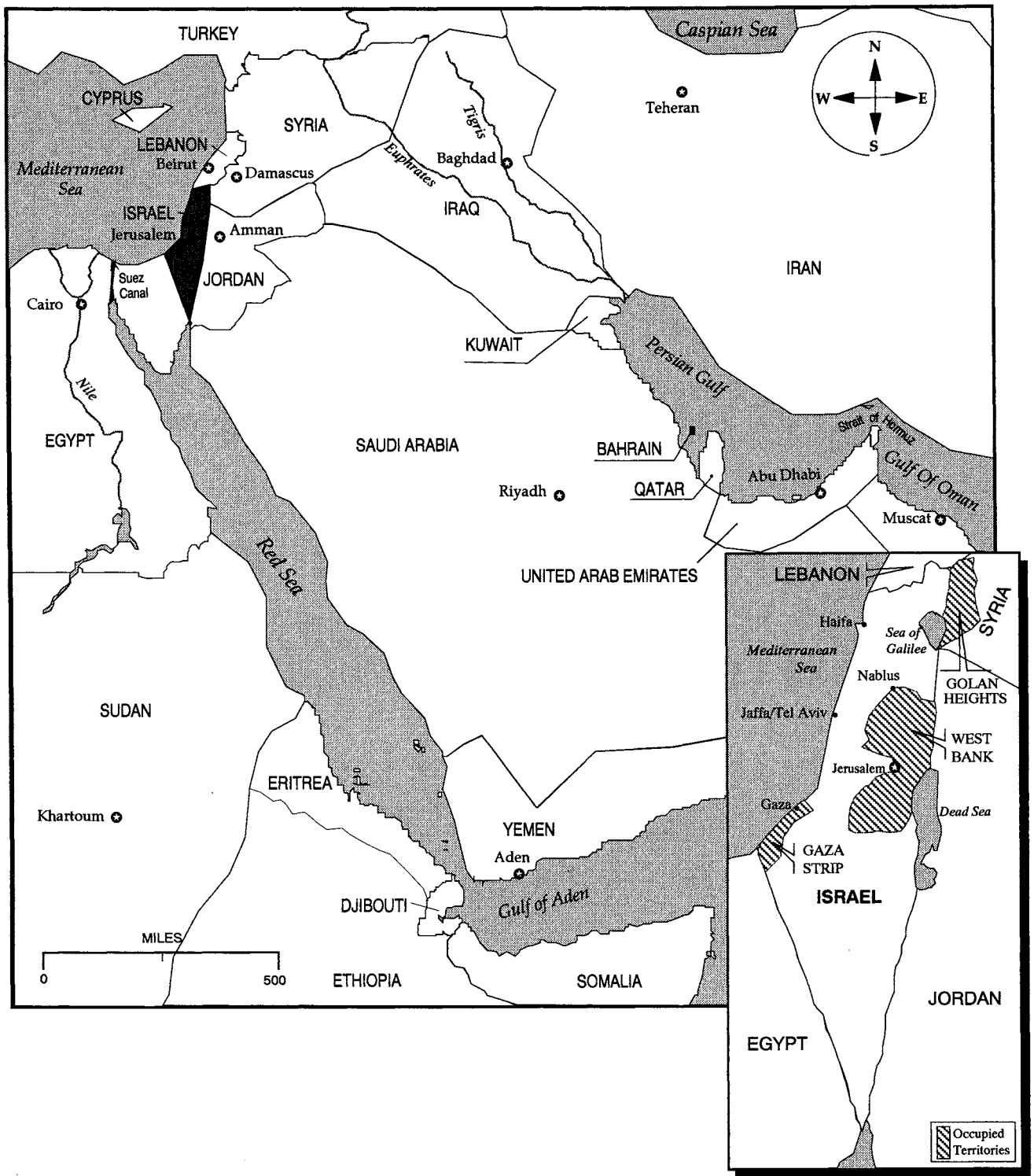
*HHA: Last time we talked about those critical moments in May 1948. Maybe we can start there again.*

**IAL:** I'm interested in the fact that we went by ship. I mentioned the incident with the sailor who asked us, "How could we leave?" As I said before, I still don't have an answer to his question. We thought at the time that our exile would last a couple of weeks. I thought it would be a vacation, and I could discover some relatives. I actually began to look forward to going to Beirut. When the ship docked in Beirut, it was full of people. That was the first encounter between the Arab peoples. Refugees were assaulting the city.

The immigration officer considered himself a powerful person. He made nasty comments, "Don't push." He really didn't know what to do when he came aboard the ship. The ship wanted to unload, and we were the load! I think we were delayed about three hours. We stood on the ship and heard very unpleasant comments. Then he processed us and stamped our passports. I carried a Palestinian passport at the time, i.e. a British passport that carried the label of the Government of Palestine. Three of us high school students were together. Each one of us had some distant relative there, so we dispersed. I went to look for some relatives that I had heard about from my mother. I had never seen them before, but I found them. That's how it works in the Arab world. I discovered that even though I was a refugee, my relatives were in a much worse position than I was. I only stayed overnight.

The next day I took a quick look at the city and decided to proceed to Damascus. I had to connect with my family. It was nice to see Beirut, and it was, in a way, an interesting time because all of the hustle and bustle of the city was unaffected by the tragedy which had struck the next-door neighbors. The newspapers were promising

*Hisam Ahmed is an ICWA Fellow compiling oral narratives of the Palestinian People.*



miracles. Reading them, we were assured that this would be simply a two-week vacation. That's all!

I went with one of the guys to Damascus. They treated us well in terms of processing at the border. They were actually nice to us. We did not feel that they were hostile to us or in any way critical of the fact that we were there. I saw Damascus for the first time. It was exciting, the capital of the Arab world. The Syrians were engaged in battle. They had heard about all sorts of imaginary battles that those trained in Syria had waged.

From there we went to Jordan. At the border area of Ramtheh, the treatment was more harsh than what we had received in Lebanon. They wanted to charge us a fee for a visa, as if we were tourists. They wanted to charge us the equivalent of one English pound, or around six dollars. Of course, I wasn't going to pay it. We had a big argument with the officer, but it didn't make any difference. He wanted to collect his money or prevent us from entering. The taxi driver took pity on us. He told us how to smuggle ourselves in. We went halfway back to Der'ah, into the village. We made a roundabout and bypassed Ramtheh; we smuggled ourselves into Jordan. We didn't have to pay the fee! At the time, I thought it was stupid of them. It was an unpleasant encounter.

We continued on and met our first surprise. I knew that we had sent our family to Nablus; therefore, I was making my way to Nablus. Amman was a very small town of 30,000 people at the time; it had only one main street. While I was walking on that main street and preparing to go meet my family (I had no idea where they had gone, but I planned to ask around), I met someone I knew from Jaffa. We hugged and shook hands. He asked me if I had seen my family. I said, "No. I'm going to Nablus." He said, "No. They are here." I had no idea that they had come to Amman. He gave me directions, and I went and found them: my mother, younger brother and so forth. We planned to stay in Amman for two weeks before returning to Jaffa. They told me that my cousin had suggested coming to Amman. It was totally unplanned. I said that we had to go to Nablus in due course, but I didn't know exactly what that meant.

The living circumstances were very difficult for us. About thirteen of us lived in one room. In Jaffa, we had a house with five bedrooms. In Amman, three families lived in a three-room house with one kitchen and one bathroom. I think close to twenty eight people lived in that house. We were paying a handsome sum. People in Jordan took advantage of the exodus of the refugees. They thought it was an opportunity to make a fortune. Amman could not absorb refu-

gees. They put up camps, but clearly it was unpleasant. We were waiting and reading [newspaper accounts of the war].

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth of May, some aircraft bombed Amman. They were small aircraft. I remember distinctly that the community believed they were aiming at the palace of King Abdullah. That was the rumor, but we saw these two planes. We saw the bullets that were shot at them. Some of these bullets had red flares. We all saw them. The aircraft did no damage because they were too small. The bombs caused absolutely no damage.

The next day I went downtown to do some shopping with my younger brother. As we came to the junction where we turned onto the main drag, there was a police station. The Jordanian police was standing there. They were arresting people whom they suspected of being Palestinians. Clearly we were Palestinians, so they took us in. As we entered the police station, we saw about sixty people in a room that normally holds around twenty. We were all standing like sardines. We stood and did nothing. The police chief who was sitting there cursed our mothers and cursed us as Palestinians who sold our land to the Jews. He accused us of giving signals to the Israelis to bomb the king's palace. So, first we sold our land, and then we ran away. Now, by our collaboration with the Jews, we were trying to undermine Jordan and its king. He continued in this line of abuse for about two hours. We were standing there like a bunch of cowards. We were cowed by him. They kept arresting people—all Palestinian refugees.

"The taxi driver took pity on us. He told us how to smuggle ourselves in."

