

ARAB AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH



UAW-Ford Diversity Digest
April 2017

April - National Arab American Heritage Month

April is recognized as National Arab American Heritage Month in the United States and around the world. Its purpose is to celebrate and acknowledge the cultural dignity and universal acceptance of Arabs. Arab American heritage month is a time to become acquainted with the influence the Arab world has had on philosophers, art, and literature.

There are 22 countries that comprise the Arab world. The boundaries extend from the Middle East, North Africa (Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan), Mauritania, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, the Comoros Island, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Mauritania, and Palestine. Each of these countries continues to demonstrate their cultural traditions.

Arab culture is referenced as far back as the written Law Code of Hammurabi, dated 1728-1686 B.C. Babylon, Iraq and known as the oldest deciphered writings in ancient times. Historically noted, Hammurabi, the Arab, wrote over 300 codes of law to preserve and unify the populace with law and order in his empire. Today, he is best known for his phrase, "Eye for an eye."

Almost every major religion is represented in the Arab American community.

- Christians: Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Syrian Catholic, Chaldean Catholic, Roman Catholic, Antiochian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Protestant

Muslims: Sunni, Shia and Druze

Not all Arabs are Muslim and not all Muslims are Arabs. The general public tends to link Arab's with religion due to the media and current events.

Arabs have played a major role in America, from politics, music, sports and the labor movement. I believe the article should focus on the ways Arabs helped shape America into the melting pot of today and the influenced America.

Here are a few examples of Arab's that bridged the divide;

Stephen Yoklch – Former UAW President and 5 term VP for the UAW

Michael DeBaky – Inventor of the heart pump

Christina McAliffe – Space Shuttle Challenger crew member

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Here are a few examples of Arab's that bridged the divide (cont);

Vince Vaughn – Award winning actor

Terri Hatcher – Award winning actor

Casey Kasem – Top 40 radio countdown and the voice of Scooby Doo's Shaggy.

Donna Shalala – First Arab American ever appointed to a cabinet post and the nation's longest serving secretary of health and human services.

Doug Flutie – Heisman Trophy winner and longtime CFL and NFL quarterback, perhaps best known for his Hail Mary Pass against Miami Hurricanes in 1984, is of Lebanese descent.

Justin Abdelkader – Detroit Redwing and also assisted to take the Redwings to 2009 Stanley Cup Finals

Ralph Nader – Green party Presidential candidate and founder of MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving)

Ralph Jones – Civil Rights Activist

Paula Abdul – Six # 1 hit singles and Grammy Award winner

Shakira – Tiffany Shakira is a US pop star and multiple Grammy Award winner

DJ Khaled – Collaborated and produced with some of the top rappers in the industry

Joseph Aboud – Prestigious Menswear and designer from New York

A Palestinian who is now living in America was asked what Arab Heritage month meant to him. He replied, "People can take my home, my land, my human rights, my food or water, etc., but they can never ever take away or deny me and my family our cultural identity and human dignity. I'm proud to be an Arab. I hope that non-Arabs will develop an understanding of our traditions and aspirations, during our Arab American Heritage Month as not separate, but equal people, of the same desires, freedoms, and future dreams of acceptance and belonging." Leila Diab

The information in this UAW-Ford Diversity Digest was derived from www.arabamerica.com website which is the leading provider of digital media about Arab America, an article written by Leila Diab published on the website Jay Makled, UAW Chairperson – Local 600.