Conclusion

The Local, National, and Cosmopolitan Work to Be Done

Throughout this book, resettled Iraqis' experiences of displacement and resettlement have demonstrated that constraints and challenges can exist simultaneously with opportunities for action. For example, deteriorating safety and social bonds can prompt one to leave one's home to seek more stable conditions elsewhere within one's home country or to seek refuge abroad. Persistent demands on one's time to work long hours to support a family can exist at the same time as desire and opportunities to participate in community-building work. Fear of government policies and agents and the material effects they can have on one's life can be and were partially mediated for a share of this study's interviewees by public demonstrations of support and resistance by others within society.

Therefore, a key takeaway from this research is the necessity for those in stronger, more secure positions within American society to find opportunities to work with and support those who suffer discrimination, violence, and are otherwise often placed in marginalized social, political, and economic positions. This work is urgent and imperative. Individuals with more privileged positions must engage in such work in ways deemed most helpful by those whom they would assist. This requires listening actively and empathetically to those targeted to understand what their goals and needs are.

Democratic Participation at a Local Scale

One of the threads that came through strongly across these interviews was the intersections and interplay of the local scale of engagement (interpersonal, in community organizations) and national-level political policies and discourses. Interviewees were rightly concerned about what the federal government did and said, and it is that level at which immigration policies about who can come into the United States are largely made. However, for

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the most part, they engaged in politics at the local level. I encountered several nonprofit leaders and community organizers drawing on norms of welcoming, multiculturalism, exchange, and dialogue to ground their advocacy and service work on behalf of refugees, immigrant communities, and the wider American society. Many of the activities and experiences described by interviewees had at their core the goal of interacting and working with others to change how belonging and democratic membership were constituted in US society. I found many examples of individuals invoking and (re)iterating norms concerning the issue of who has a right to come and stay in the United States, and where and what the boundaries of belonging and democratic membership ought to be.

I also found frequent quotidian opportunities for interviewees to engage with others, talk through various issues, interact with friends and share cultural practices and traditions, work with others to build welcoming spaces, organizations and communities, and occasionally, when acute moments of targeting against vulnerable groups appeared, to join with and draw support from other United States residents to press government officials to modify or reverse unjust policies. For those interested in working to build a more open, tolerant, and just society, such opportunities are one means by which to seek to do so. As elaborated throughout this book, building upon, and reinforcing norms of welcoming, diversity, and multiculturalism as values American society should strive to realize is vitally important given the recent acute period of violent and exclusionary anti-immigrant and anti-refugee policies and rhetoric emanating from the former Trump administration and the persistent resistance to newcomers–particularly Arabs and Muslims–among significant numbers of Americans.

My respondents largely considered democratic citizenship regularly in relation to their local communities, such as New York City or the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, rather than at the state, national or international levels. Indeed, when interviewees Omar and Nora sought to build "welcoming cities," for example, they did so by working with local nonprofit resettlement organizations and with churches and other religious entities, as well as municipal governments. Simultaneously, when the macropolitical situation affected or intersected with their lives, they undertook local initiatives to address those factors and forces.

This insight might be combined with theories and practices of domicile citizenship, granting full membership to all residents "independent of ancestry or location of birth" (Bauder 2014, 79), to envision new, and reimagine existing, practices of citizenship at the level of the city or locality. Benhabib has similarly argued that "modalities of non-national citizenship" such as what she calls denizenship have developed alongside national citizenship, providing opportunities to exercise "proto-citizenship rights . . . at local and regional as well as supra- and transnational levels" (2006, 172). Indeed,

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New York City, where four of the individuals interviewed for this book live, passed a law in early 2022 that will allow noncitizen, legal permanent residents to vote in municipal elections starting in 2023 (Ashford 2022). It is important to continue to explore how changes in citizenship rights and practices can occur at various scales; the city, the state, and inter-or-transnationally to provide opportunities for democratic decision-making to everyone, including those with temporary or no legal immigration status, stateless persons and others excluded under existing legal regimes.