Finally I had the courage to go up to him. "Excuse me," I said in a polite language, "Can I make a telephone call?" You can imagine the shock on this guy's face! He said, "Telephone?" "Yeah, a telephone," I said. "Who do you want to call?" he asked. I said, "To Mithqal Basha." Hearing the name, he couldn't believe his ears. "To whom?" he asked. "To Mithqal Basha," I repeated. "Where do you know him from?" he wanted to know. I told him we were his guests. Of course, that was a lie. My uncle was his guest. I knew that Mithqal Basha was a chief of one of the tribes in Jordan. His children served in the cabinet. He had huge tracts of land in some village on the way to Madaba. I think they are from the Ibn al-Sakhr line, but I'm not sure. Their family was a part of the Hashemite king's power base. The story of my uncle's being his guest was true. I didn't say that, of course. The officer asked me, "Where do you know him from?" I said, "Well, my uncle taught his children, so we stand in a teaching relationship." That gave us enormous prestige, and it was obvious that I was educated. He said, "How did that happen?" I told him

that my uncle was a refugee in Jordan from the First World War and he worked as a teacher for Mithqal Basha's children. He taught them the Koran and all of that. Ever since, there has been a relationship of friendship between us, and we visit one another. Now, all of this was true. I had heard about it, but I had never seen him. The police officer told me I could go. He didn't want me to make a phone call. I told him I had my younger brother, and he let us both go. I left after two-and-a-half hours or so, but the other people there stayed all day listening to the officer's curses.

On that day I decided that we had to get out. In a couple of days, we moved to Nablus. My experience was repeated by many other Palestinians. If you read Rosemary Sayegh's book, *Palestinians from Peasants to Revolutionaries*, you will see that many of our encounters with our Arab brethren were premised on misunderstanding, ignorance, and prejudice. I think that a certain fear of this unknown event also complicated things.

We went to Nablus by truck. You could get trucks in those days. At that time, the trip took five hours or so. We had our mattresses, pillows and blankets with us, so we needed a truck. Once again we rented a room in a house with three rooms and three families.

In Nablus, I finally came to recognize that there would be no return to Jaffa. While there, we sat with Iraqi army officers who were in Nablus. They were supposed to fight, but they had nothing to do. We sat in the cafe and talked to them. Many of these officers were communists. We discovered that through their language. They were very clear in their analysis that the battle of 1948 was a hoax, a plot by the British. They sent the Jordanian and Iraqi armies to take over the land of Palestine and to cooperate with the Jews. There was no hope for the return of the land by means of the Arab army. The Arab armies were already in Palestine, and they were being beaten by the Israelis. These officers didn't think that they were actually being beaten. They thought that the orders supposedly issued to these armies were either false orders or were never issued. Therefore the armies were not provided for. We sat in the cafe in Nablus because we had absolutely nothing to do. Listening to the radio, we heard the testimony of Glubb Pasha in the British parliament. He said that the Arab army would not attack the land that was allotted to the Jews in the partition plan. The Arab armies were there to maintain law and order on the Arab side. This confirmed what the Iraqi soldiers were telling us: there would be no Arab attack on Israel.

In December 1948, the first leaflet was issued by the League of National Liberation, i.e. the commu-

nists. That leaflet talked about the "Arab Occupation Armies." That was the first time I had encountered this phrase. They viewed the Arab army in Palestine as an occupation army. They were assaulting what we consider today to be the Palestinian state. They were not there to do anything to Israel. The Arabs were collaborating with Israel to keep stability in what we today call the West Bank and Gaza.

I also remember the second leaflet because I participated in its distribution. It also attacked the Arab occupation armies. We were caught by the Iraqi army and taken to the police station. This station still stands today; it is controlled by the Israelis. The Iraqi army gave us a beating. They were friendly officers, so they had to do something nasty. The beating wasn't so dangerous as to hurt us. They said, "Don't do such evil things, you ruffians!" After being beaten, we went away. These officers, to their eternal credit, used to let us into their military tribunals. We were able to hear Iraqi trials of Palestinians who had violated the law. Generally speaking, they would acquit them because there was a conflict within the system. The high officers were obviously collaborating with the dynasty. They were aiming at the suppression of Palestinians so that the West Bank would be subservient to Jordan. At the time, we didn't understand what they were doing.

By December, I had no doubt that the battle was over and that there would be no return to Jaffa. I suggested that we move to Jordan so that we could pick up the pieces and decide on our future. By then we had been away since May, i.e. close to six months, and I knew that there would be no return. We needed to find employment. We went to Amman and again we were cramped. I obviously found a job, and my brother found work, too. We tried to make a living.

In Jordan, I became much more politically active. I met George Habash in 1949 in a cafe. He was a student at the American University of Beirut, and he would come to visit his family. I also saw Hisham Sharabi for the first time. I didn't know him. He was a couple of a years older than I, but I knew his brother from Jaffa. Both he and George Habash would come to visit their families in Amman.

George and I sat together. We had another friend in common who probably introduced us, Abdul Muhsen Qattan. He is now an important person who made his fortune in Kuwait. He has been active in politics: first, as a Ba'athi and then as a member of the Palestine National Council. He is a big businessman who is interested in public issues.

I remember a discussion I had with George Habash at that time. My readings came from the Iraqis, the

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communists and Palestinians in Amman. The reading material they gave me constituted my first education. I remember saying to George that it was possible to re-group and fight. I distinctly remember telling him, "Look at what the Soviet Union was able to do. It was wrecked in the First World War. The revolution came, with its firm leadership, and this shaped it. So it's possible. We can do the same thing in Palestine." George listened carefully. He was groping. He wasn't involved in politics yet, but clearly he was interested in politics. For him, it was a decisive moment when we were expelled from Palestine. He was being trained as a physician. When he graduated from the American University, he went into medicine for only a short period of time. Then he became a political doctor. He would treat people free of charge. He went to the camps. He had a public orientation. At any rate, I distinctly remember meeting him in 1949.

A number of us young people had nothing better to do than discuss politics. Then I began to think of my future. I was working in the customs house and eking out a living. I used to give private lessons in English, of all things. I applied for white-collar jobs that paid more money, but I didn't succeed. I was interested in getting educated. Initially I wanted to study law in Egypt, but Egypt became very expensive since I was a refugee. Really though, it was very cheap since there was no tuition. But we didn't have even ten pounds a month.

Our image of the United States was that if you get there, you can work. Therefore, you can go to school and work. That was the image. True or false, we believed it. Since my brother had preceded me to the States when we had money, he managed to get me admission to Syracuse. Armed with this admission letter, I went to the American consulate in Damascus. Amman didn't have an American embassy at the time. I went to get a visa from the consulate. They gave me conditions that were difficult to meet. They wanted a bank account in my name and a valid passport. I showed them my Palestinian passport, and they refused. There was no state called Palestine. I asked what I should do. They said I could go and get an Israeli passport. I was shocked when they told me that, but they meant it. I could also get a Jordanian passport because of the new law called Article 10. Article 10 gave us no rights, but it gave us a passport, or the equivalent of a *laissez-passer*. I went and took it.

The second condition for a visa was to have a bank account. But we were penniless! Many people play around with this issue today, but I was a pioneer. I cheated. I was able to produce documents that satisfied the consulate. He gave me a visa. I didn't have a penny, and that is a fact. I did not have a penny to my name. I did open an account and put lots of dol-

lars in it. Somebody loaned me the money, and I put it in the bank. Then the bank gave me a statement in my name, saying that I had \$4000. In reality, I didn't have 4000 pennies! But that was the document that the consul needed. On the basis of the Jordanian passport, the financial statement and the medical exam, he gave me a visa. Armed with this visa, I went to the United States by boat. The boat cost \$300, and I was able to raise that money.

I arrived in the United States with \$3 in my pockets. My brother was waiting for me at the port in New York. I went with him to Syracuse. He was also penniless at that point. During the first two years, we had sent him \$2000 a year. The third year it was gone. I worked in Syracuse for three weeks. Then he shipped me to Chicago. He did that because he wanted me to be with his friend, who was in better command of American life. Chicago was a bigger city, so I could find work.

Since I arrived in the United States in October 1949, the fall semester had already begun. I couldn't go to school. This was partly a deliberate choice on my part. I didn't want to arrive in September because I would have had to go to school right away. I could work during the period between October and January.

I worked as a peddler. In Chicago I went to this friend to whom I owe a great deal. He was my mentor. He was ten years older than I. He was getting his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, a very learned person. The gap between us was quite wide, but he was very good to me. His name is Ali Othman. He's from Beit Safafa, and he studied at the American University in Cairo. He was an intellectual; he still is for that matter. He put me on the right track in the sense of intellectual achievement. We have been friends ever since. He was very important in my formation, as a model of intellectual achievement. He got me a bunch of books. He knew I was interested, of course. He pointed my reading in the right direction. I studied political theory. For example, I had never heard of John Stuart Mill before, and he made me read it. I also read Locke. He was interested in political philosophy. I would watch him sitting with a book. You know, we don't sit with a book; we talk. He sat reading for endless hours. He was interested in ideas, and he talked of nothing else. He would give me his judgment about the things I was reading. He chose a university for me. He knew I was penniless; he was, too. He became a refugee, too, although he was in the States in 1947 like my brother. We both worked as peddlers.

Then I had to go to school. He knew that if I didn't go to school, the immigration department would come after me. He found me a state university. I

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didn't know the difference between a state and a private university. He found me a state university. Now it is called the University of Illinois at Chicago. That became my school for the equivalent of three years. It is memorable in a couple of senses.

