

ISLAMOPHOBIA STUDIES JOURNAL



About the *ISJ*

The *Islamophobia Studies Journal* is a bi-annual publication that focuses on the critical analysis of Islamophobia and its multiple manifestations in our contemporary moment.

ISJ is an interdisciplinary and multi-lingual academic journal that encourages submissions that theorizes the historical, political, economic, and cultural phenomenon of Islamophobia in relation to the construction, representation, and articulation of “Otherness.” The *ISJ* is an open scholarly exchange, exploring new approaches, methodologies, and contemporary issues.

The *ISJ* encourages submissions that closely interrogate the ideological, discursive, and epistemological frameworks employed in processes of “Otherness” – the complex social, political, economic, gender, sexual, and religious forces that are intimately linked in the historical production of the modern world from the dominance of the colonial/imperial north to the post-colonial south. At the heart of *ISJ* is an intellectual and collaborative project between scholars, researchers, and community agencies to recast the production of knowledge about Islamophobia away from a dehumanizing and subordinating framework to an emancipatory and liberatory one for all peoples in this far-reaching and unfolding domestic and global process.

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This activity has been funded [or partially funded] by a grant from the Al-Falah Program of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley.

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Editorial Statement

This second issue provides a collection of articles that broadly engage the continuing problem of Islamophobia and the global anti-Muslim phenomenon while anchoring the publication in a theoretically and empirically grounded framework. While no one thread ties all the articles together, this issue attempts to further our collective knowledge about Islamophobia and its various manifestations through academic and community-based research. We hope this issue will foster further research and engagement in academic institutions and in civil and human rights organizations with the intended goal of ending racism in all its forms, Islamophobia included.



In a recent article analyzing a host of survey results focusing on Muslims and Islam since 2001, University of North Carolina sociology professor Charles Kurzman concluded that the data illustrates how “American attitudes toward Muslim Americans have grown more negative” and “a growing segment of the... population is willing to express negative views about Muslim-Americans in recent years.” Since 2006 the data has shown a steadily increasing percentage of Americans responding unfavorably when asked about Muslims in general. The survey results and Kurzman’s analysis raise important questions as to the causes of this steady shift, the forces behind it and how best to reverse it in the future.



For some, rising anti-Muslim sentiments are immediately explained away as a “natural” outcome of the many violent events in the Muslim world and “terrorism” in general. However, we maintain that the rising negative sentiments may have to do with the presence of a well-organized and well-funded Islamophobic industry that has managed to invade and capture civil society and public discourses without serious contestation. Up to this point, anti-racist and progressive voices have not been effective in challenging this industry, nor have they been able to provide the needed resources to mount regional and national responses.



The engagement with Islamophobia, as an arena for civil rights work, has not yet become firmly established within the broad civil rights groupings and organizations, with a few exceptions.

This is due in part to confusing the defense of Muslims, as a religious ethnic grouping, with arguments in support of Islam as a religion with particular textual traditions and historical contexts. We maintain that the success of the Islamophobic industry is centered on problematizing Islam in civil society discourse to such an extent that it has made it possible for civil and human rights organizations to distance themselves from the affected communities. In many encounters, the Muslims' civil and human rights are subject to contestation due to an Islamophobic focus on the textual tradition, for example certain readings of the Koran, which is then utilized to foment discord and push for exclusionary measures directed at the Muslim subject. There have, however, been some hopeful signs of change.



This issue comes on the heels of two major events this past year. First, there was the legal victory by the CAIR-San Francisco Bay Area (CAIR-SFBA) office and the Legal Aid Society-Employment Law Center (LAS-ELC) against clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch over the firing of a Muslim worker who refused to remove her hijab as a condition for employment. In a 25-page decision, U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers emphatically ruled that the popular clothing manufacturer violated federal and state civil rights laws against workplace discrimination when they fired the employee in 2010. The lawsuit and ruling serves as a reminder that the rights of Muslims and the free exercise of religion in the workplace shall not be infringed upon, and that the struggle to define one's existence against the long shadow of Islamophobia starts with one victory at a time.



The second important event is the release of *Honor Diaries*, a 60-minute film that seemed to legitimately cover violence against Muslim women in order to raise awareness and inspire direct action. However, the film is disingenuous in that it quickly overlays the struggles against victimization with an Islamophobic campaign. Supported by men and women with affiliations with The Clarion Project, a pro-Israeli non-profit organization that produces films about the threat of Islamic extremism, *Honor Diaries* dangerously conflates violence against women with Islam. This film replicates Islamophobic discourses in the guise of supporting Muslim women, and it ignites anti-Muslim sentiments. However, a robust hashtag movement, #DishonorDiaries, was created to demystify and challenge the anti-Muslim fear-mongering that the film perpetrated.

Both of these events, and many others that we could not cover in time for the printing of this issue, continue to remind communities around the world that despite the enduring permanence of Islamophobia, various modes and tactics of organized resistance are available as steps to justice, liberation, and emancipation.

Hatem Bazian
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About the Cover

The cover was provided courtesy of Khalil Bendib, an artist and political cartoonist. Entitled “Gibberish,” the cartoon depicts the opening phrase to The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, and language to the Fourth Amendment against unreasonable search and seizures in the Bill of Rights, on a document held by three agents of government, most notably the CIA and the FBI. The laws that protect individuals from warrantless searches, unrestricted encroachments from government surveillance, and race-based discriminatory tactics are “gibberish” in a post-9/11 America, especially where Muslims are concerned. For more of Khalil Bendib’s work, see: <http://www.bendib.com/>.

A Measure of Islamophobia

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ISLAMOPHOBIA STUDIES JOURNAL
VOLUME 2, NO. 1, SPRING 2014, PP. 10-25.

Published by:
Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project,
Center for Race and Gender, University of California, Berkeley.

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A Measure of Islamophobia

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The growing literature on Islamophobia is dominated by empirical studies, the analysis of media representations and socio-psychological approaches, while many of these studies have been valuable in illustrating the range of expressions of Islamophobia; they have been less successful in understanding the phenomena, and mapping its relationship with other forms of discriminatory practices such as racism and anti-Semitism. This article presents a conceptual examination of the category of Islamophobia and the work it is called upon to do in contemporary debates, as prelude to a discussion about what a theorization of this concept could contribute to the field of social analysis and policy.

INTRODUCTION

There is a film that I saw once or twice called *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead* (1995). Maybe it was an in-flight movie or on late night TV. What I remember about it, though, is the criminal argot that the filmmakers invented for the demimonde characters of the movie to use. This decision to invent a new slang always struck me as rather curious, since there already exists a rich and well-known slang familiar to audiences of American gangster movies.¹ So why did the filmmakers think it was worthwhile investing in a new vocabulary? The invention of a vocabulary is only useful if it does some work, in other words, if it makes some difference to our practice, if it allows us to say and do things that we could not do previously. The invention of a gangster argot specific to *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead* has the effect of placing the movie in a kind of never-never land of crime, turning a rather mundane story into something like a parable or a myth, in which Denver is not really an identifiable place and the characters not really people. In the world of *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead* there is phrase that characters use frequently: "Give it a name...". This phrase is used as means of demanding an answer for any query.

Islamophobia is a concept that emerges precisely to do the work that categories like racism were not doing. It names something that needs to be named. Its continual circulation in public debate testifies to ways in which it hints at something that needs to be addressed. What it names, of course, remains a matter of dispute. This dispute has two sources: philosophical and political. By philosophical I mean that there is lack of clarity about the concept of Islamophobia. Any review of the growing literature on Islamophobia will show that it is dominated by empirical studies, by analysis of media representations and socio-psychological approaches. These ontic studies of Islamophobia do not (and cannot address) the ontology of the category. They cannot provide us with a theoretical clarification. By political I mean that the dispute about Islamophobia is not due to simply its conceptual lack of clarity, but also with the way it appears in a contested field where questions about national security, social cohesion and cultural belonging are played out. It is this field in which the relationship between national majorities and the post-colonial, ethnically marked minorities is being forged.

In other words, Islamophobia is rejected not only because there may be a disagreement about whether a particular practice or behavior meets the criterion of what constitutes Islamophobia, but also because there is a dispute that any such behavior could be considered to be Islamophobic, because the concept of Islamophobia lacks any validity. In what follows, I want to address what kind of phenomena are brought forth by giving them the name of Islamophobia, and what a theorization of this concept could contribute to the field of social analysis and policy.

The tension between policy and philosophy is expressed in a number of ways in social sciences: there is the common assertion that policy and philosophy belong to two distinct realms in which the abstract reasoning and complicated language of philosophers has nothing to add to the work of practical men and women dealing with complex social problems.

In this article I want to focus on one aspect of this general problem: that is, the production of “action-able knowledge”, which is knowledge that policy makers, with sufficient political will and resources, could use to make things better. This is similar in a way to the classic “mirror for princes” literature, which existed in various historical civilizations, for example, Hellenic, Sinic and Indic. To give advice to the prince was the province of the philosopher, who would educate the prince in how to exercise what could be described as something akin to good governance. This conjoining of the speculative with the practical is what Aristotle described as *phronesis*. It is as contribution to phronetic social science that this examination of Islamophobia should be seen.² Specifically, I want to sketch out some of the possible ways in which we account for Islamophobia so that the exercise of accounting would be a prelude to its reduction.

DEFINING ISLAMOPHOBIA

Discussions about the legitimacy of Islamophobia take place in the context of various mobilizations and confrontations centered on the figure of the Muslim. These range from the series of “moral panics” that seem to regularly sweep over mainly Western plutocracies, but also other places in the world in which some cherished universal (or Western) values are threatened by the actions of Muslims (or their extremist fringes). These are values—such as the freedom of expression, gender equality or tolerance—most often brought into play as being threatened by actions of “some” Muslims.³

As a term, Islamophobia has a number of iterations: more consistently developed in French, in the colonial context and around the 1920s in particular. It appears somewhat more sporadically as used in English, with the occasional reference, such as Edward Said’s 1985 reconsideration of *Orientalism*, before its enduring appearance in 1997 in the Runnymede report. The latter makes no reference to its early formulations, giving the impression that it is a neologism without any historical depth and completely inspired by the contingencies of “race relations” in Britain.⁴ In particular, the context for the report is given as mobilizations against the publication of *The Satanic Verses* and the emergence of a Muslim political subject. Conventional uses of Islamophobia, at least in the Anglophonic world, follow the lead of the Runnymede Trust report of 1997. The concept of Islamophobia that appeared in its pages was one that was defined in terms of eight constituent parts. These components ranged from perceptions of Islam as an unchanging monolith, to the view of its inherent violent nature and its fundamental inferiority to the West. Six of the eight components refer to Islam, and the other two refer to Muslims. Muslims are seen as subject to Islamophobia primarily through the transference of hostility to Islam and the

naturalization of that hostility. This definition combines insights from the critique of Orientalism (in particular the Orientalist characterization of Islam) to ideas of racism in Britain that focus on the unjust discriminatory practices directed at ethnically subordinated socio-historical groups. It is possible to read in the Runnymede report, a conceptualization of Islamophobia as a product of the articulation between Orientalism and racism. The report does this by surreptitiously (and perhaps inadvertently) confirming the emergence of new political subjectivity into the discourse of British race relations: Muslim. By translating hostility to Islam into an hostility against those described as Muslims in contemporary society, one can see in the report an implicit recognition of the racialization of Muslims.⁵

Scholars of racism had already moved to the understanding that racism was not predicated on the existence of race as understood in primarily biological terms, but rather that race was the product of the process of racialization. As such, a mix of elements including histories, cultures, geographies and bodies were articulated to forge “race” as the condition of possibility of the exercise of racism. The radicality of the Runnymede report was to point to the way in which religious affiliation could be a sufficient source of group formation. In the context of Britain’s ethnoscape, which by the time of the publication of the report had come to be organized around three principal subject positions—White, Black and Asian—the introduction of a Muslim identity was disruptive. Muslims could be found along all the spectrum of ethnically subject positions in a significant number to subvert the racial logic of Britain’s ethnoscapes. Contrary to the more frenzied charges of secular-minded critics, the emergence of the category of Muslim was not imposed by the multiculturalist policies of the British state. Rather, its appearance in the pages of the Runnymede report was a reflection of the mobilization that had taken place in Britain against the publication of *The Satanic Verses* in 1989.⁶

This mobilization ruptured the immigrant imaginary that had governed the settlement and domestication of post-colonial migration to Britain.⁷ It was a mobilization that was itself made possible by the phenomenon throughout the Muslim Ummah, in which Kemalist projects were shaken by Islamist advances (Sayyid 2003: 53-83). The conceptualization of Islamophobia that began to circulate in the wake of the Runnymede report shared a general understanding of racism that was positivist and saw racism as primarily a matter of attitudes and beliefs. Thus the report was unable to get across the subtlety of its formulation, and as such, Islamophobia emerged as a rather impoverished concept, uncertain and unclear about what work it was being asked to do. This enabled those who opposed the conceptualization of Islamophobia to see it as a portmanteau expression that had little purpose.

The opposition to Islamophobia has three overlapping strands. Firstly, it is argued that Islamophobia is not a valid category, since the phenomena it seeks to describe does not exist. That is, there is no significant specific discrimination against Muslims because they are Muslims.⁸ Whatever discrimination or prejudice that may be said to exist against Muslims can be explained as racism—pure and simple—and as such does not require a special concept. Secondly, there are the set of arguments that maintain the deployment of Islamophobia is a means of stifling debate and free expression. In other words, Islamophobia is (to use popular expression) seen as another sign of “political correctness gone mad”. Thirdly, it is argued that Islamophobia is a legitimate response to the threat, or perceptions of threat, produced by the radicalization of a significant number of Muslims.

What a term comes to mean is related to how it is used, how it is embedded in cultural practices and, in other words, the language game played around the term in question. For a concept as contested as Islamophobia, this means that the politics around its use are

far more visible than the politics around the use of many other terms and an ostensive definition would not work. Nor would an approach that seeks to analyze Islamophobia into its constituent elements, which is a common way of trying to define a category.⁹ To have a measure of Islamophobia, we need to be able to sketch out the main frontlines in the politics evoked by Islamophobia. The politics of Islamophobia are constituted by a struggle between the opponents of the concept and its advocates. The opposition to the category straddles the conventional differences between left and right. Similarly, the advocates of Islamophobia cannot be neatly grouped along pre-existing political allegiances and solidarities: in its ranks are included both conservatives and leftists. This rearranging of the normal axis of conflict in Western plutocracies, demonstrates the disruptive effect of the disclosure of a Muslim political subject position.

Those who favor the use of the category of Islamophobia argue that Islamophobia is a means of describing a situation that would otherwise go unreported and unattended. Arguments that support the concept of Islamophobia point to the work done by categories such as anti-Semitism and racism in mobilizing opposition to these forms of injustice. Islamophobia is then prized as the means by which to suggest a mechanism for the reduction of injustice directed at Muslims. Islamophobia is not about the “hatred and fear of Islam” or Muslims. The range of activities covered by Islamophobia exceed its common formulations; rather it occurs as a response to the problematization of Muslim identity. This is similar to the way in which Brian Klug (2013: 474–475) points out that what is important is not that anti-Semitism is simply an expression of intense hostility toward Jews or Judaism, but rather what is at stake is that anti-Semitism defines Jewishness in such way that it impoverishes the ability of those designated as Jews to elaborate their sense of what it means to be Jewish. Similarly, more than an expression of hatred or fear, Islamophobia needs to be understood as an undermining of the ability of Muslims as Muslims, to project themselves into the future. The manner in which Islamophobia is expressed and made manifest are diverse. This makes it difficult to say that Islamophobia has one specific feature that is hidden behind all its various occurrences. There is no essence to Islamophobia; instead there is a series of overlapping elements that constitute a coherence based around a notion of what Wittgenstein described as a family resemblance.¹⁰ It is possible to see how a gesture, a speech, and a police action can all be aspects of Islamophobia reflecting not an underlying unity, but a series of overlapping similarities. Thus the definition that this article introduces is to see Islamophobia through the range of its deployments, rather than through its purported essence or its constituent elements. The various ways in which Islamophobia is used to describe situations are conditioned by the specific cultural, socioeconomic and historical factors that have influenced the way in which Islam can be performed.

The performance of Islam is staged in four distinct theaters (Sayyid, 2010: 3). Firstly, there is Muslimistan, which is a group of countries socially and culturally dominated, either informally or formally, by the Islamicate. For all practical purposes, this means countries in which a very large percentage of the population would define themselves as Muslim.¹¹ Very often Islam would have some constitutional privilege accorded to it; for example, Islam defined as a state religion. Muslimistan approximates the membership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) with one or two anomalies, such as the inclusion of Mozambique, but the exclusion of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The second theater is formed by territories in which Muslims are a clear minority, marginal to the national narrative, even though their presence is simultaneous to or predates the formation of the state; for example, the Muslim populations of India, Russia, China and Thailand. The third theater where Islamophobia is performed, is in territories where Muslims are represented mainly as

immigrants. Many of these countries are Western plutocracies, but this not exclusively so. The fourth theater, is one in which the Muslim presence is negligible and the Islamophobia that is performed is vicarious or virtual. Countries in large parts of Central Africa or most of South America would be included in this group. These four theaters condition the range of contexts and variety of forms that Islamophobia can take. The different ways in which Muslims are disclosed is crucial to the way in which Islamophobia is articulated.

THE REPERTOIRE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

In my discussion of *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead* I said that when characters use the phrase "Give it a name" it is a call for an explanation. I came to this conclusion by seeing that various times throughout the film when the characters use the phrase, the response is an explanation. The meaning of the term could not have been understood analytically (by breaking it down its constituent parts), it could only be understood by seeing the range of its uses. In this section, I want to try and describe the various actions and attitudes that are most commonly described as being covered by the term.

The list is not exhaustive but indicative, and there is no claim that all these actions occur with equal intensity, or are comparable in terms of the level of harm that they may inflict. They are simply the types of things that can get described as being Islamophobic. The use of multiple examples of what is described as Islamophobia is a useful way of explaining (as opposed to just trying to define) this concept. Wittgenstein's discussion of family resemblance occurs as he gives one example after another of the meaning of the concept "game". He shows by a multiplicity of examples that even though there is no common property to various uses of the term, it is possible to see a network of associations by which we can understand that chess, solitaire, soccer, football and hop-scotch are all games. The purpose of drawing out the repertoire of Islamophobia, is to elucidate the kind of behaviors that can potentially be understood through deployment of the category. It is possible to group the activities described as Islamophobic in six main clusters.

Firstly, there are manifestations of Islamophobia through attacks on persons perceived to be Muslims. These attacks can be committed by random individuals or by semi-organized or organized groups acting together. These can include: shouting abuse, pushing, spitting, pulling hijabs from Muslim women, various forms of beating and, of course, can culminate in murder. What is common to all these incidents is that they target Muslims, the violence is unprovoked and that they occur in public settings such as the street or the park. Secondly, one can identify Islamophobia in attacks on property considered to be linked to Muslims: mosques, cemeteries, business premises. These attacks may include vandalism (broken windows, hurling pig's heads into mosques, graffiti), arson, desecration of Muslim graves. Thirdly, there is the Islamophobia represented by acts of intimidation. These actions would be organized since they would involve a number of persons acting in concert to intimidate a population that is perceived to be Muslim or friendly to Muslims.¹² The form of intimidation may include marches through areas with large Muslim populations. It may include advertising campaigns warning of the danger of Islam, as well as, the burning of Qur'an or demonstrations against building of mosques or cultural centers. What distinguishes these sets of actions is the degree of coordination requiring the expenditure of social and financial capital. The fourth cluster of Islamophobia can be described as that which may occur in institutional settings, in which those perceived to be Muslims receive less favorable treatment than their peers in comparative positions within the same

organizations. Such behavior may take the form of harassment, bullying, pointed jokes, distribution of tasks, and assessments of performance in which those considered to be Muslims are subject to adverse treatment or comment. The range of examples could include (but would not be restricted to) the serving of ham sandwiches for Muslims in a university research center tasked with understanding Islam, or an implemented dress code that places greater burden on those perceived to be Muslims than other staff in the same organization. It can occur when the rationalization for decision-making in organizations includes elements that arise from tropes associated with Islam and its cognates. Thus, a Muslim may be refused promotion and the rationalization may be that he or she is radical, or does not know how to behave in a mixed gender workplace. Some of these organizations may be part of an institutional ensemble that makes up the state, while others may be private. Again, this cluster of Islamophobia is not necessarily directed or coordinated by a state project, rather its occurrence is a subject of absence of robust anti-discrimination legislation or culture, or the inclusion of Muslims within the ambit of such measures even if they exist. The fifth cluster of Islamophobia refers to incidents in which there is a sustained and systematic elaboration of comments in the public domain that disparage Muslims and/or Islam. This disparagement could be more or less subtle. For example, publishing the Qur'an with Muhammad listed as the author or recycling medieval Christian polemics as the "truth" about Islam or reading specific crimes as being motivated by Islam or Muslim culture.¹³ This form of Islamophobia could be articulated on internet hate sites, newspapers, magazines, or other media. It may be in factual or fictional programs. The form of Islamophobia can also inform policy and opinion, and may be the ground for state interventions and regulations. It could also be part of the common sense of a society—that set of unexamined assumptions and beliefs that circulate in any society.

The above five sets of Islamophobia tend to be carried out by individuals or organizations (private or public). The state may facilitate them through benign neglect or refusal to provide adequate safeguards, or to challenge such actions, but it is not actively or openly involved in the perpetuation of these incidents. There are, however, other aspects of activities that are described as being Islamophobia in which the state (in the form of its functionaries) plays an active role. These can include intensification of surveillance of Muslim populations using technology, agent provocateurs, and paid informers. Such surveillance maybe carried out by what can be described rather loosely as the secret police (that is, state agencies tasked with clandestine operating procedures).¹⁴ In addition to these secret police operations, there is an Islamophobia of the criminal justice system in which those deemed to be Muslims are perceived to be treated less favorably than others. This can be the result of differential sentencing, difference in the frequency of being stopped and searched by police officers. State policies could also be used to restrict expression of Muslimness—for example, limiting the building of mosques, regulating Muslim dress (bans on the burqa). What makes these sorts of activities appear to be Islamophobic is the degree to which they place extra burdens on sections of the population which are mostly Muslim.

What is clear about these performative clusters of Islamophobia is that most of the actions that constitute the repertoire of Islamophobia are not exclusive; they can be found in performances of anti-Semitism and racism in general. This raises the question about the exact relationship between Islamophobia, racism and anti-Semitism. To map out the contours of this relationship it is necessary for me to sketch out my understanding of racism.

The category of racism (as distinct from the category of race) first emerges in the 1930s to describe the experience of primarily people of Jewish heritage living under Nazi rule. Why was the concept of racism needed to describe these experiences? The Nuremberg

Laws and the associated legal and extra-legal practices were very similar to what was going on throughout the rest of the world, in which European settlers or administrations regulated the conduct of what were deemed to be non-European peoples. One way of describing this ensemble of practices and institutions would be colonialism. The colonial frame refers not only to the empires of the British, French, and Dutch but also the “inner empires” in which European settlers confronted indigenous peoples of the Americas and Australasia. All the techniques of social exclusion, segregation and marginalization were already operating under the heading of colonialism: concentration camps, discriminatory legal codes, repression through native collusions, semi-official systems of violations—none of these were new to European practice or the innovation of the Nazis, so why not use the concept of colonialism to describe the phenomena, why the need for racism? One way of understanding Nazism is to understand it as the application of European colonial rule to the interior of the European continent. Racism emerges to account for the application of colonial rule in the heartlands of Europe, while still maintaining the difference between West and non-West, which was constitutive of the colonial world order.

This conceptualization of racism has a number of consequences. Firstly, it extrapolates from the policies of the Nazi regime the range of racist expressions and in doing so helps to foster a notion of racism as the antithesis of liberalism (Hesse and Sayyid, 2006: 13–31). Liberalism can be presented as an antidote to racism so that its complicity with racial logic is disavowed. This not only exceptionalizes racism, but also ideologizes it; that is, racism emerges as an abhorrent belief system, the product of an abhorrent regime that has ceased to exist (Hesse, 2007: 643–63). Thus the racism inherent in the European colonial enterprise—be it British, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Dutch, Russian, Belgian or American—is elided. The second consequence of this conception of racism is that it establishes the scientific and biological foundation of racism. Racism becomes centered on the existence of race understood as a biological phenomenon (this explains the effort made by biologists and others to deny that the category of “race” had any basis in science).

The split between racism and colonialism means that Islamophobia appears to be different from racism. It cannot be contained within the field of domestic policy, since one of the particularities of Muslims is that they are a transnational people. Thus, the borders of the nation-state are not adequate to contain all of them. Furthermore, it is difficult to find a biological locus for Muslims. Muslims are not a ‘race’ and being a Muslim is not the same as having a biological identity that cannot be easily changed. Thus Islamophobia, unlike classical assumptions of discriminatory practices such as anti-Semitism, sexism, homophobia, racism and so forth, seem to rest upon a subject that is not given by nature. Therefore, being Muslim is considered to be a matter of choice in a way that being a Jew, a woman, a Roma or gay is not (The conundrum of Islamophobia is that despite its expressions, which echo those found in anti-Semitism and racism in general, there is a degree of uncertainty about the construction of the subject of Islamophobia. If Muslims are not a race or even a lineage (which they clearly are not) then what are they? Is not being a Muslim similar to being a communist or liberal, that is, a matter of belief rather than fate? It is true that one may have a great deal of investment in a position one adopts, and this investment may seep into other aspects of one’s life, but it is a position that can be abandoned or changed, it is not hardwired in human biology. The contrast with other forms of discriminatory practices and Islamophobia rests, to large extent, on the degree of voluntarism in being a Muslim that is perceived to be absent in racism or anti-Semitism.¹⁵ If there is mutability to being a Muslim, then many of the acts that are presented as manifestations of Islamophobia can be seen as being expressions of other kinds of violations. The category of Islamophobia depends on the

existence of a Muslim subject position. Muslims are not only targets of Islamophobia, but also those conscripted into resisting it.¹⁶ What exactly is a Muslim?

Any answer to this question has to begin with an acknowledgment that being a Muslim is an over determined subject position; being a Muslim cannot mean being nothing else, and thus whatever a Muslim is, she is also many other things including racial or ethnically marked in various ways. The “thrownness” of humans, however, is not simply reducible to the biological. For example, our diets are not based exclusively on what we can physically eat, but rather are culturally conditioned so that consumption of foods that are considered distasteful in particular cuisines can produce a visceral reaction. Human bodies are read through culture, history, science, geography—they never appear directly totally unmarked. Sometime during the long sixteenth century, a particular type of marking emerged as one of the main ways in which social identities were constructed. This social construction of collective entities began to take the form of races, a category that began to be dominated by scientific discourse. The discovery of races, however, remained rather imprecise and repeatedly failed to correspond to the idea of distinct species to be found in zoology. Not only were there frequent taxonomic disagreements, but the establishment of various miscegenation laws and taboos pointed to the difficulty of policing the frontiers between different ‘races’. Thus from the very beginning the category of ‘race’ (like most other categories) was implicated in social and cultural imaginaries. Racial marking does not arise from a distinct biology. The process of forming a ‘race’ is not akin to the process of discovering new species of wildlife, races were not found but created. Racialization does not depend on biology. It is precisely the impossibility of biology to make races that makes it possible to see the construction of ‘races’ as collective identities produced by social processes.

The idea that Muslims have a choice to be Muslim or not, and that their failure to make the correct choice is based on fear or ignorance is a popular belief. The idea of choice, however, does not take into account why Muslims should, en masse, choose not to be Muslims. There have been three major instances of the de-Islamization of Muslim populations, that is, Muslim communities, en masse, ceased to perform as Muslims and often lost any sense of being Muslim or awareness of Islam. The first such instance refers to the conversions and expulsions carried out by the Iberian monarchs following the fall of Granada in 1492. Most Muslims became converts to Catholicism and, under the watchful eye of the Inquisition, lost most of the distinctive practices associated with Islam (e.g. prohibition on the consumption of pork). The Islamicate traces in Iberia are largely (but not exclusively) to be found in the language and architecture. The second instance refers to the process of de-Islamization among the enslaved of the Atlantic plantation economies.¹⁷ It is estimated that perhaps one third to half of all enslaved Africans taken from Africa to the Americas were Muslim (Diouf, 1998:46-48). Under the harsh conditions of the plantation-slavery, assemblage of the traces of this Islamicate inheritance were erased; so much so that as Sherman Jackson points out, the emergence of the African–American Muslim community in the early twentieth century had no direct relationship with even the “memory” of its previous Islamicate traces (Jackson, 2005: 38-45). The third major instance of de-Islamization was carried out by communist authorities with varying degrees of success. In some countries, such as Albania, the secularization drive was able to produce a population in which the awareness of being Muslim was lost or marginal. Historically, the mass de-Islamization of Muslims has tended to only occur in the context of regimes that were inherently violent, and authoritarian.

RACIALIZED GOVERNMENTALITIES

David Theo Goldberg's conceptualization of the racial state might be useful in understanding the institutional ensemble through which Islamophobia is disclosed. Goldberg's Althusserian reworking of Gramsci (Goldberg, 2002: 105) allows him to conceptualize a racial state as state that "defines populations in racially defined groups" (Goldberg, 2002: 110). These definitions are then used for the purposes of regulation (social, legal, economic, cultural registers) that make possible the shift from government to governmentality, which comes to define the modern state. Goldberg goes on to distinguish racial states from racist states. He argues that the former are basically state formations that have emerged in modernity and racial logics and are hardwired into the very infrastructure of these entities:

Modern states and racial states are deeply entwined, the conditions of the latter bound up with possibilities of the former, the histories of the former at once accountable in terms of the projected spatialities and temporalities of the latter. Modern states are racial in their modernity, and modern in their racial quality, their raciality. (Goldberg, 2002: 7)

In contrast, racist states are those in which racist logics are "...explicitly defined as the principal (and 'principled') state project" (Goldberg, 2002: 114). With the end of the formal apartheid regime in South Africa we saw the dismantling of the last major racist state. The post-racial appears in the space vacated by the racist state. The end of racism that the post-racial announces is a reconfiguration of racial rule by abandonment of racist logics as a principle state project. Goldberg's emphasis on the state as the engine of racist rule is an important corrective to the view of racism that focuses on its emergence and regulation as an affair of civil society.

Islamophobia is a form of racialized governmentality. It is more than prejudice or ignorance; it is a series of interventions and classifications that affect the well-being of populations designated as Muslim. This does not mean that there are no emotional, cultural or religious investments and expressions in the articulation of Islamophobia, but rather that Islamophobia is a language game directed toward the undermining of a distinct Muslim identity. In other words, if we understand Islamophobia as the regulation and disciplining of Muslims by reference to a Westernizing horizon (Sayyid 2010, 15-17), it means accepting that this hostility to Muslims is neither necessarily emotional ("hatred") nor religious ("Muslims as infidels") or cultural ("Muslims as outsiders") but rather political.

Islamophobia has so far not been disclosed as the principal state project of any current state formation. This, however, does not mean that Islamophobia has not been integrated into the racial state. There is no reason why the incidence, range and intensity of Islamophobic phenomena cannot be calibrated. The logical extreme of Islamophobia would be the elimination of Muslims. This elimination can occur in two forms: one would be physical destruction of Muslims, which would be genocide. The other form would be what would be described as de-Islamization, which would involve the erasure of a Muslim identity. Based on the historical precedents mentioned above, it should be possible to isolate the various institutional arrays geared toward the elimination of a distinct Muslim identity.¹⁸ The degree of de-Islamization would help demarcate a number of stages of Islamophobia, allowing it to be measured in ways that provide policymakers with milestones against which they could assess the efficacy of measures to combat Islamophobia. In what follows, I provide thumbnail sketches of the manner in which Islamophobia has been crystallized in terms of its principal agents, arguments and attitudes.

- i. One can imagine a society in which de-Islamization is explicitly proclaimed and practiced. The de-Islamization policy is institutionalized in the machinery of the state as well as the organs of civil society. This would be analogous to Goldberg's racial state. Such an entity would approximate the post-Granada regimes in Spain, or the policies pursued in communist countries like Albania. Islamophobia is official policy.
- ii. A state in which policies and practices are implemented that are deemed to be Islamophobic, even though the state denies that charge.
- iii. A country in which there are significant and vocal organizations demanding measures that are considered to be Islamophobic. These organizations are no longer simply marginal and their opinions are echoed by senior politicians.
- iv. A country in which there are demands for Islamophobic measures to be implemented, but these demands are continually challenged and organizations and opinions exist that challenge Islamophobia.