In many ways, the initiatives in which Omar, Nora, and others reported participating are doing just that informally. They are working to enact politics and democratic citizenship–participating in dialogue, civil society, and activism–with and across organizations in their localities even as, in Nora's case, she did not yet have permanent status in the US at the time of our interview. Increasing opportunities and mechanisms for newcomers to engage in democratic processes at the scale(s) that have direct impacts on their lives may be a fruitful avenue to pursue for those interested in assisting this population.

Moreover, even when acting at a local scale in the United States, one must understand the global implications of decisions, particularly those taken by the American government. For example, one must understand the decades of American conflict waged against Iraq to understand refugee resettlement from that country in the United States. The United States and Iraq have intertwined transnational genealogies (Dewachi 2017). American imperial violence has forcefully (re)shaped Iraqi society and the resettlement of Iraqis in the United States will no doubt continue to alter the United States. Perhaps building deeper understandings of how US militarism, refugee resettlement, and democratic membership are intertwined can help analysts, scholars, and others to conceptualize more democratic and less violent approaches to American actions around the world, including within its current borders.

Envisioning New Forms of Cosmopolitan Democracy

Emphasizing the geopolitical nature of refugee resettlement also prompts (re)consideration of forms and processes of democratic participation that can be created beyond existing political communities. I take as a starting point for this reconceptualization what Fraser calls the "all-subjected principle." This principle is useful for determining "who" is allowed to participate in democratic deliberations about the substance of justice (2008, 411). Fraser has described it this way: "all those who are subject to a given governance structure have moral standing as subjects of justice in relation to it" (Fraser 2008, 411). This principle considers groups of people "fellow subjects of justice" not necessarily through state-centered citizenship, but through "sub-

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jection to a structure of governance, which sets the ground rules that govern their interaction" (Fraser 2008). The all-subjected principle moves beyond membership strictly defined as citizenship to a nation-state and recognizes that decisions have consequences that cannot be contained within national borders. As Fraser notes, this principle can be applied to those who are not already officially accredited members of a structure of governance. Therefore, and understood through this lens, those living in Iraq and facing an impending United States invasion *become* subjected to the American structures of governance, for example.

Iraqis have been bound by the decisions of the US government and have had to live under that country's jurisdiction, directly and indirectly for decades. Several interviewees pointed toward such a conception of democratic standing. As Abdullah and Walid noted, decisions made in the United States affect not only those within its borders, but also have impacts that reverberate around the world. Unlike other interviewees, Abdullah's entry to the US on a student visa does not provide him a direct path to lawful permanent residence or citizenship. As a result, "it's tricky," he said, to answer the question of whether he had a right to participate in decision making about laws and policies in the United States. As he explained: "Because at the end of the day, it's not my country and if it is not my country, I don't think I have the right to do that" (Abdullah 14 January 2018). However, he argued the United States' position as a global superpower gave him the right to participate in American politics: "So, I believe people from outside the USA, they should get involved in US politics. Because really, who you choose to be in power could affect other countries, other people."

Abdullah suggested that on certain issues, perhaps, he did not have a right to participate in decision-making processes. He noted US immigration policy, for example, as one such issue because even though he had views on the subject, in his understanding it is a domestic policy issue. "But," he said, "In terms of voting for a president, I think it's very important and I think because I could tell other people: 'Please don't vote for that candidate. Vote for the other candidate because [the first candidate] might cause wars and it would affect people from outside the USA.' . . . I don't know how I would affect, how would I change that. But I think the main thing that I can do is just to try to convince people not to vote for that person, and for the other person. And I think that is legit" (ibid.).