I remember the first time I entered into a political debate with an Israeli classmate in 1951. His name was Conrad Mayer. I remember his name; he was from Haifa of German ancestry. We were both foreign students. We saw each other and used to talk about Palestine. I learned a couple of things from him that I didn't know, simply because I was ignorant. I learned about the Palmach, which I had never heard of before. I knew the Haganah, but I'd never heard of the Palmach. At that time, I discovered the gap in information between the two of us. He knew so little about the Arabs of Palestine, and I knew so little about [the Jews]. Even though I was living next to Tel Aviv, we didn't know much about them. There was a wall of separation between the two peoples; this impacted the knowledge we had of one another. Clearly, we were not one society, even though we were neighbors. My first debate and first letter to the editor were in 1951. In my first oral presentation, I wrote out a speech, and my friend Ali helped me compose it in acceptable English. I was launched on the career of fighting for the question of Palestine. This was one important issue. I began my political discussions at university in the states.

A second issue important to my formation was a black student who was my classmate at the university. His name was Sterling Stucky. He is now a big professor, a very distinguished historian. We sat next to each other in an introductory political science course taught by a Jewish professor. We both were freshman. We both knew that this teacher hated us. He was really prejudiced against us. He picked on us for no reason. I didn't understand racial prejudice at the time. Then somebody told me that he was Jewish. So then I understood why he was prejudiced against me, but I didn't understand why he was prejudiced against the black guy. I had no idea.

Then I asked this guy why the professor was prejudiced against us. We would always stand or sit next to each other. I asked him, "Sterling, why does Mr. Gibbens hate you?" He said, "Because I am a nigger." I said, "What do you mean, you are a nigger?" I didn't even know the term. He referred to himself as a nigger because that is what Stanley Gibbens did. Sterling said, "He is a racist." I didn't even know the term racist; my English was not very good. The concept that you could be prejudiced against someone because of his color was a shock to me. Of course, I saw blacks in Chicago, and I saw that they were liv-

ing separately. But I didn't understand the explanation for it. I didn't understand it with Sterling Stucky and Stanley Gibbens, either. This was very important in my political formation in the United States. As time went by, Sterling told me that this professor would go with a mob to lynch a nigger. I was so upset when he told me that.

The professor began to ask me political questions. He got angry with me; he thought I was attacking his people. And there I was sitting in Chicago! We were both living on the south side of Chicago. Occasionally we would run into each other in a restaurant. He was single at the time, but he had a girlfriend. Occasionally we would be sitting in the same restaurant, and we would talk. I heard him say the nastiest things about blacks: that they are dumb, stupid, corrupt, sex maniacs. He had all the negative stereotypes about blacks, and he was getting his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Then freshman year was over, but I want to relate another incident.

My friend Sterling Stucky had vanished from sight. He apparently left the university. I lost track of him in about 1951.

**"He had all the negative stereotypes about blacks, and he was getting his Ph.D."**

But the wheel turns around. I had never seen or heard from him or even thought of him. Then in 1967 I was back in Chicago at Northwestern University. I was invited by a woman named Diana Becker to a dinner party on the North Shore. She had been previously married to the French consul-general in Chicago. She had prominent political figures at the dinner, including one of the financial contributors to the Adlai Stevenson campaign. It was a high-power group. We were talking politics. A black fellow was there, and we kept looking at each other. After dinner was over, we sat on the sofa next to each other. He said, "Do we know each other?" I said, "You know, I have seen you." Remember, this was 1967. Then I said, "Let's talk. Do you remember Stanley Gibbens?" He said, "That son-of-a-bitch! What do you know about him?" I said, "I read about him. He is a stupid professor at the University of Missouri. He is a stupid racist." Neither of us had forgotten this s.o.b. I said, "He was prejudiced against me because I'm an Arab. He was prejudiced against you because you're black." He said, "That is the trouble with most Jews here. They are anti-Arab. And when they are not patronizing blacks, they hate them."

I asked Sterling what he was doing. He said that he was teaching high school, but about to quit. He wanted to get his Ph.D. I asked him where he was going to study. "At Northwestern," he replied. "In what field?" I asked. "In history." "How far along are you?" "I'm supposed to write my dissertation, but I've been teaching high school. Now I'm going to

work on my dissertation full-time," he said. At that time I was the associate director of the program in African studies. He was interested in Afro-American and African history. I told him to come and see me in my office. "We'll see what we can do about it," I said. He came, and I arranged a fellowship for him. His timing was right, and he already had a master's degree. He began writing on Robinson, the jazz musician. This made it possible for him to finish. With the black revolution in 1968, they desperately needed black professors. He was right there. He became an associate professor at Northwestern without having a Ph.D. He was a Northwestern man. He had a B.A. and M.A. from there, and then he began teaching because he was poor. They appointed him because they were desperate for a black face to teach. But he was very competent.

We had an odd situation: an associate professor was writing a dissertation and had to be examined by his colleagues. Sterling finally finished his dissertation and submitted it. I chaired his committee. As usual, the committee meets first to talk about the guy. We asked ourselves what we should do. We knew it would be a tense exam because he was our colleague. We weren't going to flunk him. We had read his dissertation, but we didn't know how to conduct the exam. I had a little bottle of whiskey, and we all drank some. When he came, we gave him a drink. Then we started talking about his dissertation. Obviously we passed him. Then I took him out to dinner. In the meantime, one of our people came to town, so I invited him to dinner. We had an interesting encounter between Nabil Sha'ath and Sterling Stucky at my house over dinner. We talked politics. This was back in 1968-69. Sterling has become very important since then. He has written a great deal.

The other episode I want to relate shows how I developed my opinion of the United States. My opinion is very complex — sometimes understanding, other times angry.

An x-ray at the University of Illinois showed that I had a tremendous amount of fibrosis on the lungs. I was in Stanley Gibbens's class when a note came to him. It asked Mr. Abu-Lughod to leave the class immediately and go to the registrar's office. So Gibbens called me in the middle of the class: "I don't know what you have done, but you have to go the registrar's office. As far as I'm concerned, you can stay until the end of class if you'd like." Of course I was very agitated to see what they wanted from me, so I went to the office. The registrar sat me down and said, "How do you feel?" I said, "I feel fine." He said, "Do you cough?" "When I want to clear my throat, I cough," I replied. I still wasn't catching on. He said,

"Do you cough a lot?" "Why should I cough a lot?" "Are you ok?" "Yeah, I'm ok." He looked sad and said, "We have bad news for you. You have TB. Therefore we are asking you to leave the university immediately. You can come back when you are cured." I asked, "How do you know that I have TB?" He said that the medical office had written a note saying that I had an advanced case of tuberculosis. Because this is a very dangerous and contagious disease, they asked that I be sent away from school and treated in a hospital.

Then he said, "But you are a foreign student, and the immigration department is interested in your case. We have set up an appointment for you. You came here as a foreign student, and the immigration department will handle your case. They probably will ask you to leave the country." Obviously I was shocked. I went to my friend Ali, and he said, "They are stupid. Don't worry about it." I was scared. Do I have TB? It is a deadly disease. The worrying made me even more sick. I went to the immigration department,

and they asked me the same question: "Do you cough?" Then they gave me the news that I had to leave the country. I had to go home until I recovered; then I could re-apply for a visa. Obviously I couldn't accept that solution. The immigration officer said, "Of course, you can go to a sanatorium here and be treated. When you are cured, we will re-open your case. We can help you find a place.

In your record, you say you can bring in \$2000 a year." I said, "That was the case when I filled out my application, but now my family are refugees. I don't have money."

Then he said, "You came to the United States healthy. At least, that is what your x-rays show. You contracted the disease in the US; therefore, we will assume responsibility for it." He found a problem, but he also found a solution. I thanked him. He said, "We will send you to a sanatorium at our expense until you recover." I felt a little better, but this was devastating. He asked me to have a thorough exam at a hospital before they sent me for treatment. He really expressed sorrow when I told him I was a refugee. He showed compassion. So they sent me to a neighboring hospital. I called to make an appointment. They told me what to do and examined me on three consecutive days. They took samples from my stomach, and so forth. Then the doctors gave me the good news, "You don't have TB. As far as we are concerned, you can go back to school." They gave me a piece of paper, and I immediately went to the university and gave them my certificate of health. But they put me under observation for the next four years! They monitored me every three months. They found nothing of course. There was something on my lung, and I later had an operation. But it was not TB.

"You have TB. Therefore we are asking you to leave the university immediately."

That episode made me understand that America is complex. There is some rationality in the system. They are willing to examine; they don't act arbitrarily. They are willing to listen and help find a solution. Clearly I was a destitute case. I had no money, so I couldn't go to a sanatorium. Because I came into the US healthy, they assumed responsibility. They shouldn't have admitted me into the country if I was sick. I have never forgotten that episode and both their concern about the health of the community and their rational approach to my case. Until 1954, they continued to monitor me. Even when I went downstate to the University of Illinois, the TB unit would come every three months and direct me to have an exam. It wasn't convenient for me, but I was impressed with their concern about public health. Each time I had a test I was agitated. I was afraid they would find something. But I give them a lot of credit for that. In health, the university obeys certain rules. In immigration and public assistance, the government obeys certain rules. From that episode, I also learned how to listen to people and find solutions. I try not to apply rules and regulations in a narrow-minded fashion.

I stayed in the States for eight straight years without coming back here once. I went to the States in October 1949, and I came back to the Arab world at the end of 1957. I had always wanted just to finish my education and come back, but of course, there was no Palestine to come back to as far as I was concerned.