Let us recap: in this article, I started by arguing that the act of naming is essential to the process of problem formation. I then went on to show the way in which the invention of Islamophobia enables the analysis of various forms of violence, violations, discriminations and subordinations that are directed toward Muslims. By referring to the multiplicity of examples and contexts, I showed the range of experiences that can be marshaled by the category of Islamophobia. I then went on to draw a taxonomy of Islamophobic institutional ensembles. There remains, however, a lacuna between this taxonomy and the various experiences that can be described as Islamophobic. If I were of a foundationalist persuasion, I would either not see the lacuna or more likely, not consider it a problem. Alas, my faith in anti-foundationalism does not allow me this luxury. I want to draw out the dimensions of this lacuna by referring once again to the article by Brian Klug (2013). To show us the problem of identifying anti-Semitism, Klug imagines a bus journey where a number of characters witness a bus conductor asking a rabbi to get off the bus. The question arises as to whether such an act is anti-Semitic. Is the rabbi thrown out for infringing some rules (e.g. not smoking) or for being identified as a Jew or being misrecognized as a Muslim (Klug, 2013: 476–478)? The point of the parable is that there is “no algorithm” that determines for us whether the actions of the bus conductor were anti-Semitic (ibid: 477). Reading anti-Semitic behavior, like reading any behavior, is a doggedly interpretive activity that has to be learned. An example of this arises when people arrive in racial societies where they are ethnically marked. It can take years for them to make sense of the way in which others react and respond to them and understand those ways as being aspects of racism. How can we say with certainty that such an act is Islamophobic or racist or anti-Semitic? The short answer—and this is how I read Klug—is that we cannot. Often the first response to discovering the meaning of an action is to seek the intention behind it. An Islamophobic act is one behind which there is Islamophobic intent. This, however, not only defers the problem from action to intention, but also moves it to the terrain where there is no apodictic way of understanding anyone's intention. Imagine a murderer who claims that his actions were motivated by the orders he received from his neighbor's dog. It is unlikely that in contemporary society such an explanation would be considered valid. We would not accept that the motivation behind the murder was obedience to a demonic dog. Imagine, however, that these murders took place in medieval European society, in which case possession by a demonic dog would be a sufficient explanation. In contemporary Western society, the medicalization of “deviant” behavior would require an explanation that would emphasize

perhaps psychic trauma and childhood abuse as motivating factors (and cunning murderers often resort to this sort of reasoning as a means of mitigating their guilt). Accounts of motivation and intention are culturally conditioned. As result of the anti-colonial struggles, the Holocaust, and the Civil Rights movement in the United States, there have been transformations in large parts of the world where anti-Semitism and racism have been recognized as forms of cruelty and there has been a general socialization about how to read these behaviors. For example in the United States, 300 years of racist rule has forced African-Americans and to some extent others to be able to read racism in its multiple complex and subtle forms. Racism has to be socialized, its conventions and constructions are internalized in the enunciation of particular forms of subject formation. To know whether the bus conductor who evicts a rabbi is endorsing anti-Semitism depends on the arguments that are made, the network of associations in play in the event; in other words, the occurrence of anti-Semitism is a rhetorical activity. This does not mean it does not have effects or that it is somehow trivial. Rather, in the absence of algorithms, only persuasion and interpretation can help us in understanding what is or is not anti-Semitic. There are some people who will always see anti-Semitism and there are those who will never see it. In between are those whose understanding of what actions constitute anti-Semitism would depend on being able to navigate the cultural codes and conventions that suggest whether a particular act is anti-Semitic or not. Learning to see anti-Semitism, racism or Islamophobia requires a skilled familiarity with particular language games. Reading racism or anti-Semitism (and I would argue Islamophobia) is the skilled following of networks of associations and making arguments; in other words it is a rhetorical activity.¹⁹

READING ISLAMOPHOBIA

If being an Islamophobe (or if you prefer, committing Islamophobic acts) is a learned activity, then so is detecting it, pointing to it and condemning it. If it is a learned activity then there is something to be said for the level of proficiency an individual may acquire. One analysis of the way in which humans learn sets of skills is based is the so-called Dreyfus model. This model has gained wide acceptance in various fields including medicine and the military. The model is based on Heideggerian recasting of phenomenology. According to Dreyfus and Dreyfus, the process of learning a skill has five identifiable discrete stages: novice, advanced beginner, competent performer, proficient performer, and expert. Within each of these levels are not only differences in skills, but also differences in the way in which skills are acquired. The movement from one level to the next is neither certain (in some tasks very few will become proficient—such as playing a musical instrument, in others most people who undertake them will—such as driving), nor is it linear, that is being an expert is not a quantitative extrapolation of skills required at novice level, but rather a qualitative jump. The Dreyfus model makes a major distinction between the first three skill levels (novice, advanced beginner and competent performer) and the final two skill levels (proficient performer and expert). The first three levels are based on distinction among those whose acquisition of skills is increasingly skilled but explicit rule-following. The final two levels are based on distinction among those whose skill levels are based on intuitive, holistic mastery of context (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 21). The response to racism illustrates these two means of learning. Individuals and organizations become aware of racism through often crude and clumsy check-lists, which often leave those who are proficient in reading racism unsatisfied, since their understanding of racism and its effects is not based on rule-following but on a *coup d'oeil*. Setting up a rubric for assessing the configurations of

Islamophobia does not (cannot) evade the necessity of interpretation. Interpreting Islamophobia (or anti-semitism or racism) is not a subjective practice, but rather a skilled one in which there has to be a sufficient degree of overlap between one's reading and the other readings in play in the culture at the time. One way to understand the different responses to the occurrence of Islamophobia is to focus on variations in skill levels of the reading on offer. Some people who have had intensive and frequent experience of Islamophobia can often detect it with great acuity, and share that knowledge with similarly skilled readers. This expert understanding of Islamophobia, however, is not the result of individual qualities, since what counts as Islamophobia is what a particular framing considers to be Islamophobic. This, of course, is a historically situated understanding.

I have indicated that the performance of Islamophobia is a complex multi-faceted operation that is simply not reducible to questions of the representations or whether images of Muslims and Islam reflect closed or open views. Islamophobia is not just idiosyncratic eruptions reflecting social or psychological profiles of the perpetrators, but rather its occurrence has to be seen in specific assemblages. By identifying these assemblages it should be possible not only to take a measure of Islamophobia, but also to take counter-measures against it. Conventional strategies for diminishing Islamophobia often take the well-intentioned but also well-worn form in which authoritative speakers are asked to make declarations along the lines that "Islam is a religion of peace" or that "Muslims are not homogenous" or "the majority of Muslims are moderates". While in a moment of urgency such declarations may have some part to play, on their own they are unlikely to counteract Islamophobia. These declarations apparently challenge the idea that Islam is a religion of violence, or all Muslims are extremists; but this exchange takes place in a context in which Muslims continue to be narrated in subaltern positions, and thus, are easily countered by assertions that Muslims are extremist or Islam is violent. The logic of Islamophobia in its various forms is a relationship of domination.

The end of Islamophobia will come about when the hierarchy that makes it possible dissolves. Countering Islamophobia requires the dismantling of the assemblages that make it possible. These assemblages are specific, and while any strategy would need to be as granular as the circumstances of the occurrence of Islamophobia, it may be useful to suggest that the most successful means of ending a relationship of domination – is to facilitate and empower those who are its subjects. Counter-measures against Islamophobia have to be more than just refutation of the claims made by Islamophobia; ultimately, they have to tell different stories not just in words but also in deeds. These alternative stories need to abandon a Westernizing horizon as a common destiny.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have made three main claims: (1) that ontic approaches to Islamophobia cannot do justice to the concept, (2) that a Heideggerian –Wittgensteinian approach to Islamophobia is better than what is currently in play, (3) that it is possible to use such an approach to open a conversation with public policy. To describe a phenomena as Islamophobic is not to disclose a pre-existing pattern of behavior. To name something as being Islamophobic is a constitutive act; it enables the gathering of disparate elements into recognizable formations of cruelty and injustice, which is the first task of making demands for their rectification. To account for Islamophobia in a way that can make a difference in social policy requires an understanding of it that sees it as a definite issue, not simply as an amorphous mass of tangentially related attitudes and beliefs. The implicit demand is that

Islamophobia should be measurable in ways that produce evidence, which could be the basis of a rational policy. The difficulty, of course, is that Islamophobia is so contested as a concept that any evidence for its occurrence is unlikely to be forthcoming as such. This is simply because there is little agreement on what Islamophobia entails and therefore what evidence would support or undermine it. In this article, I have argued that it is important to clarify the conceptual haze surrounding Islamophobia so as to better understand what kind of ameliorative measures can be taken. To this end, I have suggested that it is important to understand Islamophobia as belonging to the family of racism. I have also suggested a Heideggerian phenomenological understanding of knowledge acquisition, which ties in with a Wittgensteinian-inspired understanding of the language game, played around the category of Islamophobia which allows a us to measure Islamophobia phronetically. The emergence of Islamophobia points to two key developments: firstly, Islamophobia posits a post-racial subject that is subjected to exclusionary practices. Secondly, Islamophobia marks the transformation in the balance of power and anxieties generated by the de-centering of the West. Naming something 'Islamophobia' is a way of alerting us to the persistence of the racial in the post-racial. Much of the opposition to the deployment of Islamophobia reminds us of the post in the post-racial.²⁰

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Abdoolkarim Vakil, Ian Law and Brian Klug for their comments and encouragement, like wise I would like to thank Shveta Vyas-Pare for assistance in preparation of the manuscript.

ENDNOTES

¹ To what extent cinematic representations mirror the actual use of slang by American criminal fraternity or to what extent American criminals use the language of fictional gangsters to sound like authentic gangsters is not that clear cut.

² For details about phronetic social science see Flyvbjerg (2001).

³ It's not always clear whether it is some Muslims or potentially all Muslims who are the source of threat. One of the common tropes of Islamophobic discourse is the slippage from the few and the some to the many and then the all.

⁴ See Vakil (2010:23-44) for more details about the genealogy of Islamophobia.

⁵ The Runnymede Trust is registered charity and was founded in 1968 as independent think-tank dedicated to producing research for the furtherance of race equality. It has produced a number of landmark reports and research on the challenges of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Britain.

⁶ See Khan 2006 for a succinct description of the interplay with international and national mobilizations which facilitate the opposition to the publication of *The Satanic Verses*.

⁷ For details of the immigrant imaginary see Sayyid (2004).

⁸ This position is most forcibly argued by Kenan Malik on many occasions and across many platforms, see Malik (2009).. See also Hasan (2009) for similar critique of multiculturalism as facilitating conservative Muslim practices and groups.

⁹ See the discussion by Baker and Hacker on the prevalence of this analytical approach to the definition, which they trace within Western philosophy from Plato to the early Wittgenstein (2004: 184–190), as they suggest the legitimate use of a definition maybe no more than to circumscribe the range of an enquiry.

¹⁰ For an elaboration of the concept of family resemblance see Baker and Hacker (2004: 191).

¹¹ Recently the OIC has declared that in future its membership will be restricted to countries in which at least fifty percent of the population is Muslim. This would halt attempts by India and Russia to seek full membership.

¹² The Muslim–Marxist–Multiculturalist alliance that Brevik railed against to justify his massacre against young members of the Norwegian socialist party was not a just a personal delusion. The existence of such a *convergence is one of the key tropes of Islamophobic discourse found among neo-conservatives and their fellow travellers.

¹³ Websites such as Jihad Watch, Bare Naked Islam, Campus Watch, Atlas Shrugs, Gates of Vienna, just to name a few, are replete with these kinds of stories, allegations and assertions.

¹⁴ See Hatem Bazian’s (2012) comparison of the FBI clandestine operations against Civil Rights organizations and individuals and recent counter-intelligence operations against those they consider to be Muslims terrorists.

¹⁵ See Meer and Modood (2010) for an elaboration of this argument.

¹⁶ I do not mean that all Muslims oppose Islamophobia but rather that most of them experience its effects, and that makes it difficult for them to be indifferent to it. The existence of Muslims who repudiate the concept of Islamophobia should not be more surprising than the existence of highly problematic liminal figures that are said to inhabit worlds produced by racialized hierarchies: the ‘self-hating Jew’, ‘Uncle Tom’ or ‘vendidos’...

¹⁷ Diouf (1998) details the spirited manner in which enslaved African Muslims tried to maintain their religious identity in the Americas, thus the de-Islamization that occurred was not because of a weak attachment to Islam, but rather the enormous effort made to prevent these Muslims from being Muslim.

¹⁸ Francois Soyer (2013: 408–410) draws a chilling parallel between the quest of Philip II and his advisors for “a final remedy” to the Morisco problem and Nazi designs for a final solution.

¹⁹ I am using rhetoric in the sense that Stanley Fish deploys as being synonymous with anti-foundationalism, see Fish, 1990, 343-340.

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Fear Under Construction: Islamophobia Within American Christian Zionism

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ISLAMOPHOBIA STUDIES JOURNAL
VOLUME 2, NO. 1, SPRING 2014, PP. 26-43.

Published by:
Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project,
Center for Race and Gender, University of California, Berkeley.

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Fear Under Construction: Islamophobia Within American Christian Zionism

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“Violent Islam is true Islam.”

This statement by Walid Shoebat (2010: 137) encapsulates a view of Islam which is commonly presented by leaders of American Christian Zionism, a subsection of American evangelical Christianity which emphasizes unwavering support for the nation of Israel. Reflecting the Orientalist tendency of constructing degrading monolithic caricatures of Islam and Muslims, these leaders construct essentialist depictions which play a powerful role in shaping Christian Zionist laypeople’s conceptions of Muslims in general and Palestinian Muslims in particular. Seeking to gauge Christian Zionism’s place within the landscape of American evangelical Christianity, it is difficult to determine the actual number of Christian Zionists in the United States. Shortly before his death in 2007, Christian Zionist pastor Jerry Falwell claimed that this figure exceeded 100 million, but Norton Mezvinsky claims that the number in 2009 was probably in the range of 50-60 million (2010: 41-42). Although Falwell’s amount was most likely exaggerated, Mezvinsky’s estimate demonstrates a significant Christian Zionist presence in the United States, and therefore a large number of Americans who are regularly exposed to anti-Islamic discourse which can strongly affect their views about Palestinians.

A major emphasis in Christian Zionist teaching is eschatological, focusing on future events. Despite variations in the specific details of what exactly will transpire, a fundamental Christian Zionist belief is that Jesus will take his true believers into heaven during the rapture and will subsequently return to earth, but only after Israel, especially Jerusalem, is completely under Jewish control and contains a majority Jewish population. Palestinians are the adversary, since their presence and influence in the region must be greatly diminished, if not obliterated, for the desired eschatological events to occur. Presenting this apocalyptic view, Christian Zionist leaders provide their congregations and readers with a sense of personal purpose, as their choice to support Israel rather than Palestinians takes on cosmic importance, advancing these eschatological events. Moreover, negative portrayals of Palestinians function importantly within Christian Zionist eschatology in order to uphold foundational tenets regarding the justice of God. Constructing Palestinians as irremediably prone to violence and other forms of evil, Christian Zionist leaders suggest there would be no reason to question the belief that God will destroy them in the end times. Albeit directly responsible for the annihilation of a multitude of Palestinians, God is exonerated in Christian Zionist eyes.

Instead of examining the eschatological element of American Christian Zionism, however, I will concentrate instead on a major facet of this movement which emphasizes the present rather than the future. I will explore Christian Zionist leaders’ use of the biblical verse Genesis 12:3, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse”

(NIV). For these leaders, God's words to Abraham are God's words to 21st century Americans, who will experience dire consequences if they curse rather than bless the nation of Israel. I will examine the use of this verse within what I call the American Christian Zionist "Genesis 12:3 narrative," drawing particular attention to its Islamophobic discourse. This narrative is grounded in fear, raising the specter of imminent catastrophe if American Christians do not respond to the warning of Genesis 12:3 and pledge unconditional support for Israel against the threat of purportedly fundamentally evil, violent Islam. Especially because of its basis in fear, this narrative can exert a powerful influence upon the way in which Christian Zionist laypeople view Palestinians, leading these Christian Zionists to oppose their land claims, to fail to recognize their human dignity, and to justify violence against them.

Pastor of 19,000-member Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, John Hagee is one of American Christian Zionism's chief Genesis 12:3 narrators. Hagee started "A Night to Honor Israel" in 1981, responding to what he viewed as unjust world condemnation of Israel after its bombing of a nuclear reactor in Iraq. According to his *In Defense of Israel*, at his first "A Night to Honor Israel" Hagee declared, "Israel, you are not alone; Christians support you, and America supports you. We love you, and we shall stand by you," and since 1981 this event "has given encouragement, inspiration, and comfort to people who often felt alone. A Night to Honor Israel has also raised millions of dollars to support charities and resettlement of world Jewry in Israel" (2007: vii-viii). Indeed this financial support has been abundant, with John Hagee Ministries donating \$8 million to Israel in 2007 alone for immigration and other assistance. Hagee's Global Evangelism Television has broadcast programs worldwide on 150 stations, and his books amass a large number of readers, such as his *Jerusalem Countdown*, which has sold over 800,000 copies. Hagee has also shaped American foreign policy decisions, especially through Christians United for Israel (CUFI), which he began in 2006. Stephen Spector writes that CUFI features a network of activists who "flood Capitol Hill with e-mails, faxes, and phone calls on issues of immediate concern to the Jewish state" (2008: 168). In CUFI's first lobbying effort, in July 2006, over 3400 Christian Zionists from all 50 states came to Washington, DC and participated in 280 meetings with congressional representatives, and on the day of the CUFI banquet the House of Representatives passed a strongly pro-Israel resolution by a vote of 410 to 8 (Spector 2008: 169).

In addition to Hagee, ideas of three other prominent Christian Zionist leaders will be highlighted in this article. Michael Evans is the founder of the Jerusalem Prayer Team, whose members have included Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Franklin Graham, and other well-known pastors, as well as major political figures such as U.S. Representative Dick Armey and former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Evans's books proudly display his receipt of the Ambassador Award from the Israeli government and his advisory positions to many prime ministers of Israel and mayors of Jerusalem. Though not as connected politically or prolific of an author as Hagee or Evans, pastor Chuck Missler has nonetheless shaped the worldview of numerous Christian Zionists through his daily Christian radio program 66/44 and his Internet ministry Koinonia House, which claims to bring "the world into focus through the lens of Bible prophecy" (www.khouse.org). Missler encourages readers of his book *Prophecy 20/20* to sign up for a weekly eNewsletter which summarizes "which parts of the news are Biblically relevant" (2006: 261). Finally, Walid Shoebat has achieved popularity through books he has authored or co-authored and even more so through appearances on conservative media outlets such as the Fox News Channel. Although the *Jerusalem Post* and other sources have challenged the veracity of his claim,

Shoebat describes himself as a former Palestinian Muslim terrorist, thereby purportedly giving him a former insider's view to substantiate virulently anti-Islamic remarks, such as his assertion in *God's War on Terror* that "it is with absolute sobriety that I declare that this book will establish the fact that Islam is the religion of the Antichrist" (2010: 25).

While analysis of these four leaders' presentation of the Genesis 12:3 narrative forms the core of this article, I will first discuss another narrative with significant similarities. Like the Genesis 12:3 narrative, what I label the "19th century narrative" is also shaped by American interest in the Middle East and is also rife with degrading essentialist depictions of Islam and its Palestinian followers. Furthermore, this narrative promotes a denial of Palestinian possession of land and dehumanization of Palestinians, similar to the Genesis 12:3 narrative. Importantly, however, the 19th century narrative does not involve justification of violence against Palestinians. This difference is the major reason for examining the 19th century narrative in this article, as I seek to highlight that the Genesis 12:3 narrative's basis in fear, a disposition not emphasized in the 19th century narrative, leads not only to denial of possession of land and dehumanization but also to justifying and even calling for violent actions against Palestinians. Thus the presence of fear within degrading constructions of Islam and Muslims can have especially deleterious effects, creating a climate in which violence against Muslims may be exonerated and desired.

19TH CENTURY ISLAMOPHOBIA

The 19th Century Narrative

Contrary to the Genesis 12:3 narrative's basis in fear, the 19th century narrative is grounded in confidence, embodying the notion of American exceptionalism. America's potency and vitality are on the rise, exemplified in this narrative by America's newfound influence in the Middle East and by America's putatively clear superiority to Islam and its Palestinian followers, portrayed as essentially evil, ignorant occupiers of the mythical Holy Land. Prominent within this narrative is the metaphor of America as the "new Israel," specially blessed and chosen by God for a unique providential mission, similar to the biblical people of Israel. Rooted in America's colonial past, especially among the Puritans of New England, this metaphor implies that just like the freeing of the Israelites from Egypt, emigrants to America were led by God out of bondage in Europe to a glorious promised land, where colonists and early Americans viewed their lives as typological reflections of the biblical Israelites. Although the "new Israel" metaphor continued to influence American self-definition throughout the 19th century, a notable development occurred regarding its connotation, as many Americans focused not only on their own nation as the second Israel but also on the actual, physical land of biblical Israel due both to newly acquired commercial, diplomatic, and military connections in the Middle East as well as to increasing religious fervor amidst the Second Great Awakening (Sha'ban 1991: 149). John Davis discusses this new American emphasis, writing, "As the second chosen people, they assumed it only natural that they should 'inherit' the land of the first favored race" (1996: 37). As a result, many Americans traveled to Palestine, with some establishing permanent settlements in the region.

A more complete examination of the 19th century American connection with Palestine would consider a variety of aspects such as the Palestine Exploration Society, dedicated to strengthening Christian faith and biblical understanding through the study of Holy Land geography, or Palestine Park on the shores of Chautauqua Lake in New York, a

popular destination with topographical landmarks, buildings, and actors which sought to provide an “authentic” Holy Land experience. My focus, however, will be upon statements from 19th century Americans who traveled to Palestine. Throughout their letters, memoirs, books, and sermons, these Americans venerated what they commonly called the “Holy Land.” William Cowper Prime extols this land because of its seemingly incontrovertible proof of the veracity of the Bible. Prime declares, “Every step that I advanced on the soil of Palestine offered some new and startling evidence of the truth of the sacred story. Every hour we were exclaiming that the history must be true, so perfect was the proof before our eyes. The Bible was a new book, faith in which now seems to have passed into actual sight, and every page of its record shone out with new, and a thousand-fold increased lustre” (1857: 314). For well-known Presbyterian minister Thomas De Witt Talmage, Jerusalem is especially praiseworthy because it is the city of heaven, unique among all cities in the world. He exclaims, “O Jerusalem! O Jerusalem! Greatest city on earth, and type of the city celestial. After I have been ten thousand years in heaven, the memory of that first view from the rocks on the afternoon of December 2nd, will be as vivid as now” (1893: 35).

Importantly, such encomiums were shaped by idealized pictures created within travelers’ minds prior to arrival in Palestine. Talmage reports, “All my life I have heard of Palestine and I had read about it, and talked about it, and preached about it, and sung about it, and prayed about it, and dreamed about it until my expectations were piled up into something like Himalayan proportions” (1893: 7). Travelers retained these romanticized conceptions in their minds despite the fact that what they actually encountered often diverged sharply from these images. Jonathan Sarna writes that the symbolism of the Holy Land was far more important to these Americans “than was the reality. Indeed, those who visited the Holy Land were sometimes disappointed. The Holy Land that existed in their mind’s eye was inevitably far more appealing than the Holy Land they later beheld” (1986: 346). Like Talmage, however, this reality did not cause American travelers to jettison their idealized view of the Holy Land, as Gershon Greenberg describes in commenting on Prime’s *Tent Life in the Holy Land*. According to Greenberg, although the images which were solidified within Prime’s mind in America “conflicted with the reality he encountered in the Holy Land,” he overcame this tension “by transcending his own reality and immersing himself totally in Scriptural drama” (1986: 356). Other American travelers did the same, steadfastly embracing their idealized images of the Holy Land no matter what they actually encountered during their Palestinian sojourn.

Although these travelers continually glorified the Holy Land, this attitude was not extended towards those who inhabited this land. American travelers commonly exhibited a sense of superiority over, and often disdain for, Palestinians, especially because of their Islamic faith. Like the Genesis 12:3 narrative, the 19th century narrative presents Islam in strongly unfavorable essentialist terms. To a large extent this negative appraisal of Islam arose out of pre-existing American sentiments towards Islam and Muslims. Noting that many Americans in the late 18th century were exposed to biographies which depicted Muhammad as the founder of an evil religion as well as to reports which described atrocities faced by Americans during warfare with North African pirates, Douglas Little remarks, “The revolutionary statesmen who invented America in the quarter-century after 1776 regarded the Muslim world, beset by oriental despotism, economic squalor, and intellectual stultification, as the antithesis of the republicanism to which they had pledged their sacred honor” (2002: 12). Building on this perspective, the 19th century narrative emphasizes the themes of violence, indulgence, and ignorance when portraying Islam and Muslim inhabitants of Palestine.

An inextricable link between Islam and violence appears in this narrative. In his description of “Mohammedans,” traveler J.V.C. Smith declares, “The conceived infraction of a single law that emanates from the Koran rouses them to fury; and the first thought is, to slaughter those who have dared to frown or ridicule upon the sacred institutions of Moslemism” (1852: 330). Henry Harris Jessup also connects Islam fundamentally with violence, professing, “Whenever Islam holds the sword it uses it for the oppression and humiliation of all infidels” (1879: 34). In addition to violence, the theme of sinful indulgence appears frequently in travelers’ descriptions of Islam. Smith asserts, “Morals are certainly at a low-water mark in every country where Mohammedanism is in the ascendant; consequently in Palestine and throughout Syria, the sins most abhorrent and abominable are as common as the instincts of its followers are depraved and beastly” (1852: 118-119), and elsewhere he claims that “Mohammedanism ... permits and regulates indulgences in such a way to satisfy the deceived believer that he is piously doing his duty, while gratifying the selfish and low propensities of his nature” (1852: 330). Another example of the association of Islam with indulgence comes from *Earthly Footsteps*, a book of photographs of various Palestinian sites. The caption for a photograph called “Military Mosque, Damascus” reads as follows: “Mohammedanism is thought by many who have studied it well to be but organized sensualism. Its subjects move languidly from the harem to the bath and from the bath to the mosque” (Davis 1996: 87). Furthermore, according to the 19th century narrative, Islam is also characterized by ignorance. Citing a newspaper article which alleged that Muhammad intentionally sought to keep Muslims in “abject ignorance,”¹ Sha’ban states that many 19th century Americans believed that Muhammad tried to perpetuate the ignorance of Muslims by preventing the advancement of science and education (1991: 37). Reflecting this mindset, Jessup declares that Islam is “in direct conflict” with modern civilization, and in “the conflict between civilization and barbarism Islam must be the loser” (1879: 94). Similarly, Talmage recalls the difficulty he faced while attempting to land ashore in Palestine, proclaiming, “Mohammedanism is against easy wharves, against steamers, against rail-trains, against printing-presses, against civilization. ... ‘Leave those rocks where they are,’ practically cries the Turkish Government: ‘we want no people of other religions and other habits to land there; ... away with your nineteenth century, with its free thought and its modern inventions’” (1893: 9-10). Comparing what they saw in Palestine with American customs and institutions, Talmage and other travelers found the former to be grossly inferior to the latter. While influenced by the notion of American exceptionalism, this judgment was simultaneously shaped by a belief in the supposedly corrosive effect of Islam.

Products of the 19th Century Narrative: Denial of Palestinian Land Possession and Dehumanization of Palestinians

Because of this alleged violence, indulgence, and ignorance, many travelers believed that Muslims were unworthy of living in the Holy Land. Edward L. Wilson laments that near the Sea of Galilee he encountered “repulsive” peasants, stating, “Not a ‘good Samaritan’ of the old school is discoverable in the whole posse of them. They are entirely out of harmony with the character of the land” (1890: 265). Corresponding with this idea that Palestinians were woefully beneath the grandeur of the Holy Land was a belief that Americans instead were truly entitled to this territory. An American magazine writer in 1855 boasted, “We know far more about the land of the Jews than the degraded Arabs who hold it” (Davis 1996: 5).² Harboring such a conviction, American travelers believed that they, not the actual inhabitants, had an authentic claim to the Holy Land. According to Sha’ban, Palestinian

natives were viewed as “deluded intruders in a land which the American traveler considered his own possession” (1991: 132), and Davis writes that “Americans became convinced that the Palestinian landscape was (or should be) unconditionally ‘available’ to them” (1996: 48). Davis illustrates this mindset by quoting William M. Thomson, who avers that although the Holy Land was given to the patriarchs, “I mean to make it mine from Dan to Beersheba before I leave it” (1880: 24). Consistent with this presumption, some travelers conceived of Palestine as their true home. J. F. Packard declares, “You come to the Holy Land with something of the feeling that you come to your home. Somehow you always belonged here” (1880: 316). The 19th century narrative promoted the mindset that Americans, not Palestinians, genuinely belonged in the Holy Land. Cast as an unwanted people in the place where they lived, Palestinians were regarded as alien occupiers of an idealized land to which violent, indulgent, ignorant followers of Islam had no legitimate claim.

Framed in this manner, the 19th century narrative also promoted a lack of recognition of Palestinians’ humanity. To an extent this involved virtually rendering Palestinians invisible. Burke Long writes that 19th century American travelers attempted to “skim the dross and extract the purely biblical, the ‘real’ Holy Land, from its distasteful contemporary trappings” (2003: 96), exhibiting the tendency to ignore the existence of Palestinians in order to ensure that their presence would not tarnish travelers’ idealized conceptions of the Holy Land. What appears to have been far more common, however, as shown in preceding paragraphs, was for travelers to acknowledge Palestinians’ existence but to disparage it and cast it as an affront to American interests in Palestine, especially because of the avowedly evil nature of Islam, the religion followed by most Palestinians. This mindset was demonstrated at times through travelers expressing antipathy towards local Muslims. Sha’ban reports that many travelers were denied entry into holy sites in Jerusalem, which “aroused feelings of resentment and called forth expressions of hatred against the Muslem population,” as these travelers protested “against this Muslem ‘intrusion’ on ‘their’ rights” (1991: 134). Travelers may have acknowledged Palestinians’ existence, but they were nonetheless loath to do so, viewing Palestinians not as people with whom they shared human dignity but rather as followers of a malignant religion who were rivals in their quest to possess the Holy Land. Importantly, however, this dehumanization and sense of rivalry did not translate into expressions of justifying and desiring violence against Palestinians. While it cannot be ruled out definitively that travelers may have held such a desire, it does not appear in their writings. For these travelers, Palestinians may have been repugnant rivals to American interests, but they were not threats to American security and survival. Seen through the lens of the Genesis 12:3 narrative, on the other hand, Palestinians are exactly such a threat and therefore may need to be exterminated.

AMERICAN CHRISTIAN ZIONIST ISLAMOPHOBIA

The Essentialist Construction of Islam

Similar to 19th century travelers, American Christian Zionist leaders connect Islam categorically with violence. Hagee announces, “Islam not only *condones* violence; it *commands* it. A tree is known by its fruit, and the fruit produced by Islam is fourteen hundred years of violence and bloodshed around the world” (2007: 68). In order to support such an allegation, Hagee remarks that the Qur’an requires the amputation of a hand or foot of someone who resists Islam, saying, “In America, cutting off someone’s hand or feet because he would not accept your religion is unthinkable – but the Islamic Bible commands it”

(2006: 32). Christian Zionist leaders are especially apprehensive about the presence of an alternate message concerning Islam, namely that it is a religion of peace, and so they attempt to refute this idea. Shoebat writes, “Imagine how I feel as a former Muslim to hear some ignorant Western commentator tell me that Islam means ‘peace.’ Yeah, and someday a unicorn riding on a cotton candy rainbow will come and take us all to Michael Jackson’s Neverland where we will all live together in unity” (2010: 26). Additionally, Christian Zionist leaders challenge the notion that Islamic terrorism is an aberration in relation to mainstream Islam. Hagee declares that “Islamic terrorists are not *fanatics* – but *devout followers of Muhammad* who are following his example and doing what their Islamic Bible teaches them to do” (2006: 33). Mirroring this belief, Shoebat maintains that Islamic terrorists “are indeed behaving in an Islamic way. They are behaving like Mohammed and his successors. While it is often said that the terrorists have hijacked Islam, in reality the so-called moderate Muslims are trying to change the true teachings of Islam.” (2010: 137).

Within this theme of violence, the concept of jihad generates substantial discussion from Christian Zionist leaders, who assert that violent jihad is mandatory for all Muslims. According to Evans, the Qur’an requires “the waging of *jihad*, or holy war, against all non-Muslims. As holy war was an integral part of Islam at its onset, so it remains to this day. ... According to Islamic law, *jihad* will never cease – it will last to the Day of Judgment” (2003: 48). Missler agrees that violent jihad is binding upon every Muslim regardless of time or place. Conspicuously demonstrating a timeless essentialist construction of Islam, Missler proclaims, “Since its inception, *jihad* has been waged by Islamic warriors to spread their religion of violence and hatred. Islam does not change: examine any of the countries in which Islam is in control” (2006: 148). Of the four Christian Zionist leaders discussed in this article, Shoebat devotes the greatest attention to the concept of jihad. Claiming privileged personal knowledge as an alleged former Muslim terrorist, Shoebat disputes the ideas that Muslims consider jihad primarily to signify an internal spiritual struggle rather than a call to violence and that Muslims condone jihad as an act of violence only in the case of defense. Shoebat protests, “When Western Muslims claim that the various verses that speak about Jihad are only about ‘overcoming adversity of injustice,’ they are serving up afresh the kool-aid of Jim Jones fame. What is so sad, however, is to see so many Westerners gobble up this poisonous nonsense down” (2010: 110), and elsewhere he declares:

The concept of Jihad in Islam is to literally attack unbelievers for the purpose of converting them to Islam, ‘by persuasion or by force,’ ‘even when they have not started it.’ This is quite clear; Mohammed and then his successors ... all attacked the surrounding nations offensively to spread Islam. These were not defensive wars. They were offensive wars whose goal was to force the victims to submit to Allah or be ‘crushed,’ plain and simple. So what part of ‘Jihad,’ ‘fight,’ or ‘kill’ do Westerners not understand? (2010: 104)

Citing numerous Qur’anic verses, Shoebat insists that jihad, specifically in the form of a violent offensive campaign to bring non-Muslims to Islamic faith, is an obligation for all Muslims in the past, present, and future.

According to Christian Zionist leaders, this mandate for offensive violent jihad galvanizes Muslims’ determination to achieve world domination, so that every inhabitant of every nation will follow Islam. Missler states, “The intractable goal of Islam is the subjugation of the entire world. It intrepidly aspires to the forceful elimination of all non-Muslims” (2006: 147). Missler links this aspiration with teachings of the Qur’an, which he

describes as “a warrior code committed to global conquest – by the sword, if necessary” (2006: 144). Hagee evinces a similar view of the Qur’an, claiming that it requires Muslim nations to fight against any non-Muslim nation, no matter how powerful, in order to advance the cause of Muslim domination of the world (2006: 36). Shoebat also has much to say about world domination, declaring, for example, that the “eventual conquest and complete Islamization of the earth is as natural an expectation for most Muslims as the rising of the sun. Muslims have a sense of entitlement, feeling as if world domination is simply their destiny” (2010: 449). Because of their monomaniacal focus on world domination, Muslims allow themselves to commit all sorts of atrocities according to Christian Zionist leaders. Missler proclaims, “The Western mind cannot grasp the ethic that *anything* that advances the cause of Islam is to be extolled: murder, lies, deceit, etc.” (2006: 149). Muslims are constructed as the personification of evil, not only condoning but celebrating sinful, violent actions.

