

Talking to America Digital Exhibit | Libraries

field research in Southern California during 2017-18 and summer 2021, documenting how a community with heterogeneous religious, political, and ideological orientations is recontextualizing Iranian ways of life—what one may call Iranian traditions—in the United States.

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Digital Exhibit: Talking to America: Iranian Communities in Southern California



Two Women play the Daf at the Nowruz Spring Walk on the UCLA campus.

Southern California has been home to the largest Iranian diasporic population for more than four decades. The area saw a growth of new Iranian immigrants in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a result of the Iranian Revolution and establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. The revolution and its outcome led many to flee from Iran due to their ties to the former Shah, their religious or political orientation, or simply the desire to avoid the turmoil of the revolution and the ensuing 8-year war with Iraq. Due to this major wave of migration, the population of Iranians in the U.S has grown from less than a hundred thousand in the late 1970s to an estimated one million in Southern California alone.

This exhibit looks at various aspects of Iranian-American lives in Southern California and the religious, political, and cultural diversity within the community. The images and images feature a range of practices that have been maintained, modified, or fully reinvented in the US context after migration. The exhibit is the result of one year of