**"From that episode, I also learned how to listen to people and find solutions."**

I was fortunate that my first professional job took me to Egypt. I was just finishing my Ph.D. and applying to various jobs. Luckily, I was taken on by UNESCO and assigned to Egypt, which was ideal. That was after I had written to all the Arab universities in existence asking for a job. Only one of the universities answered my application and that was the University of Khartoum whose dean was an Englishman, Dr. Grey. He wrote back a very nice letter thanking me and saying that my application had gone on file, but he was the only one.

Later, I met the former President of Damascus University and told him about my applications. He said that I wouldn't get a job because I had to know somebody. He told me nobody writes letters! Anyway, I got a job with UNESCO, and I went to Egypt and worked there for four years. This was my first experience with Nasserism. I arrived at a period when there was tremendous hope in the Arab world following the political triumph in getting out of the Suez invasion. From the slogans, the headlines, the radio, people were fully confident that they were going to tri-

umph. I was part of that process. In the center where I worked, there were a number of Arabs from various Arab states and also a number of outsiders: Americans, Swedes and so on. Our task was to construct the future of the Arab world. Gradually the foreign experts were phased out as we proved to be just as capable of building our future, doing the research and technical work and building our society without assistance. It was a period of tremendous hope. We were not just working; we were actually building a new Arab world. This was the atmosphere of the time when I was in Egypt.

I became very familiar with Egyptian politics and society, as well as the other Arab states which I visited in my work. I had to interview candidates and the center itself was very mixed. There were Saudis, Yemenis, Libyans and people from all the Arab states where we did training. This left a permanent mark on me. My interest in Egypt, both as an academic and a person, stems from that point. I also developed tremendous friendships.

Then I went back to the States because I found that to be promoted in UNESCO, you had to become a bureaucrat. I didn't want this. Also, there were other complications, and I had children. Anyway, I went back to the States and finished my first book, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, which is very old now. I got my first teaching job at Smith College, which is an excellent college.

After I got that job, it became a regular habit of mine to come back to the Arab world every summer. I wasn't cut off from the Arab world. I brought my family almost every summer. That's how I spent my money. I visited all the countries that I hadn't visited before, starting with Tunisia and Algeria. I went to Algeria for the first time in the summer of 1963, just after it had become independent, which was very exciting time.

So, in an important sense I have never lost touch with the Arab world. I was also in touch with the States, and I continued to write in Arabic. I write in English too about the Arabs although I never wrote on Palestine. I didn't even teach on Palestine, but I used to give lectures. As a student, I gave lectures in the States. When I became a professor, I also gave lectures.

At that time we were certain of the political direction that we had. This was before the PLO. Of course, after the PLO's founding, it was Ahmad Shuqeiri's<sup>1</sup> direction. I was skeptical about him but the question

1. Ahmad Shuqeiri was the first president of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the founder of the Palestine Liberation Army.



was whether to work within the narrow identity or the broader identity. Until 1970, I worked with the Pan-Arab movement, and my Palestinian identity was there. The attack on Israel, for me, was always an Arab attack and therefore, I was part of the Nasserist movement. My friends were all in the Nasserist camp. I accepted the formulation of the Ba'ath without actually dealing with it. I lived with the organization of the Arab students when it existed in the 1950s and the 1960s, so in an important sense I remained actively involved in the Arab world and also in Arab America.

My first job was in Egypt after the Ph.D. My second job was in Beirut with UNESCO as well.

**HHA:** *Before Smith College?*

**IAL:** No, after Smith College. I took an unpaid leave of absence from Northwestern University and went to Beirut. UNESCO has an educational center there, and I was assigned to work there for a year. While there, I became very involved with the PLO, particularly with the research center. This was in 1971/72.

**HHA:** *What happened to the job at Smith college?*

**IAL:** I was there from 1962-67, and in 1965, I was promoted to associate professor. They appointed me; I didn't ask for it. I was active in the college. I had an excellent reputation as a teacher. I thrived, but the place was too small for me. The students were very bright and I learned from them. It was a wonderful experience, but it was too small for me. I needed a university. Smith was too isolated. I used to give lectures and was beginning to be recognized as a scholar. I had published a number of articles and was invited to lecture on Arab issues. It was difficult to get out of this, but I needed to do research.

One year I got a visiting appointment at McGill, a university in Canada, working with their Institute for Islamic Studies. I went there and caused havoc in the place, but they asked me to stay. They offered me a permanent job at McGill. I wanted to stay but my family didn't. The next year, 1965-66, I took a leave from Smith. It was the year that they promoted me, and I think that they knew that I might stay at McGill. They asked me to promise to come back. I came back and we settled down. We were comfortable, and we found a private school for my oldest daughter, Leila, because clearly she was very smart.

One day while in Canada, I was invited by a former colleague to give a lecture for the second time at Northwestern University. My former colleague from

Smith was Canadian, and she was the director of the program for Academic studies at Northwestern. So she invited me to give a lecture while I was at McGill. It was simply a public lecture. The second time she invited me with a purpose in mind. She wanted me to come to Northwestern and be her associate director. I was dealing with Africa, but she also wanted me to deal with North Africa, which was very far-sighted of her because Africa in America means black Africa. The second time I went, she had the deans around because clearly she wanted them to see me. Political science people were also there, and she offered me a job. That was the beginning of the process, and it took a while before I accepted. The University of Pennsylvania was also offering a job as they were establishing a Middle East Center.

By then we almost said we didn't want to go. Then one day I read an obituary of a former professor at Smith college, and it listed what he'd done. It was so unimpressive that I said to my wife, "When I die I don't want to have an obituary like that. We have to get out of here." So, that's how I got out. I took the job at Northwestern and went to Chicago in 1967. From there I took leave from 1971-72. I was taking temporary leave twice a year, sometimes travelling on my own attending conferences or going to the Gulf. I ended up spending one third of my time in the Arab world and the other two thirds in the States. Clearly my heart and mind are in both places. My professional life in the States also became involved in Arab politics. In an important sense, I have always been around the Arab world.

**HHA:** *I would like, if I may, to go back to 1967, when you founded the Association of Arab American University Graduates, an incredible achievement.*

**IAL:** During the period between my Ph.D. and work with UNESCO, I was building a professional life with some scholarly interest in public issues. However, between that period and 1967, I was not as politicized. I was not active in partisan politics, but I was active in the Organization of Arab Students. I gave occasional lectures and debates about Palestine, but Palestine was always part of the whole struggle for Arab liberation. Therefore, I assumed a posture whereby I defended Egypt and Nasser. I didn't view the Arab states as attacking Israel, for it was their responsibility to help us as Palestinians. Palestine is an Arab country.

However, the 1967 war had a major effect on me as an individual. It was actually the watershed for me. Firstly, I discovered a big gap between me and my American colleagues. I knew we were different, but we had always been colleagues. I was trying to integrate myself into their society, and I did well. I was a

"When I die I don't want to have an obituary like that."

part of the society and was active in a number of things that were American. But 1967 was a divide. I had a number of both Jewish and gentile colleagues in my department. With my Jewish colleagues there was a sudden gap. They behaved as if Israel was their society, and they were no longer Americans. Other American colleagues also became fully supportive of Israel. They were modest in extending their political support, but were also appreciative of the terrible damage that American society was doing to us as Arabs. For the first time I recognized how racist America was toward the Arabs and toward Abdel Nasser. They hated him with a venom. Watching the American media at that time was a horrifying experience. I knew about American discrimination towards the Indians and blacks, but I did not believe that this could also be directed at us, as Arabs. The ruthlessness of Israel's showing Egyptian soldiers being marched barefoot through the desert, the American media gleeful about it and getting so much satisfaction over Nasser being smashed—this was the crushing of all Arabs.

At this moment I almost came back [to the Arab world], but I didn't know where to come back to. I wanted to leave [America]; I didn't want to see this. It was a very difficult time. I was not at North-western at that point. I was at the Smith summer institute, of which I was director. I was living in this small community, and I really didn't know what to do. I went to the Arab League to see if we could do something and become more active. The Arab League was stupid, but I had friends there. I went to New York and joined a group there. We were basically giving each other therapy because you couldn't talk to your friends. My daughters had fights with their best friends who were Jewish. My daughters had nothing to do with it. They weren't even sure what it was, but these Jewish kids, who were nine or ten years old, actually had fist fights with my children. So this period showed me the big divide and the fundamental differences, which made all our relationships seem superficial. The attack from Israel, and the verbal attack from America, didn't spare any Arab. Every Arab was subject to ridicule. They did not distinguish between progressive and reactionary. To them we were all the same. That was, in part, where the idea for the AAUG came.

"I recognized how racist America was toward the Arabs and toward Abdel Nasser."

There was no AAUG then. Hatem al-Husseini<sup>2</sup> was living in the same place as me. Kamel Abu Jabr<sup>3</sup> was coming to replace me at Smith. Ibrahim Othman and a number of students in the area came to commiserate. We didn't know what to do. I moved in September, and I was looking for an outlet.