While a desire for world domination is presented as an essential component of Islam, of even greater relevance for the Genesis 12:3 narrative is the assertion that this desire focuses intensely upon the nation of Israel. Christian Zionist leaders emphasize that Muslims throughout the world are wholeheartedly committed to Israel’s obliteration. Claiming that Muhammad dreamed of Islamic world domination, Hagee warns, “The first step in fulfilling Muhammad’s dream is the destruction of Israel” (2006: 42). Missler magnifies this threat by declaring that one of Islam’s “primary goals” is to:

wipe Israel and the Jews off the map. ... This legacy of hate that focuses on the Jews – and includes the Christians – has always been the obsession of Islam, and this clearly identifies it as satanic. Islam’s agenda is the same as that of the Pharaoh who slaughtered the babies in the book of Exodus; Haman’s attempts in the days of Esther; Hitler’s pursuit of the ‘final solution’; and it will continue with the final world leader pursuit at Armageddon. (2006: 148)

An argument which Christian Zionist leaders commonly express is that Muslims are consumed by a longing for Israel’s annihilation because the veracity of the Qur’an would be undermined if Israel is not destroyed. Hagee writes, “Islam believes the prophet Muhammad taught absolute truth – that it is God’s (Allah’s) will for them to rule the earth. Therefore, if Islam does not defeat Israel, Muhammad and the Quran were wrong – and that’s absolutely unthinkable. Therefore, they must defeat Israel. ... If Israel survives, then Islamic theology is not true” (2006: 35). Shoebat offers this argument as well, concluding that “Allah is not God” for Muslims if Israel continues to exist (2010: 38). According to Christian Zionist leaders, the stakes could not be higher for Muslims to seek the destruction of Israel, since the foundations of their religion would irreparably crumble if this destruction does not transpire.

The Genesis 12:3 Narrative

Importantly, these leaders maintain that the stakes are just as high for Americans, because their nation too may be destroyed if they do not support Israel against Palestinians. Based on their exposition of Genesis 12:3, these leaders exhort congregations and readers to support Israel and therefore receive God’s blessings instead of God’s curses. According to Hagee, the “Word could not be plainer: if you want the blessing of God upon your life, you must *bless* Israel, not *curse* it with hatred, persecution, and murder” (2006: 63-64). Hagee

quotes Genesis 12:3 and declares, “Entire books could be written on how that blessing and cursing have dramatically impacted human history. It is an undeniable fact that the man or the nation that has blessed Israel has been blessed of God, and to the man or the nation that cursed Israel the judgment of God came in spades” (2007: 111). Hagee follows this quotation with numerous biblical stories, seeking to demonstrate an irrefutable pattern of God’s blessings upon those who have assisted the people of Israel and God’s curses upon those who have harmed them in some manner. Christian Zionist leaders contend that this pattern is just as certain during any time period as it was during biblical times. Shoebat writes, “What was promised to Abraham, ‘I will curse those who curse you and bless those who bless you’ still stands. It has no expiration date” (2010: 52). It is noteworthy that Shoebat reverses the order of the words in Genesis 12:3, placing the idea of cursing before blessing, since like other Christian Zionist leaders he warns of curses more frequently than speaking of God’s blessings. Shoebat tells his readers that God’s commitment to curse those who harm the people of Israel is “a proven law with much historical evidence that no logical man can deny. Nothing could be more self-fulfilling” (2010: 52), and he exemplifies this claim by citing numerous historical examples including the death of Hitler. Significantly, Christian Zionist leaders proclaim that America is currently receiving such curses from God. Evans makes the startling statement that there is “absolutely no question that God’s hedge of protection was lifted from America. September 11 was a curse on our beloved nation, but worse is the fact that most Americans don’t understand why it happened. I believe it will happen again, and again and again, and much worse, if Americans do not wake up to the truth” (2005: 14). Thus the Genesis 12:3 narrative proposes the following message: As demonstrated categorically by biblical examples and by recent history, America must support Israel lest an event even more devastating than September 11 will occur.

Intrinsic to this message is also the idea that whether or not Americans support Israel is a choice characterized by urgency. Christian Zionist leaders profess the omnipotence and sovereignty of God, yet these divine attributes are not believed to preclude God from giving humans the responsibility to make choices which could have tremendous historical consequences. Noting biblical precedents such as God’s desire to allow Abraham to intercede for inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah before these cities’ destruction, Evans writes, “While many may think that the fulfillment of biblical prophecy is a sovereign act of God, the Scriptures themselves indicate that we can choose to be on the blessing or cursing side of prophecy” (2005: 29). Not all Americans, however, are capable of making this choice according to Christian Zionist leaders. In the context of quoting Genesis 12:3, Evans declares, “God-fearing Americans must stand up now before it is too late” (2005: 212), since they alone are equipped to make the requisite choice for the sake of America as a whole.

Considering the urgency of this choice, the Genesis 12:3 narrative especially emphasizes kairoic time, in which the present is accentuated as a moment in history when American Christians must make an existential decision bearing incalculable significance. Evans declares, “There has never been a more urgent time for Americans to act with moral clarity than today, yet there has also never been a time in which we have seemed more duplicitous. The future of our nation, as well as our world, hangs in the balance between our action and our apathy” (2005: 20-21). Hagee also displays this kairoic dimension of time, uttering, “America is at the crossroads! Will we believe and obey the Word of God concerning Israel, or will we continue to equivocate and sympathize with Israel’s enemies?” (2006: 193). Constructing Islam, the religion of most Palestinians, as essentially evil and violent, Christian Zionist leaders seek to make this choice extremely obvious, as if there were

no need whatsoever to even question the position that the United States should support Israel rather than its malignant Palestinian “enemies.”

A Product of the Genesis 12:3 Narrative: Denial of Palestinian Land Possession

Christian Zionist leaders aim to provide no doubt that American Christians must choose to support Israel. Recognizing the vagueness of this directive, however, the question must be raised regarding what exactly this support might entail. Victoria Clark addresses this question, quoting Genesis 12:3 and then stating that “blessing” Israel has involved many Christian Zionists “in opposing any peace process, in supporting the continued building of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, in funding those internationally outlawed settlements and in backing an extreme right-wing Israeli plan to ‘transfer’ the Palestinians to neighbouring Arab states” (2007: 12). Most prominently, Christian Zionist leaders have demanded that the United States must not urge Israel to give up any land or sign peace treaties with Palestinian authorities. According to these leaders, God promised the land of Israel to the Jewish people not only for biblical times but forever. Hagee asserts that “God gave the Jewish people the land of Israel by divine covenant. (See Genesis 15:17-21; 17:7-8.) That covenant is a blood covenant; it is eternal and unbreakable” (2007: 53), and he references numerous biblical passages to maintain that the creation of the nation of Israel in 1948 was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy (2006: 35). In addition to claiming that Israel has a divine mandate for the land it currently possesses, Christian Zionist leaders assert that Palestinians have no right to any land, including the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Hagee writes that Palestinians have no right to the land of Israel, because it was given to Abraham’s descendants through the lineage of Isaac rather than Ishmael, the “father of Arabs” who “was excluded from the title deed to the land in Genesis 17:19-21” (2006: 196). Hagee also maintains he has historical support for his position, stating:

The land of Israel has never belonged to Palestinians. Never! It was labeled Palaestina by the Roman emperor Hadrian in A.D. 130, but there has never been a land called Palestine. There is no Palestinian language. Before 1948, the people now called Palestinians lived in Egypt. They lived in Syria. They lived in Iraq. They moved into the land of Israel when they were displaced by the war of 1948, which the Arab nations started, but Israel is not occupying territory these people now call home. Referring to Israel as ‘occupied territory’ is propaganda. (2007: 58-59)

Missler challenges Palestinian possession of land with a similar argument, declaring that “there has never been a country of Palestine ruled by Palestinians” (2006: 130). For Christian Zionist leaders, Israel has no reason to relinquish any land and must not do so since this would violate the will of God.

These leaders proclaim that the United States will experience dire consequences if it plays a role in Israeli loss of land. Hagee declares that any nation “that forces Israel to ‘divide the land’ will come under the swift and certain judgment of God” (2007: 53-54), a fate which he portends for the United States if it asks Israel to withdraw from territory or enter into treaties with Palestinians. In order to prevent this scenario, Hagee implores his readers to place pressure on members of American government, saying, “Every Christian in America has a biblical mandate to stand in absolute solidarity with Israel and demand that our leaders in Washington stop recommending Israel’s withdrawal as the solution to every conflict that arises in the Middle East” (2007: 53-54). Furthermore, Christian Zionist leaders especially

warn against American involvement in land deals linked to peace treaties with Palestinians, because followers of Islam allegedly can never be trusted to uphold their terms of a treaty. Shoebat contends, “To the Muslim mind, treaties are not binding agreements, but rather opportunities to grow stronger while buying time or to appear peaceful while preparing for war. But make no mistake; making peace treaties with the infidels simply for the sake of peace is never the ultimate goal. The only goal of Islam is victory over the whole world” (2010: 120). Missler turns to the beginning of Islamic history to illustrate this allegation, claiming that Muhammad made a peace treaty with his own tribe, the Quraysh, but then violated the treaty and killed his fellow tribesmen after gaining military strength two years later. According to Missler, this event “is not just historical incident: it is *celebrated* to this day” (2006: 149). Because of this purported Islamic attitude towards treaties, Shoebat admonishes his readers not to adopt misguided optimism about Palestinian involvement in peace agreements, announcing, “This is 1938 all over again” (2010: 456). Raising the fearful specter of Hitler and his scorning of attempts to effect peace, Shoebat suggests that tragedy of Holocaust-like proportions will result if Americans trust Palestinians to faithfully uphold any treaty with Israel.

Consistent with their application of Genesis 12:3, Christian Zionist leaders emphasize that such a tragedy may affect not only Israel but the United States as well if America pressures Israel to give up land or enter into treaty agreements with Palestinian authorities. Hagee declares, “America is very vulnerable to terrorist attacks in the future, whose consequences could be much more severe than the three thousand lives lost on 9/11. This is not a time to provoke God and defy Him to pour our His judgment on our nation for being a principal force in the division of the land of Israel” (2006: 194). Reflecting its enormous importance for Christian Zionists, Jerusalem appears especially prominently in these warnings, as Christian Zionist leaders condemn any plan to divide the city. Evans proclaims that the “nations that divided Jerusalem will be cursed beyond their ability to comprehend. If that happens, no amount of prayer or repentance will reverse the curse on that nation” (2005: 167). Evans then focuses specifically on the United States, warning, “If America divides Jerusalem, there will be no forgiveness. America will tragically end up on the ash heap of history” (2005: 167). Conjuring images of the events of September 11, Christian Zionist leaders encourage their congregations and readers to imagine the occurrence of something much more cataclysmic if they do not actively oppose the division of Israel, especially Jerusalem.

A Product of the Genesis 12:3 Narrative: Dehumanization of Palestinians

Occasionally Christian Zionist leaders refer explicitly to Palestinians in order to claim they are not an actual people group. Hagee makes this position extremely clear, stating that “the Palestinians have *never* existed as an autonomous society” (2007: 176). For Missler, Palestinian identity is not simply called into question; it is expressly denied and transferred to Jewish inhabitants of Israel. He writes that the “Jewish people are the real Palestinians. They have a documented three-thousand-year history in that land” (2006: 130). Such statements which explicitly deny Palestinians’ existence as a people group can powerfully affect Christian Zionist laypeople’s conception of Palestinians. What is not as readily apparent, however, is that this conception may also be dramatically shaped by the implicit treatment of Palestinians inherent within the Genesis 12:3 narrative. For the most part, throughout this narrative Palestinians are an unnamed people, subsumed under the reified label “Islam.” In addition to obfuscating the fact that not all Palestinians are Muslims, this tendency to discuss

“Islam” rather than “Palestinians” may effectively make Palestinians invisible in the Genesis 12:3 narrative, similar to the writings of 19th century travelers. While the humanity of Americans and Jewish inhabitants of Israel takes center stage in the Genesis 12:3 narrative, since their existence hangs perilously in the balance due to potential imminent destruction, the humanity of Palestinians is not brought to light.

Melani McAlister draws attention to an analogous phenomenon in the *Left Behind* series, a set of novels and movies which achieved tremendous popularity among Christian Zionists during the 1990s and first decade of the 21st century. Noting that no Palestinian Arabs play a role in the series even though much of its action takes place in or near Jerusalem, McAlister concludes that Palestinians “are simply outside the representational possibilities of the *Left Behind* world. Dick Arme’s suggestion that the Palestinians should be removed from the West Bank and Gaza, and Pat Robertson’s insistence that Israel should never compromise one bit of land, are enacted within the novels as wish fulfillment: there is no Palestinian problem on the evangelical map” (2003: 791-792). Similar to the *Left Behind* series, the Genesis 12:3 narrative tends to remove Palestinians from Christian Zionist consciousness, maintaining its focus on reified Islam instead. Concentrating on Islam rather than Palestinians befits post-September 11 America, since Christian Zionist leaders build upon widespread associations between Islam and violence to augment the sense of impending threat they desire to create. As a result, not only does Islam become more sinister in the minds of Christian Zionists, but the existence of Palestinians continues to remain in the background, if acknowledged at all.

Furthermore, for those Christian Zionist laypeople who encounter the Genesis 12:3 narrative and nonetheless recognize Palestinians’ existence, the Genesis 12:3 narrative promotes an additional dehumanizing effect, namely an inability to recognize the human dignity of Palestinians. Due to the Genesis 12:3 narrative’s thoroughly unfavorable depiction of Islam, Palestinian Muslims are implicitly cast as essentially violent and evil, lacking human dignity. Moreover, they are implicitly presented as absolute foils to Jewish inhabitants of Israel. As illustrated by Hagee, Christian Zionist leaders regularly proclaim that “the religious beliefs of Islam and Israel remain in total opposition to each other” (2006: 42). Lauding the virtue of Jewish inhabitants of Israel while simultaneously denigrating Palestinians, Shoebat declares, “Jews love peace. In fact, when I speak at Jewish events I always quote Golda Meir: ‘We will have peace when the Arabs love their children more than they hate us.’ Their faces shine at such a phrase, they love Golda’s wisdom” (2010: 100). Hagee also extols Jewish inhabitants of Israel in distinction to their Muslim neighbors, insisting that the Israeli system of government, crafted by Jews, stands alone as a regional exemplar. According to Hagee, Israel “is the only true democracy in the Middle East. It is an island in a sea of radical Muslims screaming for the death of every *infidel* (non-Muslim)” (2007: 174).

Employing this Manichean mindset, the Genesis 12:3 narrative dehumanizes Palestinian Muslims. As Charles Strozier and Katharine Boyd argue, this type of dualistic thought causes one to “see others in very partial terms – as part-objects,” so that one loses “the ability to imagine the inner world and humanity of others” (2010: 14), especially of those characterized on the nefarious side of this dualism. Reflecting upon Edward Said’s analysis of Orientalism, Douglas Little asserts that such bifurcated understanding concerning Israel and Palestinians promotes the mindset that Palestinians “represent ‘terrorism’ and little beyond it” (1993: 260-261). Inhibited from imagining the inner world of Palestinians, viewing them uniformly as terrorists and adherents of a malevolent religion, Christian Zionists who encounter the Genesis 12:3 narrative are conditioned to disregard Palestinians’ human dignity. While this potential effect should not be deemed inevitable, as if all Christian

Zionists will inexorably adopt such a mindset due to the Genesis 12:3 narrative, its possibility to become actualized must be acknowledged. As I will discuss in the following section, such acknowledgement is especially important because whereas Christian Zionists are exhorted to devote their energy, prayers, and resources to rescuing the Jews of Israel as well as themselves from imminent destruction, lack of regard for Palestinians' human dignity may manifest itself in Christian Zionists desiring Palestinians' destruction.

A Product of the Genesis 12:3 Narrative: Justification of Violence against Palestinians

As numerous authors have addressed, when one group fails to recognize the humanity of another, a desire for and justification of violence against this other group may readily ensue. James Waller presents what he calls the "psychological construction of the other," arguing that people are much more likely to kill others if they are conceived as fundamentally dissimilar from oneself (2007). Amin Maalouf considers the tendency to believe, once dichotomized categories of us and them have been constructed, that "[w]hatever happens 'the others' will have deserved it" (2001: 27). Roderick Hart also discusses this matter, proposing that every community identifies an "uncommunity," a group which has "mindfully chosen a course different from our own and pursued it with abandon." According to Hart, "By invoking the uncommunity – graphically, athletically – society's leaders get us to take risks we otherwise would not take. They make us see the Other in his full depravity, and they embolden us as a result" (2008: xxv). This boldness may take the form of violence against the other community, which the perpetrators and their allies condone since the victims are viewed as wicked beings who deserve these actions.

Such approval of violence against Palestinians can be linked to the Genesis 12:3 narrative, as demonstrated by the staunch advocacy of Israeli military action against Palestinians which is expressed by all four Christian Zionist leaders discussed in this article. Hagee proclaims, "It's time, as friends, for us to say, 'Israel, we stand with you – and enough is enough! You have the right to attack your terrorist enemies just as America has the right to attack ours!'" (2007: 82). Evans insists that "America will have to allow Israel to fight their war against terrorism that has never been fought" (2005: 9), and Missler declares that "Israel has the God-given right to defend itself against terrorism" (2006: 135). Additionally, Shoebat entreats readers to support what he identifies as a divinely ordained Israeli "war on terror" against Palestinians (2010: 52). Even though these leaders may not endorse direct American military action against Palestinians, similar to Evans's call in his 2003 *Beyond Iraq* for American preemptive strikes against Iraq, they nonetheless clearly desire for violent actions to be carried out against Palestinians by Israeli forces.

Importantly, two tendencies of Christian Zionist leaders may lead laypeople to uncritically accept these leaders' ideas, thereby increasing the likelihood for laypeople to justify and desire acts of violence against Palestinians. First, Christian Zionist leaders commonly present an ethos of unique personal authority, which seeks to negate any doubt regarding the veracity of their claims. Remarkably similar to comments made by Evans, Hagee boasts, "I have been going to Israel regularly since 1978 and over the years have developed a network of highly qualified and strategically placed confidential sources that have a very clear and certain focus on critical geopolitical developments in Israel and the Middle East" (2006: 13). Shoebat is especially noteworthy in this regard, as he regularly emphasizes his status as "a former Palestinian terrorist" to generate a sense of definitive personal authority. In *God's War on Terror*, he tells readers that they:

will find an extensive course on the subject of Islam as predicted in the Bible. I will provide you with a fresh understanding of Biblical prophecy from an Eastern perspective and insight into the Bible as viewed by an ex-Muslim terrorist. I realize that these are not the greatest qualifications, particularly because I am not even a seminary graduate – but neither were many of Jesus’ disciples. He chose Paul, a terrorist against Christians, and He transformed him into one of the greatest Christian ambassadors that has ever lived. Like Paul, I persecuted God’s people, and like Christ, I was born in the same village as the King of Kings. (2010: 23)

Placing himself in such mythic proportions, Shoebat aims to create an aura of authority similar to what his readers would attribute to the Bible. Second, uncritical acceptance of Christian Zionist leaders’ ideas may result from their tendency to impute divine mandate upon their narrative, as if obedience to God requires acceptance of whatever they say. In order to accentuate this sense of divine mandate, Christian Zionist leaders occasionally contend that the events which they describe are not a matter of politics, which is ultimately a human affair, but rather of divine providence. Evans proclaims, “The Scriptures call on us to speak out. The battle being fought over Jerusalem is not politics – it’s prophecy. It’s not a foreign policy battle, but a heavenly battle!” (2005: 145). Along these lines Evans recounts his role in a 1981 meeting with American president Ronald Reagan’s staff and American generals and admirals regarding the sale of military planes to Saudi Arabia, a proposal which Evans identified as contrary to God’s will. In response to being asked, “What does God know about foreign policy?” Evans exclaimed, “He is foreign policy!” (2005: 15). This type of assertion seeks to quash disagreement and doubt, suggesting there is no need to even consider alternative viewpoints since God has already settled the matter.

While these two tendencies may play a significant role in stimulating a desire by Christian Zionist laypeople for violence against Palestinians, the sense of fear created by the Genesis 12:3 narrative plays an even greater role. Unlike the 19th century narrative, which was grounded in American confidence, the Genesis 12:3 narrative, with its threat of cataclysmic American destruction, promotes a desire to prevent this destruction through acts of violence. Such eagerness for violence in response to a sense of threat is characteristic of a contemporary American attitude towards fear, highlighted by Peter Stearns. For 20th and 21st century Americans, fear is “unacceptable, an emotion that, if it cannot be prevented, legitimizes both lament and retaliation” (2006: 114). Arguing that they have been socialized to overreact to fear “from a combination of inexperience, learned resentment, and a quest for reassurance,” Stearns states that contemporary Americans “respond to fear as a highly individual emotional affront ... which someone, somehow should both punish and assuage” (2006: 114). With the Genesis 12:3 narrative identifying Islam and its Palestinian followers as an ominous threat to Israel and therefore to America, Christian Zionists may respond to this perceived threat with a longing to punish it. In addition to this contemporary American attitude towards fear, a feature of the Genesis 12:3 narrative itself connects this narrative with a desire for violent actions against Palestinians. As J. Robert Cox explains, the likelihood of committing and justifying acts of violence against another group increases greatly when this group is considered to be a threat against something viewed as irreparable. Cox argues that in such situations “actors may feel justified in going to extreme lengths to block or forestall the loss of something rare, precious, or unique. ... [T]he locus of the irreparable may be said to warrant ‘extraordinary’ measures – actions which go beyond the usual, customary, or what most people would approve” (1998: 152). Emphasizing the presence of imminent danger to Israel and the United States, nations depicted by Christian

Zionist leaders as “rare, precious, or unique,” the Genesis 12:3 narrative can easily spur Christian Zionist laypeople to approve of “extraordinary measures” of violence against Palestinians, since they are held responsible for this threat to the irreparable. Thus the advocacy of military action against Palestinians becomes no longer merely the desire of a few Christian Zionist leaders but a shared conviction held by a substantial number of Christian Zionist laypeople.

CONCLUSION

According to philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, authentic communication involves dialogue, a “game of giving and taking” (1977: 56) between a self and another which leads to the enrichment of that self through what is disclosed in the dialogue. Absorbed in the back and forth movement of dialogue, one gains new insight into one’s existence in the world as well as that of others. Crucial to this process is openness to another person or a text through asking questions, which allows one to be addressed and influenced by something other. Gadamer writes, “To ask a question means to bring into the open. The openness of what is in question consists in the fact that the answer is not settled” (1975: 326), thereby necessitating the asking of more questions. For Gadamer, dialogue features an ongoing interplay of questions and answers which call for new questions to be posed, enabling someone and another person or text to come to mutual understanding. This understanding is continually provisional, however; Gadamer’s conception of dialogue is an open-ended process which does not seek total comprehension but rather pushes for ever greater understanding.

Contrary to Gadamer’s model of dialogue, the mindset undergirding the Genesis 12:3 narrative does not welcome open-ended questioning and provisional understanding. Answers are already settled in this dichotomized good vs. evil worldview which shuns any acknowledgement of ambiguity in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Jason Bivins states that this type of worldview is endemic to a “religion of fear,” which “asks us to see not only political life but human existence as fixed and settled; it contends that a single, irrevocable choice (us or them, in or out, identity or a self adrift) can serve as a surrogate for the messy indeterminacy of public life. ... The religion of fear has slowly constructed a frame through which public life is seen in terms of conflict rather than cooperation and dialogue” (2008: 233-234). While “conflict” may arguably be an appropriate label to characterize contemporary Israeli-Palestinian relations, the fear-based mindset infusing the Genesis 12:3 narrative effectively obstructs Christian Zionists from even considering this relationship as an opportunity for cooperation and dialogue rather than an insoluble conflict. Furthermore, within this mindset, cooperation and dialogue with Palestinians are viewed as preposterous since they are antithetical to the binary thought in which this mentality finds security.

As Stuart Croft points out in his analysis of the American “war on terror,” when the enemy is viewed as “evil,” this enemy “cannot be accommodated, it can only be destroyed” (2006: 104). Considering Christian Zionist leaders’ intolerance to accommodate the Palestinian “enemy” through cooperation and dialogue, a desire for their destruction may very well be seen as the only viable option. In his 2002 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, former American president Jimmy Carter proclaimed, “The bond of our common humanity is stronger than the divisiveness of our fears.” Christian Zionist leaders may be correct that American Christians face an urgent choice. However, instead of the decision whether or not to support Israel as presented by the Genesis 12:3 narrative, the more

pressing decision appears to be whether to embrace the fear-conquering mentality outlined by Carter or the fear-based perspective inherent in this narrative.

ENDNOTES

¹ “Our Arabian Visitors,” *New York Morning Herald*, August 5, 1840.

² “The Dead Sea, Sodom, and Gomorrah,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 10 (1855): 187-93, 187.

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Use of Islam in the Definition of Foreign Otherness in Switzerland: A Comparative Analysis of Media Discourses Between 1970-2004

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ISLAMOPHOBIA STUDIES JOURNAL
VOLUME 2, NO. 1, SPRING 2014, PP. 44-58.

Published by:
Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project,
Center for Race and Gender, University of California, Berkeley.

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***Use of Islam in the Definition of Foreign Otherness in Switzerland: A
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INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, Switzerland has become well known for its strict policies of immigration and minority integration, especially after three votes from 2004: the rejection to facilitate naturalization, the expulsion of foreign criminals, and the banning of the construction of minarets. Citizens voted for each of these initiatives in Switzerland using a direct democratic system. The influence of the media on the decision-making of voters is central to understanding these decisions, resulting in the need to investigate the media discourses concerning foreigners. In this context, several sociologists have suggested that foreigners in Switzerland are mostly represented as Muslims in media and public debates. More specifically, Martin Behloul claims that an Islamization of public debates has been at work since the beginning of the 21st century and that the representation of immigrants has shifted from “immigrated / foreign workers” to “Muslims” (Behloul, 2009). Moreover, it is often stipulated that the “typical foreigner” in Switzerland shifted from Italian workers to Muslims between the 60s-70s and the 2000s, changing the discourse from “italophobic” to “islamophobic” (Helbling, 2008). Other studies have focused on the representation of Muslims in the Swiss media and public debates, whether they were categorized as immigrants or not (Ettinger & Imhof, 2006). Their results revealed that the media and public discourse used notions based on Islamic terrorism, criminality, and religious ideology as its basis for the treatment of Muslims. While some scientists analyzed these representations in newspaper commentaries in the US (Joseph & D’Harlingue, 2012), others chose to shed light on the ones present in literature over the centuries (Gottschalk & Greenberg). Finally, scientific investigations have been carried out to understand and explain Islamophobia in its various manifestations in the Western world over both time and space (Grosfoguel, 2012). These studies look at the way newspapers and literature address the thematic associations of Muslims in the United States and Europe, in parallel to studies dealing with Islamophobia in a more general way (Stolz, 2005).

What is lacking from the literature are studies that empirically show just how the construction of otherness and Islam have changed in the past decades, and that cross the study of Islamophobia and migration. More specifically it seems important to test the claim that the construction of “Muslim immigrant” has replaced the “Italian worker.” Through our research, we are filling this gap by analyzing Swiss newspapers in order to see *how and to what extent Swiss newspapers of 2004 and 1970 differ in the use of the (presumed) affiliation to Islam to define foreign otherness (in comparison to other features).*

Was religion, more specifically Islam, an important criterion in defining otherness in journalistic entries thirty years earlier? Is it true that Muslims have become the predominant immigrant figure of the 21st century? Does the Muslim presence in newspaper representations parallel their sociological existence in Switzerland? And finally, what are the themes used to frame media discourses on Muslims in comparison to other figures of foreigners? These questions will structure the present paper, broken down into six parts that address each question. Their answers shed light on the construction of the “foreign Muslim” in newspapers in Switzerland, along with testing claims and hypotheses never verified heretofore.

SOCIOLOGICAL, TEMPORAL, AND MATERIAL DELIMITATIONS

Our aim is not to determine what the category of “Muslim foreigner” is “in its essence” or what it should mean sociologically, but how it is *represented* as a *constructed category* in journalistic discourses. The journalistic and sociological realities have to be distinguished and may – but do not have to – overlap. We can indeed question the terms “foreigner” and “Muslim,” in the sense that they ignore and conceal the extreme sociological diversity and cultural heterogeneity inherent in these groups amalgamated under such denominations. However, since the aim of this study is to analyze their representation, we assume that “foreign Muslim” refers to *every individual defined in the Swiss newspapers as a non-Swiss citizen living in Switzerland and affiliated with Islam, independent from the criteria upon which these definitions are based*. In order to facilitate the reading of this paper, no quotation marks are going to be used. In addition, the expression of “foreign otherness” will refer to the *result of the designation, by the Swiss media, of people considered as distinct of the Swiss society (other) and non-citizen (foreign)*.

In terms of temporal definition, we chose the years 1970 and 2004 according to specific criteria: the years analyzed had to contain an important vote concerning immigration, based on the expectation that the number of articles and public debates would intensify right before and after the vote. For that reason, only the articles appearing two weeks before and two weeks after have been sampled. Popular initiatives are particularly interesting because they can be considered as “excellent indicators of the nature and the evolution of discourses” (Windisch, 2002, translation ours). In 1970, the Swiss were called upon to decide the fate of the people’s initiative “*against foreignization*” (*Überfremdung*), proposed by the politician James Schwarzenbach in order to dramatically reduce the percentage of foreigners, and it was rejected on June 7, 1970. At this time, foreigners made up 17% of the resident population, which constitutes an increase of 85% percent in the former ten years. Italians represented half of this population,¹ while 2% of this same foreign population was identified as Muslim.² Thirty-four years later, the people’s initiative on “*facilitated naturalization for foreigners of second and third generations*” was rejected on September 26, 2004. It aimed to facilitate the “*naturalization*” (obtaining the Swiss citizenship) of first and second generations of immigrants, since *jus soli* does not exist in Switzerland. In 2004, Switzerland counted 22% foreigners, most of whom were Italian,³ and 20% of the resident foreign population was Muslim.⁴ Both initiatives involved the degree of accessibility to Switzerland and its institutions for foreigners in general (not specifically for Muslims), allowing for comparability of the way Islam is or is not used in order to define otherness.

METHODOLOGY

Our analyses aim to analyze how media discourses construct Muslim foreigners in comparison to other representations of immigrants - in 1970 and 2004. Consequently - concerning our *research design* - this study is a so-called “controlled comparison,” being circumscribed in relatively short lapses of time and in a small-scale geographical space.

Our *sampling* was conducted as follows. The media discourses under exploration were gathered in two different newspapers: *Le Temps* and *Le Matin* in 2004, and their predecessors *La Tribune de Genève* and *Le Journal de Genève*, and *La Gazette de Lausanne* respectively for 1970. The former is known as a popular daily paper and the latter belongs to a higher standard of journalism. Both of them are French-speaking daily newspapers, ensuring that there is no bias due to regional variations. Only articles dealing with foreigners in Switzerland were sampled.

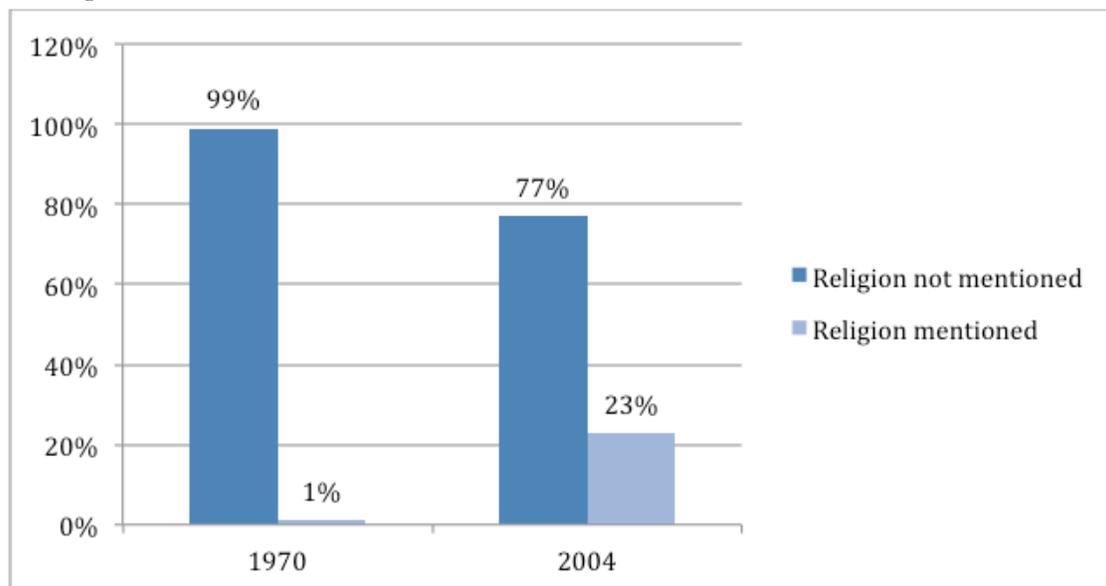
Our method is a *Media Content Analysis*, understood as a “research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952). More specifically, we chose to use the *core sentence* method: the unit of analysis is the core sentence, made up by a subject and its relation to an object. In this context, the subject is the enunciator – or the subject presented as such – and the object is the foreign otherness. The relation is the attitude of the former toward the latter, seen as an “index of the degree to which a person likes or dislikes an object, where ‘object’ is used in the generic sense to refer to any aspect of the individual’s world. [...] irrespective of the object under consideration, the attitude is determined by the person’s salient beliefs about that object” (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

Frames are used in these discourses to orient the reading of the issues with which the media deals. In other words, “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993). Finally, each element constituent of the core sentences was coded according to its characteristics and its intensity for the attitudes, measured on a scale ranging from -1 to 1. The entire sample was made up of 433 articles, from which 2,217 core sentences have been selected and coded. After the statistical analyses had been processed, we could present the following results.

RELIGION: A NEW TOOL IN THE DEFINITION OF FOREIGN OTHERNESS

In 2004, religious affiliation, real or assigned, was a new feature mentioned in the newspapers when they dealt with immigrant issues, while it was almost totally absent thirty-four years earlier. In fact, as *Figure 1* clearly shows, religion is mentioned in 23% of the coded core sentences in 2004, whereas it is noted in only 1% of those in 1970, which consists of a dramatic increase in the use of religion in the definition of foreign otherness in the 21st century.

Figure 1 Percentage of the mention and absence of mention of the religion in the definition of foreign otherness.



