Linda Jacobs

Book Launch for

Strangers in the West:
The Syrian Colony of New York City, 1880-1900
(KalimahPress, October 2015)

Linda K. Jacobs is a New York-based scholar and author. She holds a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Archaeology/Anthropology and spent many years working on archaeological excavations and economic development projects in the Middle East. She is the author of Digging In: An American Archaeologist Uncovers the Real Iran (2012) and a series of articles about the 19th century Syrian colony in New York. Dr. Jacobs is committed to promoting Middle Eastern culture and knowledge in the United States, founding KalimahPress in 2011, establishing the Violet Jabara Charitable Trust, and sitting on the boards of the Near East Foundation and the Moise Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies. She has also served on the board of the American University of Beirut. All four of her grandparents were members of the New York Syrian Colony.

Strangers in the West is the never-before-told story of the Arab immigrants who settled in New York City, beginning in 1880. They came primarily from what was then known as “Greater Syria,” and settled in tenements on the lower west side of Manhattan, founding an Arabic-speaking enclave just south of the future site of the World Trade Center. Arriving in the New World with little more than their resourcefulness and business acumen, these immigrants quickly built a thriving “colony” that was the cultural and economic center of the Syrian diaspora in America.

Dr. Jacobs paints a vivid portrait of life in this early immigrant community and the people who founded it. They were peddlers and merchants, midwives and doctors, priests and journalists, performers and impresarios. They capitalized on the orientalist craze sweeping the United States by opening Turkish smoking parlors, presenting belly dancers on vaudeville stages, and performing across the country in native costume. They learned English, built businesses, and became an important thread in the rich tapestry of the immigrant culture of 19th century New York.

Co-sponsored with the Lebanese American University (LAU), New York Academic Center

Tuesday, October 20, 2015
6.30 - 8.00 pm
Room C205
The Graduate Center, CUNY
365 Fifth Avenue at 34th Street
New York, NY 10016

ALSO
Thursday, January 28, 2016
6.30 pm
Lebanese American University
New York Academic Center
211 East 46th Street
New York

Books will be available for sale