In July, I remember a particular incident which had a decisive effect on me. I got a phone call from an Egyptian friend of mine, Tah'sin Bashir, who worked in the Arab Information Office and became very prominent subsequently as part of the "kitchen" working on the Camp David accords. He was a friend of mine from the 1950s. He was a Nasserist and a very smart guy. He told me I was going to get a phone call from the director of an outfit in New York called the Theater for Ideas. I knew what the Theater for Ideas was. They had previously held discussions on black power. It was a vanguard place where controversial ideas could be aired by the best representatives of those ideas. He said that she was Jewish and wanted to open up discussion on the

Arab-Israeli conflict. The people in the Arab Information Office and in the Arab League could not speak because there was no policy. This was July—before Khartoum.<sup>4</sup> There was complete silence from the Arab governments, which were smashed and completely demoralized. Bashir said that no Arab affiliated with any government could speak. The theater had asked Fayeze Sayigh<sup>5</sup> and others, but they had orders not to

say anything until policy was formulated. Bashir told me that as a professor, I represented nobody. I could speak my mind. The Arabs simply must be present in a national debate in the United States. I agreed. He said, "You owe nothing to nobody. Nobody can punish you. You can say whatever you want but you must appear."

The woman called me half an hour later and gave me more information about it. It was an elaborate procedure. I appeared with Mejid Khadouri<sup>6</sup> from our side, at least I presume he was from our side, and Ben Halpern, author of *The Jewish State*, and one other on the Israeli side. There was a first and second rebuttal, too. I didn't choose Mejid Khadouri, and I wouldn't have chosen him. All I insisted on

2. Hatem al-Husseini was involved in various academic and political capacities in the United States, as well as the Occupied Territories, before his recent death.

3. Kamal Abu Jaber is a well-known personality in Jordanian politics, who at one point became Jordanian minister of information.

4. Reference is made to the Khartoum Conference, in which the Arab states committed themselves to the so-called Three No's: no negotiations, no peace and no recognition of Israel.

5. Fayeze Sayigh was a renowned Palestinian scholar and author.

6. Another well-known Arab author, whose views are not popular among some Arab scholars.

was a neutral chairman, but at that time there was no neutrality. The format was that we would speak and react to each others' points. Then they would invite questions from specific people by name. Anyway, after some negotiation, they named a neutral chairman—Roger Fisher from Harvard Law School. At that time we thought he was neutral, but he's a maverick. He was not on our side but not exactly on their side either. I didn't know him but I accepted him. I just knew him from a letter in the *New York Times* in which he supported Egypt's right to close the straits and so forth. He was not a very good chair.

It was very interesting as it was the first time I had addressed an audience so committed to the other side — committed Zionists and prominent thinkers. The debate was held in a hall of about 100 people, including the editor of the *New York Review of Books* and many other members of the Jewish intelligentsia.

I ended up being very surprised, both by my capacity to confront them and, I think, to beat them, even though the Arab world had been smashed. At that time, I was really surprised. I don't want to appear immodest, but I think I did a very good job. I remember my answer to one particular question: What would it take for the Arab states to negotiate with Israel? I had to think very fast about this because the possibility was not even acknowledged. I said:

"It was the first Arab in the United States to speak after the 1967 war..."

I will make a statement, and if Eshkol<sup>7</sup> will repeat it in the Knesset tonight, the Arab delegations will be at the conference table tomorrow. I, Eshkol, Prime Minister of Israel, am prepared to order a withdrawal of all Israeli forces from all the areas that I have just occupied. I am willing to do this voluntarily and without condition in an attempt to reach a peaceful settlement with these states. I am prepared to withdraw now, although there is no force that can make me withdraw now because the Arabs have no power. I am willing to withdraw voluntarily in return for a negotiated settlement. We will go to the conference table and reach an agreement.

Then I said that Eshkol would never make that statement; therefore, they (the Arab states) will never be party to any negotiations. There has to be a principle of withdrawal.

I was then asked, "What about the Palestinians?"

I said that this was completely different, and that they would have to ask the Palestinian leadership. I could not answer this question. The issues were different.

So that was a trial by fire. I was the first Arab in the United States to speak after the 1967 war and probably the only Arab to speak to such an audience. Then I began to speak in the area and get the energy to speak. I moved to Chicago in July 1967.

At the time Nasser was talking about "erasing the traces of aggression" and the right of the Palestinian people to self determination. I generally used the same terms. Instead of saying "erasing the traces of aggression," I said withdraw, get out, and then the Arab states will be prepared to reach an agreement with you

HHA: And this was even before [UN Resolution] 242.<sup>8</sup>

IAL: Oh yes, of course. You will find in my writings that I supported 242, at least at one point, but then I quit! I wrote a letter to President Nixon endorsing 242 and said that the correct interpretation of 242 would lead to the repatriation of the Palestinians to their homeland and the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the territories.

I went to Chicago and tried to get something organized. In America you have to have an organization or you have no influence. Articulate speakers, for example, are important, but they don't affect the public. The name of the game in the United States is organization. In early September, I heard from Tah'sin Bashir about a meeting in Detroit. I was asked to go and give a talk. I thought it was a terrible meeting, but out of it came ANERA [American Near East Refugee Aid]. The organizers included a number of "American friends of the Middle East," and ANERA was the result. Clearly this was not my cup of tea. They were mostly Americans, and I had a big fight with some of them. It wasn't a great meeting, as I said, but I met a number of loose missiles like me who were looking for something.

One person I met was Abdeen Jibara. It was the first time I'd heard of him, and I had no idea who he was or what he represented. Anyway, he wanted to make an announcement. He said in his own particular way—he was a lefty—that there were a number of academics who were interested in getting together to see what they could do about the situation in the Middle East. He invited me to a meeting with four or

7. Levy Eshkol was Prime Minister of Israel at that time.

8. This UN Security Council Resolution set the basis for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict following the 1967 war.

five other academics, who were all old men. Nothing much was really discussed, but out of that meeting came the idea for the AAUG. It turned out that the American Oriental Society had met in Ann Arbor, Michigan, about two weeks before. Those orientalist thought that they ought to bring together academics who could think, write, speak, and address themselves to the issue of the image of the Arabs. What they had seen on TV had offended them, so they thought that the American consciousness should be raised and the Arabs defended. Now some of these people had already been in politics, for example in the Syrian National Socialist Party. Some people in this small group had attended the Ann Arbor meeting. They asked for my name if I was interested. They promised to keep me informed of what was happening, including the planning of a general meeting.

I agreed, gave them my name and went to Chicago. I began to speak on my own. Schools began to ask me to speak. Then I received a letter from a guy by the name of Rashed Bashshour, whom I did not know personally, but whom I had tried to recruit to replace me at UNESCO when I worked in Egypt. UNESCO approved him, but the Egyptian government didn't. I knew all about him without ever meeting him. He was a trained sociologist from the American University of Beirut and was teaching at Michigan University. He said that the group was planning to spread awareness about the Arab people's situation. He asked for ideas and any help I could give, as well as a contribution for mailing costs. There weren't any funds for such a venture. I wrote a letter back encouraging him and saying that I would attend a meeting. I was invited to a general meeting in Chicago in December 1967, in association with MESA, the Middle East Studies Association. MESA was there with the American Oriental Society and anyone with an interest in the Middle East. The Detroit group was attending MESA and I was not. At that time, I considered MESA to be an instrument of Zionism. I was fighting it, so I never joined MESA. While I did attend two of their meetings, I never registered with them. It changed in later years, but at that time the founders, organizers and recruiters were all Zionists. I attacked them publicly.

The meeting was held at the University of Chicago School of Theology. Close to sixty people were at the meeting. It was chaired by Muhsen Mahdi, an Iraqi, and the most distinguished professor among us at that time. Although he was totally useless in a political sense, he was an intelligent man and an accomplished scholar to whom people deferred. Rashed Bashshour and Fawzi Najeh — the Syrian Lebanese contingent—Hosni Haddad and Adnan Aswad were at the meeting. This was the clique from Detroit; they were all former members of the Syrian National So-

cialist Party. They were interested in Palestine since Palestine was central to the Syrian National Socialist Party—as part of Syria of course.

I was impressed by the many people who wanted to organize, but I discovered that we were all very isolated. Each was pursuing his own career without any connection to the other. We knew something about each other only through books. I met Michael Suleiman there. I don't think Kamal Abu Jabr came, but Anwar Shejni did. I met a number of these people: Farhat Ziadeh, Ayoub and Ghada Talhami, and a diverse group of people. Rashed sent about 500 letters, and about 60 of us turned up. There was already a plan of action. They were prepared to elect an executive committee and found an association. I had a hand in formulating the organization by looking for the common links. We were all Arabs and university graduates; we were a skilled, not a mass, organization. Among us were professors, doctors and lawyers. We needed a name that would not restrict our ranks, and which would give us enough prestige to counter the despicable image we had been given by the American press. We pledged to pay \$100 each as a foundation fee. About fifty or sixty made the pledge, but only 20 or so actually delivered. Anyway we formed the organization and elected an executive committee. The first president was Fawzi Najah who was at Michigan State University. Adnan Aswad was treasurer, Rashed Bashshour vice president, and Abdeen Jabara secretary. The dynamo among them was Abdeen Jabara, the lawyer.

