

As a researcher and a Samaritan, I am committed to diversity and inclusion. As a child, I grew up in Damascus, Syria, where I witnessed how corruption, dictatorship, and a lack of free economy could bring poverty and negatively affect the well-being of people. After leaving Syria due to the civil war, I received a diverse education, first in the United Arab Emirates and then in moving to the United States. As an undergraduate student, I attended Arizona State University, a public university with a diverse body of students and instructors. Also, as a part of Arizona State University's curriculum, students were required to fulfill racial, ethnic, and global diversity courses. I fulfilled these requirements by taking sociology, anthropology, arts, history, political science, and mathematics courses. The variety of classes has taught me to approach the world using diverse methods of inquiry. Moreover, my upbringing in Syria, an impoverished country with a devastated economy, has taught me to work with what I have and let go of methods that did not work. Therefore, my education and background encourages me to continually update my priors and beliefs when new facts arise. As a result, I conduct research utilizing the best approach to answer interesting questions to benefit diversity in the United States, even if it is less frequently used within the field.

After graduating from Arizona State University, I worked in Houston, TX for a campaign for Alief Independent School District and a congressional campaign in Texas's Seventh Congressional District. On the school district campaign, I was able to talk and meet with parents and teachers in an impoverished area in Houston inhabited mainly by minorities. Talking to these stakeholders, I was able to understand the education system better, learning about the resources school districts, schools, principles, and teachers received, and the problems that needed fixing. Moreover, Hurricane Harvey hit Texas during the campaign, and I witnessed firsthand the devastation it brought. Consequently, I led a community effort to help the residents of Alief by distributing water and food. Working in the seventh congressional district as a researcher and data analyst allowed me to use the tools I have amassed to find solutions to the problems that faced people in the community. This allowed me to gain valuable perspectives in addressing educational and societal issues, as well as poverty, through economic and education-based initiatives. These experiences contribute to my research agenda focusing on labor economics and my teaching. As a Syrian immigrant, these experiences meant even more to me, because I truly believe in policy that is guided through research and facts, rather than beliefs and opinions.

My current research focuses on using applied microeconomics techniques in labor, education, and health economics. My works in progress signal my broader research interest in issues affecting minorities, immigrants, and low- and middle-income communities. My background as a Syrian immigrant and experience in my post-college career has driven me to study the effect of race and ethnicity on labor market outcomes, immigrant assimilation, and local, state, and federal public policies that affect health and education. Therefore, I want to participate in the research to improve the body of work on these issues in a way that could influence public policy.

As an instructor, I aim to cultivate a safe environment in my classroom where all students would be comfortable asking questions and learning, just as was provided to me at Arizona State University. For example, research shows racial and gender gaps in classroom participation. Thus, I research in-class examples that are inclusive to encourage the participation of all students. Furthermore, I encourage an open learning environment where students can share the best way to understand a topic in and outside class.

Finally, I will continue to pursue knowledge that will allow me to improve diversity and inclusion in economics. I stay updated with methods other academics have used and shared on Twitter, AEA guidelines, subcommittees and books, and academic research on inclusion and diversity. I hope that I, along with my experiences and background, can improve inclusion and diversity.