Along with the increase of references to religious affiliation, we observed an important decrease in the number of generic terms used to designate the “foreign other.” The relationship between these two variables is statistically significant (Cramer's $V = 0.404$): in other words, the probability of using generic terminology to categorize foreigners decreases when a reference alludes to their religious affiliation. The mere allusion to religion is sufficient to set a boundary between the Swiss *in-group* and the *out-group*. This trend is particularly visible in an anti-naturalization campaign published in *Le Temps*, in which its committee states that the increase in the number of Muslims will make them a majority in Switzerland within twenty years:

*No other religious community increases as fast as the Muslim one. In 1970, 4000 inhabitants of the canton of Zurich declared belonging to Islam. It represents one inhabitant out of 280. In 1990, Muslims were already 30,700 in the canton of Zurich. This number has doubled until 2000 where approximately 67,000 Muslims were registered in the canton. [...] on the Swiss level as well, we notice that the number of Muslims doubled in a lapse of time of ten years. If this evolution continues, Muslims will soon be the majority in the country.*⁵ (“Muslims soon the majority?” *Le Temps*, September 19, 2004)

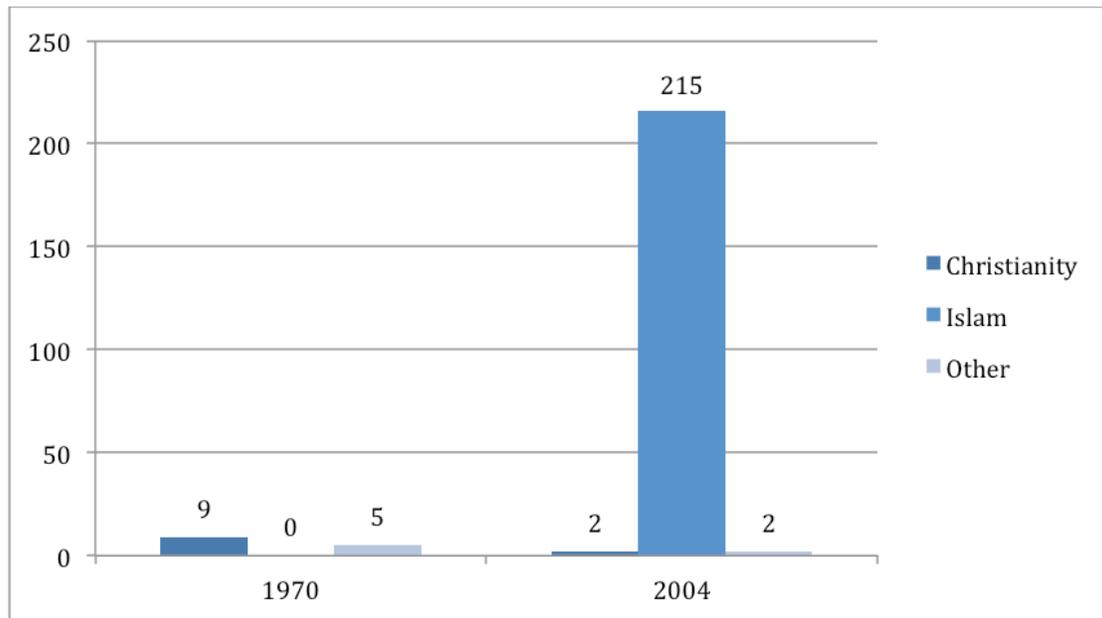
This example suggests that there exists, in media discourses, an absence of distinction between Swiss Muslim and non-Swiss Muslim, leading to the equation “Muslim = foreigner”, even though the distinction is present in the official population census used in this campaign.

ISLAMIZATION OF MEDIA DISCOURSES ON IMMIGRATION

Religion thus appeared in media discourses on immigration at the beginning of the 21st century, while it was almost nonexistent three decades earlier. But which religions are mentioned in Swiss newspapers and to what extent? Our analysis clearly shows that the only

religious affiliation designated to foreigners in the sampled articles is Islam, since less than 1% of the core sentences of 2004 refers to other religions. These two new trends – increase of references to religion and focus on Islam – corroborate Behloul’s hypothesis stating that an Islamization of public debates has been at work since the turn of the century. Concretely, public debates would frame the discourse on immigration through religious identity and a concentration on immigrants from Islamic countries would supplant the former focus on Italian workers of the 70s. Indeed, as *Figure 2* highlights, the mentioning of Islamic affiliation was totally absent in 1970, but appears in an overwhelming majority in 2004.

Figure 2 Religions mentioned in the core sentences referring to religion, by year and in absolute numbers in 2004.



Compared to 1970, it is important to evoke the particularity of constructing a specific *out-group* on the basis of its – supposed – affiliation to a religion in the media of 2004. This should have been expected for 1970, when Italian workers were mostly Catholic and migrated to protestant Swiss cantons. This antagonism and an idea of a catholic invasion were, in fact, discussed in public debates and were present on the popular minds at that time, as this extract suggests:

*This time, M. Schwarzenbach highlights the necessity of defending Swiss particularisms, and stimulates the fright of the Helvetian to be overwhelmed by aliens. In passing, he raises the specter of the massive arrival of Catholics that will dominate and set their own mark on a protestant minority. The leadership of the movement wrote a letter to the evangelical Church to warn it [...].⁶ (“Campaign review”, *Tribune de Lausanne*, June 2, 1970)*

The construction of a catholic otherness and a protestant *in-group* was at work in the Swiss society of the 70s. However, and surprisingly, it did not appear in the other articles of this year, suggesting that journalists did not consider this criterion to be pertinent at this time. Thus, the construction of a foreign otherness based on the criteria of Islamic affiliation

is specific to the 21st century. What is more, the almost unique mentioning of Islam at the expense of other religions implicitly sets another equation: foreigners affiliated to a religious tradition are necessarily Muslim, since other religions are not represented when foreigners are discussed in Swiss newspapers. This also echoes Behloul's thesis, stating that migrants from Islamic countries are mostly defined through their religious belonging (Behloul, 2009), ignoring other features such as social or professional background, language, geographic origin, or even the goal of migration.

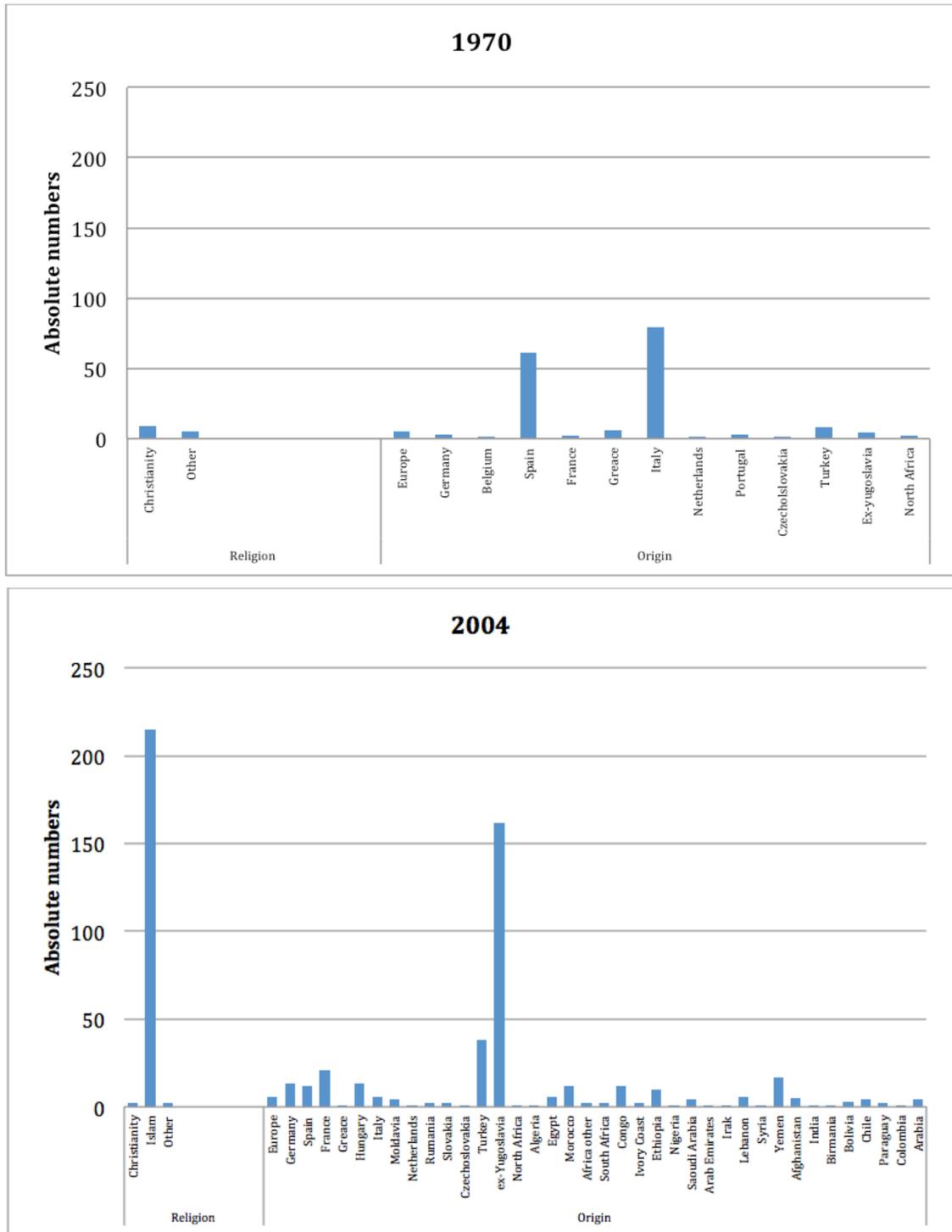
MUSLIMS FOREIGNERS AMONG OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Such results could bring support to sociological theses and hypotheses involving the typical representation of how foreigners evolved from Italian worker to Muslim between these years (Behloul, 2009). However, other analyses of our samples reveal that the state of affairs is more complex.

First of all, the assumption that the typical foreigner in Switzerland during the 1970s was the Italian worker needs to be revisited. Further analyses of our sample allowed us to assert that another figure of foreigner, numerically as important as Italians, was present in newspapers in 1970 despite the fact that they are totally absent from the discourse held by sociologists of migration: Spanish migrants.

A similar observation in the sampled articles of 2004 came to light, as we were now able to prove that the Muslim other was not the primary representation of a foreigner in the media discourses of this year. In reality, articles were frequently found mentioning ex-Yugoslavian foreigners. In this case, the criterion used to categorize certain people into the *out-groups* is the geographical origin, used in 40% of the core sentences coded in our 2004 sample. Moreover, an important diversification of origins is visible, in comparison to the media discourse of 1970, having increased from a dozen to almost forty nationalities. Comparative graphs (*Figure 3*) allow for a better overview of this complex landscape of media discourses: an absence of religion and important representations of Spanish and Italians in 1970, in comparison to a diversification of origins, the important figure of ex-Yugoslavian migrants, and the emergence of Muslims in the media discourses of 2004.

Figure 3 Distribution of the religions and origins mentioned, by year and in absolute numbers.



As such, it is necessary to moderate the former claims stating a shift of representation from Italian to Muslim: religion, more specifically Islam, is indeed a new and important tool in the definition of foreign otherness in the 21st century, but by a lower

percentage (25%) in comparison to the feature of geographical origin (40%). However, an important finding illustrates that, when articles refer to the (supposed) religion of foreigners, Islam seems to be mentioned almost automatically.

OVERREPRESENTATION OF MUSLIM MIGRANTS IN SWISS MEDIA

One could wonder if this focus on Muslim migrants in the newspapers reflects a sociological reality in the foreign population in Switzerland. In terms of religious affiliation, do Muslims constitute a majority of the foreigners living in Switzerland? A comparison with the official data of the population census of 2000, gathered by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO) was used to answer this question. As no census was held in 2004, we use the data of 2000.⁷

In order to set up this comparison, we use only core sentences referring to the religious affiliation, and exclude the “no affiliation” category in the OFS data. This way, only comparable categories in both “realities” are used in order to make the comparison valid.

Table 1 Comparative table of proportions of religious affiliations according to media and OFS in 2004.

Religion	SFSO Data	Media Representation
Islam	23.2%	98.2%
Christianity	72.5%	0.9%
Others	4.3%	0.9%
Total	100%	100%

A quick glance at the official data, displayed in *Table 1*, is sufficient to give a first answer to this question: although Muslims are represented in a massive majority in the media discourses referring to religious affiliation, they are in fact a minority in the sociological reality. Notice also the difference existing between the proportion of Christian foreigners in the official data and those in the articles. Even though they are the majority in the sociological reality, they are almost absent in the newspapers articles.

Thus, we can assert that Swiss newspapers represent religious affiliations of the migrant population in a way that is not in numerical accord with the sociological reality. Further analyses reveal a similar situation for the figures of ex-Yugoslavian foreigners who were overrepresented in the newspapers articles examined. In 1970 however, Italians are proportionally more important in the population than in the media, whereas it is the opposite for Spanish migrants.

As a result, such differences certainly affected the view of public opinion on the numerical importance of this minority in the country. It is therefore not surprising that one of the arguments used to reject the initiative of the “facilitated naturalizations” is that there existed a possibility that Muslims could become the majority in Swiss society, although the SFSO stated that it was statistically impossible:

*The Swiss federal statistical office (SFSO) wanted to pinpoint, on Saturday, that it was not originally the source of the extrapolations contained in the controversial announcement in preparation of the vote on facilitated naturalizations, published by several newspapers in their advertising space, included Le Temps. The 2.2% and 4.5% of Muslims respectively for 1990 and 2000 are correct, confirms the SFSO, but the projections for the years 2010 and 2040 are not plausible⁸. (“The «hateful soliloquies» of the UDC”, *Le Temps*, September 21, 2004)*

NEGATIVE DISCOURSES CONCERNING MUSLIM MIGRANTS

We have shown that a disproportionate focus on Muslim immigrants is present in Swiss newspapers from 2004 at the expense of other religious communities. What can be said about the media discourses surrounding Muslim immigrants at the level of attitudes and framing? First of all, precisions about enunciators have to be made in order to avoid any misinterpretation of our results. It is important to keep in mind that journalists not only write articles, but also transmit views, sayings, and information that are not theirs; as such, “media discourses” does not equal “journalists’ discourses.” That said, impartiality, objectivity, and fidelity of this communication are never assured. This contributes to constructing a certain media reality that does not necessarily fit with the sociological one.

By coding the core sentences regarding the attitude towards foreign otherness, ranging from -1 for very negative attitudes to +1 for very positive ones, we were able to compute the average attitude of media discourses when they were dealing with Muslim foreigners in 2004. Our findings show that, on average, Swiss media discourses are moderately negative (-0.3) when they involve Muslim foreigners. In other words, the statements transmitted in daily newspapers regarding Muslim immigrants are, on average, negative. Comparing this with the discourses presenting non-Islamic foreigners makes these findings even more significant. The average attitude towards foreign otherness without a presumed affiliation to Islam equals -0.1, which is significantly different from the average attitude towards Muslim foreigners. This verifies that when foreigners are categorized as Muslims in the Swiss newspapers of 2004, the attitude towards them is significantly more negative than when they are not defined through Islamic affiliation. In the same way, when origin is mentioned, media transmit significantly more negative attitudes than when no mention of the origin is made. We can thus assume that, when media discourses of 2004 specify some characteristics of foreigners (origin or religion), the attitudes are, on average, more negative than when they use more vague discourses.

However, a considerable standard deviation (0.8) around the mean of -0.3 suggests that an important debate, consisting of very negative and very positive comments, was at work in 2004, whereas neutral attitudes were rare. Furthermore, when we qualitatively analyze our sample of articles, it is important to point out that an enunciator rarely directly expresses very negative statements towards Muslim foreigners. On the contrary, hostile sayings are usually in the shape of reported speech attributed to other sources, as illustrated by this extract:

Can freedom of thought accommodate itself to almost explicit advocacy of hatred of the most disgusting kind – here, the aim is to oppose Muslims and Christians, to raise the specter of a quantitative invasion, the ineluctable defeat. How can we avoid foundering into paranoia in front of the repeated and omnipresent persecution in newspapers and

*rumors against Muslims, and even more Arabs?*⁹ (“Polemics provoked by the announcement on Muslims”, *Le Temps*, Septembre 22, 2004)

Here, the speaker transmits views that she/he applies to the anti-naturalizations campaign. On the other hand, very positive sayings are usually more straightforward:

*The political advertisement that Le Temps allowed three times expresses an insult to the Muslim community of Switzerland that, since decades, has demonstrated its integration in our country and the respect for our institutions*¹⁰. (“Freedom of thoughts has limitations”, *Le Temps*, September 20, 2004)

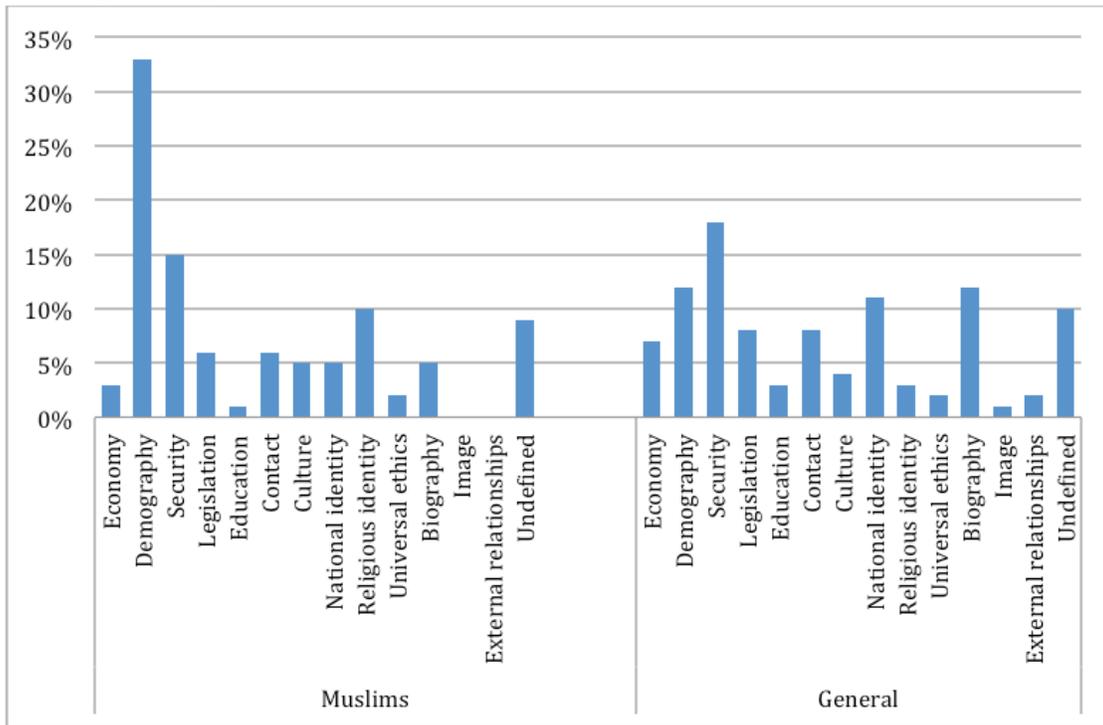
In this case, the author explicitly states her/his personal opinion on the integration of Muslim foreigners. This suggests that the enunciators, including the journalists themselves, are either careful or sympathetic when they speak about Muslim foreigners. However, since the average attitude is negative, we can assume that enunciators more frequently display negative views, even though they do not agree with these opinions. This, even though it may not necessarily be the intention of the Swiss journalists, contributes to a negative representation of Islamic immigration by offering quantitatively more negative opinions than positive alternatives.

FRAMING THE DISCOURSE ON THE MUSLIM OTHER

Besides just the attitude towards Muslim foreigners, it was also possible to analyze the way Swiss media framed the discourses surrounding these attitudes in 2004. Due to our systematic coding procedure, we were able to display the different themes of articles dealing with foreign otherness and, more specifically, with Muslim otherness. The three main themes were “pragmatism,” “identity,” and “moral considerations,” subdivided in different, more precise categories.

Regarding general trends, in comparison to 1970, we could observe that demographical and economical considerations (part of the pragmatic frames) were more employed than thirty-for years later, since half of the entire sample of 1970 resort to these two frames. In 2004, however, a diversification of frames was at work, with a noticeable increase in securitarian themes, national identity and biographical focus. The comparative graph below highlights the specificities peculiar to the discourse on Muslims in comparison to these general framing trends regarding issues about immigrants in 2004.

Figure 4 Percentages of categories of frames used in the discourse about Muslim foreigners and foreigners in general in 2004.



Due to this graph and further statistical analyses used to detect significant differences, we can assert that six out of fourteen categories of frames are different from the general discourses on foreigners, which constitutes a minority. First of all, Swiss newspapers resort to demographical and religious identity more frequently when referring to Muslim foreigners. While the second difference is passably obvious, the first is more noteworthy. As previously mentioned, the theory of a numerical invasion of Muslims in Switzerland was discussed in 2004 and stated in a poster of the anti-naturalization committee. Although the vote of September 26 concerned all immigrants, including children, it seems that the concern of a growing population of foreigners focused on Muslims. An inverse trend was observed in 1970, as demographical considerations were used in a quarter of the discourses concerning foreigners in general, but constituted only 7% of the discourse on Spanish and Italians, the main figure of foreigners at the time.

Another observable dissimilarity is a lower use of *economic*, *contact*, and *biographical* frames when core sentences dealt with Muslims. Media discourses focused more on the economical aspect of foreigners in Switzerland in general and did not necessarily link it to the specific Muslim immigration. Regarding the lesser presence of frames referring to the contact between the immigrant population (out-group) and the autochthonous population (in-group), we can speculate that this may reflect a lack of actual contact and willingness to meet and understand Muslim communities in the Swiss society. Finally, the data displayed a dramatic increase in the biographical references in the general discourses of 2004 in comparison to 1970: in other words, Swiss newspapers tended to focus more on the individual trajectories of migrants than they did thirty years ago, when foreigners were discussed in terms of impersonal groups. This general new trend is however less important

when it comes specifically to Muslim foreigners that are conceived as a homogenous group to a larger extent than foreigners not categorized as Muslims.

Finally, among others, the securitarian frames are used to the same extent in both the discourses surrounding Muslim and “non-Muslim” foreigners in newspapers in 2004. We observed an increase of this category of frames, becoming the more prominent in the general discourse of this year (more than 15%), while it was hardly present in 1970. Concerning Muslim foreigners, it should have been expected to see an important part of *sub-frames* concerning terrorism, as it was often stipulated that Muslims were discussed in terms of Islamic terrorism (Ettinger & Imhof, 2006). However, our results contradict this claim, as only a tiny part of core sentences contain reference to this very theme. Even so, other analyses did reveal a noticeable difference in the distribution of references to criminality in the media discourse about Muslims among popular and higher standard newspapers: they are indeed concentrated in *Le Matin* (popular) and almost absent in *Le Temps*.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have shown that religion was a new tool in the definition of foreign otherness in Swiss newspapers in 2004, whereas it was totally absent in 1970. Interestingly, the only religion mentioned in the media discourses surrounding foreigners was Islam, which leads to the construction of the “Muslim foreigner.” This finding supports the theory of an “Islamization” in the discussions about immigrants in newspapers, where only Islamic affiliations are highlighted. This focalization conceals other religious belongings present in the immigrant population, thereby distorting the sociological reality described in the official population census. In other words, Muslim immigrants are overrepresented, while all other religious affiliations are absent from the discourses. This is all the more noteworthy since Christian religious affiliations are majoritarian among foreigners living in Switzerland.

On the other hand, we have shown that the representation of foreigners in Swiss newspapers is more complex than some sociologists have suggested. We cannot, in the light of our results, assume that the typical foreigner of the seventies was an Italian worker and that the Muslim immigrant has substituted this figure in 2004. The representations did not simply shift from the “Italian worker” to the “Muslim immigrant,” but rather from a passably homogenous and poor representation of origins that were mentioned in less than 15% of discourses, to a more diversified and important range of origins (40%), along with, indeed, the appearance of the Muslim foreigner as the only religious affiliation referenced. More specifically, next to Italian foreigners, sociologists omitted the social construction of the Spanish workers in 1970 and the ex-Yugoslavians in 2004. Muslim foreigners are thus a representation among others and are not a majority (20%) in the media discourse, although this still deserves a special attention on behalf of social sciences.

An important finding regarding media representations of Muslim foreigners as unveiled by our analysis is that they are statistically overrepresented vis-à-vis their sociological representation in official censuses: as a minority religious affiliation in the foreign population, they make up almost the entirety of the references to religion in Swiss newspapers in 2004. At the same time, articles display an underrepresentation of Christian affiliations; they are majoritarian in the immigrant population but virtually absent in the media discourses on foreigners. This phenomenon is characteristic of the mentioning of religious belonging, but this same trend also appears in reference to geographical origins: while some origins are underrepresented (Italian in 1970 and in 2004), and others are overrepresented (Spanish in 1970 and ex-Yugoslavians in 2004). This is how the media

discourse offers a distorted landscape of the numerical presence of certain categories of foreigners about whom they report, which necessarily leads to skewed communications.

As our study reveals, the media discourses on Muslim foreigners are on average moderately negative. However, it is important to note that these media discourses do not necessarily reflect the personal beliefs of the journalists themselves. We emphasize the fact that very negative discourses were usually expressed in the form of indirect speeches, being attributed to other enunciators. Moreover, journalists often unintentionally contribute to negative images of Islamic immigration by displaying more negative claims than positive alternative views regarding Muslim foreigners. As such, it becomes difficult to talk about actual “Islamophobia” on behalf of Swiss media. This study could serve as a warning and recommendation to the Swiss media concerning their handling of immigrant issues, and more specifically Muslims, to prevent the formation of negative stereotypes and stigmas.

Another component of media discourse about Muslim foreign otherness relates to its framing. We discovered that while the discourse on Muslim foreigners shares similarities with the discourse on foreigners not categorized as Muslim, it also contains specificities: a more important part of demographic and religious identity frames on the one hand, and a smaller use of economical, biographical, and contact frames on the other hand. A majority of frames are used interchangeably when it comes to general versus Muslim foreigners, one being securitarian framing, especially in regard to criminality. We also notice a concentration of these frames in the popular newspaper, which supports hypotheses formulated in previous studies. However, we need to moderate some claims from Swiss sociologists about the use of the terrorist theme, which was hardly present in the articles under analysis.

Predictions are difficult, yet one can recall that in 1970, the national origin was the criterion used to define foreign otherness and that it was used very homogeneously, singling out the Spanish and Italian majority. Three decades later, this criterion was still utilized, but through an important diversification that exceeds even the official categories used in population censuses of the SFSO. The distinctive criterion of religious affiliation seems to be a recent development and, even though it is used homogeneously, we may speculate that it will go through a diversification similar to that of the evolution of foreign origins.¹¹

ENDNOTES

¹ Population résidente permanente et non permanente selon le sexe et la nationalité par pays, à la fin de l'année <http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/01/02/blank/data/01.Document.88340.xls>

² Wohnbevölkerung nach Religion, Geschlecht und Nationalität, 1970-2000, data provided by the SFSO.

³ Population résidente permanente et non permanente selon le sexe et la nationalité par pays, à la fin de l'année

⁴ Wohnbevölkerung nach Religion, Geschlecht und Nationalität, 1970-2000

⁵ Translated from French: Aucune communauté religieuse n'augmente aussi rapidement que celle des Musulmans. En 1970, 4000 habitants du canton de Zurich s'étaient déclarés comme appartenant à l'Islam. Il s'agissait donc d'un habitant sur 280. En 1990, les Musulmans étaient déjà 30'700 dans le canton de Zurich. Ce chiffre a doublé jusqu'en 2000 où l'on comptait quelque 67'000 Musulmans dans le canton. [...] au niveau suisse aussi, on relève un doublement en l'espace de dix ans. Si cette évolution se poursuit, les Musulmans seront bientôt la majorité dans ce pays. (« Les Musulmans bientôt en majorité ? », *Le Temps*, September 19, 2004).

⁶ Translated from French: *Cette fois-ci, M. Schwarzenbach met l'accent sur la nécessité de défendre les particularismes de la Suisse, joue sur la peur de l'Helvète de se voir submergé par les allogènes. Il agite au passage le spectre d'une arrivée massive de catholiques qui domineraient et s'imposeraient à une minorité protestante. L'état major du mouvement a même écrit une lettre à l'Eglise évangélique pour la mettre en garde [...].* (« Bilan de la campagne », *Tribune de Lausanne*, 2 juin 1970).

⁷ *Wohnbevölkerung nach Religion, Geschlecht und Nationalität, 1970-2000.*

⁸ Translated from French: *L'Office fédéral de la statistique (OFS) a tenu à préciser, samedi, qu'il n'était pas à l'origine des extrapolations contenues dans l'annonce controversée en vue de la votation sur les naturalisations facilitées, publiée par divers médias dans leur espace publicitaire, dont Le Temps. Les 2,2% et 4,5% de Musulmans respectivement pour 1990 et 2000 sont juste, confirme l'OFS, mais les projections pour les années 2010 à 2040 pas plausibles.* (Les "tirades pleines de haine" de l'UDC, *Le Temps*, 21 September, 2004).

⁹ Translated from French: *La liberté d'opinion peut-elle s'accommoder de l'appel quasi explicite à la haine la plus nauséabonde – ici, il s'agit d'opposer Musulmans et Chrétiens, de brandir le spectre d'une invasion par le nombre, la défaite inéluctable. Comment ne pas sombrer dans la parano face à la persécution réitérée dont regorgent les journaux et la rumeur à l'endroit des Musulmans, et plus encore des Arabes ?* ("La polémique suscitée par l'annonce sur les musulmans", *Le Temps*, 22 septembre 2004)

¹⁰ Translated from French: *La "publicité politique" que Le Temps a autorisée à trois reprises exprime tout à la fois une injure à la communauté musulmane de Suisse qui, depuis des décennies, fait la démonstration de son intégration dans notre pays et dans le respect de nos institutions.* ("La liberté d'expression a des limites", *Le Temps*, September 20th 2004).

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Cultural Politics of Humor in (De)Normalizing Islamophobic Stereotypes

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ISLAMOPHOBIA STUDIES JOURNAL
VOLUME 2, NO. 1, SPRING 2014, PP. 59-81.

Published by:
Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project,
Center for Race and Gender, University of California, Berkeley.

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Cultural Politics of Humor in (De)Normalizing Islamophobic Stereotypes

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This paper offers an examination of the role of humor in both normalizing Islamophobic representations as Other and in creatively challenging them. The first section traces historic connections of ways dominant culture in the United States portrays targeted groups as both full of irrational anger and lacking a sense of humor or the ability to “get” or “take” jokes. In the perpetuation of dehumanizing stereotypes, this discourse of negation undermines core aspects of being seen as fully human, as humor is a fundamental communication realm of bonding and generating shared symbolic and social meaning within different cultural contexts. Against this backdrop, the more specific level of denial of humor functions to dismiss socio-political causes for anger at injustice, discrimination and violence, pathologizing the targeted group for not being able to share laughter at jokes that normalize their oppression. This power dynamic serves to invisibilize context, psychologize structural issues, and delegitimize resistance. The following sections turn to uses of humor and political comedy to strategically surface, explicitly challenge and subvert Islamophobic stereotypes since the start of the War on Terror. From the Axis of Evil Comedy troupe, to *The Daily Show*’s satirical Muslim version of *The Cosby Show* to the recent appropriation of *Newsweek*’s “Muslim Rage” cover and the subsequent mocking transformation through social media that followed attaching a wide range of hilarious humanizing images and tweets to the #MuslimRage hashtag, diverse comic strategies have worked to expose dehumanizing stereotypes in a time of war and made them “uninhabitable.” By holding up mirrors to mainstream narratives of the monolithic Muslim Other, both Muslims and non-Muslim allies have used techniques of humor to create punchlines that open shared understandings of the underlying assumptions of dominant frames, and destabilize them through making those assumptions visible, and laughable. Drawing from cultural studies, humor studies and media studies, this paper incorporates scholarship on audience response, popular culture, theories of humor, and interviews.

INTRODUCTION

(C)overing Islam is a one-sided activity that obscures what “we” do, and highlights instead what Muslims and Arabs by their very flawed nature are.

– Edward Said

Interrogating stereotypes makes them uninhabitable—it destroys their naturalness and normalcy.

– Stuart Hall

The thing that frustrates me is when you see us on TV nowadays who do they always show, they always show the crazy dude burning the American flag (waving flag gesture) and going “Death to America!” always that

guy—just once I wish they would show us doing something good, (applause) just once, like you know baking a cookie or something, right—cause I’ve been to Iran, we have cookies, just once I want CNN to be like, “And now we’re going to go to Mohammed in Iran” and they go to some guy who’s like, “Hello, I’m Mohammed, and I’m just baking a cookie. I swear to God, no bombs, no flags, nothing. Back to you, Bob!” (laughter)

– Maz Jobrani

How does humor bring into a sharp focus what the blurry lens of Islamophobic tropes distort and universalize? As stereotypes work to make particular contexts, histories, diverse identities and structural inequity invisible, political humor works to make them visible, and their stereotypical distortions laughable. Anthropologist Mary Douglas, in her essay, “Jokes”, poses, “We must ask what are the social conditions for a joke to be both perceived and permitted” (Mukerji & Schedson 1991:298). Jokes and audience reception reveal unique dimensions of the social, cultural and political context in which shared laughter occurs. This paper seeks to contribute recognition and analysis of forms of emergent and proliferating comedy since the start of the War on Terror, that have specifically arisen in direct response to mainstream Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism. Many of these entrenched stereotypes have a longer history pre-dating 9/11/01, in film, news media, colonial literature and the American national imaginary. The main focus of this research is based in dynamics within the United States, though in our globalized world and media environment, a number of the examples have international reach and significance.

Of the dehumanizing Islamophobic stereotypes that perpetuate seemingly unbridgeable, untranslatable gulfs in the militaristic framework of “us vs. them,” the stereotype of humorlessness supports and upholds the others, as irrational, rage-filled, violent and unrelatable. The axis of humor in the recurrent “clash of civilizations” discourse in media and popular culture, reinforces core War On Terror narratives that “Islam is incompatible with democracy,” as a parallel discourse of “Islam is incompatible with comedy” has concurrently circulated.