**"They thought that the American consciousness should be raised and the Arabs defended."**

Abdeen Jabara discovered that I was also active, so we became partners. He lived in Detroit, and I was in Chicago. My advantage over most people was that I had access to the telephone. At Northwestern I was the boss and I had secretarial staff. I began to subsidize the AAUG since I had the facilities that the others didn't. We collected the first installment of the money which was \$2000, including \$100 from me, and that's how we began. I harassed Abdeen. He wanted to be harassed! Fawzi is a nice guy, but he was not active. Rashed was a nice guy, but he was a rising professional who didn't have enough time. He compensated for the weakness of the president. As vice-president, he worked hard to articulate the organization in terms of its by-laws. He and Abdeen worked closely. I was also part of the team, so we were three in the initial year. This was really an important year, in which elections for the board of directors were organized. I ran for the board and received the largest number of votes, around 40. Hisham Sharabi also got in on 38 votes. Somebody said that I probably got all the votes, since they didn't think there were more than 40 voters! So I got in along with six others.

We had our first annual conference. It was my idea that we hold a yearly meeting of this kind. We set the dates for a conference in Washington, D.C. We wanted to make an impact, and this was in December 1968. I drew up a four-page mimeographed program. Our keynote speaker was Fayez Sayigh. We were more conscious as Arab Americans than most earlier generations, so we invited a member of the state legislature of Michigan by the name Kharroub. He was from Detroit, and we invited him to address us as a major speaker. He was a nice guy.

Now on the day of the conference, which was December 26th or 27th, we had the worst blizzard in the Midwest. It was an historic blizzard. I was at O'Hare Airport in Chicago from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., wandering from terminal to terminal. All the planes were grounded because you couldn't see anything. Only one plane, an American Airlines plane, took off from that airport because the pilot wanted to go home. I was on that plane and (boy-oh-boy) you should have seen that ride! In any case I got on it. The president of the organization was in another terminal, and he never made it.

I arrived in Washington and went to the conference venue, a hotel called the Executive House. It was small, costing \$35 a night for two people. We were poor! We had no money from any source; everybody paid for himself. I got there and pushed all my friends to join. I had a number of friends, and I had already plotted what these friends should do. I had sent a copy of the program to Washington to be reproduced. Anyway when I got to the hotel, there were a total of seven people. The VP was there and three of my friends including Naseer Arouri and Elaine Hagopian.

I made them join. They were there because they had come from Boston. Rashed made it from the Midwest because he had driven the day before the blizzard. There were two others: Hussein Hamdan from Princeton and somebody else. We were surrounded by all sorts of people from Washington, especially the FBI and CIA. It was obvious that they were eager to listen to what we had to say. There we were: when I went into the room, nobody came. Even the person in charge of local arrangements, Walid Khaddouri, wasn't there. (The local arrangements committee was my invention.) In any case, Hussein Hamdan and I decided to go to sleep. We were sharing a room, and neither of us was able to sleep. I asked him whether there was any hope. Hussein replied, "Don't you realize that you're dead? What's the matter with you? You're dead!"

I told Hussein to forget about it. There was still hope! The following day we wanted to check the arrangements, but there were no arrangements. Where were we going to sit? There was no place to sit. Where was the hall? Where was this 'aars [bastard] Walid Khaddouri? Walid finally dragged himself over saying, "I'm sick. I have the flu." I told him, "So what if you have the flu? You were supposed to make arrangements, prepare the name tags and a host of other things." I knew what needed to be done, but we had relied on this guy who now was sick.

As a result we sent somebody to Woolworth to buy name tags and so on. After very hard work and running very late, we finally managed to get together at about 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning.

Anyway, we finally got together in the room with lots of people from Washington who had nothing better to do. The final count was about twenty-four of us. The president was absent, so we had to reproduce the program by hasty xerox. One of the provisions of the conference was the president's speech. This AAUG condition was one of my ideas too, but Fawzi Najah was not there. I was really fussy about this and didn't know who else could possibly give this presidential speech. He hadn't sent a transcript of his speech. The vice-president then said that he would give it. I agreed and asked him whether he had anything to say. I was basically chairing that part of the conference. The vice-president gave the speech. It wasn't great, but the panel discussions went very well.

Kharroub, the state legislator, came late, but arrived during the panel discussions. All this information is included in a book, [the AAUG conference proceedings]. We gave him a lecture slot because he was in the state legislature and the highest Arab American that we knew. At that time we didn't have Abu Rizik<sup>9</sup> or the others.

Anyway Kharroub came and said that he was very surprised at what he had heard. He said that he was used to speaking at conferences, but he had to confess that our group was very different from what he was used to. He said that he was accustomed to speaking to Arab-Americans but that we were a different kind. In fact, he said that we were at a higher level than him. He then spoke frankly about his experiences as an American-born Arab in the state legislature. He said that he had worked with many partners, including Jews. He said that on June 5 or 6, 1967, his partners had come to him and said, "Mike,

"Don't you realize that you're dead? What's the matter with you? You're dead!"

9. James Abu Rizik from South Dakota became a famous Arab American U.S. Senator. He is of Lebanese origin and was instrumental in the establishment of the ADC - the Anti Arab American Discrimination Committee.

(I don't really remember his first name), why don't you get up off your ass and do something for your people?" They were all giving money to the Jewish National Fund or the Jewish National Appeal, and he wasn't doing anything. "Why don't you get up off your fat ass and do something for your people?" He said that this had shocked him. He hadn't done anything before, and that is why he wanted to get to know us and find out about the AAUG. He gave a nice presentation.

In the evening, we had contracted the hotel for a banquet for fifty. Since there were only twenty-four of us, we hassled students to come. We were paying for it anyway. We managed to get about forty-two in the end, and we had a main banquet speaker. It was our first convention. The style was my invention, and it remained forever. We had a presidential speech, a banquet, as well as a breakfast session to deal with celebrities and intense, contemporary political issues. Fayez Sayigh was the speaker, and we were embarrassed. Fayez Sayigh usually addresses 100 or 200 people. He was a good speaker and thinker, but a loner who doesn't cooperate with anyone. As Fayez was speaking, I saw one of the speakers who should have spoken at the panel in the morning — Baha' Abu Leban. He had been stranded in Toronto for 24 hours, but he came. We had to make a special panel the next morning so that he could speak. We commiserated. At least he showed up! There was interest in the conference, and other people had legitimate excuses for not coming.

The lobbying began as we began creating a new executive committee. The first committee with Bashshour and Fawzi had to be changed because people were seeking activists. Kamal Abu Jabr was a lobbyist along with Michael Suleiman. They said they wanted me to be president. I agreed and recruited my committee, including Hussein Hamdan as vice president, (He was a friend of mine and one would usually recruit his friends!) Elaine Hargopian as secretary, and Naseer Arouri as treasurer. That was my slate, and it was unopposed. Of course we were only twenty-five or so. Abdeen gave us a big push, so I was elected. We then began an active process of recruitment.

We had the second annual convention a year later in Detroit, again in December. We brought Clovis Maqsooud<sup>10</sup> as keynote speaker, the head of the Arab

League in the seventies, as well as Eqbal Ahmad as the banquet speaker, and Abdel Latif Tibaqwi from our side. That was a huge success. We had over 200 people and we didn't have a single extra seat at the banquet. The panels were crowded. People came and joined the association. We had the book of the first convention ready for distribution, which I organized. I hired an editor and put it out.

We invited (as has been the pattern with the AAUG) Annia Marcos. She is a French Jewish activist writer who was a young child when her parents were in the holocaust. I invited her from France. She is a beautiful woman, and we had a wonderful time. She used to edit a magazine called *Africa and Asia*, a French magazine. Annia Marcos was terrific.

As for Eqbal, I think he gave the most brilliant speech of his life. I still have it. He is a friend of mine, but I didn't invite him. He was a substitute.

I wanted to invite strangers, people unfamiliar to us, to come in order to show that we could get other people. I wanted to bring a Pakistani from England by the name of Tariq Ali. Tariq is, or was, a Trotskyite, and he was refused a visa. He was an anti-war activist against the United States. Two days before, he went to the embassy for his visa and led a huge demonstration in London of about 25,000 people. He burned the American flag.

"Two days before, he went to the embassy for his visa and led a huge demonstration... of about 25,000 people."

So Eqbal gave a speech which began: "I was not invited here to speak by Ibrahim. I came instead of Tariq Ali." Tariq Ali! Did he have to embarrass me? Eqbal was very disturbed because his brother had been arrested in Canada, and the FBI had gone to his apartment in New York while his wife was there. They searched it, so he was boiling mad. He said:

I am here because he cannot be here. They wouldn't give him a visa to come here and address you. Do you know why? Tariq Ali! They accuse him of burning the American flag. That's a lie: He cremated it!

He was incredible. He spent an hour and a half attacking the United States. He got a lot of applause and wore us all out. It was an amazing speech. He told us about his mother, an 85-year-old woman. She wanted to lead a peaceful Palestinian demonstration, so that people could return to Palestine. He

10. Clovis Maqsooud, of Lebanese background, served as the Arab League's Ambassador to the United Nations for many years. He resigned from that post during the Gulf Crisis of 1990-91.

11. A recognized PLO military planner and Palestinian poet, he was assassinated at his home by Israeli commandos in 1973.

12. A well-known British author and commentator.

13. A French author.



suggested that people march to Palestine. He said that he would send us his mother as the first volunteer to lead the demonstration.

It was a brilliant meeting, a brilliant conference. We have the proceedings printed. We invited Shafiq al-Hout, but he couldn't come. We invited Kamel Nasr<sup>11</sup>, may God be with him. He requested security. We said, "Do we look like the kind of people who can provide security?" Anyway, he couldn't come.