Similarly, describing his views on the 2016 presidential election, Walid said he disagreed with Trump and that he was a Bernie Sanders supporter during the Democratic Party primaries. As he observed:

> I'm a Democratic [Party supporter] and I was thinking about Hillary Clinton, but she decided to [support the invasion of] Iraq. She has a bad reputation. I was encouraging people about [Sanders] because he didn't vote for Iraq, he didn't vote for the war. . . . Yes, there are a lot of good candidates in this

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> country, they can do something good overseas. I mean, when you think about participating in democracy, you have to think about how much they do good here and also good outside of the United States. So, I didn't have any choice at that time [in 2016]. We disagree about President Trump . . . and we were thinking about the person who's caring about us and also caring about the people overseas because we know the United States plays a big role in many countries. (Walid 27 September 2017)

Abdullah and Walid's comments engage with the recurring central questions for democratic decision-making of who has standing to participate in deliberations, and how standing can be enlarged to incorporate those subjected to particular decisions (Benhabib 2011). These concerns highlight the important reality that decisions such as launching wars not only affect those beyond the borders of the belligerent state(s), but also in many ways subject those individuals to the governing structures of the warring states. This important empirical reality strengthens the argument that those former "outsiders" subjected to American military attack, including not only Iraqis but Afghans, Syrians, Yemenis, and others, have moral standing to participate in, consent to, and dissent from, decisions that affect their lives, including American decisions to invade, bomb and sanction their countries.

This insight, and the global scale and harm caused by conflicts waged by the United States described in this book, reinforce the argument that those who resettle in the United States ought to have full standing to participate in decision-making processes. It further points toward the need to reconceptualize democratic decision-making beyond the globally predominant form of territorially bounded sovereign states. Even though it remains an important political and social formation (Brubaker 2010), the nation-state is not, nor need it be, the sole site or scale of democratic attachments (Benhabib 2006). Rather, it is important to continue to envision other decision-making modes and mechanisms that can be exercised at all levels from the local to the inter-or-transnational. And, crucially, there is an urgent need to build substantively democratic organizations, movements, and institutions that can offer alternatives to the violent domination of imperial powers like the United States.

Implications for Policy and Activism

I close by reiterating the key insights for fostering and enriching a democratic ethos, practices, and institutions in the United States that my discussions with resettled Iraqis illuminated. I present the following recommendations aimed at government officials, non-governmental organization representatives, and activists and advocates working to expand the democratic spaces and opportunities for individuals to help to shape the rules, policies, and

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laws that govern their lives in the United States. Crucially, while this work has focused on those Iraqis displaced by the 2003 American invasion of their country, the recommendations here and requirements for participation identified in this research are not necessarily confined only to this group or, more generally, to resettled refugees. As the Biden administration's tenure proceeds, activists will need to assess the opportunities and risks of pushing for more open and less violent immigration policies with a less explicitly hostile administration, but also one that has already demonstrated it will use Trump-implemented policies to continue preventing asylum-seekers from entering the country. There is little indication that Biden will make a sharp break with the long-standing bipartisan commitment to punitive and violent immigration policies (Beltrán 2020).

Moreover, the Biden administration will certainly continue the global project of violent American military domination that has so often caused population displacement in the past. A change in presidential administration or party control of the US Congress is not sufficient to fundamentally alter the structures of US empire. The United States's ongoing wars around the world will no doubt continue to prompt resettlement of new populations. For example, the official end to the twenty-year occupation of Afghanistan in late 2021 is poised to spur significant numbers of Afghans to seek refuge in the United States. The suggestions outlined below are likely generalizable to such newcomer populations as well as to other residents of the United States who seek more substantive democracy. The experiences of the resettled refugees profiled in this book suggest that there is an urgent need to generate alternatives to American military violence; create and enlarge spaces for diversity, difference, and exchange; understand interconnected relationships between barriers and requirements for democratic participation; and engage in struggles for justice across multiple sites and modes of action with diverse strategies and tactics.

Generate Alternatives to American Military Violence

The United States is not a normal country; it is the preeminent imperial power that has sought to maintain its economic and military dominance throughout the world. As I hope this book has clearly demonstrated, that imperial project has caused immense suffering for the people of Iraq. We will likely never know exactly how many people have been injured and killed as a result of the war. What is known, as the experiences of those interviewed for this book demonstrate, is that the war tore apart Iraqi society, and caused hundreds of thousands of people to leave their homes and seek safety elsewhere. It is critical that Americans face the destruction their government has caused and begin the work of ameliorating that damage. That work entails creating mechanisms to hold the architects of the war against

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Iraq accountable and developing reparations programs that can begin to redress the harm inflicted by the United States.