Edward Said utilized the term “thought-stopping headlines” (Said 1997) to point out the phenomenon of intentionally created visceral fear in the journalistic enterprise of “covering Islam.” As a counter to thought-stopping headlines, thought-provoking punchlines engage in warfare by humorous means. Moving into the Orange Alert spotlight, many comedians have crafted performances against a backdrop of tragedy. Challenging the distorted lens through which the mainstream media views the Muslim Other, forms of humor bring into sharp focus human faces, while blurring the line between “us vs. them.” As a prism to understand conflict, change and social tensions, humor and comedy may serve as a “restoration of reason” and “means of undoing otherness” (Bilici 2010: 207), and wedge open space in which critical thinking can gain a foothold.

Comedy and humor may be used in order to break tension, to create a sense of community, to build solidarity through in-group inclusion and out-group exclusion, as a method of coping with injustice or trauma, as a survival tactic, as a form of political resistance, for therapeutic ends, and for social commentary and critique. This research examines various rhetorical devices and socio-historical connections in the diverse, comic undoing of Muslim otherness. The framework of cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall informs the understanding of the key processes of stereotyping as reducing, essentializing, naturalizing and fixing “difference.” Stereotyping deploys a strategy of “splitting” the normal and acceptable from the abnormal and unacceptable, it tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power and thus serves to maintain the social and symbolic order (Hall

1997:258). Contesting stereotypes may involve the diversification of the range of images, inclusion of “positive” images (which may yet problematically reproduce a reductive and flattening representation), and taking the images apart to turn them creatively against themselves. As Hall (1997) states, “Interrogating stereotypes makes them uninhabitable – it destroys their naturalness and normalcy.” Humorous strategies are powerful in the capacity to “unfix” dominant meanings through subversive satire and parody, and affix new meanings that destabilize the underlying assumptions of the stereotype.

Analyses of what elicits laughter typically cite three key theories from the multidisciplinary field of humor to examine how humor produces a social effect. Superiority theory argues that we laugh at people (or categories of people, or perhaps our former selves) who we see as inferior and ridiculous, or as role reversals. Catharsis theory recognizes the particular release of psychological tension or repression through shared laughter; a desire for relief. A dominant approach to humor is incongruity theory, in which humor results from the “unexpected juxtaposition of two or more frames of interpretation” (Gourneles & Greene 2011:xvii-xviii), and may make the implicit frame explicit. Often all of these “why” aspects of humor may be at play. A fourth theory of humor acknowledges the power of ambivalence, as a humorous text may generate tension through simultaneous attraction and repulsion, expressed through laughter.

In looking at forms of humor that challenge stereotypes in a time of war, surveillance and racial profiling, it is evident that humor has everything to do with power dynamics. Susan Purdie’s work *Comedy: Mastery of Discourse*, articulates the discursive power in the political operation of joking as follows: “All habitual joking - recurrent patterns of who makes jokes and who is joked about—will both reflect and create patterns of power”(Purdie 1993:129).

Popular culture studies has placed increasing emphasis on audience theory in analyzing the reception and construction of a joke, recognizing the power of the spectator’s active role in the transformative potential of comedy and humor, as opposed to seeing joke texts as non-social and non-historical. Four stages of “humor agreement” that underscore the integral role of audiences in making meaning and offering or conversely withholding “humor support” are: recognition, understanding, appreciation and agreement (Smith 2009:155). The context of Islamophobia makes each of these stages between comic artist and audience a political act.

In this exploration, I examine three different examples, each representing a distinct genre and diverse modes of audience interaction. Acknowledging the field of stand-up comedy that emerged to directly address Islamophobia over the past decade and continues to grow, I select the *Axis of Evil Comedy Tour* for closer focus, drawing links to other performers in the field. In stand-up comedy the audience is self-selected and fundamental for jokes’ success. The second selection is *The Daily Show*’s pilot of the “Qu’osby Show,” a highly satirical take on the sit-com genre, with a staged focus group reaction as a test audience, which is deliberately constructed by the producers. Lastly, expanding the realm and definition of audience is the #MuslimRage Twitter phenomenon, where users of the social network turned *Newsweek*’s online conversation into a platform for a digital wildfire of satire, engaging a global participatory audience.

All are in relation to the need to make those targeted by Islamophobia non-threatening to dominant groups and thus less threatened by them. Many educational outreach strategies to reduce bias and prejudice attempt to fill gaps in what non-target groups “do not know.” A different pedagogical strategy is to engage in what people “do know,” that reinforces stereotypes and blocks counter-information. Humor strategies are

uniquely and powerfully able to destabilize what is “known” as an audience enters into a shared experiential understanding of “getting” social and political context through getting the joke.

YOU'RE EITHER WITH US, OR YOU'RE HUMORLESS

Well I by definition can't take a joke, right? I'm Muslim and feminist (laughs). What am I doing being a comedian? How do I exist?

– Zabra Noorbakhsb

After the post-9/11 moratorium on humor, in late September Malcolm Kushner, self-identified as “America's Favorite Humor Consultant,” called on the country to “unleash humor” calling it “our secret weapon.” Kushner went further, suggesting that the terrorists hate us because we have humor and they “lack it:”

*The current conflict has been characterized as good vs. evil; right vs wrong; freedom lovers vs. freedom haters: and the list goes on...But (there's) another way of looking at it: the humorous vs. the humorless. Just think about it. The freedom to laugh at each other and ourselves encompasses most of the other freedoms that we cherish so dearly...America is the country that gave the world the one-liner, the light-bulb joke and the top 10 list...What have our enemies offered in the way of humor? The answer is found in another indigenous American joke form, the list of the world's shortest books. It must certainly include *The Wit and Wisdom of Fundamentalist Islamic Extremists* (Kushner 2001).*

This crystallized binary representation pits noble American humor against the whole Islamic world as the out-group who does not “get it” or cannot “take it.” The axis of humor within “clash of civilizations” rhetoric in a time of the lethal militaristic binaries makes a case for humor’s centrality in social power dynamics and political discursive power (Purdie 1993, Lewis 2006). In 2005, the movie *Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World* was released as a type of comedy Orientalism speaking to the desire to render knowable the “enemy other” in a time of war. The cinematic journey follows Jewish American comedian Albert Brooks to India and Pakistan in search of what makes Muslims laugh. Appearing several years after the start of the War on Terror and subsequent military invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, the role of comedic inquiry was explicitly framed as a new tactic of warfare, “alongside spying and fighting.” Upon invitation from the State Department, Brooks (2005) was enlisted as a comic to write up a 500-page report on what makes Muslims laugh, and informed, “The world is in a precarious place. There are huge numbers of people that we as a country don’t really understand: the Chinese, Africans, and most pressingly, the Muslim population of the world”. By completing this report on the comic sensibilities of Muslims, “You’ll be doing one hell of a service for your country” (Brooks 2005). The significance of the film lies in its historic moment, as it echoed the question of whether this “new enemy” was possible to comprehend, relate to, laugh with, and infiltrate.

The discursive lens of humor in the War on Terror functions to pathologize the monolithic Muslim Other, to deny the capacity in order to “get” what is funny to “us” or to even smile. Purdie (1993) argues that, “the capacity to joke is connected with possession of that ‘proper’ language which commands full subjectivity” and which is denied to abjected groups (128–9). A denial of rational communication to those labeled “terrorist” is a

recurrent feature of (neo)colonial discourse. The ability to communicate, relate, empathize or even bond is negated by an unfathomable gulf of humorlessness and a simultaneous sea of inexplicable anger and aggression. The late Edward Said (1997) described the Western regime of representation of Islam as “Muslims are uniformly represented as evil, violent, and, above all, eminently killable” (xxvii). Sharply observed over decades, the recurrent “media experts” portrayal of “Islam” claims to bring to light universalizing diagnostic pronouncements of the “Muslim mind” as explanatory frameworks that serve to legitimize racist worldviews, whether rooted in psychology or culture. Both the denial of humor and the projection of rage work in tandem as extreme othering, based in psychological and cultural racism. This binary serves to position the white, Christian self as good, contained, rational, with full “civilized” subjectivity. Communication is impossible on terms and norms set by those in power, reinforcing cultural hegemony. This discourse of negation towards those who cannot “get” or “take” a joke reinscribes Western ethnocentric worldviews as particular forms of American humor is equated as universal humor, equated with full humanity. In her work *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Judith Butler (2004) stated “Indeed, one has to wonder whether it is not simply selected acts undertaken by Islamic extremists that are considered outside the bounds of rationality as established by a civilizational discourse of the West, but rather any and all beliefs and practices pertaining to Islam that become, effectively, tokens of mental illness to the extent that they depart from the hegemonic norms of Western rationality” (72).

Known as the “first transnational anti-joke scandal,” the riots over Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*’s elicitation and publishing of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad have been widely discussed. Once the protests began, the cartoon’s status was irrevocably changed from a public humor performance into a high-stakes game of a “clash of civilizations,” supporting the narrative of the Muslim Other as inexplicably humorless and enraged. A far more complex and manufactured situation than the depiction of a spontaneous eruption of embassy burning, the furious Danish cartoon controversy was made to represent polarizing evidence of the alleged humorlessness of the Islamic world in contrast to the Western defense of free speech: “In the cartoon controversy, sense of humor became the indicator of the personality failings of entire nations conceived as unitary civilizations” (Smith 2009:165). The focus on the cartoons themselves and response to them also served to eclipse the conditions of serious grievances across the Middle East and of Western military aggression. Paul Lewis points out that images of ridicule accompanying Abu Ghraib torture were firmly established across the world prior to the appearance of the irreverent cartoons, “Can we blame them for the context in which cartoons that seemed risible and only moderately provocative to most in the West were received as taunting, degrading, and outrageous by Muslims from Denmark to Indonesia?” (Gournelos & Greene 2011:221).

Moira Smith (2009) draws our attention to a theory of audience and boundary maintenance in terms of how humor as social solidarity may be constructed as inclusion as well as exclusion. Michael Billing coined the term “unlaughter,” to mark its social power and significance when it occurs. There may be a deliberate provocation of unlaughter, in order to heighten social boundaries and gauge the butt of jokes’ suitability for full inclusion or membership in the group. Related inextricably with Western notions of selfhood¹ a sense of humor is seen as a sign of psychological and emotional health, whereas the lack of it renders one “almost pathologically deficient” (Smith 2009:158). Easy notions about humor bringing people together is contradicted and complicated by unlaughter as a refusal of group norms, as strategic provocation, as boundary setting and heightening. The Prophet Muhammad

cartoons may be identified as a form of boundary-heightening humor (162), testing the ability or willingness to “take” the joke and all it implies.

There is a strong parallel between the dominant characterization of Muslims and feminists as a group as being unable to get or take jokes, specifically ones that make them the degrading punchline. The trope of the angry, un-funny feminist is so long-standing and pervasive that a psychological study was conducted in 1996 to assess whether this “folk belief” had validity. The findings² unsurprisingly showed, “that no relationship between feminism and sense of humor was demonstrable” (Franzini 1996). What these findings do show, rather, is the recurrent way in which the representation of humorlessness, waged by a dominant group towards a targeted group who is fighting oppression, effectively functions. To psychologize anger and unlaughter in the face of structural oppression serves to erase context, and thus portray resistance as irrelevant and baseless. Outrage at jokes that normalize sexual violence, for example, is shown to be a personality deficiency rather than response to realities of rape culture, discrimination and objectification. Being both humorless and hostile are core features of the popular television and film trope of the “straw feminist,” a character whose “feminism” is drawn only for the purposes of either proving them wrong or mocking them. An exaggerated character who is an irrational man-hater, the angry, unfunny straw feminist portrayal works to discredit and delegitimize feminist movements, to make them look over the top, unnecessary and ridiculous.

This familiar American pattern of representing a minority group as dispossessed of humor and full of uncontrollable anger repeats throughout history in different socio-political contexts. In *Al-Jazeera*'s moderated 2013 panel “Beyond the Angry Black Woman,” which inquired why slavery-era stereotypes continue to resurface in the United States and influence perception and policy, cultural studies professor Imani Perry points out their familiar, comfortable long-standing presence as reductive narratives that reproduce themselves in different historical moments. The stereotype of the “angry black woman” functions to steer attention away from causes of “righteous rage”, as anger is portrayed as “deficient” (*Al-Jazeera* 2013).

The denial of humor and embodiment of severe threat create a highly generative backdrop for comic inversion and subversive resistance. As comedian, writer and actress Zahra Noorbaksh explains of the relation between the current context of Islamophobia and Muslim American comedy as a phenomenon of our times:

It's ripe ground for comedy. Subverting is what comedy does...I think there's a lot of absurdity inherent in the assumptions people make, which makes it easy to make jokes about—through naming it or claiming it, for me to get up on stage and be like “I'm Muslim, so look out!” you know, it's ridiculous, playing with hyperbole...Comedians are in a great position to reveal a lot of that absurdity...I mean humanize is such a tricky word because obviously (laughter) I think it does allow people to see Muslims as people rather than as stereotypes (Personal communication, February 25, 2013).

Stand-up comedian Azhar Usman enters the stage and opens his recorded set for the documentary film of comic group Allah Made Me Funny, taking direct aim at the stereotype of humorlessness to set the tone and make space for the rest of his act. An Indian American Muslim man who wears a full beard, he greets the audience with the line, “Hey listen, so let's get this out of the way. I'm perfectly aware most of you have never seen somebody who looks like me smile before”(Kalin 2008). As he slowly breaks into a broad contagious grin

and the audience laughs, his smile is the punchline against the background of what is normatively shown and “known.”

AXIS OF EVIL COMEDY AND MUSLIM AMERICAN STAND UP: LAUGH TRUTH TO POWER

[A] dominant pattern of relations is challenged by another – if there is no joke in the social structure, no other joking can appear.

– Mary Douglas

Rendering the commonly accepted as ridiculous to reveal the ridiculousness of the commonly accepted.

– Henri Bergson

Historian of humor Joseph Boskin observes, “Just as humor has been used as a weapon of insult and intimidation by dominant groups, so it has been used as a weapon for resistance and retaliation by minorities” (Lewis 2006:115). As the Bush Administration’s War on Terror began, Muslim American comics began to intervene individually and collectively into the atmosphere of extreme polarization, hate, fear, and violence. A number of stand-up comedians began to shift their material to directly confront Islamophobia. Openly identified as Muslim or Arab comics, such as Palestinian-Sicilian American comedian Dean Obeidallah, who had previously worked under his middle name Dean Joseph, began to use his Arab last name as his stage name and incorporated it into his material: “My last name is Obeidallah, I know many people here can relate to this, for the non-Middle Eastern people, do you know what it’s like being of Arab heritage with a Muslim last name living in America the last few years? I could use a hug (laughter)” (Simon 2008). Tissa Hammi left her career in business and turned to comedy driven by activist concern. British comedian Shazia Mirza famously altered her act to open with the line, “Hi my name is Shazia Mirza, or at least that’s what it says on my pilot’s license” (Lewis 2006:178). The troupe and tour “Allah Made Me Funny,” conceived by veteran African-American comedian Preacher Moss in 2003, grew to become the longest running comic collective of Muslim American performers along with Azhar Usman and Mohammed Amer, up until 2011. Dean Obeidallah and Maysoun Zayid founded the New York Arab-American Comedy festival two years after 9/11 to change the way Middle Easterners are perceived and to showcase and inspire the works of Arab-American comic artists. It is a festival whose popularity continues to the present. In 2005, in response to the Bush Administration’s label of the Axis of Evil, demonizing Iraq, Iran and North Korea,³ the Axis of Evil Comedy Tour was formed by Ahmed Ahmed, Maz Jobrani and Aron Kader, until the group disbanded in 2011. In 2008 *PBS’ America at a Crossroads* series released a film titled, “STAND UP: Muslim American Comics Come of Age,” featuring Ahmed Ahmed, Azhar Usman, Tissa Hami, Dean Obeidallah and Maysoun Zayid, to show that there is no contradiction between being Muslim and American, observing that, “Most Americans might view the phrase ‘Muslim comics’ as an oxymoron” (Baker et al. 2008).

These comic first responders shaped the emergence of the prolific genre of Muslim American and Arab American political comedy, continuing in the tradition of stand-up comedians who have used the stage as a platform for social criticism, to examine of the process of identity formation in the United States, and as a space to question belonging and difference. Socially critical, political stand-up comedy is a unique analytical site to reveal public engagement with stereotypes and realities that individuals and communities face. “Since the early 20th century, publicly staged humor has emerged as a unique cultural space

for American minorities to respond to the pressures of assimilation and to the contradictions of the American racial system” (Michael 2011). As various observers of Muslim comedy note (Bilici 2010, Amarasingam 2010, Michael 2011), it is precisely the new and negative associations (described by Bilici as “negative charisma”) with being Muslim in America that produce Muslim responses in the form of public stand-up humor. As the most recent minority to gain national relevance as a source of social anxiety and intensified scrutiny, “Muslim Americans continue a historical tradition of using stand-up comedy as a way of lending their voices to the discourses of what it means to be a minority and an American at a critical moment in American social history”(Michael 2011:5). In examining the “ripe time” for marketing the art form of comic inversions, sociologist Mucahit Bilici (2010) states, “Muslim ethnic comedy is part of the Americanization process: the power of comedy becomes a means of undoing otherness. The comic vision rehumanizes Muslims and allows comedians to engage in a symbolic reversal of the social order. Muslim ethnic comedy is the world of Islamophobia turned upside down”(207). While focusing on the Axis of Evil’s documentary for Comedy Central, I will draw links to other performers to bring out common themes and patterns.

FEAR AND ANXIETY ANTIDOTE

The Axis of Evil stage, as featured in the 2008 performance recorded for Comedy Central, comprises highly charged images of power. In the backdrop is an image of the White House lit up at night, framed on either side with large black and red nuclear signs. Stage right is a TSA scanner through which each comedian enters as a mock ritual with a brief humorous interaction with African American actress Loni Love playing airport security. Symbols of United States empire, existential terror of nuclear annihilation,⁴ and the rectangular portal signaling who is deemed dangerous and safe, are introduced. Bilici (2010) posits that “no joke zones” (regarding bombs) in airports define the same current as the comic zone of the symbolic airport. Profiling Muslims as both an internal and external enemy of the United States, the airport functions as a militarized border, a site of extreme racial and religious discrimination and as such, a prominent theme of Muslim stand-up comedy, illuminating how jokes function at social boundary points (Douglass 1991).

As the symbolic site of fear, who will enter, get searched or be detained, what potential destruction or humiliation may occur, Axis of Evil ritually transforms this portal between worlds/zones to expand the space of possibility and empathy. The audience of mixed ethnic and religious backgrounds has the repeated visual experience of witnessing and becoming acquainted with a hilarious person of Middle Eastern descent entering through a scanner alongside the dominant media image of the scary unsmiling other. The gaze is returned to airport security, as Ahmed Ahmed, whose name is on multiple no-fly lists, explains that he can always identify the air marshal, “always the guy sitting there holding the upside-down *People* magazine looking right at me.” The insider-outsider audience also has the experience of laughing at the extreme commonness of racial profiling, heightening consciousness of this reality, which may open up critical awareness among those not targeted by Islamophobia, and offer the catharsis of public acknowledgement for those familiar with this shared experience. Special opening guest Dean Obeidallah suggests a new market for an anti-stress drug for Arab-Americans post 9/11, and advertises,

Hello, are you depressed because no one wants to fly on the same plane as you? Are you anxious because you resemble several people on the government's most wanted list? Are you angry because every time you go to the airport you are "randomly selected" for extra screening? (applause) Do you get randomly selected even when you're just dropping off a friend at the airport? Do you just wanted to be treated like a white person again? Then you need "Arab-Be-Gone," the first medication designed especially for Arab Americans in the post-9/11 world. In weeks you will stop using words like "babibi" and "my friend" and will start using words like "pal", "chief" and "amigo" (Simon 2008).

This pharmaceutical ad diagnoses the social context as pathological. Laughter may result from insider identification and outsider education. The performance journey from fear to laughter functions as an antidote against unconscious prejudice and the racist bias of "flying while Arab/Muslim." As a boundary between worlds where violence is anticipated and enacted, air travel becomes the magical zone of comedy to surface, expose, confront and subvert. Comedian Azhar Usman, of "Allah Made Me Funny" shares with the audience, "And I love being a comic but I tell you what my least favorite thing is all the travelling, ok, and the worst part about it is the moment when I have to walk into the airport. Come on people, you can write your own joke right there" (Kalin 2006). Usman invites the collective knowledge of bigotry and opens it up for participatory mocking as the audience's expertise allows for a proliferation of jokes at this performed moment.

Egyptian-American comedian Ahmed Ahmed explains his transition from acting to comedy due to chronic typecasting in terrorist roles. He narrates how he went to an audition for "terrorist #4," not to try out for the part but to make fun of this Hollywood stereotyped role, and exaggerated his portrayal with an over the top accent and gestures, explicitly mocking it. Ahmed then switches to embody the enraptured face of the director, who enthusiastically asked to see "more of the Middle Eastern anger that your people possess" (Simon 2008). In this one joke, a long history of Hollywood stereotyping of Arab people is conveyed. Ahmed's autobiographical material exposes this marketing of stereotypes, a microcosmic illustration of Jack Shaheen's work in *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, which is a review of more than 900 feature films from 1896–2001 that systematically documents an overwhelming majority of negative narrow villainous stereotypes (Shaheen 2001). Maz Jobrani invites a complementary analysis by surfacing knowledge of frequent televised news depictions of Iran, "Who do they show? They always show the 'Death to America!' guy, always that guy" and the punchline is delivered imagining a news story of an Iranian doing something good, like baking a cookie, "Hello, my name is Mohammed, and I'm just baking a cookie, no flag, no bombs, no nothing. Back to you, Bob!" (Simon 2008) Ahmed Ahmed's joke invites analysis of what demonized identities are depicted inside the Hollywood frame and whose vision constructs it. Jobrani's punchline provokes reflection of whose realities exist outside the frame, the humorous incongruity of the specter of terror and loathing contrasted with a glimpse of a disarming domestic moment.

Hyperbole is employed as a rhetorical device to counteract the broad scapegoating blame directed at Muslims and Arabs. For example, Jobrani impersonates newscasters reporting the cause of a blackout or of bad traffic to be associated to terrorist activity, "Oh sorry, it was Enron...oh sorry, it was just cars." Ahmed draws attention to realities of hate crimes, saying,

It's a bad time to be from the Middle East. In fact I read a statistic on CBS.com saying that after 9/11 hate crimes against Arabs, Middle Eastern people and Muslims went up over a thousand percent. Yeah. Which apparently still put us in fourth place behind blacks gays and Jews. You guys know this? We're still in fourth place. (laughter) So what do we have to do? We can't even win in hatred, I want to be number one in something. Such a bad time (Simon 2008).

Michael points out that, “Muslim Americans laughing about the negative social discrimination they face is a contemporary form of ‘gallows humor’⁵...And if one can say that today American Muslims are in the gallows, it is clear that Muslim American comedians are continuing an American minority tradition of using laughter as a method of resistance and humor as a way to cope with social in justice” (Michael 2011). During the two-term Bush presidency, much of the comedy took aim at the lethal combination of ignorance of the Middle East and military aggression toward the region.⁶ Maysoun Zayid jokes about grim realities, “You guys, things are really bad, we’re going to an internment camp, and I’ll be the funniest one there”(Baker et al. 2008).

BRIDGING AND SPLITTING

“A journey from fear to laughter, it (Muslim ethnic comedy) aims to bridge the divide that separates Muslims from the rest of American society by reaffirming both sides’ common humanity”(Bilici 2010:196). Uniquely situated to serve as “contact zone field guides” for Muslim and non-Muslim audiences, Bilici (2010) points to comedians’ dual knowledge as cultural entrepreneurs between worlds as best illustrated in their ability to go back and forth between accented and “normal” speech (196). Within the hour-long Comedy Central Axis of Evil special, this switching to a Middle Eastern accent occurs more than two dozen times, ranging from impersonation of relatives and political leaders to members of Al-Qaeda. Accent-switching may serve to bridge as well as split, as a first generation immigrant family member may be depicted as endearing, or comically out of touch with mainstream norms, with the second-generation comedian able to perform code-switching translation. In contrast, using a Middle Eastern accent to make fun of real and fictional terrorists may elicit laughter at the unassimilable Other, while also bringing them into a recognizable American cultural arena where their frightening mask is revealed as silly, such as Osama bin Laden voted as “Most Likely to Hide” in high school (Simon 2008). In a discussion of African American comedic reverse discourses, Weaver (2010) draws attention to the role of ambivalence in anti-racist humor, whereby jokes may impact truth perceptions, stretch racial prejudices into the absurd and may render them meaningless, as well as potentially support the stereotype, as the splitting, bridging and, negotiation of acceptable and unacceptable ‘others’ “occurs in the context of overarching racism” (42). This strategic splitting and sympathetic bridging work in alternation throughout each performer’s routine. As Bilici (2010) notes, “Muslim comedy reveals the space of otherness that stretches between looking scary and looking funny”(207). Stand-up performer Tissa Hami often employed visual switching in her physical appearance, entering the stage in *hijab* and *chador* and then taking them off part way through her routine to challenge assumptions about Muslim women, and show that she is the same person covered or not (Baker et al., 2008).

Throughout their performance, the *Axis of Evil* performers take the time to make explicit what they are doing and why, to be seen and known⁷ in a way outside of the limited range of media representation (militant gunman/terrorist or alleged militant

gunman/terrorist, as Obeidallah summarizes), to counter hate with love, and to recognize solidarity of regular people in contrast to politicians' divisiveness on all sides. As a consequence, political leaders are turned into the out-group. A technique that bridges with the audience, as a form of educational critique, is the sharing of questions and real life comments directed at the performers by friends and strangers not of Middle Eastern descent. Such comments and questions come in the form of, "Oh you're Arab, but you look so nice!...Oh you're Arab, what a coincidence, I love Indian food" (Obeidallah) to the solicitation of "insider knowledge about when the next "terrorist hit will come" (Jobrani) to ignorance of the existence of Palestine, "Pakistilia? Where's Pakistilia?" (Kader). Transformed into verbatim jokes in themselves, they give the opportunity to discredit unexamined assumptions, and to hear these forms of liberal racism with greater clarity. Welcoming the cultural insider and outsider audience members to experience empathy, recognition, social relief and the revelation of illogical Islamophobic premises, allows for shared laughter at structured ignorance, generating a new community of those who "get" why these common remarks are ridiculous and harmful, and those who do not.

NAMING WHITENESS

The comedians I interviewed spoke to the creative difficulty and need to address whiteness in combating racial stereotypes through comedy. Iranian-American comedian, performer and producer Negin Farsad gave her provocatively titled debut talk as a 2013 TED Fellow, "How To Make White People Laugh". Which, she boldly stated to the audience, is the best way to deal with the problem of racism, "because they (whites) control government, politics, outer space, and TED talks" (Farsad 2013: Section 1: para. 14). Her guidelines for addressing racism include supplanting a dominant stereotype with a friendlier one (such as eggplants instead of nuclear bombs with Iran), "Get up in people's faces, but in a delightful way," (Farsad 2013: Section 1: para. 14) and get non-threatening allies. As she says, "As long as we keep white people happy they're less likely to start wars" (Farsad 2013: Section 1: para. 14). Moreover, there is a long history of racial minorities in the United States using comic entertainment to educate, appease, integrate with and critique dominant culture. Farsad makes this power dynamic explicit, forcing a recognition for white audience members of the use of their laughter to deescalate violent attitudes.

Dean Obeidallah, who is able to pass as white, introduces the Comedy Central *Axix of Evil* set asking how many people in the audience are of Middle Eastern heritage, and in response to loud cheers, he smiles with the acknowledgement that "It's great to see so many Middle Eastern people coming together in one place... voluntarily" (Simon 2008) Ahmed Ahmed, who does not pass as white, greets the audience with, "How many white people are here?" and after a cheer, states, "Welcome to our meeting"(Simon 2008). This significant addressing of a mixed audience sets the tone for power shifts in the comic setting, where people of Middle Eastern descent are welcomed into a space that ridicules a hostile security state, and white people are configured as outsiders welcomed into a shared, possibly uncomfortable understanding.

Interspersed with jokes that make plain experiences of stereotyped racial targeting, stand-up commentary on how the social construction of whiteness functions to provide safety as the invisible, invulnerable norm provides an educational service. As mixed heritage Dean Obeidallah narrates, "Before 9/11, I'm just a white guy living a typical white guy life, all my friends had names like Monica and Chandler and Joey and Ross (laughter) I go to bed on Sept. 10th white, wake up on Sept. 11th and I'm an Arab! (laughter)" (Simon 2008). His

autobiographical use of his own bi-racial appearance to make visible the violence of this dividing line opens up the essential understanding of the pattern of presumed white innocence against Arab suspected guilt, and the luxury of being seen as an individual versus representative of a targeted group. Obeidallah concisely explains that “white is status,” and “the difference between us and white people is, white people never suffer as a group when a few people do something bad in their group, you know, Middle Eastern people do, and honestly white people, to be honest, you’ve done your fair share of bad things, corporate scandals, presidential assassinations, NASCAR, Paris Hilton, country music, that is audio terrorism to me” (Simon 2008). Maz Jobrani, in his material on differences between Persians and Arabs, plays with the alternating perception of Persians as white and non-white, “My American friends, I tell them I’m Iranian and they go oh so you’re Arab? and I’m like no, actually we’re different, we’re not Arab but we’re similar, you know we’re all getting shot at, that’s one thing, but you know Iranians ethnically we’re Aryan, we’re white, we’re white! You know, so stop shooting” (Simon 2008).

At the same time, there is tragic joking about people of Middle Eastern descent being so racially profiled that they are the “new black.” This echoes the wave of stand-up commentary by a number of African-American comedians post-9/11 of increased safety from law enforcement’s redirection towards Arab Americans, and jokingly serious critique of “African Americans’ newfound ‘rights’ consequent to Arab Americans’ waning civil liberties” as Lanita Jacobs discusses in *A Decade of Dark Humor: How Comedy, Irony and Satire Shaped Post-9/11 America* (Gournelos & Greene 2011:49).

A Google search for “Axis of Evil” will lead to a disambiguation page of the Bush administration’s term and Axis of Evil Comedy. The troupe’s work intentionally attached the word “comedy” to this militarized term to expose it as a made-up political label and uses the backdrop of “evil” as rich material for subversion. Travelling through this comic journey attaches comic pedagogical interventions to the way an audience member may view what is inside the frame of the “Middle Eastern menace” in news and film, knowing that outside the frame may be Mohammed baking a cookie, a casting director using stereotypes to market sensationalistic fear, or the performers themselves.

THE *QU’OSBY SHOW*: JUST LIKE YOU/NOT LIKE YOU

What you would want to do with a show with Muslims is just have them be like everybody else – we’re all basically American.

So we should portray Muslims as, as good people.

Yes.

Genius, genius.

– *Aasif Maandvi with The Cosby Show, consultant to Dr. Alvin Poussaint*

“Maybe we need a Muslim Cosby Show,” suggested Katie Couric in her 2011 year-end recap, as a way to challenge the “bigotry expressed against Muslims in this country.” (Stewart 2011) *The Daily Show with John Stewart* took this suggestion to heart, and in another direction, with high production mimicry of *The Cosby Show*’s set, style and familiar opening dance sequence, and mockery of all that is assumed in the premise of a familiar sit-com to change America’s negative perceptions of Muslims through performing a particular familiar likeability. In the effort to “make Muslims less threatening to white people,” Aasif Mandvi, the regular “Middle East correspondent,” consults with both Dr. Alvin Poussaint, who was a key advisor to *The Cosby Show*, and Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf of the Cordoba Initiative, to

ascertain how to create a show that will prove that Muslims can be “regular Americans.” Situated as a response to changing attitudes in the wake of the Egyptian Revolution, *The Daily Show* created both a satirical pilot for a Muslim version of *The Cosby Show*, the show that “cured racism against black people” as Mandvi described it, followed by a staged focus group reaction. In the *The Qu’osby Show: Allah in the Family* fake pilot, enacting hyper-assimilation is pushed to the extreme of unbelievability, as the Qu’osby family is led by their father to disavow connection to Islam and any outward Muslim identity, and what it means to be “less threatening” set the stage for satire from multiple angles.

The pilot opens as Mandvi starring as the Muslim version of Bill Huxtable, enters the living room wearing a “Kiss Me I’m Irish” apron with BLT sandwiches and babyback ribs as a homework reward for his children. Studio laughter is cued at every intended point of the portrayal of the middle class Qu’osby family acting both non-Islamic (the daughter and son are given “pork juice” as a favorite treat) and ultra-American (the Qu’osby patriarch runs an apple pie store). Humor arises from both extreme caricatures and the tension between them. When Joe the white neighbor walks in on their spontaneous livingroom dance to Toby Keith and says, “Sorry, didn’t realize you guys were praying” the family responds, “Praying? (laughs) Not us! Unless you mean praying to the god of Oklahoma country music!” (Stewart 2011) As Joe sifts the family’s mail, “bill, bill...” he then says, “FBI summons” and we see an exchange of worried looks between Mandvi and co-star Sakina Jeffreys, before Joe releases the tension saying “just joking.” Mandvi acts most nervous when his wife innocently uses language associated with violence or terrorism, such as asking him not to “blow up” at his son for receiving a D grade in algebra, “Why would you say that? Blow up—I would never do anything like that – that is just a very strange way to put things, am I right? (studio laughter).” (Stewart 2011) In a kitchen scene, he argues with his daughter that she should attend the school dance with white Mike Rogers instead of her chosen partner Abdul, as Mandvi expresses internalized Islamophobia and his role in policing the acceptable:

*I don’t trust that guy, he’s a bit too peculiar.
You mean he’s Muslim.
Hey I didn’t say that.
Dad, we’re Muslim!
Not that kind of Muslim (studio laughter) (The Daily Show, 2011)*

The normalizing power of the “Huxtable Effect” is described as paving the way for a postracial ideology, for portrayals of professional African Americans in media, and greater acceptance and integration. Mass communication scholars Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis (1992) undertook a focus group study of black and white audience responses to *The Cosby Show*, funded by Bill and Camille Cosby, to address the political importance of how the “ubiquitous cultural form” of television influences national thought, and how American society thinks about race relations in the post-Civil Rights era (xv). Citing Michael Dyson, one of “the most useful aspects of Cosby’s dismantling of racial mythology and stereotyping is that it has permitted America to view black folk as *human beings*” (Jhally & Lewis 1992:5). In their published findings *Enlightened Racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences and the Myth of the American Dream*, the authors critically view the immensely popular show as perpetuating harmful myths of social mobility in America as meritocracy, that deny continued racial barriers and legal, political and economic inequalities to be overcome. Functioning as a “threat contained,” Bill Cosby’s attractiveness and comfort to white viewers eases historical guilt, as they assert, “*The Cosby Show* provides its white viewers with relief not only from fear

but also from responsibility” (Jhally & Lewis 1992:8). While situation comedies are powerful in their ability to expand the range of representation and normalize different families, characters and communities, Mandvi and cast teasingly interrogate coded expectations of “good, regular American people” as they hyperbolically stretch performative “normalcy”.