In the second convention we worked out the constitutional committee to draft the final by-laws. My committee was elected for two years. The new constitution wanted to make it a two-year term of office, but I said declined. Because this was a new constitution, in fairness to all of us, the presidency should be for one year. I was concerned about actual rotation. I submitted my resignation after the first year. You can be re-elected, but the term should be one year only. They elected Sherif Bassiouni. He was theoretically my candidate. I backed him against my vice president, Hussein Hamdan. I wanted competition, and for many years afterwards we insisted on the right of forming two slates. The members must have a choice. Not all were in favor of this because they couldn't guarantee they would be elected. Nevertheless the law remained. I would say that between the second and probably the fifth or sixth convention, we all were moving in a generally left wing direction.

We invited Oliver Tambo, former President of the ANC, to Washington, and he came to AAUG. We also invited Krishna Menon, India's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Michael Adams<sup>12</sup>, Maxine Rodinson<sup>13</sup> and many other famous leftist figures from all over the world brought some very illustrious people to the AAUG conventions, and their speeches are recorded. We had a third item in the AAUG, which I think we have finally abandoned, and that was resolutions. We started that in the conference in Detroit. We would write a statement of resolutions. I think it would be interesting to review these because they're all on record.

That is the format of the AAUG and it was finalized by the third convention. We have the presidential speech in the first evening, then the banquet with more than one speaker and then the breakfast session, which is highly political and addressed to contemporary issues which are in the public mind.

Until 1970, the AAUG did not address Palestine exclusively. The change began in the 1970's when the militants of Fatah assumed leadership in the PLO, and we became active with the PLO. I phased myself out of Nasserist politics. After meeting Arafat in

1970, I shifted. The AAUG shifted as well, since most members are Palestinian. We began to pay much more attention to Palestine and the occupation.

In 1970, this conference took place in Evanston, Illinois in September a few days after Abdul Nasser died. I had made arrangements at the university. We used the halls since my dean at the time liked me. I asked him for permission to use the halls free of charge. I also asked him to attend the banquet, but he said he couldn't come because he had to go to a football game. Anyway, the invitation was open in case there was any change of plan. Then I went to attend the African Studies meeting which was held a week earlier in Boston. At seven o'clock Boston time one morning, I got a call from the dean's office. It was 6 a.m. there! It was the dean's secretary. My dean had been made president of the university since the last time we had spoken. I don't know why it was so early. Maybe he had to go somewhere, but, even so, making the secretary work at that time in the morning proves he was a compulsive man.

"We invited Oliver Tambo... to Washington, and he came to AAUG."

Anyway, he asked if the invitation was still open and if he could accept. I said it would be an honor for us. He then said that he should explain something. He said that he had been prevailed upon to host the Israeli ambassador in Washington, Mr. Rabin, and that he was trying to be even-handed. The policy at that time was to be "even-handed." I said, "I don't care what made you change your mind. You are most

honored guest and host at the same time." He then said, "I know how difficult this is for you so I will understand if you don't accept what I am about to say. I want to invite you to the dinner, but you have the right to say no and I won't take offense." I said, "Thank you. I'm not coming. I'm busy doing something else!"

Of course I got fidgety, and wondered why son-of-a-bitch Rabin was coming. He was coming on the same day that we opened our conference. So I packed my case and took the next flight back. I had a student spy working for me. He now works for the CIA. I got him off the streets. He was great guy, and I was very fond of him. I said, "Ron, the ambassador of Israel is coming to speak here and have dinner. I would like you to go and find out what he's doing."

After two hours he got back to me and told me that Rabin was delivering a lecture at three o'clock at a certain hall. Our business session began at three, and the keynote speech wasn't until the evening in a different hall.

So I had to organize a demonstration. My wife and daughter made a sheet on which they wrote FREE PALESTINE. It was about 30 feet long. I investigated

the rules of having a demonstration. It was the first time that I'd done it. They said the demonstration couldn't obstruct traffic and had to be a certain distance from the hall. I wrote to the mayor of the city and the chief of police saying that we wished to have a demonstration or, as I put it, a vigil.

Nobody knew anything about Rabin and what he was doing. All the AAUG people arrived, and I talked to all the blacks and the Americans who were working with me. I explained that I intended to have a demonstration. I believe I also talked to some of the Arabs in town. Now, the bulk of the AAUG was conservative.

At three o'clock, we had our business session. floor as chair. At that time as Bassiouni was President. I said, "We have a crisis here. Rabin is going to give a lecture two blocks from here." Nobody knew about this. I said, "I have made the formal arrangements and propose that all of us go and engage in a vigil." It was a horrible day— grey, damp and cold. Nevertheless, I said that we should go. The conservatives were embarrassed. I don't think they had ever been involved in a demonstration in their lives.

Anyway we stood and demonstrated. My black friends were distributing leaflets at the entrance to the lecture. Rabin was brought in a police car and taken into the hall through a small entrance, but we saw him. I think we had the biggest demonstration in the history of the AAUG, getting all these fuddy-duddies and professors from the older generations to stand up.

Then we left. We didn't want to interrupt the lecture. Afterwards, we discovered that the Israel National Students Association actually had their annual conference at the same university and on the same dates as us. It was incredible! I discovered this from a Jewish student of mine.

Either that evening or the next, the Israeli students actually tried to disrupt our banquet. I called the police and said, "This is a professor and they are disrupting our academic meeting." They came and threw them out. Hatem Hussein got involved in fight with one of the students. I pulled him out because they were there to provoke a fight.

Anyway the important thing is that Rabin made a statement at the Israeli conference, and I arranged for a television debate between Rabin with Michael Adams. We couldn't debate directly with Rabin, of course, so we got Michael Adams who was really

cocksure. He's an Englishman, but he did a good job.

A Jewish student told me that Rabin made the following statement:

The president of Israel requires a very conservative American President. If we have a choice between a person like Nixon and a person like Goldwater, we would choose Goldwater. The Republicans are more useful to us, they are better defenders. The student who told me this was shocked. These students were democrats. It was interesting.

Anyway, I will show you a resolution that we passed in Evanston, saying that today Arafat and the PLO do not speak for the Palestinians. The resolution says that the revolution speaks for itself. Nobody has the right to speak for the revolution except the revolution.

In the AAUG, there was always a contradiction between the general political resolutions we made and the commitments of the members. The members were conservative, but those who attended the General Assembly and passed the resolutions were the militants. We did that on Sunday, so people began to wait. All of our statements through the 1970's were radical statements. I'd like you to check this statement because I think it will stand as the most important

"We have a crisis here. Rabin is going to give a lecture to blocks from here."

statement. In 1970 in Evanston, we made the statement that nobody speaks for the revolution except the revolution. It was an interesting statement at the time. People didn't understand it; they thought it was idiotic. Now it assumes greater significance when we talk about the PLO. We can disassociate the revolution from the structure of the PLO. I know who drafted the statement — Elias Shufani. He wanted to emphasize that the revolution speaks for itself.

Elias is a Fatah member and a refugee of 1948 from Miilya.<sup>14</sup> He came to the United States and was not active at all. He worked for the department of antiquities and was a part of the Sulta. He studied at Hebrew University. Then he experienced a change and became a militant. He was one of the pioneers who joined the revolution and went to Lebanon. He quit his work in the States. He had a Ph.D. in ancient history. He just abandoned his job and went to be a full-time militant. He remained that way until 1982, when he became one of the dissidents with Jamal and Moussa. He was their theoretician. He was militant compared to others, and he practiced it.

14. A small Palestinian village in the Northern Galilee.

The creation of the AAUG was of great personal importance to me. I didn't create it, but I was present at its creation. I was the first person to get it energized. I laid the foundation for collaborative effort across national frontiers. I was a Nasserist and tried to approach all Arabs with an Egyptian-Arab identity. I wanted to build a coalition and apply what we had learned in American politics. How could we accommodate different views and commitments? We had a single purpose. That was the experiment of the AAUG. There were Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians, Egyptians, and Iraqis. All of us were politicized in one way or another. How could we harmonize these? The Egyptians would struggle against the Syrians and the Syrians against the Iraqis. We somehow stayed together as a pan-Arab organization. Even today, though it is dominated by the Palestinians, it still has an Arab orientation. We were interested in issues of Syria and Iraq and Arab relations. You will see that in the themes of each conference. It had a Palestinian thrust, especially in the 1970's, but it remained a pan-Arab organization.

Putting people together and getting the best out of them were our tasks. We got the best groups to make contributions without money. That was our most valuable resource. The AAUG pioneered intellectual output on the issues of Palestine and Arab-Israeli relation. We were able to tap into new people. We established an important network. We gave importance to analysis. That is how we became known. We were all more or less middle class; we were from the universities. We were able to connect our national contributions with a personal contribution. If you write an information paper, that is what you do for a living. You think it may advance your personal interests as a scholar, but you also contribute to a national cause.

