

# Skadden Celebrates National Arab American Heritage Month

## Why is it important to you to celebrate the Arab American experience?



**Khaled Abbas**  
Associate, Litigation / Los Angeles

National Arab American Heritage Month is an occasion for Arab Americans to celebrate our history, culture and achievements, and, importantly, to solidify that we are an identifiable community with shared experiences and challenges. One of the biggest struggles for the Arab American community is our inability to formally identify ourselves. Currently, the U.S. Census Bureau does not have an option that allows those who are ethnically Middle Eastern, let alone Arab American, to self-identify, which in turn leads to a lack of representation in both the public and private sectors. Arab American Heritage Month is an important opportunity to have these discussions, raise awareness and build a more equitable and inclusive future.

When I was 5 years old, my parents — both of whom are Palestinian and grew up in Egypt — moved to the United States to secure a better life and greater opportunity. This month, I commemorate the sacrifices my parents made. As I grow older, I realize the enormity of what they gave up and left behind. I also celebrate and honor my ethnic and religious roots this month. Our visibility is important and helps create community. It's been wonderful to discover other Arab and Palestinian lawyers at the firm, and to come together with colleagues who may understand and even share my personal experiences.



**Abdullah Alzamli**  
Associate, Litigation / Washington, D.C.



**Zeinab Bakillah**  
Associate, Labor and Employment Law / New York

The Arab world is very diverse. I'm half Moroccan and half Tunisian, born and raised in the United States, and I identify as North African. While most North Africans are of Amazigh and not necessarily Arab descent, there is a strong connection to the Arab world because the Arabic language and other influences have become prevalent in North Africa over time. This heritage month presents a chance for all of us with such different identities under the “Arab umbrella” to share our cultures and learn about each other. It's also important, especially to someone like me, to come together with other Arab individuals. Although there are not many North Africans at the firm, it's been meaningful to build community with my colleagues from all throughout the Arab world, such as Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon and many other countries.

It's no secret that a great deal of misinformation leading to prejudice against Arabs emerged post 9/11. It's a prominent part of our experience — growing up in the United States where, when people learn you are Arab American, and particularly a Muslim Arab American in my case, they have a totally different idea of what that means than you do. It's essential to celebrate who we are and highlight the importance of all Arab Americans in the general fabric of American life. Equally important, however, is changing the narrative within. Growing up in the United States post 9/11 was tough; it took me years to come to terms with, embrace and really love my identity, and to not think it was something I had to hide or make more palatable for people. This month is a powerful opportunity to change both external and internal perceptions.



**Nour El-Kebbi**  
Associate, White Collar Defense and Investigations / London



**Leena El-Sadek**  
Associate, Litigation / Chicago

Growing up post 9/11, any mention of Arabs I encountered on the news was usually negative, and I didn't have many positive tangible examples of Arabs in leadership roles. My family and community have worked long and very hard to change the perception of what it means to be Arab. The month of April, now dedicated to our history and heritage, is significant as it provides an opportunity to reframe the Arab American narrative and spotlight our culture and contributions to society. It's also a chance for us to uplift and empower other Arabs, especially younger generations, to live their truths and chase their dreams.

Growing up, I experienced Arab culture and American culture in two separate spheres. Having a month dedicated to celebrating Arab culture and the contributions of Arab Americans means a lot to me because I feel it's important for younger generations, my kids included, to know that the two experiences can be lived together.



**Daniel Michael**  
Partner, Securities Enforcement; White Collar Defense and Investigations / New York



**Amr Razzak**  
Partner, Corporate / Palo Alto

There is no stereotypical Arab American, and this heritage month affords a moment to highlight the diversity within the Arab world and throughout the Arab American experience. It's easy for this idea to get lost, even in our own communities and particularly for those of us who are first- or second-generation Americans. Many are unaware of the large number of Arabs in this country, the length of our history here and our rich contributions to the United States. Our culture has been in the shadows, and it's time for us to emerge — to share our pride and hold our rightful place in the American experience.