In the post-show shift to audience opinion, the filmed focus group is unamused. Assembled as a test audience of average Americans, Mandvi narrates, “It was time to win some hearts and minds” only to discover that the strategy of representing a Muslim family as the friendly next door neighbors who don’t “act Muslim” but instead defied believability, entertainment value and engagement. The take-away message from the audience members is to heighten Muslim stereotypes to make it believable, reinforcing that this is the only way non-Muslim audiences wish to see Muslims portrayed. Suggestions offered include, “push the envelope with a Qur’an joke,” and to have a “closet terrorist Uncle Rahib, who’s a Bedouin living in the basement in a sand box,” and while this is spoken, we see the family on the familiar Cosby/Qu’osby livingroom set with the sudden appearance of “Uncle Rahib” with *kafiyah*, AK-47 and goat, whose extreme contrast throws into relief the vast incongruous gap between one constructed reality and an imagined other. As the television or online audience, viewers are watching the reactions of Aasif Mandvi as he watches the reactions of a fictional focus group as they watch a fictional pilot in the context of a fake news comedy program, that has responded to a suggestion from a real news anchor about a real sit-com whose unparalleled popularity is credited with shifting attitudes around race, integration, and idealized normative middle-class American identity. Functioning in tandem, the pilot and focus group operate on multiple comic and critical levels. By claiming that representation as “regular Americans” will shift anti-Muslim prejudice, *The Qu’osby Show’s* exaggerated performance satirizes the desire for portrayals of de-ethnicized and secularized assimilation as the favored path to bigotry reduction. It reveals an ambivalence around the familiarity of distancing stereotypes in the face of a next-door neighbor representation. As Mandvi takes notes from the test audience, he explicitly summarizes his learnings of the audience preferences, “So the way to make a show to combat stereotypes is to include more stereotypes” (Stewart 2011). Both the NASCAR-loving Huxtable caricature and the transposed Uncle Rahib figure position extreme masks to be worn as comforting uncomfortable Others. The moments of tension in response to violent metaphors and in response to any reference to Muslim heritage show performing American-ness as a slippery mask. The test audience’s stated desire for a more Othered character, who is not only recognizable but ridiculous provides another level of mockery of the focus group, inviting real life audiences to critically view the viewers, and potentially their own projections. As James Baldwin lucidly observed, “The country’s image of the Negro, which hasn’t very much to do with the Negro, has never failed to reflect with a kind of frightening accuracy the state of mind of the country” (Jhally & Lewis 1992:ix).

#MUSLIMRAGE: RADICAL ORDINARINESS AND AUDIENCE AS AGENT

It [The Roots of Muslim Rage] attempts to characterize Muslims as one terrifyingly collective person enraged at an outside world that has disturbed its almost primeval calm and unchallenged rule.

– Edward Said

Muslims just hijacked @Newsweek's hashtag. Pun intended. #MuslimRage

The *New York Times*, reporting from Cairo in September of 2012, stated:

After a week of violent protests over an online video demeaning the Prophet Muhammad, the American news media has conducted a searching psychoanalysis of the Muslim mind to ask why such an offense should trigger such wrath. Essayists have generalized about resentments dating back to the 8th century, an anachronistic discomfort with modernity, or the excesses of Islamist politics, among other familiar themes (New York Times, Sept. 2012).

This familiar cycle of Orientalist psychoanalysis of the monolithic “Muslim mind,” denies historical change, “or the possibility that not all Muslims think alike since the seventh century” (Said 1996: xxxii), obliterates concrete circumstances and particular context in the present, and disallows human agency. Its predictable recurrence is traced in depth by the late Edward Said, who in the introduction to the Vintage Edition of *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, cites among various examples, British Orientalist Bernard Lewis’ 1990 publication titled “The Roots of Muslim Rage” in *The Atlantic*, with a cover where, “a glowering, turbaned, obviously Islamic, head stares out at the reader, its pupils showing American flags, its demeanor announcing hate and anger” (Said 1997: xxxii).

On Sept. 17th 2012 *Newsweek* magazine deliberately courted controversy with its cover. Across the top in bold red capital letters, the blaring thought-stopping headline: “MUSLIM RAGE.” Underneath the title, there appeared a close-up photo of Middle Eastern men, yelling, saliva flecked, faces contorted with fury. Underneath the photo, there appeared the featured subtitle by famous highly polarizing critic of Islam Ayann Hirsi Ali, “How I Survived It. How We Can End It.” Released in the wake of the YouTube video “The Innocence of Muslims,” which encapsulated a systematic check-list of the most offensive and inflammatory representations of the origins of Islam, and the ensuing protests taking place across the Middle East, *Newsweek* reduced vast diversity and complexity into a singular transhistorical psychological feature. The intended cycle of controversy, condemnation and defense was posed to begin.

Newsweek attempted to steer the public conversation with the open online invitation, “Want to discuss our latest cover? Let’s hear it with the hashtag #MuslimRage.” Seizing the invitation to discuss its provocative, sensationalist, shock-journalism cover story via Twitter, thousands of Muslim users of the social network turned the tables, unleashing an inspired mockery of the premise of the inquiry. The #MuslimRage hashtag was transformed into a platform of participatory culture (Jenkins 2006), and brilliantly redirected the conversation in unintended viral directions. A showcase of satire at its best, thousands of hilarious and humanizing tweets and retweets flooded Twitter. Ranging from the highly sarcastic to serious, inspired Twitter users transformed *Newsweek*’s headline into a generative backdrop for humor that made every comment a punchline. Two of the most re-tweeted read:

I'm having such a good hair day. No one even knows. #MuslimRage

Lost your kid Jihad at the airport. Can't yell for him. #MuslimRage

Like a frame, a hashtag organizes and amplifies attention. In this powerful social media moment, the frame itself, focusing attention onto inexplicable rage of the Other, was exploded with human faces, moments, voices not shown in the mainstream media. The stereotype of Muslims not being able to take a joke was ingeniously turned inside out as

Muslims and non-Muslims turned *Newsweek's* frame into a global participatory joking platform. Much of the creative outpouring focused on everyday mundane irritants (real and imagined), precisely what is not shown in the mainstream media, daily moments that open relationality. The #MuslimRage meme offers a stunning illustration of incongruity theory, all against what is “known” and shown, rendering absurd the phrase “Muslim Rage” from hundreds of angles (see Appendix for a fuller archive):

Orders pancakes at IHOP, came with a side of bacon. #MuslimRage

When you machine wash your dry clean only burqa. #MuslimRage

The shawarma guys wraps my sandwich too tightly, so I have to rip off little pieces of paper bit by bit. #MuslimRage

When I wear a white hijab to a TV interview with a white backdrop. #floatinghead #MuslimRage

#muslimrage When you order halal chicken and find out the chef cooked it in alcohol!

Against the backdrop of dehumanizing, decontextualized baseless rage, the tweet, “Tried to make a bowl of cereal this morning, but I didn't have enough milk” became a political statement, the representation of daily life and individuality made radical in its ordinariness. Shaheen (2001) writes not only of the obsession with repetitive stereotyped portrayals of “Arab-land” and one-dimensional roles in the cinematic spotlight, but raises the equal signification of absence:

Hollywood's past omission of “everyday” African-Americans, American Indians, and Latinos unduly affected the lives of these minorities. The same holds true with the industry's near total absence of regular Arab-Americans. Regular Mideast Arabs, too, are invisible on silver screens. Asks Jay Stone, “Where are the movie Arabs and Muslims who are just ordinary people?” [4]

Rage and humorlessness function together as a portrayal of a people with whom rational communication is impossible, a nightmarish specter that is indiscriminate and eternal. Fear is used to sanction violence, made palatable and desirable. The #MuslimRage tweets shift the discourse, as Said described, from what the Muslim Other *is*, to both what the Western media *does* and what everyday Muslims do.

The primitivist discourse that infuses depictions of the Middle East across media genres, is revealed in its true absurdity in the face of the #MuslimRage social media platform talking back. Johannes Fabian in his 2002 work *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, examines the distancing rhetoric employed through ethnographic temporal hierarchies that configure the anthropological Other in categorizations of “barbaric,” “savage,” and “primitive” that reproduce Western (neo)colonial domination. In what he terms a “denial of coevalness” (151), the primitive Other is represented in relation to the colonial observer as “their present is our past.” The #MuslimRage tidalwave drowns this depiction with 140-character glimpses that point to mundane modern subjectivities, the everyday, today. Some tweets encode this incongruity within themselves, “BURN ALL WESTERN LITERATURE....onto a zip drive so I can listen to it while driving #MuslimRage,” and

“When you behead an infidel but your iPhone did not record properly so you don’t get the credit you deserve. #MuslimRage”

These speak to another sub-category of #MuslimRage tweets which directly call upon fear-mongering images or phrases and point the camera back to the Western media frames, invert the meaning to drain it of fear and fill it with disarming self-representation. Employing politically edged humor, the tweets launch commentaries on experiences of racial and religious targeting, and mainstream media ignorance:

When you realize that if you have a 5 o'clock shadow it can be deemed a security threat. #MuslimRage

I told my shrink I was feeling suicidal and he reported me to the FBI. #MuslimRage

When everyone in history class turns to you once 9/11 is brought up. #MuslimRage

Television “experts” saying Iran is an “Arab” country. #MuslimRage

Suspect that #psychoturbanedfourwivedbarbarianmohamedians was 2nd on Newsweek's list as a potential hashtag after #muslimrage

A new column by Thomas Friedman. #MuslimRage

Frequent media commentator and comic Dean Obeidallah (2012) weighed in on this phenomenon:

The U.S. media—and we're not just talking about Newsweek or Joe Scarborough—need to act in a more responsible way. It appears that our media are more focused on ratings than facts and accuracy. While the media jump on the story and then quickly move on to another story, their impact in defining a people and a culture can be lasting. Let's hope the wave of #MuslimRage responses prompts the media to think twice before they react (Obeidallah, 2012).

Where the media failed in their responsibility to nuance a complex dynamic, skilled social media communicators around the world were able to use this hashtag to infuse unexpected dimensions of human nuance. Beyond the specificity of the representation of the YouTube video protests, the #MuslimRage meme took this headline representation as a platform to expansively intervene into the larger damaging representation of being painted with the same “sinister brush” for over a century (Shaheen 2001), as thousands of individual brushes painted portraits that dissolved the dominant frame. In explicit acknowledgement of humor as effective strategy, University of California professor Reza Aslan (2012) tweeted: “Memo to those few violent MidEast protesters, this is how you fight Islamophobia. You make fun of it”.

Ganker (2012) contributed visual images to the #MuslimRage meme, in its piece “13 Powerful Images of Muslim Rage,” introducing the photos with, “It's hard to find a better image than the one on the *Newsweek* cover to really communicate how rage-filled Muslims constantly are, but we've found a few that will strike a chill into your heart”. We are then led through a series of photographs of Egyptian youth blowing bubbles in a city square, Iraqi athletes training, Iranians making a snowman (“#snowrage”), a relaxed Egyptian man sitting

reading the newspaper outside his store, a smiling Jordanian girl on a swing, Iraqi breakdancers, Iranian lovers sitting on a city vista outlook, a young Egyptian couple looking into each others' eyes on a bridge ("Irate Egyptians taking a break from their #MuslimRage"), a family calmly riding a horse-drawn carriage, children playing and jumping off a sailboat. When we ask what makes these funny, we are led back into the tragedy of this context in which humor arises. The backdrop of undifferentiated insane rage is what makes the images of daily life, of tenderness, recreation and creativity unexpected through their extraordinary incongruous attachment to the hashtag/appropriated headline. It is exactly what is not shown, lived ordinariness, diversity, and humanity, that makes the juxtaposition with the face of fear absurd in the extreme, rendering the dominant frame irrational. To reiterate comedian Zahra Noorbakhsh's point, Islamophobic stereotypes are ripe for comic subversion given such pervasive material. The brilliance of those who created and circulated this meme allows for a "getting it" on the levels of both sympathetic realities and media distortions.

Not everyone speaks or is spoken for on social media, and its transient viral moments easily dissipate from memory. However, the lasting lessons of the #MuslimRage case study reveal a perfectly proportional aim at a target. They disorganized the intended meaning, formed a new narrative strategy to detach real people from the signifying power of the enraged humorless stereotype, through attaching thousands of jokes to the reductive frame. ##MuslimRage effectively turned down the boiling headline to simmering mirth. It is questionable if this headline can be re-used effectively in the wake of such withering mockery, as Twitter users transformed the conversation from fear industry object to complex subject to participatory agent, creating new forms and new audiences of comic recognition and appreciation in the process.

CONCLUSION

If all you've ever heard about Islam is that it's a dangerous religion, that women cover themselves, and that those shifty eyed Muslims have evil ulterior motives, this movie wants to give you a new stereotype. Yeah, this movie is going to convince you that Muslims are just a bunch of hilarious people.

– *The Muslims Are Coming!* (website homepage)

In fall of 2013 the film *The Muslims Are Coming!* will debut in theaters. Produced by Negin Farsad and Dean Obeidallah, the documentary follows a road tour of Muslim American comedians through Middle America. They perform free shows, converse with locals, and stage public interventions like the "Ask A Muslim Booth" in town squares. Asking what can be done to counter the hate and fear-mongering, citing the controversy over the "Ground Zero mosque," the perceived national threat of Shariah Law, the NYPD surveillance of Muslim groups, and heated discussions of Muslims during political elections, "the idea that Islam is somehow antithetical to American culture just won't go away" (*The Muslims Are Coming!* 2012. Homepage. www.themuslimsarecoming.com). The tour and film seek to shift the discourse around Muslims, to use stand-up as a platform for social commentary and dialogue, and "unleash the power of punchlines" as strategic outreach. On the film's website, the stated ultimate goal is defined as highlighting similarities between major religions, foregrounding shared concerns and experiences, and to present an "Americanized" face of Islam. Negin Farsad explains, "If you've never had a Muslim friend, if this movie is your first Muslim friend, which is cheesy, but we're happy with that, we want that to be the case" (personal communication, March 20, 2013). As social justice comedy,

including the Muslim American comics who have trailblazed over the past decade, and drawing from traditions of minority groups using humor for social change and cultural criticism, *The Muslims Are Coming!* is not about education on Islam, but rather about making an impact on the perceptions of people who have only ever “met” Muslims through the mainstream media.

As anti-Muslim stereotypes and the injustices they rationalize continue, forms of subversive comedy continue to arise in direct response. Social justice forms of humor revalue individuals and replace a human face on targeted groups whose full humanity is denied. Through disarming, welcoming, familiar and warming comic ritual, the transformative experience is offered of generating community across difference through shared “getting” of the social, cultural and political context that makes jokes both successful and necessary. Comic artists open critical space for diverse audiences to question hegemonic “common sense”, social structures and hierarchies, see Othering assumptions and projections illuminated, and supplant dehumanizing tropes with memorable jokes, hilarious images, that infuse “new sedimentations” (Amarasingam 2010). Douglas describes the joker as a “minor mystic” who gives glimpses of a truth through the mesh of structured ideas, as “a joke implies that anything is possible” (Douglas 1991).

With entrenched pre- and post-9/11 Islamophobic stereotypes imbued with so much power over rational debate, clear perception and critical thinking, tiny bits of progress need to be recognized in their potential to accumulate into long-term cultural change, where Muslims are not seen as perpetual internal and external security threats, and for “Muslim” not to be an accusation, or synonymous with inherently un-, non- or anti-American. Power and ideology attempt to fix meaning, yet “meaning is never fixed” (Hall 1997). The subversive power of humor encourages meaning to slip, as comic performance has the ability to bypass rigid barriers that reinforce xenophobic stereotypes and militaristic binaries, potentially transforming unreflective acceptance into conscious reflection. Directly addressing what people do seem to “know,” comic subversions and inversions serve as a form of epistemological inquiry. They invite questioning what is known about the Other, where that knowledge comes from, and the power that produces it, the very critical thinking that is shut down by war mentality. As Farsad reflects, “If you can do that for someone, that makes an impact on their ongoing perception, they’re going to think twice when they see a news story, or think twice about a Park 51 type story and I think that really matters...all of these things are changed through culture first”(personal communication March 20, 2013).

Whether expanding the dominant frame, debunking, loosening, replacing or fracturing it, social justice humor forms allow for ossified ideas to become malleable and porous. Transformative room is created for audience agency to problematize Islamophobic stereotypes and consider diverse information otherwise filtered out by monolithic representations.

Asked whether he thinks he is educating people through comedy and changing views about Iran, Jobrani (2013) responded:

Yeab absolutely, I mean that’s one of my goals, as a matter of fact, when we did the Axis of Evil Comedy tour...what’s funny is, I went online to see what people were saying about the show, and I ended up on Sean Hannity’s chat room, and one guy had written another guy, he said “I never knew these people laughed,” and if you think about it, you never see Middle Easterners laughing in American film or television, you know, maybe like an evil “I will kill you in the name of Allah” (laugh), but never you know like a “ha ha ha ha,” so just that in itself, to have people realize that oh

wow, people in the Middle East do laugh, that in itself is, I think, a little bit of progress (Maz Jobrani, personal website, 2012).

The selections in this paper are intended to point to proliferating fields of critical comedy as a complementary social change strategy alongside other forms of media advocacy and educational outreach to include diverse, positive and normalizing portrayals of Muslims within and outside the United States' mediascape. Indeed no other form is as perfectly suited to completely undermine the stereotype of fundamental humorlessness. The cultural politics of humor in a time of perpetual war, surveillance and profiling, neocolonial discourses and fear-based politics, possess an ongoing power to harden or dissolve Otherness. Against current realities and enduring colonial tropes, comedic interventions are all the more courageous and vital when the representational bar is so low and the stakes so high.

ENDNOTES

¹ The notion of a sense of humor has become immensely significant in 20th-century Western thought, traced by Daniel Wickberg as appearing in the Western history of ideas in the mid-nineteenth century, blossoming into a pervasive, desirable, essential trait (Smith 2009:157).

² “The lack of a significant association between the women's self-rated sense of humor or the SHQ (Sense of Humor Questionnaire) and either the ATW (Attitudes Towards Women Scale) or HF (Hyperfemininity Scale) that no relationship between feminism and sense of humor was demonstrable at least with these instruments in this young adult sample” (Franzini 1996).

³ Described as “the middle child” of the Axis of Evil, North Korea is less discussed in Axis of Evil Comedy, apart from the running joke of looking for a North Korean comic. In 2007, comedian Wonho Chung, a native Arabic speaker of Korean descent, joined the Axis of Evil Middle East tour.

⁴ It is worth recalling *The Onion's* 2012 headline “Iran Worried US Will Build Its 8,500th Nuclear Weapon.”

⁵ Gallows humor is defined by Fine (1983) as, “humor that grows out of a tragic situation in which an oppressed group attempts to transform their misery by poking fun at their oppressors” (173).

⁶ Jamil Abu-Wardeh, who founded the Axis of Evil Middle East Comedy Tour, to contribute to the “standup uprising” in the Arab world, conveyed in his 2010 TED talk, “We’d like to thank one man, who over the past decade has been working tirelessly to support comedians all around the world, (projected image of George W. Bush) specifically comedians with a Middle Eastern background”.

⁷ In the PBS special “STAND UP: Muslim American Comics Come of Age,” Ahmed Ahmed states, “We can’t define who we are on a serious note because nobody will listen. So the only way to do it is to be funny about it” (Baker et al., 2008).

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***National Entry-Exit
Registration System: Arabs,
Muslims, and Southeast
Asians and Post-9/11 “Security
Measures”***

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ISLAMOPHOBIA STUDIES JOURNAL
VOLUME 2, NO. 1, SPRING 2014, PP. 82-98.

Published by:
Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project,
Center for Race and Gender, University of California, Berkeley.

Disclaimer:

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National Entry-Exit Registration System: Arabs Muslims and Southeast Asians and Post-9/11 “Security Measures”

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“In the hours and days immediately following [the September 11] attacks, Attorney General John Ashcroft . . . directed that FBI and INS agents question anyone they could find with a Muslim-sounding name . . . in some areas . . . they simply looked for names in the phone book Anyone who could be held, even on a minor violation of law or immigration rules, was held under a three-pronged strategy, fashioned by Ashcroft and a close circle of Justice Department deputies including criminal division chief at the time Michael Chertoff, that was intended to exert maximum pressure on these detainees . . .” (From a summary of Ashcroft strategy sessions contained, in further detail, in Steven Brill’s After: How America Confronted the September 12 Era)¹

January 10, 2003, was a seemingly normal day by all the standards used to measure ‘normal’ in America. Across the country, people went about their day as usual rising early, eating breakfast, going to work, grabbing a coffee, reading the comics and sports sections, checking email, keeping track of the stock market, listening to music, or watching a favorite show on television, and sports fans were looking forward to the weekend and the National Football League playoffs to commence. The reality is that all was not as average or familiar as it seemed. January 10, 2003, marked the second date for Special Registration, a procedure requiring certain non-immigrants to report and register with the United States Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) mandated by the Patriot Act. The INS’s program was initially put into effect on November 15, 2002, in a little publicized Special “Call-In” Registration that required men and boys with visas from Iran, Libya, Sudan, Syria and Iraq to report to the INS to be fingerprinted, photographed, and interrogated or else face criminal prosecution and deportation. In the aftermath of 9/11, a concern had emerged regarding the possibility of a large number of Arab and Muslim sleeper terrorist cells operating in the US, who were deemed to possibly be considering a future attack; thus a method had to be introduced to deal with this ‘real’ threat. Considering the extent of the 9/11 attacks, one can understand the level of fear permeating the society and the responsibilities of the national leadership to protect citizens from impending threats, but the security instruments chosen alarmed civil rights and immigrant advocacy communities. The question of how to provide security while guaranteeing civil and human rights protection was and still remains the key issue confronting American society.

On June 6, 2002, in a response to increased public discussion of the perceived threat, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced the National Entry-Exist Registration System (NSEERS) by stating the following:

In this new war, our enemy’s platoons infiltrate our borders, quietly blending in with visiting tourists, students, and workers. They move unnoticed through our cities, neighborhoods, and public spaces. They wear no uniforms. Their camouflage is not forest green, but rather it is the color of common street clothing. Their tactics rely on

*evading at the border and escaping detection within the United States. Their terrorist mission is to defeat America, destroy our values, and kill innocent people.*²

Attorney General Ashcroft painted a very dreadful and frightening image of “enemy platoons” having infiltrated the country that moved about in “our cities, neighborhood and public spaces.” Not only had they made it into the country, but also they appeared dressed in normal clothing so much so that it would be difficult to detect them or their whereabouts. The logic of Ashcroft’s statement, if one were to accept its premises, calls upon society to use extraordinary measures to secure the country from this ‘new enemy’ deemed to be hiding and lying in wait all over the country. For the average citizen confronting a 9/11 type of an attack, the arguments and the threat are made to appear real, thus the prescription of what is required as a remedy to such threat becomes acceptable in the face of a very deceptive enemy hiding in “our cities, neighborhood and public spaces.” One may also derive from Ashcroft’s statement the real possibility that society is being asked to turn a watchful eye on those among us who are to be held indirectly responsible for the 9/11 attacks, Arabs and Muslims. In this regard, the Department of Justice’s registration program; rather than going after those responsible for the attacks, opted for cementing the idea of Arabs and Muslims as collectively guilty for the 9/11 events.

The government’s answer to the “real threat” of sleeper cells was the implementation of the National Entry-Exist Registration System targeting individuals from 25 Arab, Muslim and South East Asian countries. The result of this registration is a twofold approach; one directed at visitors coming into and leaving the country, while the other impacted those already in the US. As far as visitors entering the US, the NSEERS mandated those arriving from certain designated countries to be “fingerprinted, photographed and interviewed by an INS inspecting office.”³ During the Special Registration, non-immigrants entering or already in the country were subject to photographing, fingerprinting and questioning. Under the directives of Attorney General Ashcroft, the Special Registration was made requirement for:

1. Male citizens or nationals of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan with a deadline of March 21, 2003.
2. Male citizens or nationals of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan or Kuwait were given a deadline of April 25, 2003.
3. Male citizens or nationals over 16 years of age from Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, and Libya (Group 1) and Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Lebanon, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates the deadline was January 10, 2003.

All of the countries included in the registration are pre-dominantly Muslim with the one exception, North Korea, which was added due to its inclusion in Bush’s “Axis of Evil” category during the State of the Union of Speech in 2002. Another country, Armenia was included for a 24 hours period, but then immediately removed as a result of heavy lobbying and political pressure directed at Congress, which acted swiftly to expunge any reference to it in the INS program.⁴

As a policy, the INS Special Registration has been on the books since 1996, and it applies to all foreign visitors, however the Department of Justice “has put it into effect only for men from 25 countries, all but one of them Arab or Muslim nations.”

Susan Sachs in a Feb 21 article in the New York Times points out that “of the 32,000 men who have registered so far at immigration offices around the country, according to INS officials, more than 3,000, face deportation.” One has to consider the impact of such a policy on the Arab, Muslim and South East Asian immigrant populations and whether this in reality, was directed at reducing their numbers in the US. In commenting about Special Registration, Jeanne Butterfield, Executive Director of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, observed that “if your goal is to make tens of thousands of Muslims males easily deportable, then you may be accomplishing that.”

The case of Ejza Haider, a visiting Pakistani scholar in the Washington based Brookings Institute, who was arrested outside his office and taken into custody under the NSEERS program, is a case in point. In an editorial, *Wrong Message to the Muslim World*, published in the Washington Post February 5, 2003, Mr. Haider explained what happened to him:

On Jan. 28, two agents from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) arrested me outside my office at the Brookings Institution. In a matter of moments I was transformed from research scholar at a venerable Washington think tank to suspect, from a person with a name and a face to a "body," a non-person. I was put in a car, taken to a detention center, locked in a cell, and stripped not just of my belt and shoelaces but of my pride and dignity -- all because of my nationality. As a visiting scholar from Pakistan, where I am an editor, I had visited the State Department and attended functions with senior U.S. officials. But as far as the Justice Department was concerned, I was someone to be stalked and brought in by burly federal agents. I am only one of hundreds of victims, from Pakistan and elsewhere, who have suffered such indignities under the absurd new policy that requires foreign nationals from numerous Muslim countries to register with the INS: the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System. Many have fared far worse than I.

For more than a century, people from all over the world have come to the United States to escape repression and enjoy its freedoms. Perhaps for the first time in American history, we are witnessing the spectacle of families migrating from the United States in search of safety. It is argued that this policy is meant to increase security for the United States. A worse way of doing so could hardly be imagined. The policy is an attempt to draw a Maginot line around America. Not only is it likely to fail in securing the homeland, it is creating more resentment against the United States. Does America need a policy that fails to differentiate between friend and foe? Not only has the Justice Department designed such a policy, it has authorized the INS, arguably the most inefficient of the bureaucratic organizations, to implement it. The argument that, as a Brookings scholar, I should have known or did know about the registration policy is wrong.

On Oct. 22, 2002, I was registered at the airport. I was told to return for a second interview on or before Dec. 2. But before that date I learned that Pakistan was not on the INS list of countries. So I checked with the INS help line and was told that I did not need to go in for a second interview. Later in December, Pakistan (along with Saudi Arabia) was put on the list and the INS issued another deadline for registration, sometime in February. But even then, the registration requirement related only to Pakistani nationals who had entered the United States before Sept. 30, 2002.

I did not know I was in violation of the INS policy. Brookings did not know I was in violation. My friends in the State Department did not know I was in violation. And if -- even after following the policy closely and calling the INS for information -- we could not understand the law, what hope can there be for the cabdriver or the restaurant worker who doesn't have the leisure to discover the letter and intent of INS policies?

The Justice Department's job is not foreign policy, of course, and part of its duty is to prevent both American citizens and legitimate visitors from doing or suffering harm in this country. The INS should keep a watchful eye on potentially dangerous foreigners, but it must do a much better job of distinguishing them from the vast majority of foreign nationals in this country who seek only to work, study and obey the law. Moreover, the law itself must be clear and fair for those to whom it applies.

As matters stand, the policy draws on the "us vs. them" syndrome. The very question of "why they hate us" is begotten of the binary logic of terrorism and does incredible damage by removing the distinction between the U.S. government and America, between the official United States and American society. The irony is that confusing these two distinct categories is the big achievement not of "terrorists" but of the U.S. government itself. There are many people out there who may not, and do not, agree with U.S. policies, but neither do they hate America. Mere rhetoric about Islam's being a great religion or the fact that the war on terrorism is not a war on Islam or even that registration is not about racial and religious profiling will not do. People out there are neither stupid nor intellectually challenged. It does not serve any purpose for the United States to test their intelligence.⁵

To many Americans, the new security measures implemented post 9/11 were welcomed and viewed as providing much needed comfort after a blazing attack that undermined the sense of normalcy in a society bruised upon its own continental soil for the first time.⁶ Often the security measures instituted did not extend beyond cosmetic measures, but nevertheless for an angry and frightened population, anything seemed a welcome reprieve from the onslaught of the foreign terrorist. In a memorandum to the FBI and law enforcement agencies, the Attorney General called for the use of "every available law enforcement tool" to bring to justice anyone who "participate in, or lend support to, terrorist activities."⁷ The real problem confronting law enforcement agencies is how to identify the people who might be involved in any aspect of "terrorism."

In this context, the Department of Justice measures were within the range of "acceptable" responses to a clear and present danger, while some within the American society argued for even harsher measures. The target of the security measures were arguably those who were the weakest in defending themselves, the new immigrants and those occupying the economic bottom within the American society. In addition, race and color plays a role in the acceptability of the institution of new security measures. Since Arabs, Muslims and South East Asians are all non-whites, a campaign against them falls within the rational discourse of race relations in the American context. The INS and security measures fits into the racial matrix governing the societal structure, allocation of resources and accordance of rights in the American system, and is normative and not an exception. When a crime is committed in America, the likely suspect is a "Black" even before any details of what occurred are conveyed, and the same pertains to terrorism. Thus, the first to be

thought of as being a terrorist is Arabs, Muslims and South East Asians for they fit the existing institutionalized profile.

The registration program was born out of these dynamics and no resistance or discussions occurred prior to its implementation. In addition, the main stream news did not have much coverage of the registrations prior to the deadline and, other than in passing, the focus was on an attempt to rationalize the measures. Prior to the date of the registration, since a number of those who carried out the attacks entered the US legally then, the news coverage maintained that the government should have a way to prevent others from coming into the country and also to make sure that sleeper cells were accounted for. No historical context, no counter arguments and no real face to those affected by this massive targeting of a community based on its religious and national origins were offered. The level of hostility on right wing radio and television programs was so high and considerable segments within the society wanted raw blood, not caring whom it belonged to as long as it has an Arab, Muslim or South East name to it.

The long lines in INS offices provided dramatic imagery of the new security era unfolding across the nation with minor attention, if any, paid to these events by the main stream. However, this all changed as news of what was unfolding in the Los Angeles INS offices. Over 500, mostly Iranian immigrants, were arrested as they responded to the new mandatory requirements to register. One cannot be sure whether this was a mistake on the part of the INS officers at the Los Angeles branch or a possible approach to demonstrate the seriousness of the Department of Justice in implementing the new policy, but it brought much needed attention to the Justice Department program.

In response to this massive arrest, the Los Angeles Iranian community, which has been mostly apolitical on the domestic front since the early years of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, was quick to respond and a large demonstration outside the Los Angeles INS offices provided images for the whole world to observe. As to the role of the media, the large and quick turn-out by the Iranian community has much to do with the influence and the role of the ethnic media which provided live coverage by a popular Persian language radio station, which adjusted its programming to deal with the crisis at hand. The radio station focused on events as they unfolded at the Los Angeles INS office, including live interviews, including victims' families, mothers, fathers, and wives who provided a much needed narrative for an otherwise omitted story from the main stream press. The radio station was then followed by the Los Angeles based Iranian community television and a massive protest emerged in a rather short time.

"A breaking story" out of Los Angeles was the headline on CNN and all the major networks had live images of hundreds and possibly thousands of people besieging the INS office and real stories filled with drama found its way across the nation and the world. In retrospect "the story" was born out of the response to the policy implementation and not the registration policy itself. Had it not been for the massive turn-out, the story would have not made it to the headlines even with a large amount of arrests that had taken place. The arrests caused the radio station to shift its coverage from its daily routine, to become a voice for the Iranian community at a critical time and people responded to the call by coming out in large numbers thus creating visibility and the story broke nationally. What is impressive is that it was not the INS or the liberal main stream media that made the difference; rather an 'old fashioned' community response aided by its own ethnic mass communication medium that caused a crisis.