Moreover, the war against Iraq is only one of many conflicts the United States has waged in pursuit of expanding its influence and control. The twenty-year American war against Afghanistan, which officially ended in August 2021, is another example of the tremendous damage American imperial violence has done. One of the United States's final acts as it completed its withdrawal of troops was a drone bombing that killed ten civilians, including seven children (Liebermann and Kaufman 2022). Millions of Afghans, Libyans, Syrians, Palestinians, Yemenis, and many others have similarly strong claims to redress and reparation for the conflicts waged and supported by the United States against them.

As I noted in the introduction, this book is grounded in a pacifist ethic that refuses to legitimize war and military violence. Invading other countries, dismantling their governments, and imposing new economic and political structures are crimes against humanity that cannot be justified. Although often ignored and dismissed by policy makers and scholars of international relations (Jackson 2019), there are always alternatives to violence. It is incumbent upon Americans to reject the violent imperial project of their government in favor of seeking out more peaceful ways of interacting in the world.

Create and Enlarge Spaces for Diversity, Difference, and Exchange

The United States is a multicultural society. The anti-immigrant right wing may wish it were otherwise, but the historical and contemporary reactionary violence of white supremacy cannot undo this reality (Beltrán 2020). The experiences shared by participants in this study demonstrate the possibilities for those of diverse backgrounds to live together in their communities and to share and learn from one another. This requires more than simply repeating symbolic rhetoric that "we're all immigrants" or that the United States is uniquely successful at creating a "land of opportunity" (Crane 2021). Building a society in which diverse members can live together requires creating and supporting initiatives in advocacy groups, religious organizations, social movements, and elsewhere that enact ideals of multiculturalism, mutual exchange, and democracy.

The types of intentional efforts to this end that interviewees described, such as sharing of food and cultural practices; community interfaith meetings discussing differences and commonalities; festivals incorporating the traditions of a wide array of community members; and efforts to convince national, state, and local governments to adopt a welcoming, multicultural ethos, all point toward activities and programs that governments, NGOs, and activists might develop and adopt to create opportunities for deep engagement among those living in particular areas. Such undertakings may

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assist in developing and spreading the cosmopolitan viewpoint that every human being is entitled to equal rights, protections, and opportunities to express their own identities, practices, and cultures.

Understand the Interconnected Relationships between Barriers and Requirements for Democratic Participation

Democracy is time consuming. Participating in democratic processes can require devoting considerable time to any number of activities such as attending meetings, organizing events, or engaging in discussions. Moreover, it takes time to build the individual and collective knowledge that enables members of a political community to understand mechanisms and structures of democratic participation. As Pateman (2012) notes, when "ordinary citizens" have sufficient time and information, they are more than capable of participating in deliberations about complex public issues that affect them. By devoting time to developing deep knowledge, members of a community can also build the confidence to engage with questions of effective strategies and tactics to achieve their goals.

Not only are ensuring sufficient time and the need for deep knowledge to participate intertwined, but both are likely also necessary to begin to ameliorate lingering fear of authoritarian government and, importantly, to understand what mechanisms are available to confront state authority. Interviewees' perception that state authorities in the United States would arbitrarily use their power against them is well-founded. This fear is grounded in their experiences living in Iraq under repressive governments as well as in the knowledge that American police, spy agencies, and other repressive state institutions have targeted Arabs and Muslims for illegal surveillance, imprisonment, and violence. Democracy requires dismantling those repressive programs and capacities.

Moreover, as several of this study's participants noted, the lack of time to engage and build the knowledge necessary to participate in democratic processes is, at least in part, a function of the neoliberal political-economic arrangements in the United States. Many people in the United States are compelled to work long hours to support themselves and their families because there are few redistributive or public programs through which to meet needs such as healthcare or housing. The violent suppression of socialist, anarchist,[1] and other approaches within and beyond US borders (Lens 2008; Bevins 2020), has thus far succeeded in preventing alternative forms of social, political, and economic organization to flourish.

