



and completing oral histories of Arab and Muslim Americans in metropolitan Chicago.

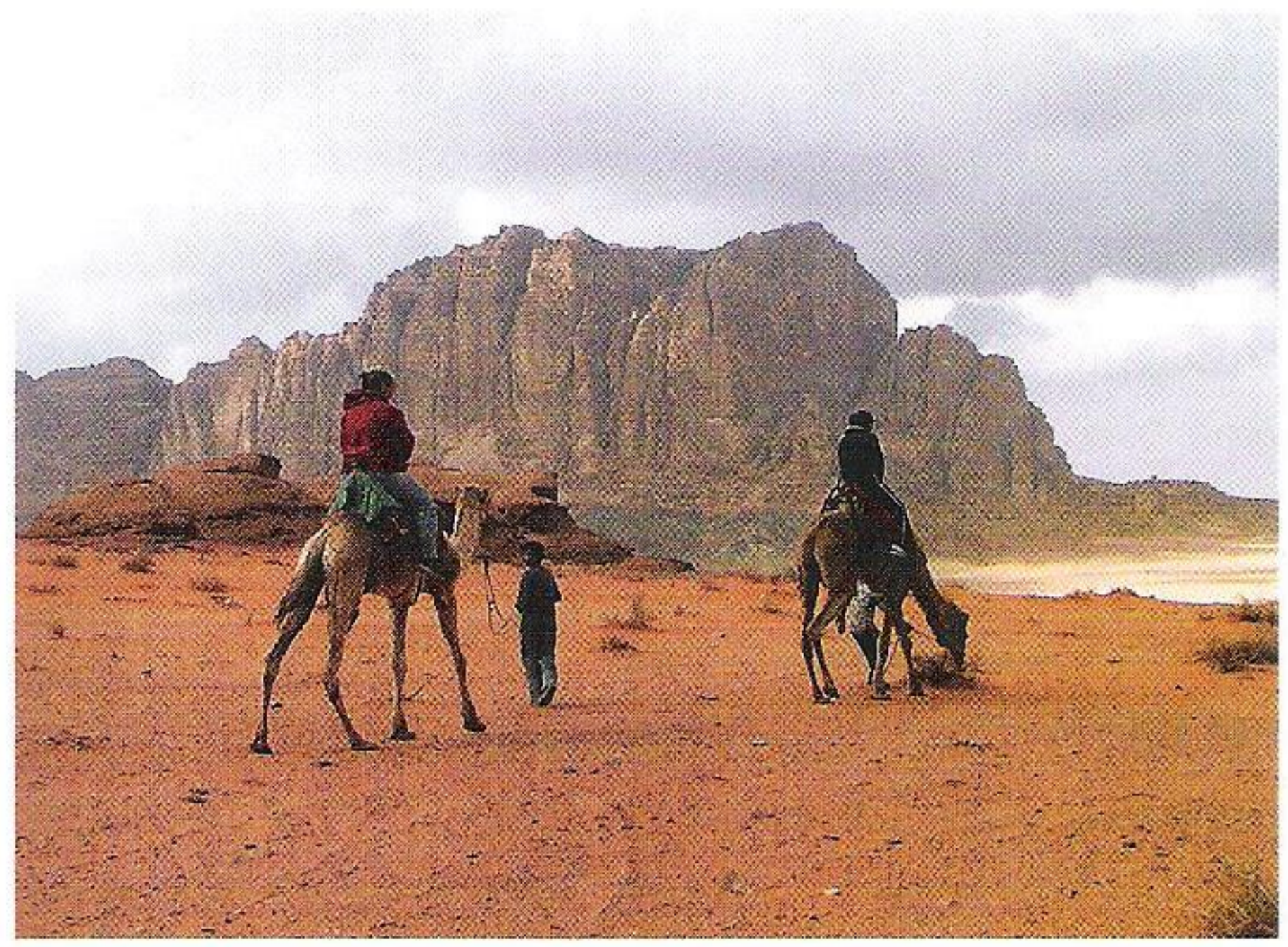
Cainkar incorporated into that work knowledge gained from research she conducted on human displacement in Jordan after the Gulf War, domestic violence in Muslim communities, immigrant access to public services, barriers to census participation, the impact of economic sanctions on women and children in Iraq, and the relationships between homeland security officials and Arab and Muslim Americans.

The result was an award-nominated book titled *Homeland Insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim Experience after 9/11*, which explores the roots of ignorance and racism toward Arab and Muslim Americans, as well as the ways these attitudes played out in their daily lives in the first few years after the 9/11 attacks.

“I want readers to hear the stories of those who were not heard,” Cainkar said, explaining that her purpose for the publication is to let silenced voices speak. “I would like readers to understand that what happened to Arab and Muslim Americans after September 11 was complex and nuanced. We need to see that we are all human beings deserving of dignity.”

To reach that goal, Cainkar details how history has been repeated. She writes how the Arab and Muslim American experience after September 11 is similar to the Japanese American narrative following Pearl Harbor, which led to U.S. involvement in World War II. In both instances there are the tragedies of the people who lost their lives and loved ones, and the subsequent treatment of groups of Americans who only looked like those accused of orchestrating the attacks.

Beyond providing an historical perspective and documenting ongoing problems—such as harassment Muslim women wearing traditional head scarves still encounter—Cainkar’s unique research points to evidence of positive change in recent years. For example, her work confirms “an increase in Muslim American activism, in the number of



people interested in Islam, and in people wanting to acknowledge their religious heritage,” she said.

“Arab Americans experienced a lot of backlash, but all sorts of Americans came to their defense. It showed the real power and strength of civil society. It showed the importance of having nonprofit advocacy and civil rights organizations that keep society healthy,” Cainkar said. “These organizations helped the Arab and Muslim Americans rise up and defend themselves.”

Cainkar has been praised for doing the same. Among her many accolades are an Outstanding Service Award received in 1989 from the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee in Washington, D.C. She was given the key to Kansas City in 1991 in recognition of her human rights investigations in Iraq and Kuwait after the 1990-91 Gulf War, was named the Carnegie Corporation Scholar Award recipient in 2004 for her research on Islamic revival among Muslim Americans, and in 2008 accepted the Young Scholar Award from the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding in Detroit.

The honors only fuel her passion to keep focused on changing attitudes. She remains vigilant in helping others realize that confronting the impact of prejudice in society is of vital importance in any pursuit of social justice. And she remains hopeful about the future, believing that everyone can make a significant contribution in the struggle that is overcome in part through awareness.

“These ideas of our shared humanity should inform whatever kind of work you do. They should affect the way teachers teach, the way voters vote, how you think, speak, and interact with others and your children,” she said.

“You can’t let the actions of a few determine how you see the rest, and you can’t hold an entire group of people responsible for the actions of a few. We have to be concerned about other people,” Cainkar insisted, not only because it is our responsibility as human beings, but because “it could happen to any of us.”