The story in Los Angeles did not only affect the Iranian community, but included a diverse array of people from the targeted nations. Emad Takleh, a businessman from

Claremont, California, of Syrian origin, who had lived in the United States for 18 years was required to register. In a town hall meeting Takleh said: "I knew my papers were in order, and thought I should have nothing to fear. I entered a room before the interviewer knew anything about my case; I was informed that I would be detained. My work authorization is in order-it doesn't expire until October of 2003." Entering the room was the beginning of a process that included a few hours of interrogation and demanded proof of his marriage. It seems Takleh came to the US as a foreign student and after college remained in the country, but in the early 1980's he allowed his visa to lapse. However, at the time of his registration Takleh's records indicate that he was granted full legal status as a result of a green card lottery, but the INS investigator "wouldn't listen" stating "You are illegal." After being interrogated for hours, Takleh was "packed into a cell with 50 other people and over the next few days was moved from Los Angeles to a facility in Lancaster approximately at 3:00 am in the morning." "If this would have happened in Syria, I would have expected it, but to have it happen in the United States – well it's just unbelievable to me."⁸

A similar story is that of Yasser Tair, a resident of the United States for 21 years. His wife Zohor said: "he followed the law, he went there and then soon called to say that he had been detained. They put him in jail, and he doesn't know why. We still don't know why and they are treating him like a criminal. My husband sells real estate. We came here to make a good life for our children. My husband is the only one in the family who works and I have no other relatives here. We don't know when he will come back to us."⁹

Another Syrian man, Mohammed Tabboa, who lived with his wife and two children in Pasadena, went to the INS building in downtown Los Angeles early Monday morning to register and it was not until 11:00 pm on Thursday he was released, but not in Los Angeles rather from Lancaster, California. Tabboos said about his immigration status: "I am here on a visa. I've had a case with the INS dating from 1989, so for 14 years I've been in the US, working and paying taxes. My children are Americans. If the INS asks to see me, I come. What I don't understand is why they detained me. They asked me how I entered the US, who my parents and siblings are, and where they live today. Then they sent me to 'processing' where they took my picture, fingerprints, and told me to empty all of my personal belongings into a bag." After processing, Mohammed was taken into the basement holding cells shared by 50-80 men and boys placed in six small rooms with two small toilets and washbowls. "Some of the detainees had trouble breathing. There was only little space under the door to let in fresh air. We were so tight in the rooms that we didn't even have room for our prayers."¹⁰

INS offices across the country dealt with the registration in a variety of different ways with most using their own discretion by choosing not to arrest those coming in to register and being content with providing a way for the person either to post bail or promise to appear in court to begin the removal from the country procedure. As a result of the Los Angeles arrests, a national debate ensued about the wisdom of such registration; asking if it was causing a rift with those who might be helpful to "us" in fighting terrorism, and whether it is reflective of long held American values concerning the treatment of immigrants in the country. The debate provided an opening for a greater segment of the American public to engage, but this was quickly overcome and other more pressing items captured the headlines; Osama Bin Laden, Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction won the day.

*A DAY AT THE INS: A JOURNEY TO SAN FRANCISCO REGISTRATION
PROCESS*

On January 10, 2003, the first date for the Special Registration, I walked into the Immigration and Naturalization Services building in San Francisco to meet with the acting director, a member of delegation representing the Arab and Muslim community, academics, civil rights lawyers, and union leadership. After the meeting, Hiba Nimar a volunteer lawyer with American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee San Francisco office, suggested a tour of the various areas of the building where people were going through the registration process. We traversed several floors of the building and I was sick and saddened by what I saw on this visit. No, it was not torture or people receiving a physical beating that was sickening and saddening; rather the sight of Arabs, Muslims, and South East Asians young men sitting, watching and waiting not knowing what would happen to them next. On the eighth floor, I ran into M.A., a man in his late 30's. I had known M.A. for about eight years at the time from Oakland Islamic Center where I had occasionally attended the Friday sermon and he often stopped me afterward for some personal questions. I greeted him with the Muslim salutation and greeting of peace "al-salam alaikum" and he in return responded with "wa alaikum al-salam." Witnessing M.A. in this situation became personal. I felt responsible and at the same time sad for him. As part of my community, this '30 something' man, who owned a small store in Oakland, whom I had seen on occasion in the wholesale market, seemed powerless during the INS registration process. M.A. was not a citizen in the US, and had opted to hold onto his Yemeni citizenship instead, which was a cause for him to appear for this registration. I was told by the lawyers that people on the eighth floor were waiting for investigation of their cases, and that they may be required to post a \$5,000 bond otherwise they would be kept overnight for a possible deportation hearing. He said jokingly "it must be my Yemeni passport that is causing all this trouble for me!" I told him the reason for our visit at INS, checked up on him and then parted company. Before we separated he asked me in a low voice for a du'aa (supplication) to which I responded with words of comfort and patience in this ordeal. I held back my own emotions of sadness from this man, wanting him to seek strength in our short exchange together, aware that nothing we could do at that moment would change his situation. When I left him, my mind was drawn to thoughts of his wife and children in Oakland wondering what running through their minds waiting for their father and husband to return, while not knowing if he ever would. While waiting for the elevator to take us to the next floor, I recalled the many times M.A. brought his six year old daughter with him to Friday prayers, always asking her to greet me in Arabic to which I responded back by kissing her on top of her head before she left. M.A. was a victim of terrorism, and through the INS registration he was cast as a marked man belonging to some master list of "potential" threats that the government would keep watch on in the foreseeable future. Terrorism has many victims both seen and unseen, and while the focus is always on those physically injured through violence and attacks, M.A. carries a silent scare and is a moving target every time he travels or has any law enforcement contacts.

January 10, 2003 was anything but a normal day in America, and our next stop on the fifth floor and the sights we encountered served as proof of that. What I witnessed was so shocking to me that the only other comparable example I can recall, was when I as a Palestinian, waited to cross the bridge into occupied Palestine. We entered the fifth floor from a small door and we could see one young man in his twenties standing there and four others sitting on chairs inside an opening on the other side of the hallway. However, when

we stepped inside what I thought was a very small area turned out to be a long L shaped extension with two facing rows of chairs filled with young men at each side all sitting in wait. Not a single chair was empty and there was no space to add another. All eyes, momentarily lacking the sparkle of young age, were fixed on us at the entrance. Despair and humiliation was written on their faces and I felt each one of them looking back at me as if to say “do something” and beckoning us to identify ourselves and our role in the building that day. The eyes conveyed more than words at that moment.

As far as I could discern, none of the young men in the room appeared to be above 25 years old. As we greeted the room, I recognized a number of those waiting as worshipers at the Islamic Society of San Francisco on Jones Street. I witnessed a group of about 40 or more young men, all sitting, with something in their eyes that struck me as fear, uncertainty, bewilderment, and a plea for help knowing that we could do nothing to change what they were going through. No one should have to witness such a look in the face of young men full of life and energy. By this time I was fighting back tears, but this was not the time for it. These young men needed hope even though I did not know what was ahead for them. I wished I could do something to change their condition, but all I could do was offer words of comfort. There was an unmistakable fear permeating the air, thick and heavy. The young men were just sitting and waiting for their number to be called through a five foot by five bullet proof window casting the only bright light in the area. The controlled lighting seemed to say, the light of hope for you will only come from this direction. The window was the bulletproof kind utilized by banks and gas stations as a form of protection, with a small opening to talk and pass paper work through. One man said that he had been sitting continuously in the same chair for over seven hours, and had been asked the same question over and over a number of times by different people during various time intervals. Another, sitting right next to him, said the person manning the window was not helpful and did not provide them with any real information. All of the young men were waiting for their magic number and name to be called in an unfair game between the hunter and the hunted with the prey already trapped in the cage surrendering. This is not sufficient, however, for the hunter knowing that he has complete power and domination over his prey that sit in wait before him surrendering to what comes next.

In our meeting with David Stills, the Acting Director of Northern California INS, he mentioned that “people who have assets in this country were more likely to be released without having to post bail.” Hearing this I thought we were talking about money, real state and businesses, but when he made reference to it again in passing it became clear to me what he meant. “Assets” in INS language does mean money, employment and an address, but more importantly includes family, a wife and children. I realized that what we had here was language as a tool for dehumanization. A wife and children were “assets” used in the same context with non-living objects and someone would be called upon to make a determination about them (i.e. if they were good enough to warrant keeping one in America). A wife and children served as the most important “assets” for immigration cases and they had to be citizens for one to be released without having to post bail. By definition, a wife and children were good “assets” if they were Americans, but if they were not then the entire family was subject to deportation proceedings (i.e. they were a liability). From this, one can understand the way language and words were used to dis-empower and humiliate, all an important part of a concerted policy. Our discussion with Stills focused on the actual implementation of the law and the apparent differences between what happened in Los Angeles and San Francisco. The Los Angeles office chose to arrest a large number of people, who came to register, which caused such a negative public response. On the other hand, the Northern California

INS office elected not to arrest people and opted to give a “Notice to Appear” in court to many of those who showed up. From all personal indication, Stills appeared to be a very nice person, sociable, sensitive to people needs and able to discuss all kinds of immigration issues, but he was still implementing an unjust law. This made me question how someone who from all indications appears to be a ‘good’ person, can with conscience agree to be part of such an unjust undertaking. In retrospect, as a nation we look back in history and speak of what happened to the Japanese in America and the suspicion surrounding them during the war and their internment and are very clear regarding the wrong done to them, yet the government engages in similar types of programs as we speak.

We left the fifth floor on our way to the second floor, which was a large room bustling with people, endless counters, flashing numbers on electronic boards calling upon individuals. Muslims, Arabs and South East Asians abounded and I could discern the various dialects spoken in the hall. If one did not know otherwise, one would think they were at an Arab market someplace in the Arab World. Next to the door two Yemeni men stood drinking coffee passing the time talking to each other possibly providing comfort to one another. I heard them complaining about the process and listing all the paper work they had to bring to the INS as a way to prove their worthiness of being allowed to continue to live in America. These two men appeared to be in their late 40’s. I looked in the corner of the room and immediately recognized one of my students, M.T., who graduated from the University of California, Berkeley a year before, sitting next to an Asian man. I left the group and headed straight towards him to greet and embrace him. I knew that M.T was a foreign student and since his days at Berkeley was seeking to get married to a Muslim woman, but it seems that up to this point he was unable to find someone. In our conversation M.T did not want to share the details of his case with me and I understood that he was guarding his privacy and so I did not ask any questions. As a way to lighten the moment, I suggested to him to get married as the best way to deal with this issue. He responded in gest, “where are they? I am ready if you have someone and I have been looking as you know.” The Asian man sitting with him was a volunteer lawyer, who used to work with the San Francisco Asian Law Caucus who came forward to offer his help to anyone needing it.¹¹ He also informed us that the Asian Law Caucus did not have an immigration lawyer on staff at the time, otherwise they would have been there and since he worked with them he felt compelled to come and help. In addition, M.T informed me that his lawyer was willing to offer financial help in case a bail was needed. We spent a few minutes talking with the Asian lawyer, exchanged business cards and before going our separate ways we complained to one another of the inherent racism in this INS mandatory registration.

We stood by the entrance surrounded by attorneys who were working with a number of clients and on almost every floor any gathering turned into a processing moment and the human need to vent and share painful experiences. In general, lawyers are not viewed highly in American society as far as character, nevertheless, the many who were present on the scene were the saviors of the day acting as legal advisors, therapists, family, financial advisors and possibly the only witness to an arrest of their own clients.

In the goliath waiting room I knew I could not speak to everyone. The men passed time by talking to one another, drinking coffee or huddled with their lawyers. The room was big and spacious, but the feeling of gloom and despair was very thick in the air and made it feel like a small closet. I imagine our group was experiencing similar emotions that day. Hiba Nimar, the volunteer lawyer, looked tired, angry, frustrated, defiant, merciful and you could sense the pain she was feeling behind every word she uttered. I did not talk much with her, but she guided us through the tour informing us of every aspect of the INS and it seems that

she spent the countless days, weeks or months in these halls and floors. In the elevator, Nimar mentioned the number of “blonde wives” coming to look for their Tunisian husbands who were arrested. Obviously, Nimar had seen and listened to countless stories first hand and she moved and spoke with all the narratives fresh in her mind and weighing on her conscience. As one listened to the stories, saw the young men come and go, witnessed arrests and detentions, helped post bail for some, answered the questions of wives and family members, at the end of the day how were you expected to feel normal? Imagine if this was done to your own people, someone you know, relatives of yours, friends you call upon, fathers, sons, husbands, nephews etc. Nimar was a witness to history in the making, not as a mere observer, but as a single participant attempting to heal the wounds of racism.

We moved from the second to the eleventh floor since Nimar did not know what was occurring up on that floor and needed to investigate as a number of people in the past few days had been taken up there. In the elevator, one person said “it feels like a 007 movie” going up to the eleventh floor to find out what was taking place and the sense of mission. It was a way to lighten the moment after the sight on the second floor. We arrived at the eleventh floor and were greeted by one of the lawyers who immediately informed us that due to the large number of investigations underway, they needed more space and INS investigators have been using rooms on that floor. I believe he said they had ten rooms in use and that sometimes they used the cafeteria in addition to the others. We asked how long he stayed the previous day and he responded “I left the INS at 12:05 am after the last case I represented finished.” We inquired about the cases he is dealing with. He responded that the day before he had 17 cases in total and all but three were given an NT while each posting a \$5,000 bond and three were detained. NT is short for a “Notice to Appear in Court” for INS proceedings and possible removal from the country, which means that all of those released were officially placed in a deportation process and the real ordeal had just begun. The lawyer presented us with the numbers, seventeen the day before, fifteen that day, and eleven the first day. To us they were nameless and faceless, yet each must have had a story to tell, how and why they came to America, why they came to register and whom they left behind before coming to the INS that day.

Outside the INS building in San Francisco, a number of community groups set up volunteer teams. The volunteers worked long hours from 6:00 am to possibly midnight in order to keep records of who went into the INS to begin the registration process and who emerged afterward. Most of the volunteers outside were young and highly dedicated individuals from local universities and the community. Clip boards in hand, young men and women spoke to everyone before they went inside, asked if they had a lawyer, took down their contact information, employment and family member contact and provided a hand-out, prepared by the civil rights community, describing the INS registration process.

After the INS tour and meetings, I spent some time speaking to the volunteers outside of the building and a number of individuals who just finished the registration process. One volunteer, Noura Erakat, a first year Boalt law student at the University of California, Berkeley, was immediately in front of me as I exited the INS building and I stopped to ask about the number of individuals she had on her list for the day. She replied “I have about 300 names on my list from this door.” I asked her about the hours she has been keeping at the INS office and she responded “the last two days I have been arriving at 6:30 AM and getting home around 12:00 midnight.” The response from the community groups, volunteers and activists, imperfect and lacking in resources and overall structure, seemed to make a difference. They were able to organize, provide legal help and contacts, arrange or

help with funds and for many they were the only other human beings they could reach out to about what they were experiencing.

I also ran into four young men from the mosque who had just finished one part of the process and were told to come back the next day. We greeted each other with Islamic salutations of peace. One of them said that it was his “third day coming to the INS for this registration” and he was told to return with another set of papers. The other three had completed the registration and it was reflected in their joyful demeanor. One could see a sense of relief in some and frustration by others due to the ongoing ordeal even among a group of friends. In my mind I also needed answers to some critical question: did America become more secure with this registration? Were any “sleeper cells” caught through this registration? How secure did our country become when someone who walked voluntarily into an INS office to register was arrested?

My day was anything but normal on January 10, 2003 and for a long time will not be, for we are living in a new period of ‘good-old American exclusion once again utilizing immigration policies. It was not a normal day for Muslims either because it was a Friday, the day people from all walks of life gather at the masjid (mosque) to meet, greet each other, listen to the sermon, pray and then usually rush back to work, school, or home. On Fridays, I usually deliver a talk in one of the areas masjids and at least twice a month my assignment is at the Islamic Society of San Francisco, a major center in the downtown area, frequented by a large immigrant population. On January 10, 2003, I was at ISSF and my sermon focused on the differences that exist between first generation immigrant and American born Muslims and how best to develop unity through recognizing and appreciating the diversity of our backgrounds.

After the prayers, we informed people of a protest taking place in front of the INS offices in downtown San Francisco and encouraged everyone to attend. The protest was a community wide response to the INS mandatory registration requirements and had many local politicians, activists and religious personalities.¹² Even though the protest had wide representation on the speaker list, in terms of San Francisco and the Bay Area it was not big and the turnout was not impressive at all. Thinking about the protest, the turnout for me indicated a lack of concern or comprehension of this issue at hand from the various sectors of the Bay Area progressive and liberal communities. I questioned if, beyond a core of progressive activists in the Bay Area who relate to the Arabs, South East Asians and Muslims as real people, much of “the movement” see them as objects to be dealt with when it is most convenient but not real allies. The anti-terrorism campaign is a difficult issue for many because it also involves a sense of fear related to 9/11, and includes the possibility of other “terrorists” in the country that might conduct similar acts in the future. Thus, this feeling permeating society, even in “the movement,” results in closeness, but at the same time distance in a relationship when dealing with the Arab, South East Asian and Muslim communities on this and other important issues. Orientalism, if I may remind all, is not limited to the right wing; rather it is a construct impacting many layers of the society; liberal and progressive included. The turnout and the over-all response in the Bay Area would have to be deemed dismal pointing to some weakness in the collective work. Not to dwell on the negatives, the Asian and Latino communities, Japanese, Koreans and Central Americans were in the forefront, they understand the issue well and reached out to the Muslim and Arab communities immediately after 9/11 and continue to do so at every juncture. Above I might sound a little too harsh on the “movement” however the reality of how minorities are treated in the progressive camp only reflect the dominant society and as a friend often

reminds me that we have an empire with a big “M” on the right and one with a small “m” on the left.

POLITICS OF BLAME AND FEAR: THE IMPACTS OF THE INS REGISTRATION PROGRAM

Jalil Mirza, a Pakistani national residing in the state of Virginia with his wife and seven children, is symbolic of the period Muslims, Arabs and South East Asians immigrants find themselves in this country and I maintain on an international level as well. Mirza, facing the INS special registration requirements, opted to pack his bags and headed north to Canada. After a long “16 hour bus ride from Virginia with his wife and seven children, he arrived at the Canadian border”¹³ in the hope of beginning another life as a second time immigrant. Since the INS instituted the special registration, many immigrants in the US from 25 designated countries without residency permits or those who had overstayed a tourist visa who were confronted with arrest and a possible deportation, have made their way to Canada in hope of gaining political asylum. What Mirza found was a closed border and a notice to come back in two weeks. The Canadians had experienced a flood of people, but in particular Pakistanis, seeking asylum from an increasing repressive immigration policy treating all Muslims, Arabs and Southeast Asians as a suspect class deemed a threat to national security. Not being permitted into Canada, Mirza returned to the US side of the border, however, lacking legal residency he and his two teenage sons were promptly arrested and placed in deportation proceedings. His wife and the rest of the family, who had documents and were legal, were stuck at the icy cold border area with nowhere to go. The number of those who decided to leave is not yet clear, but some estimates were as high as 10,000 if not more, however a systematic study is lacking and it is something that deserves further future attention. I have presented cases that show outcomes of those who went to the INS to register and another case (Mirza) of those that chose to leave the country altogether to find an alternative home for themselves

A third group of cases are those of immigrants that decided not to register at all and take their chances by going underground. The rationale behind their decision is the fact that 13,434 of those who registered are facing deportation even though they went to the INS on their own. On the streets and in apartments at the heart of the inner cities a large number of Arabs, Muslims and South East Asians are living an underground life with limited movement and avoiding contact with all aspects of government structures including basic healthcare services. Ali is one of the people who decided not to register, gave the reporter only his first name, is a highly educated Egyptian who “gave up a prestigious job teaching aviation engineering in Cairo”¹⁴ and moved to the United States. “I came here not to hide,” Ali informed his interviewer but “it’s very hard to decide what to do.”¹⁵ Another person opting for the same approach is Mohammed, a 35 year old man from Yemen, who said “the only time he leaves the house is to walk the five blocks to and from the small grocery store where he works.”¹⁶ Fear is running rampant in the Arab, Muslim and South East Asian communities and as San Jose lawyer Saad Ahmad noted that “the sad thing is that many of these immigrants did have valid remedies available, but many people never took advantage of it because they were scared and because they were afraid of being caught, and this was even prior to 9/11.”¹⁷

This particular INS registration is a process of shifting the blame and finding a scapegoat that can be assigned responsibility for what happened in New York on 9/11. We are years removed from 9/11, yet no real investigation has taken place, the Congressional

Committee has not taken anyone to task and doubtful if it will ever do so. The report issued with the 28 pages that were kept away from the public eye did not demand any real changes at the top and mostly offered cosmetic recommendations. Critical questions need to be asked of the “intelligence” community regarding their knowledge concerning 9/11 and if they had no knowledge, why? Why should they continue to be on the job? Immigrants, Arabs, Muslims and Southeast Asians are an easy target, they produce immediate results, good photo opportunities, especially with lines stretching blocks around INS building, and it brings satisfaction to those xenophobic forces in American society. As a nation, we have previous encounters with this approach; the Japanese, Chinese, and Mexican immigrants all have tasted this cup of poison before and are familiar with the winds of racism and selective use of law as an instrument of coercion. The dragnet security approach is a coercive tool often deployed by despotic regimes in place of real systems of justice based on guilt and proof. Since the Federal government lacks any evidence to cause the arrest of any individual, they resorted to the dragnet approach, in this case directed at the Arabs, Muslims and Southeast Asians, carried out under the guise of immigration enforcement.

If it is immigration issues that are of concern then why not apply the law to everyone and ask all male visitors to register? The law is racially and religiously directed at people from specific countries. Why do we say it is racial and religious even though no race or religion is mentioned in the law itself? Politicians, specially the racist ones among them, think they are sharp and smart by using nation-state as a way to avoid the race and religion issue when passing a law dealing with immigration. If it is not race or religion, then why are all of the countries subject to this new policy with the exception of one, pre-dominantly Muslim countries? Should we assume this to be a mere oversight? Should we think that nation-state in this context is different than the exclusionary practices directed at Asians and Chinese in particular? If you ask a child in the street of any Muslim country he/she would inform you of the intent of this law. Come to think of it, is not the case that the law should be considered for its intent and not only by the wording used. Let’s be clear for the purpose of honesty and history, the intent of the Patriot Act and the INS registration is to target Muslims, Arabs and Southeast Asians as a group in response to the events of 9/11. The legal system or what is left of it in post 9/11 does not and should not accuse a group for the crime of one or a group of individuals, even if they belong to a given racial or religious group. Innocent until proven guilty is the standard for an individual in the American legal system and the same applies for a group. It is understood that only a person who commits a crime or a person who assists them in doing so is to be charged and taken to court to be presented with the evidence against them. In our case, the whole Muslim, Arab, and Southeast Asian world is guilty as charged and the discussion is centering on the kind of sentence to be handed down. Justice by fiat carried out by the powerful. One is guilty because of their religious belief and background. The argument goes something like this; Osama Bin Laden and the terrorist with him are Muslims, thus all Muslims belief the same way as Osama, he carried out an attack against our country thus he is guilty of a crime and all those who share his belief likewise are guilty.

In the context of this logic, the guilty party is the Arabs, Muslims and Southeast Asians as a group, which warrant their treatment as a guilty party excluding them from entry and participation in the affairs of the country. The logic is a faulty one and cannot stand the test of time, nevertheless what is giving it legs is the sense of fear created in the aftermath of 9/11 by politicians and public figures who have agendas pertaining to legal and constitutional reforms targeting immigration and civil liberties. Yes, those who carried the attacks were Muslims and they have committed a crime that they should pay for it, but to

make all Muslims and their countries guilty is beyond pale. Also, since those who carried out the attack came to the US through student or visitor visas does not make all such individuals guilty and subject to deportation proceedings. I argue that someone had to be strung up on the tree to satisfy the public mob and the immigrant Arabs, Muslims and Southeast Asians are the logical choice in this period.

A larger issue is the whole question of immigration; the “legal” and “illegal” aspect of it. The US population is getting older and has been doing so for some years, while the economy is in constant need of young, vibrant and able bodies to fill the ranks in hotels, restaurants, factories, sweatshops, and farms. Legal immigration addresses but a small portion of the economies real need, which is left for the massive influx of “illegals” to fill. Politicians and “concerned racist citizens” will scream aloud about “illegal” immigration, however at the end of the day their rational economic interests overtakes all other, since everyone of them will go out to eat, shop, sleep, buy produce and travel at a reduced rate due to the “unwanted” workers. The massive hunts, dragnets and racist speeches about the “illegal” immigration are created for public consumption because if they were principled positions then our economy would collapse without these workers. What I am pointing out is the utter hypocrisy of the immigration policies for a society calling for legal immigration but at the same time cannot do without the “illegals” in the day to day operations of the economy. What the system is saying is-we stand for principle when our interests are concerned and we disregard our principles when our interest is at hand; a true mark of hypocrisy.

Another dimension of the response to the INS registration is the rarely addressed intra-Muslim attitudes toward this unfolding crisis. When examining this closer one comes to find the gaps existing between the immigrant Muslim and Arab communities and their African American and Caucasian counter parts. In regards to the history of exclusion, the African American and Native American communities have written the book on the subject and continue to shoulder the legacy and the current reality of racism and discrimination in America. Immigrants who make it into the US come to the country with an already developed racial matrix that places the African American community at the bottom while attempting to find its way into the top where the Caucasians are to be found. In this racial structure, immigrants who adopt this view continuously strive to be part of the ‘superior’ race while looking down distancing themselves from those whom they perceive to be below them. Malcolm X spoke of the differences between the “house Negro” and the “field Negro.” The same can be said for the immigrant communities, however the only difference is that most among the immigrant population want to be in the master’s house instead of the field, and many have come to this country attracted by its allure.

While intra Muslim and Arab coalition was lacking, the same cannot be said about other communities. A side effect of the INS registration was the development of an extensive network among a number of diverse community organizations representing various ethnicities impacted by the program. The ordeal brought about coordination among volunteers, immigration workshops, fact sheets, and development and sharing of resources among community organizations that otherwise would have remained distant and separated from one another. This topic of emergence of cross-ethnic cooperation among organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area is a subject unto itself which calls for independent work beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to celebrate the development of real alliances in the middle of such an important civil rights battle. Some in the civil rights community managed to cross the bridge and take a real interest in the Arab,

Muslim and South East Asian causes, which is also an area needing further research and systematic documentation.

The INS Special Registration placed heavy stress on Arabs, Muslims and South East Asian communities and stretched their internal capacities and financial resources. Since its inception the program managed to register more than 113,000 individuals and deport 13,400 people while others were still working their way through the system at the time of writing this paper. Having unleashed this massive program, the INS did not claim a single success case of uncovering a sleeper cell in this country; rather it managed to disrupt the normal life of hard working immigrants who committed no crime other than being born in a country that happens to be on their new list.

On December 1st, 2003, the Department of Homeland Security announced that it was scrapping the Special Registration Program. Asa Hutchinson, the then Homeland Security undersecretary for border and transportation security, said the move “freed up resources to target more effectively terrorist based on individuals and not geographic factors. It was a significant resource commitment to handle these re-registrations. These resources could be better used in implementing real security measures not founded upon nation or ethnic profiling.” In reality, the reason for scrapping the program is its failure to provide any national security leads, which was the specific intent of the program when it was first set-up and announced to the public. However, the Department of Homeland Security did not want to admit the obvious, the failure of this program in its time and resources. The Arab, Muslim and South East Asian communities, disparately impacted by the Registration, welcomed the news though it was a bittersweet victory after the deportation of some 13,400 members of its communities. In a press release issued, Nihad Awad, the executive director of the Council on American Islamic Relations, welcomed the change and advised that “any new screening procedure should not be based on religion, ethnicity or national origin, but instead reflect the American values of equal justice and religious freedom.” We continue to be hopeful that Nihad’s recommendation of transparency and accountability remains the standard; however, recent revelations of NSA programs in spying and communications monitoring of all Americans make such efforts even more difficult as violations of basic constitutional rights continue to be trampled upon.

ENDNOTES

¹ Nat Hentoff, Ashcroft in Conference: ‘Let’s Not Let them Get Johnnie Cochran on the Phone’, *The Village Voice*, June 27, 2003.

² Attorney General John Ashcroft, Prepared Remarks on the National Security Entry-Exist Registration System, June 6th, 2002.

³ United States Department of Justice, June 6, 2002.

⁴ INS, Special Registration Procedures, 2002.

⁵ The writer is news editor of the *Friday Times* and foreign editor of the *Daily Times*, both Lahore-based publications. He is a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution.

⁶ The indigenous community in America has suffered a full-scale genocide over a period of 500 years and the notion of this being the first external attack has to be contextualized and referenced of a particular reading of history.

⁷ Memorandum from Attorney General John Ashcroft to United States Attorneys entitled, “Anti-Terrorism Plan,” September 17, 2001, and quoted in The Office of the Inspector General Report, September 11 Detainees: A Review of the Treatment of Aliens Held on Immigration Charges in Connection with the Investigation of the September 11 Attacks, April, 2003.

⁸ Testimonies in a public meeting held in Buena Park, California, October 20th, 2002, and organized by a Coalition that included Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), ACLU, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), the Orange County Asian and Pacific Islanders Community Alliance (OCAPICA), the Iranian American Lawyers Guild, the National Lawyers Guild, the South Asian Network (SAN) and the Coalition of Women from Asia and the Middle East (CWAME).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ For privacy purposes I did not include the name of the lawyer or the student.

¹² Asian Week, Thousands Across the Nation Protest INS Special Registration, January 17, 2003.

¹³ Susan Sachs, Crackdown Sets Off Unusual Rush to Canada, New York Times, Feb. 21, 2003.

¹⁴ Anastasia Hendrix, Fear Keeps Immigrants in Hiding: After 9/11, many Live Underground Rather Than Register, San Francisco Chronicle, Sunday, August 3, 2003, p. A26.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The U.S. Islamophobia Network: Its Funding and Impact

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ISLAMOPHOBIA STUDIES JOURNAL
VOLUME 2, NO. 1, SPRING 2014, PP. 99-xx.

Published by:
Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project,
Center for Race and Gender, University of California, Berkeley.

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The U.S. Islamophobia Network: Its Funding and Impact

Corey Saylor

Council on American-Islamic Relations

The U.S.-based Islamophobia network's inner core is currently comprised of at least 37 groups whose primary purpose is to promote prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims. An additional 32 groups whose primary purpose does not appear to include promoting prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims but whose work regularly demonstrates or supports Islamophobic themes make up the network's outer core.

The inner core of the U.S.-based Islamophobia network enjoyed access to at least \$119,662,719 in total revenue between 2008 and 2011. Groups in the inner core are often tightly linked. Key players in the network benefitted from large salaries as they encouraged the American public to fear Islam.

In 2011 and 2012, 78 bills or amendments designed to vilify Islamic religious practices were introduced in the legislatures of 29 states and the U.S. Congress. Sixty-two of these bills contained language that was extracted from David Yerushalmi's American Laws for American Courts (ALAC) model legislation. While the bias behind the bills is clear, the presence of an actual problem that needed solved was not, even to the legislators introducing the measures. In at least 11 states, mainstream Republican leaders introduced or supported anti-Muslim legislation.

In September 2013 the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy group, issued "Legislating Fear: Islamophobia and its Impact in the United States 2011-2012." In part, that report examines the revenue available to Islamophobic organizations and their legislative impact. This paper is extracted from that report.

FINANCING PREJUDICE AND HATE

According to research conducted by CAIR, the inner core of America's Islamophobia network enjoyed access to at least \$119,662,719 in total revenue between 2008 and 2011. Given the limitations on CAIR's research, this number should be viewed as very conservative.

Groups in the inner core are often tightly linked. For example, Daniel Pipes's Middle East Forum granted \$1,242,000 over three years to Steven Emerson's Investigative Project on Terrorism. Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer's American Freedom Defense Initiative and Jihad Watch share the exact same five top leaders.

Key players in the network benefitted from large salaries as they encouraged the American public to fear Islam. David Horowitz of the David Horowitz Freedom Center earned \$488,953 in 2011. As President/Treasurer of the board of directors of ACT! for America Brigitte Gabriel oversaw a 79 percent increase in her own compensation, going from \$87,300 in 2010 to \$156,473 in 2011.

BACKGROUND

In 2011, the authors of the Center for American Progress Action Fund's *Fear, Inc.* examined the Islamophobia network's roots. They found seven foundations contributing \$42.6 million over a ten year period to organization's promoting anti-Islam sentiment in America. *Fear, Inc.* focused only on the funding coming through foundations while this report spotlights total revenue.

As a result of using similar primary source material a certain amount of repetition in the two reports' findings exists. CAIR has worked to minimize this repetition and focus on expanding the public's understanding of group's promoting Islamophobia in America. The authors of this report strongly encourage all readers to obtain *Fear, Inc.* as an essential resource for understanding the Islamophobia network.

A number of journalists have also already produced insightful material on this subject. For instance, it was Justin Elliot of Salon Magazine¹ who first broke the news that Barre Seid is likely responsible for a \$17 million donation to the Clarion Fund to make its 2008 distribution of millions of copies of its anti-Muslim film *Obsession* possible. Similarly, *The Tennessean's* Bob Smeitana revealed questionable financial transactions between Steven Emerson's not-for-profit Investigative Project on Terrorism and for-profit SAE Productions.

METHOD

CAIR developed its American Islamophobe Database by reviewing the source material for both 2011's "Same Hate, New Target: Islamophobia and its Impact in the United States 2009-2010" and this report.

Groups and individuals cited in the reports and active in the last five years were entered into the database and then assigned to one of three categories:

Inner Core: Groups or individuals whose primary purpose is to promote prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims and whose work regularly demonstrates Islamophobic themes.

Outer Core: Groups or individuals whose primary purpose does not appear to include promoting prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims but whose work regularly demonstrates or supports Islamophobic themes.

Of Concern: Groups or individuals who have used Islamophobic themes or supported Islamophobia in America, but whose work does not regularly demonstrate or support Islamophobic themes. CAIR does not further discuss groups placed in this category in this report.

CAIR then obtained tax documents known as Form 990s for each non-profit organization in the inner core for the years 2008-2011, when they could be acquired in the window of time allotted for researching and writing this report. Form 990s must be filed annually by tax exempt organizations. Unless otherwise stated, all of the below information was obtained from these forms.

THE INNER CORE

CAIR identifies 37 groups in the Islamophobia network's inner core. The impact of eleven of these groups is local in nature. Five of the local groups are based in Florida: Americans Against Hate, Citizens for National Security, Counter Terrorism Operations

Center, Florida Family Association and The United West. ACT! For America is headquartered in Florida as well.

The influence of these groups spans a full spectrum from minimal, such as the Sheepshead Bay, New York's Bay People, to significant, such as ACT! For America, the Center for Security Policy, Jihad Watch, Atlas Shrugs and the Investigative Project on Terrorism.