As multiple interviewees in this book pointed out, there is a need for programs that provide vital services to the population and resources to repair neglected infrastructure. Millions of Americans live in towns and cities with dangerous levels of lead contamination in their drinking water (Mulvi-

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hill 2021). Millions more are denied adequate food, housing, and medical care because of the pervasive ideological commitment to privatizing and marketizing life-sustaining essentials. In 2022, there is no lack of resources that could be marshaled to provide healthcare, education, and housing to everyone in the United States. The work of democratizing the United States requires moving beyond the myth of scarcity that perpetuates the fear that equitable (re)distribution of resources to those formerly excluded will require "taking something" from others (Pharr 1996). As Mohammed and Wissam pointed out about US military spending, the vast resources are there; but they are used for destructive purposes rather than constructive ones. What is lacking is not ample resources to meet the needs of every member of American society, citizens and noncitizens alike, but rather mechanisms that can translate policy preferences into programs (Gilens and Page 2014).

Substantive democracy must extend to all areas of life, including the economy. In a democratic society, members are able to make decisions about what to produce, how, and who gets the profits (Wolff 2012). An increased level of material security and comfort for all residents would enable everyone to have the time to engage in, and to pursue knowledge about, the decisions that affect their lives. Therefore, critically, actively building programs and institutions that improve material well-being and security, reduce inequalities, and (re)distribute resources must be key goals of social movements and any government that calls itself democratic.

Engage in Struggles for Justice across Multiple Sites and Modes of Action with Diverse Strategies and Tactics

Those who participated in this research described a wide array of activities in which they had engaged, including protesting, forming NGOs, community organizing, voting, contacting government representatives, translating, teaching children and adults with the goals of improving the material circumstances of their fellow residents, building relationships within and across communities, and defending and expanding their rights and the rights of others. Participants pursued all those goals through direct service provision, education, advocacy, and engagement with government officials and direct action organizing to bring together diverse members of communities to petition and challenge state authorities and build collective power. This research has demonstrated that all these forms of activism are vitally important to confront and push back against the sort of attacks on refugees, migrants, and other marginalized groups that were acute during the Trump administration and to envision and build more democratic and just alternative public policies and programs.

Participants described engaging in dialogue and deliberation, but also the limits to discussion. Any democratic society will likely include delib-

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eration, even if deliberation is not taken as the core element of democracy (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012). Deliberation may be necessary, but it is certainly not sufficient (Pateman 2012). Democracy, and the expansion of substantive opportunities to participate in American society, culture, and politics, also require struggle. There are members of American society who are committed to the violent exclusion of difference. Many of those people are in positions of power that allow them to carry out exclusionary policies. It is not about convincing such individuals that they are wrong through rational discussion and dialogue. Contestations and confrontations are needed that challenge existing structures of power that commit violence against refugees, immigrants, and many others.

Many formerly excluded individuals have engaged in ongoing struggles to answer the question of who gets to belong in American society. Those struggles have often required confronting cruel and violent systems of exclusion. Philip Hallie argues that people often fail to act to end cruel systems because they assume that only “vast ideologies and armies” can do so (1981, 28). The experiences shared in this book demonstrate that within limits imposed upon them (Inhorn and Volk 2021), resettled refugees as individuals, and collectively with other newcomers and native-born Americans, can engage in such contestations. Building a democratic society will involve complex interactions of deliberation (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012), dialogue, confrontation, and conflict. Those engaged in struggles to create a better world must assess each context and situation to determine what will be most effective. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, taking action is better conceived of as a complex ecology of individual action, the aggregate effects of individuals acting, and collective work to transform the world (Nunes 2021). Much needs to be done to dismantle American military domination, democratize democracy in the United States, and create a society that is welcoming of newcomers. The task is to keep our horizons of possibilities open while assessing what we can feasibly do in each moment to pursue those goals.

Note

1. Such approaches, like pacifism, are also often dismissed or ignored by mainstream scholars (Rusche 2022). However, the anarchist tradition has much to offer those interested in building substantively democratic organizations, structures, and societies.

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