All of the papers of the AAUG in the 1970's—without exception—were the best you could get on Israeli-Arab relations. We devoted talent to the cause. Many people had their first appearances in the AAUG. We directed people toward political activity on behalf of the Arabs in Palestine. We gave a legitimate outlet to people who had been isolated in the past. The people in the leadership were respectable. We were in important institutions. I was at Northwestern, a respectable institution. I could do these things and give the activity some legitimacy. It also encouraged people to think they could function, if they were competent, without being fired. You have a group that you can rely on in confronting the so-called Jewish lobby and its hostile activities in America. In that sense it was really respectable place. Also, some people wrote publications for nothing. We gave a tremendous amount of effort for no pay. We sacrificed a great deal, and that was evident to people. We

wrote quality articles, and people could perceive the quality in terms of the physical publication. It differed from anything the Arabs had done before. We produced books and information papers of good quality. They were accurate and carried weight.

The association became known to the American public through the media. The media began to show interest, and they could find speakers who articulated the issues. We were discovered by various universities. As you know, they need speakers for debates. You need an alternative view, and that is what we were. We were independent—not from the Arab League or Arab embassies. We were contacted on our own. Many of us also participated in demonstrations. We were not simply aloof, sitting with business people or in universities. You must also remember that this was a period of tremendous agitation in America. We took the side of the peace movement. We took the side of civil rights. We really created a contradiction for our Jewish-American, Zionist opponents. They always represented themselves as liberals, but on the Middle East they were reactionist and conservative. Eventually, we exploited that contradiction because they became conservative.

Among other things, the AAUG helped me maintain my connections with the Arab world. In 1982, I came to Beirut because in 1982 Beirut was a surrogate for Palestine. I came to establish the Open University, but then the invasion put an end to that. I had a choice—either to go to Tunis with everybody or to go back to the States until the situation cleared. I kept negotiating for the next year or two, and then I decided I could work in Tunis and Jordan. Again, the time came for me to return to the Arab world. I faced a hard decision about where to go because the Arab world was becoming very closed and so unattractive that I wasn't sure I wanted to work there. I said to myself that I had worked in many Arab States, in Europe and in the United States, but I had never actually worked in Palestine. So it became an issue—why not? I had never been back there after the occupation. There was a psychological barrier and a political one. I also thought there was a legal one such that I couldn't actually go there.

Finally, two issues came together. The first was my increasing dissatisfaction with the Palestine National Council. We talked but we were not actually very effective. Then I began to see my colleagues in the National Council were very old and getting older. Clearly we were aging, and nobody was sensitive to bringing in new blood. The PNC had become fossilized in the political system, so I was increasingly alienated.

One day I was in the library in the University of

Jordan doing a piece of research on the fall of Jaffa. I was reading old Palestinian newspapers when I got a telephone call from my nephew. While I was talking, I noticed some young students watching me. After I finished the call the students came over and introduced themselves to me, and we started talking. They were really anxious to chat and asked if we could have coffee. I discovered that they were writing their MA theses at the University of Jordan on the rebellion. I told them what I was doing and gave them some source material. They were all Palestinians, and one of them asked me why I didn't come and teach at the University of Jordan. They said that they needed advisors; there weren't any advisors for their research. That is when it began. I started thinking about it and also thinking about Birzeit University. I realized I could benefit since they actually gave me some source material I didn't know about.

I went to see Hanna Nasser<sup>15</sup> who was living in Jordan at that time and reminded him that he had offered me a job in 1978. I asked if the offer was still

open, and he said it was. This was in May 1991, so I said that I would start in September 1992. I came as a visiting professor, and after two months I knew I wanted to stay. I resigned from Northwestern. Birzeit then offered me the job of Vice President, which I accepted although it was under some pressure.

It was pointed out to me that I had a habit of moving about, and I was asked why I would stay here. I also had the same doubts, but I am behaving in such a way as to make myself stay here. I'm looking for a house to buy and put down roots to prevent myself from moving. The problem is that every few years I have concerns about myself and I need to change. But I think that I have finally anchored myself. Another way of looking at it is that for all those years I was looking for home, and I finally came back and found it. I think you will see certain things about me. Obviously I am an academic, but I have always had a passionate interest in the political defense of our people and a passionate interest in the liberation of the Arab world. □

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15. The exiled president of Birzeit University.

## Current Fellows & Their Activities

**Bacete Bwogo.** A Sudanese from the Shilluk tribe of southern Sudan, Bacete is a physician spending two and one-half years studying health-delivery systems in Costa Rica, Cuba, Kerala State (India) and the Bronx, U.S.A. Bacete did his undergraduate work at the University of Juba and received his M.D. from the University of Alexandria in Egypt. He served as a public-health officer in Port Sudan until 1990, when he moved to England to take advantage of scholarships at the London School of Economics and Oxford University. [THE AMERICAS]

**Cheng Li.** An Assistant Professor of Government at Hamilton College in Clinton, NY, Cheng Li is studying the growth of technocracy and its impact on the economy of the southeastern coast of China. He began his academic life by winning the equivalent of an M.D. at Jing An Medical School in Shanghai, but then did graduate work in Asian Studies and Political Science, with an M.A. from Berkeley in 1987 and a Ph.D. from Princeton in 1992. [EAST ASIA]

**Adam Albion.** A former research associate at the Institute for EastWest Studies at Prague in the Czech Republic, Adam is spending two years studying and writing about Turkey's regional role and growing importance as an actor in the Balkans, the Middle East and the former Soviet bloc. A Harvard graduate (1988; History), Adam has completed the first year of a two-year M. Litt. degree in Russian/East European history and languages at Oxford University. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

**Cynthia Caron.** With a Masters degree in Forest Science from the Yale School of Forestry and Environment, Cynthia is spending two years in South Asia as ICWA's first John Miller Musser Memorial Forest & Society Fellow. She is studying and writing about the impact of forest-preservation projects on the lives (and land-tenure) of indigenous peoples and local farmers who live on their fringes. Her fellowship includes stays in Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka. [SOUTH ASIA/Forest & Society]

**Hisham Ahmed.** Born blind in the Palestinian Dheisheh Refugee Camp near Bethlehem, Hisham finished his A-levels with the fifth highest score out of 13,000 students throughout Israel. He received a B.A. in political science on a scholarship from Illinois State University and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California in Santa Barbara. Back in East Jerusalem and still blind, Hisham plans to gather oral histories from a broad selection of Palestinians to produce a "Portrait of Palestine" at this crucial point in Middle Eastern history. [MIDEAST/N. AFRICA]

**Sharon Griffin.** A feature writer and contributing columnist on African affairs at the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Sharon is spending two years in southern Africa studying Zulu and the KwaZulu kingdom and writing about the role of nongovernmental organizations as fulfillment centers for national needs in developing countries where governments are still feeling their way toward effective administration. She plans to travel and live in Namibia and Zimbabwe as well as South Africa. [sub-SAHARA]

**Pramila Jayapal.** Born in India, Pramila left when she was four and went through primary and secondary education in Indonesia. She graduated from Georgetown University in 1986 and won an M.B.A. from the Kellogg School of Management in Evanston, Illinois in 1990. She has worked as a corporate analyst for PaineWebber and an accounts manager for the world's leading producer of cardiac defibrillators, but most recently managed a \$7 million developing-country revolving-loan fund for the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) in Seattle. Pramila is spending two years in India tracing her roots and studying social issues involving religion, the status of women, population and AIDS. [SOUTH ASIA]

**William F. Foote.** Formerly a financial analyst with Lehman Brothers' Emerging Markets Group, Willy Foote is examining the economic substructure of Mexico and the impact of free-market reforms on Mexico's people, society and politics. Willy holds a Bachelor's degree from Yale University (history), a Master's from the London School of Economics (Development Economics; Latin America) and studied Basque history in San Sebastian, Spain. He carried out intensive Spanish-language studies in Guatemala in 1990 and then worked as a copy editor and Reporter for the Buenos Aires Herald from 1990 to 1992. [THE AMERICAS]

**Teresa C. Yates.** A former member of the American Civil Liberties Union's national task force on the workplace, Teresa is spending two years in South Africa observing and reporting on the efforts of the Mandela government to reform the national land-tenure system. A Vassar graduate with a *juris doctor* from the University of Cincinnati College of Law, Teresa had an internship at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies in Johannesburg in 1991 and 1992, studying the feasibility of including social and economic rights in the new South African constitution. While with the ACLU, she also conducted a Seminar on Women in the Law at Fordham Law School in New York. [sub-SAHARA]



Author: Institute of Current World Affairs  
Title: ICWA Letters – Mideast/North Africa  
ISSN: 1083-4281  
Imprint: Hanover, NH  
Material Type: Serial  
Language: English  
Frequency: Monthly  
Other Regions: Europe/Russia; East Asia;  
South Asia; SubSaharan Africa;  
The Americas

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## ICWA LETTERS

ISSN 1083-4281

*ICWA Letters* are published by the Institute of Current World Affairs Inc., a 501(c)(3) exempt operating foundation incorporated in New York State with offices located at 4 West Wheelock Street, Hanover, NH 03755.

The letters are provided free of charge to members of ICWA and are available to libraries and professional researchers with indexes by subscription.

<b>Executive Director</b>	Peter Bird Martin
<b>Program Administrator</b>	Gary L. Hansen
<b>Letters Coordinator</b>	Ellen Kozak

Phone: (603) 643-5548  
Fax: (603) 643-9599  
E-Mail: ICWA@valley.net

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## The Institute of Current World Affairs

4 WEST WHEELOCK STREET  
HANOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03755

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