Groups in the Islamophobia Network's Inner Core

(Groups listed with a state abbreviation tend to operate only in that state.)

- ACT! For America
- American Freedom Defense Initiative
- American Freedom Law Center
- American Public Policy Alliance
- American-Islamic Forum for Democracy
- Americans Against Hate (Fla.)
- Atlas Shrugs
- Bare Naked Islam
- Bay People (N.Y.)
- Center for Security Policy
- Center for the Study of Political Islam
- Christian Action Network
- Citizens for National Security (Fla.)
- Concerned American Citizens (Calif.)
- Concerned Citizens for the First Amendment (Calif.)
- Counter Terrorism Operations Center (Fla.)
- David Horowitz Freedom Center
- Debbieshussel.com (Mich.)
- Dove World Outreach Center
- Florida Family Association (Fla.)
- Former Muslims United
- Forum for Middle East Understanding
- Gates of Vienna
- Investigative Project on Terrorism
- Jihad Watch
- Middle East Forum
- Middle East Media Research Institute
- Militant Islam Monitor
- SAE Productions
- Society of Americans for National Existence
- Stop the Islamization of Nations
- Strategic Engagement Group
- Tennessee Freedom Coalition (Tenn.)
- The Clarion Fund

- The Shoebat Foundation
- The United West (Fla.)
- The Virginia Anti-Shariah Taskforce (Va.)

THE OUTER CORE

CAIR identifies 32 groups in the Islamophobia network's outer core. Many of the listed foundations were identified by the Center for America Progress Action Fund in *Fear, Inc.* and are included because they funnel money to the network. Just as providing funds to white supremacist or anti-Semitic groups should be seen as anathema, these foundations must be held to socially responsible standards.

Groups in the Islamophobia Network's Outer Core

(Groups listed with a state abbreviation tend to operate only in that state.)

- American Center for Law and Justice
- American Family Association
- American Islamic Leadership Coalition
- Anchorage Foundation/William Rosenwald Family Fund
- Family Security Matters
- Becker Foundations
- Carroll County Republican Party (Tenn.)
- Christian Broadcasting Network
- Donors Capital Fund
- Eagle Forum
- Endowment for Middle East Truth
- Extreme Terrorism Consulting
- Fairbrook Foundation
- Fox News
- Grace Baptist Church (Tenn.)
- Liberty Counsel
- Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation
- National Review
- Richard Mellon Scaife Foundations
- Russell Berrie Foundation
- Rutherford Reader (Tenn.)
- Security Solutions International
- Stewart County Republican Party (Tenn.)
- Traditional Values Coalition
- The Family Leader
- The Mark Levin Show
- The Oak Initiative
- The Rush Limbaugh Show
- The Savage Nation

- Washington Times
- Williamson County Republican Party (Tenn.)
- Worldnet Daily

NETWORK INTERDEPENDENCE

Daniel Pipes and his Middle East Forum (MEF) are longstanding components of the Islamophobia network. Pipes's involvement in anti-Muslim sentiment is documented back to his 1990 statement raising concerns about "brown-skinned people" with "different standards of hygiene" immigrating to America.

MEF's funding activities provide an illuminating example of the interconnected nature of the Islamophobia network:

- Steve Emerson's Investigative Project on Terrorism received \$1,242,000 from MEF between 2009 and 2011.
- Between 2009 and 2011 MEF sent Yigal Carmon's Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) \$450,000.
- Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy got \$60,000 in 2009.
- The Committee for Accuracy on Middle East Reporting, or CAMERA, received two grants totaling \$70,000, one in 2009 and the other in 2011.
- David Horowitz's Freedom Center, which in turn funds Robert Spencer's Jihad Watch, got \$6,000 in 2009.
- Zuhdi Jasser's American Islamic Forum for Democracy accepted \$10,000 from MEF in 2010.
- Outer core group the Endowment for Middle East Truth, on whose board Pipes serves, received a \$75,000 grant from MEF in 2010.

Daniel Pipes's Middle East Forum Grants to Islamophobia Network Organizations

Organization	2009	2010	2011	Total
Middle East Media Research Institute	200,000	100,000	150,000	\$450,000
Investigative Project on Terrorism	250,000	480,000	512,000	\$1,242,000
Center for Security Policy	60,000			\$60,000
Committee for Accuracy on Middle East Reporting	50,000		20,000	\$70,000
David Horowitz Freedom Center	6,000			\$6,000
American Islamic Forum for Democracy		10,000		\$10,000
Endowment for Middle East Truth		75,000		\$75,000

Similarly, the David Horowitz Freedom Center is intertwined with Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer. In turn, Geller and Spencer are hand-in-hand: each member of Jihad Watch's board of directors is listed on the American Freedom Defense Initiative's web site as a "global leader."²²

Jihad Watch filed as a non-profit organization in 2007, reporting \$0 in revenue on its Form 990. Its most recent 990s cover 2010 and 2011.

Jihad Watch does, however, appear on the David Horowitz Freedom Center's 2009 Form 990. Acknowledged as a 'program' of the Center, Jihad Watch accrued over \$300,000 in expenses with \$0 in revenue. Spencer is listed as an employee of the Freedom Center with the title Jihad Watch Director.

In 2010, Jihad Watch is again listed as a Freedom Center program, and Spencer is still an employee. But in 2010, Jihad Watch also filed separately as a nonprofit, this time with revenue and grants over \$190,000. On this form, Spencer is listed as Jihad Watch's Vice-President, claiming no compensation whatsoever. This form 990 also lists Pamela Geller as Jihad Watch's president, while at the same time listing Geller and Spencer's other organization, The American Freedom Defense Initiative, as the recipient of a \$70,933 "payment to an affiliate" from Jihad Watch.

Jihad Watch continues to be listed as a program of the Horowitz Freedom Center in 2011, this time receiving its own separate \$95,000 grant. Again Spencer is the "Director of Jihad Watch" raking in a salary of \$161,206 from the Center. Jihad Watch's most recent, separately listed 990 reports increased grants and revenue, reaching over \$238,000. Jihad Watch granted American Freedom Defense Initiative \$16,624 that year, while still listing Geller as their President and Spencer as their VP.

Geller and Spencer represent a wide array of inner core staples: American Freedom Defense Initiative (as the two top global leaders), Atlas Shrugs (Geller's blog), the David Horowitz Freedom Center (Spencer's employer),³ Jihad Watch (both are board members) and Stop the Islamization of Nations. They are not the only people serving multiple parts of the network.

Nina Cunningham is the founder and CEO of Quidlibet Research,⁴ a legal consulting firm. She serves on the boards of the Center for Security Policy, the David Horowitz Freedom Center, and also the Clarion Fund. She is also a director at the Endowment for Middle East Truth.

Claire Lopez, a former national security professional, is a member of the Clarion Fund board of advisors, a United West board member and Center for Security Policy fellow.

David Steinmann is listed as the Vice Chairman of Daniel Pipes's Middle East Forum and also serves on the board of Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy. The Committee on Fairness and Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA) lists him as a director. In addition to these institutes, Steinmann is also the president of treasurer of the William Rosenwald Family Fund, of which *Fear, Inc.* reports that between "2001 and 2008, the Anchorage Charitable Fund and William Rosenwald Family Fund contributed \$2,818,229 to Islamophobic organizations."

Dr. Ashraf Ramelah's advocacy for Coptic Christians, a group facing discrimination in too many places around the world, is undermined by his alliance with the Islamophobia network and his propagation of misinformation about Islamic religious principles. For example, during his speech at Stop the Islamization of Nations' 2012 International Freedom of Speech Congress Ramelah defended Robert Spencer and Pamela Geller saying "a lot of America (is) calling us bigot(ed) and Islamophobic, no, we (are) saying the truth and the truth hurt(s)." When speaking about the September 11th attacks he said "they are not terrorists, they are jihad. They are for the Quran." Ramelah is a board member of Stop the Islamization of Nations, of which he says "I believe this... global organization will be the first organization to counter Islam in... every country in the world and we will win."⁵ Along with his position on SION's board, he is also the president of Voice of the Copts, a human

rights organization, and a contributing editor of Family Security Matters, a conservative news source sponsored by Center for Security Policy.

EXAMPLES OF AFFLUENT SUPPORTERS OF THE NETWORK

Foster Friess

Foster Friess made his fortune in mutual funds. His super PAC donations gave life to former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum's 2012 GOP presidential nomination bid. Santorum explicitly endorsed profiling of Muslims during a presidential debate.

On his website, Friess lists among his key issues "helping peaceful Muslims ... to transcend the 7th century ideology of violence, intimidation, and coercion that threatens them ... and us."⁶ Leading the cause, according to Friess, are inner core groups such as Brigitte Gabriel and ACT! for America, Dr. Zuhdi Jasser and the American Islamic Forum for Democracy, Frank Gaffney and the Center for Security Policy, and Jihad Watch. Outer core groups such as Family Security Matters are also featured. Islamophobes such as Ayan Hirsi Ali and Dr. Wafa Sultan are also endorsed by Friess.

Joyce and Aubrey Chernick

In 2010, *Politico* found that "the lion's share of the \$920,000 [the David Horowitz Freedom Center] provided over the past three years to Jihad Watch came from [Joyce] Chernick, whose husband, Aubrey Chernick has a net worth of \$750 million."⁷ Aubrey Chernick is a software engineer.⁸

According to the Center for American Progress Action Fund, Aubrey Chernick's Fairbrook Fund donated \$1,498,450 to elements of the Islamophobia network from 2004 to 2009.

Pat Robertson

On his 700 Club program, Robertson, a wealthy televangelist, is known for making comments asserting that "Islam is Satanic," "Islam is not a religion," and that "Muslims are worse than Nazis."

Andy Miller

Miller is Chief Executive Officer of Nashville's Healthmark Ventures. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Miller was the sole contributor to the Citizens 4 Ethics in Government super PAC. His gift totaled \$105,000. Miller is active in Tennessee Republican-party politics heading "fundraising and get-out-the-vote efforts as chairman of the 2010 Tennessee Victory Leadership Team and is a member of the Williamson County GOP Chairman's Circle."⁹

Miller's gift to Citizens 4 Ethics in Government was used to support Lou Ann Zelenik's run for U.S. Congress. Speaking about his opposition to Rep. Diane Black (R-Tenn.) Miller said, "I don't think she believes there is a problem with Islam."¹⁰

Others of Note

As cited earlier, numerous press reports point to Chicago-based Barre Seid as the source of a \$17 million donation that enabled the Clarion Fund to distribute 28 million free copies of its anti-Islam film *Obsession* in battleground states in the run up to the 2008 election.¹¹

Bob Vander Plaats is the president and CEO of The Family Leader. In 2011, *the Hill* newspaper, one of two key Capitol Hill publications, named Vander Plaats' endorsement as one of the top 10 coveted endorsements for Republicans running for president.¹² He eventually endorsed Rick Santorum. The Family Leader's 2012 election Marriage Vow contained both anti-Islam language, and in its original form including language that implied that African-Americans were better off during the slavery-era than under President Barak Obama's administration.

LEADERSHIP COMPENSATION

Leaders of the Islamophobia network are generally well-compensated for their efforts, often enjoying salary increases that far surpass those anticipated by members of the general workforce.

As President/Treasurer of the board of directors of ACT! for America Brigitte Gabriel oversaw a 79 percent increase in her own compensation, going from \$87,300 in 2010 to \$156,473 in 2011. Robert Spencer, whose compensation does not reflect earnings from his numerous books, got a 17 percent raise from his employers at the David Horowitz Freedom Center in 2011. Both David Horowitz and Daniel Pipes benefitted from at least a 12 percent compensation increase in 2011.

Sample Compensation of Inner Core Leaders

Organization	Name	Title	2010 Compensation	2011 Compensation	Increase
ACT! for America	Guy Rogers	Executive Director	\$100,606	\$101,322	0.7%
ACT! for America	Brigitte Gabriel ¹³	Board President/Treasurer	\$87,300	\$156,473	79%
David Horowitz Freedom Center	Robert Spencer	Jihad Watch Director	\$138,004	\$161,206	17%
David Horowitz Freedom Center	David Horowitz	Founder/CEO	\$435,963	\$488,953	12%
Center for Security Policy	Frank Gaffney	Founder/President	\$299,063	\$278,300	-7%
Middle East Media and Research Institute	Yigal Carmon	President and Founder	\$163,690		Not available
Middle East Forum	Daniel Pipes	President	\$200,000	\$224,992	12.5%

AMERICAN LAWS FOR AMERICAN COURTS AND ITS DERIVATIVES

David Yerushalmi, is an attorney with inner core groups the Center for Security Policy and the American Freedom Law Center. He is confident in his hatred of Islam, writing, "Our greatest enemy today is Islam. The only Islam appearing in any formal way around the world is one that seeks a world Caliphate through murder, terror and fear."¹⁴ Yerushalmi is also a founder of the Society of Americans for National Existence, a group that once advanced a policy advocated incarceration for "adherence to Islam."

He is also the author of American Laws for American Courts (ALAC), the template for many anti-Islam bills introduced across the nation.

Outside of his anti-Islam activism Yerushalmi is notable for writing, "There is a reason the founding fathers did not give women or black slaves the right to vote." Yerushalmi also says he finds truth in the view that Jews destroy their host nations like a fatal parasite.¹⁵

Yerushalmi wrote the bill for the American Public Policy Alliance (APPA). While the organization has a professional-looking website, its Washington, D.C. address is a UPS Store. APPA has a minor Facebook presence, with less than 100 friends as of early 2013.

Yerushalmi's bill is then pushed at the state-level by groups like ACT! for America, the Eagle Forum and to a lesser extent Pamela Geller's Stop the Islamization of America.

In its 2011 IRS filings, ACT! for America includes among the organization's accomplishments a total membership of 175,000 people, 635 chapters, and 40,000 Facebook fans. The group also celebrates its role in the passage of anti-Islam bills in Arizona and Tennessee. Also among its accomplishments ACT! lists the distribution of thousands of "Sharia Law for Non-Muslim" [sic] pamphlets and the hosting of multiple events at which participants were inaccurately taught "how the Islamic doctrine of abrogation, which is the annulling of contradictory passages in the Koran, has annulled up to 124 peaceful and superseded them with violent and jihadist verses aimed at non-Muslims."

ACT! for America founder Brigitte Gabriel once told the *Australian Jewish News*: "Every practicing Muslim is a radical Muslim."¹⁶ Speaking at the Intelligence Summit in Washington, D.C. on February 19, 2006, Gabriel told the audience, "America and the West are doomed to failure in this war unless they stand up and identify the real enemy. Islam."

In a newsletter the Eagle Forum told its supporters, "Sharia law is becoming part of the American landscape as Christianity is being systematically removed. Christian students are being told they cannot pray at school activities or even pray in front of American institutions, while public school students adopt Muslim names, pray on prayer rugs and celebrate Ramadan under a state-mandated curriculum."¹⁷ Tennessee's anti-Islam bill was given to legislators by Tennessee Eagle Forum President Bobbie Patray.¹⁸ Texas Eagle Forum president Pat Carlson testified in favor of that state's anti-Islam bill.¹⁹

In December 2012, an Alaska ethics panel recommended that Karen Sawyer, former chief of staff to state Rep. Carl Gatto, be fired after it found "she used state resources to help an anti-Islamic group." The panel also recommended that Sawyer never be allowed to work for the legislature again. Sawyer resigned before she could be fired. According to the panel's findings, Sawyer allowed David Heckert of Stop Islamization of America to "use the Wasilla legislative information office and equipment for work related to his organization." It also found that Sawyer used state equipment to help plan activities related to a 2011 group conference, and that she failed to file a timely disclosure showing she was a member of the group's board in 2011 and 2012." *The Associated Press* also noted that the panel found that

SIOA's "main mission appeared to be promoting their organization and its mission with HB88 [Alaska's anti-Islam bill] as a validation point."

BILL BREAKDOWNS

In 2011 and 2012, 78 bills or amendments designed to vilify Islamic religious practices were introduced in the legislatures of 29 states and the U.S. Congress. Sixty-two of these bills contained language that was extracted from ALAC.

Party of bills' original sponsor(s)

- 73 bills were introduced by Republicans
- 1 bill was introduced by a Democrat (Alabama)
- 3 were bi-partisan (Kansas, South Carolina, South Dakota)
- 1 was introduced by Republicans along with an Independent who caucuses with the Republicans (South Dakota)

Number of bills that used language of Islamophobe David Yerushalmi

- 62 were based on David Yerushalmi's American Law for American Courts
- 16 were not

Bills were signed into law in Arizona, Kansas, South Dakota and Tennessee in 2011 and 2012. These joined previously passed bills in Oklahoma and Louisiana bringing the total to six states with an anti-Islam law on the books.

WHAT IS SHARIA?

Sharia literally means "path." It is a set of interpretations of the Quran and other Islamic sources; it is dynamic and intended to accommodate the time, place and laws—in America that means the U.S. Constitution—of a particular community.²⁰ Sharia is interpreted differently based on its surroundings. Sharia mandates Muslims to respect the law of the land in which they live.

IS SHARIA TAKING OVER?

According to the Public Religion Research Institute, as of September 2012, 61 percent of Americans reject the notion that American Muslims are seeking to establish Sharia as the law of the land. The number of Americans who feel that Muslims are working to subvert the Constitution rose from 23 percent in February 2012 to 30 percent in September 2012.²¹

No religious code can replace American law. Article VI, Clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution clearly states, "This Constitution... shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby. ..." Additionally, the First Amendment prohibits Congress from making any law "respecting an establishment of religion. ..."

America has an already established tradition of allowing people of faith to make agreements and resolve disputes within the parameters of their religion, as long as any resulting contract complies with U.S. law. Catholic Canon law and Jewish *Halacha* are the most frequently cited examples in the context of the debate surrounding Islamic practices.

No national Muslim organization is calling for the implementation of foreign law in the United States. Many support the idea that individuals can make faith-based agreements that are in accordance with U.S. law which can subsequently be enforced by U.S. courts. A primary example of this is the Islamic mortgage industry. Corporations offer loans that are compliant with both Islamic rules against lending money with interest and with American law. These contracts can, if necessary, be enforced in a U.S. court of law.

In 2011, the American Bar Association (ABA) passed a resolution opposing ALAC-type legislation noting that it is “duplicative of safeguards that are already enshrined in federal and state law,” and saying, “Initiatives that target an entire religion or stigmatize an entire religious community, such as those explicitly aimed at ‘Sharia law,’ are inconsistent with some of the core principles and ideals of American jurisprudence.”

The ABA also stated the following:

Language in these Bills and Amendments dealing with ‘international law’ or ‘foreign and customary law’ is likely to have an unanticipated and widespread negative impact on business, adversely affecting commercial dealings and economic development in the states in which such a law is passed and in U.S. foreign commerce generally.

And furthermore,

Many of the Bills and Amendments would infringe federal constitutional rights, including the free exercise of religion and the freedom of contract, or would conflict with the Supremacy Clause and other clauses of the Constitution.

Regarding the notion of Islamic rules supplanting American law, the American Civil Liberties Union reached the following conclusion in a report released in May 2011:

A new report by the ACLU, Nothing to Fear: Debunking the Mythical "Sharia Threat" to Our Judicial System, examines, in detail, the cases repeatedly cited by anti-Muslim groups as evidence of the alleged "Sharia threat" to our judicial system. The report concludes that these cases do not stand for the principles that anti-Muslim groups claim. Rather, these court cases deal with routine matters, such as religious freedom claims and contractual disputes. Courts treat these lawsuits in the same way that they deal with similar claims brought by people of other faiths. So instead of the harbingers of doom that anti-Muslim groups make them out to be, these cases illustrate that our judicial system is alive and well, and operating as it should.

The Anti-Defamation League wrote of the 2012 anti-Islam bill in Florida that there “simply is no documentation of unconstitutional application of foreign law in our judicial system. Florida courts are already prohibited from applying or considering religious law in any way that would constitute government entanglement with religion due to the separation of church and state embodied in the Florida and federal constitutions.”²² The Florida Bar’s Family Law Section made a similar argument.²³

The Congressional Research Service, a nonpartisan component of the Library of Congress that does research for members of Congress, determined that, “Any bill that would specifically ban sharia may be challenged as a disapproval of Islam in violation of the

Establishment Clause or as an infringement on the ability of Muslims to freely exercise their beliefs under the Free Exercise Clause.”²⁴

Similarly, *Think Progress* reported, “As the Supreme Court explained in *Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye v. Hialeah*, ‘the protections of the Free Exercise Clause pertain if the law at issue discriminates against some or all religious beliefs or regulates or prohibits conduct because it is undertaken for religious reasons.’”²⁵

As will be shown momentarily, the legislators who introduced anti-Islam bills also failed to produce evidence of an actual problem they felt would be addressed by such a law.

THE PURPOSE OF AMERICAN LAW FOR AMERICAN COURTS

Writing in the *New York Times*, reporter Andrea Elliot concluded that actually passing ALAC was a “secondary concern” for David Yerushalmi. “If this thing passed in every state without any friction, it would have not served its purpose,” Yerushalmi told Elliot. “The purpose was heuristic — to get people asking this question, ‘What is Shariah?’”²⁶

While most of these bills failed, many politicians found that the anti-Sharia issue draws attention to them and taps into public fear.

Yerushalmi wrote the model legislation to “get people asking this question.” What he achieved was an anti-Muslim dialogue characterized by religious intolerance and the absence of an actual problem that was supported by a troubling number of mainstream state-level Republican leaders.

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

It is reasonable to argue that the anti-Sharia movement is really a cover for Islamophobic sentiment. Bill supporters often argue that their legislation is meant to preserve American law, but this argument does not withstand even minimal scrutiny.

Writing in *The Guardian*, journalist Sarah Posner identified the main themes running through the movement:²⁷

The conspiracy theory about sharia law is fivefold: that the goal of Islam is totalitarianism; that the mastermind of bringing this totalitarianism to the world is the Muslim Brotherhood, the grandfather of all Islamic groups from Hamas to the Islamic Society of North America; that these organizations within the US are traitors in league with the American left and are bent on acts of sedition against America; that the majority of mosques in the US are run by imams who promote such sedition; and that through this fifth column sharia law has already infiltrated the US and could result in a complete takeover if not stopped.

Writing about an anti-Islam bill in Florida, reporter Paul Berger noted in the *Jewish Daily Forward* on March 7, 2012, “The bill’s supporters acknowledge that their proposal is aimed at Muslims.” Berger went on to state that, if passed, the law might end up “preventing Orthodox couples from using Jewish religious courts, or *batei din*, to arbitrate their divorces, according to legal specialists and some Jewish groups.”

On May 11, 2012 the *Topeka Capital-Journal* reported, “Sen. Chris Steineger, R-Kansas City, said a marketing campaign by supporters of the bill inundated him with materials that ‘explain’ why sharia law is coming and Muslims are trying to take over America.” Steineger told the *Capital-Journal*, “The proponents of this measure, clearly by the literature they gave

me and by the video link they directed me to, they presented this as protecting us against sharia law.”

The Topeka Capital-Journal later reported, “But [Kansas state] House members left no doubt that the bill is largely about Islam. Rep. Janice Pauls, D-Hutchinson, told her colleagues it was important to vote for it to stave off Sharia — a view shared by Rep. Peggy Mast, R-Emporia. The bill passed 122-0 in the House.”

Despite the bill’s clear anti-Islam genesis, Virginia Delegate Rick Morris (R-64th district), who introduced a bill that echoed ALAC language, said, “It’s definitely not an anti-Muslim bill.” A Virginia newspaper reported that Morris was telling his colleagues in the state legislature that the bill was intended to “apply American laws to family situations such as custody disputes, premarital agreements, divorce and the division of assets.”²⁸

Virginia legislator Del. Bob Marshall (R-13th district) also argued that his bill did not target Islam. However, on February 12, 2012, Virginia-based constitutional professor Douglas Laycock told the *Virginian-Pilot*, “This one is more cautiously drafted than a lot of these bills because it doesn’t mention Shariah law. Although everyone knows that’s what it’s about.” Laycock then added, “You cannot be a state with commercial enterprises in a global economy and not deal with foreign law.” Business interests and faith groups, such as the Jewish Community Federation, opposed the Virginia bill.²⁹

“I would be less than fully honest with you if I didn’t also say that part of the purpose of [House Bill] 1253 is to deal with what I am going to say generally has been referred to as Sharia law,” said South Dakota State Representative Roger Hunt (R-10th district) before the State House Judiciary Committee. “[This bill] will give us the provision needed to in essence deal with religious codes that would be sought in the state of South Dakota.”

In other places, legislators did not even attempt to hide the bias behind the bills they introduced.

In Tennessee, the bill’s original definition of “Sharia” was, in practical terms, the entire religious tradition of Islam. “Sharia,” read the bill as introduced, includes the “set of rules, precepts, instructions, or edicts” based upon sources from “the god of Allah or the prophet Mohammed.” It stated that “Sharia” encompasses all content derived from “any of the authoritative schools of Islamic jurisprudence of Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’i, Hanbali, Ja’afariya, or Salafi.” Islam is split into two main branches, Sunni and Shia. Sunni Islam has four main schools of thought: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’i and Hanbali. Jafari is Shia Islam’s main school of thought. Salafi is a movement within Sunni Islam. Thus, the above definition of Sharia both encompasses the vast majority of Muslims as well as reveals the author’s unfamiliarity with the faith.

Rep. Carl Gatto (R-Palmer), Chairman of the Alaska State Legislature’s House Judiciary Committee, said his proposed version of ALAC was necessary because of the religious beliefs of recent immigrants. “As a kid, we had Italian neighborhoods, Irish neighborhoods . . . but they didn’t impose their own laws,” Gatto said. He added, “When these neighborhoods are occupied by people from the Middle East, they do establish their own laws.” Gatto later said, “I’m more concerned about cultures that are vastly different from European immigrants, who come here and prefer to maintain their specific laws from their previous countries, which are in violent conflict with American law. That’s the issue that I am worried about.”³⁰

South Dakota anti-Sharia bill sponsor Phil Jensen (R-District 33) told an audience, “It is alarming how many of our sisters and daughters who attend American universities are now marrying Muslim men.”³¹

In Pennsylvania, the bill itself included no mention of Islam. However, in a memo to all House members urging them to co-sponsor the bill, Rep. RoseMarie Swanger (R-District 102) falsely claimed that Sharia is "inherently hostile to our constitutional liberties." Later, Swanger claimed she "had no idea how [the memo] was going to be written" and that it was never circulated. Swanger also claimed that it was leaked by "someone who is not my friend."³² This claim is rather incredible, given that the memo, with Swanger's signature, was available on the Pennsylvania state legislature's website.³³

Missouri State Rep. Don Wells (R-Cabool) referred to Sharia, as a "disease" like polio during a meeting of the House Judiciary Committee, which was discussing a bill Wells had proposed to ban consideration of Sharia in that state's courts. When another lawmaker asked if Wells really believed Sharia is like polio, he replied, "Absolutely."

Michigan State Rep. Dave Agema (R-Grandville) was clearly targeting Islam for unequal treatment in relation to other faiths. In explaining why he felt his bill was important, he told the *Grand Rapids Press*, "They [Muslims] want specific laws applied to their specific groups ... They do not want to be under our law."³⁴ Agema also repeated the myth that President Obama is secretly a Muslim.

In at least one instance, once a legislator was made aware of the bill's genesis, he withdrew it. Shortly after a press conference held by CAIR-Minnesota and interfaith groups, Republican State Senator Dave Thompson withdrew his bill, which had been written using American Laws for American Courts as a template, saying, "It was never my intent to introduce legislation that was being targeted to any one group."³⁵

A NON-EXISTENT PROBLEM

While the bias behind the bills is clear, the presence of an actual problem that needed solved was not, even to the legislators introducing the measures.

The *Star Assistant* in Alabama reported, "But no one—not even Sen. Gerald Allen, who sponsored the bill—can point to examples of Muslims trying to have Islamic law recognized in Alabama courts."³⁶ Allen could not even define Sharia when asked, saying "I don't have my file in front of me." When pressed about why the Alabama bill's definition of Sharia matched one found in Wikipedia, legislative staff "confirmed that the definition was in fact pulled from Wikipedia."³⁷

Texas legislator Leo Berman said his bill was necessary because he had heard, but apparently had not actually tried to confirm, that one American town was allowing judges to use Sharia. "I heard it on a radio station here on my way into the Capitol one day. I don't know Dearborn, Michigan, but I heard [that Sharia is accepted there] on the radio. Isn't that true?"³⁸

North Carolina legislator Rep. George Cleveland also was forced to admit, "I do not have any specific examples off the top of my head," when asked to show a need for his version of American Laws for American Courts.³⁹

The pattern continued in South Carolina. "None of the senators nor Kevin A. Hall, a Columbia attorney who testified in support of the bill, were aware of any examples in South Carolina where courts upheld sharia law over the U.S. Constitution."⁴⁰ When he was asked about Sharia in South Carolina, former State Attorney General Henry McMaster told an interviewer, "I haven't encountered anything except American law."⁴¹

Sen. Mike Fair of South Carolina sponsored a version of Yerushalmi's bill in that state's Senate but admitted that he was, "not aware of any cases of foreign law being used in a South Carolina court."⁴²

In Wyoming, Rep. Gerald Gay called his bill a "pre-emptive strike" since, according to the *Billings Gazetteer*, "No Wyoming court rulings have been based on Islamic law." Gay feared Wyoming judges might use Sharia to interpret "honor killings" and arranged marriages.⁴⁵

Similarly, Georgia Rep. Mike Jacobs, vice chairman of Georgia's House Judiciary Committee and original sponsor of the American Laws for Georgia's Courts bill, "acknowledged that he was not aware of any instances in Georgia where a plaintiff or defendant asked the court to apply Sharia law but believes it has happened elsewhere."⁴⁴

The *Kansas City Star's* Jason Noble reported, "Missouri Reps. Paul Curtman and Don Wells agreed that there was no evidence that state courts were judging cases based on Islamic principles or foreign laws."⁴⁵ Challenged again a month later, Curtman still could not provide an example.

Unlike many legislators, Kansas' Rep. Peggy Mast "provided numerous links to stories about Islamic courts in Britain and a print-out from the 'Islam Review' — a website that's stated purpose is 'to demonstrate that the fundamental teachings of Islam are incompatible with the Christian faith, and the American way of life.' However, like in other states, "Mast's research didn't turn up any instances of Kansas courts invoking Sharia."⁴⁶

Missouri Speaker of the House Stephen Tilley also could not provide "an example of foreign law trumping domestic law in Missouri courts," reported *Politicalmo.com* in early March 2011. The article noted that Tilley's office later issued a statement outlining one case in New Jersey, but that ruling was rightfully overturned by a higher court.

Iowa state legislator Kim Pearson conceded that she did not "know of any cases of [Sharia deciding issues in Iowa courts] happening or how, under the Iowa and U.S. constitutions, it could." Nevertheless, Pearson's bill specifically targeted Islam for unequal treatment under the law.

REPUBLICAN STATE-LEVEL LEADERS EMBRACE ANTI-ISLAM BILLS

In at least 11 states, mainstream Republican leaders introduced or supported anti-Muslim legislation. At least nine of those bills were based on Yerushalmi's American Laws for American Courts.

Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin ignored the Constitution's proscription against government censure of religion when she threw her weight behind House Bill 1552, a version of Yerushalmi's model ALAC, saying, "I personally believe that a law should be made on American law, on our constitution. The people of Oklahoma spoke pretty clearly when there was a vote...on Sharia law..."⁴⁷ A Federal judge recently determined that the vote Fallin was referring to resulted in a law that is un-Constitutional.

On March 2, 2012, MSNBC's Kari Huus reported "[South Dakota] Gov. Dugaard's general counsel Jim Seward testified that the bill served to 'answer the question of the Sharia law' without being unconstitutional or interfering with business interests. This bill was motivated by a growing demographic concern in Sioux Falls,' Seward said, referring to the influx of immigrants from majority Muslim countries."

Rep. Carl Gatto was chairman of the Alaska State Legislature's House Judiciary Committee when he sponsored an anti-Islam bill. Missouri Speaker of the House Stephen Tilley supported a bill. In South Dakota, original sponsor Charles Hoffman was majority whip.

The originator of Michigan’s anti-Muslim bill was Rep. Dave Agema, the majority caucus chair. Agema was elected as the national committeeman from Michigan to the Republican National Committee in May 2012.

THE IMPACT OF THE BILLS

Legal Challenges

The 2010 amendment to Oklahoma’s state constitution, which prohibits courts from applying—or even considering —"Sharia law" and "international law," explicitly subjected Islam to government censure. It immediately faced a legal challenge from then CAIR-Oklahoma Executive Director Muneer Awad. A federal judge put the law on hold after determining that the challenge had merit and the law would likely be ruled unconstitutional.

In January, 2012, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit upheld the lower court's decision to block implementation of the Oklahoma state constitutional amendment. The appeals court ruling stated in part:

We conclude that Mr. Awad's allegation—that the proposed state amendment expressly condemns his religion and exposes him and other Muslims in Oklahoma to disfavored treatment—suffices to establish the kind of direct injury-in-fact necessary to create Establishment Clause standing. ... Appellants do not identify any actual problem the challenged amendment seeks to solve. Indeed, they admitted at the preliminary injunction hearing that they did not know of even a single instance where an Oklahoma court had applied Sharia law or used the legal precepts of other nations or cultures, let alone that such applications or uses had resulted in concrete problems in Oklahoma.

Speaking about the decision on MSNBC, CAIR staff attorney Gadier Abbas said, “It’s not as if the 10th Circuit is a bastion of left-wing activism. This [ruling] is coming from a very conservative court ... [The court’s ruling] is unequivocal that there are really serious, very clear violations of the Constitution that this amendment poses.”

Vilification of Islam

To date, the only other observed impact of an enacted anti-Islam bill besides vilifying Islam during the process of passage is that it has no real world effect. In Tennessee, Rep. Judd Matheny and Sen. Bill Ketron’s original, identical bills were revised and passed with all references to religion removed.

Similarly, the language of the final Arizona law has more symbolic than substantive impact. This observation substantiates our earlier assertion that legislators are spending their time passing laws to solve a non-existent problem. There is no wave of religious law being blocked by these anti-Islam bills because that wave does not exist.

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