

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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THE ATTACKS on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, had a dramatic, immediate effect on Muslims in the United States. Both the magnitude of the destruction within the borders of the United States and the ensuing war on terror have brought the issue of Muslims living in the United States into public awareness in an unprecedented way. Islam and terrorism were already closely associated in public discourse: Immediately after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, for example, public officials and the media had speculated that Muslims were responsible. This error led reporters to be more careful on the morning of September 11 when they made their initial assessments. But once the involvement of al Qaeda became clear, the association between Islam and terrorism moved to the center of public awareness, foreign policy, and domestic politics, where it has remained. In the days following the attacks, some members of the American public, including a few radio talk show hosts and Christian leaders, quickly generalized and racialized this threat to include anyone who might look Muslim or Arab. This public talk created a sense of panic in some circles and triggered a backlash of violence, harassment, and insult that was widely reported in the media. As a result, Muslims and those who looked Middle Eastern feared for their safety. The Bush administration made public statements that distinguished terrorism from the activities of most Muslims and from Islam. Nevertheless, al Qaeda and its possible sleeper cells of terrorists who might be hiding within the United States, ready to strike at any moment, posed the powerful threat of an ethnicized, racialized enemy within that the United States public had not experienced since World War II.¹ Parallels to the imagined threat posed by Japanese Americans during World War II have frequently been drawn. For many American Muslims, the possibility of a

similarly strong response to the al Qaeda threat, generalized to include all who had immigrated from Muslim-majority countries, was an unavoidable part of the post 9/11 experience. Muslims had suddenly become highly visible outsiders.

The government's responses to the threat of Islamic terrorism included the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act, the suspension of certain civil rights, the detention of many Muslims, and the launching of the war on terror. Though not as drastic as the internment of Japanese Americans, these policies, as well as media coverage and local politics, have affected the lives of Muslims in the United States, as well as the lives of non-Muslim Arabs, South Asians, and others who fell under suspicion in the wake of 9/11. The racial crystallization of the category of Arab-Muslim legitimized a distinction between an American Us to be protected through homeland security measures and the dangerous immigrant Other who came under intense surveillance. Even those who had considered themselves American suddenly found themselves excluded from the sphere of those who were to be protected.

Not only has this complex aftermath of 9/11 altered everyday environments; it has also shaped possibilities and strategies for belonging, cultural citizenship, and identity, though not always in ways that might have been expected. In addition to the effects of the events of 9/11 on specific communities of immigrants from Muslim-majority countries, this volume examines how local Muslim responses have evolved in the years since 2001. In her comprehensive 2003 overview of existing scholarship on Muslims in the United States, Karen Leonard cautioned that research on the impact of 9/11 might have the effect of obscuring continuities in the history and development of Muslim communities in the United States (2003, 139). This book looks at both disruptions and continuities: chapters in part I highlight how Muslims have experienced and been shaped by the events and aftermath of 9/11, and those in part II foreground how preexisting trends in the development of Muslim communities and Islamic institutions have continued and even intensified despite the disruptions and displacements created by the effects of 9/11 and the war on terror. With their emphasis on local communities, these essays as a collection question and consider the ideas of citizenship and belonging when an entire immigrant minority is abruptly reinscribed as a stigmatized Other.

The papers gathered here were first developed as part of a Russell Sage initiative to document and analyze how Muslims have managed the stresses associated with the effects of 9/11. They are based on several research projects, funded by the foundation, that were developed by scholars who had already been working at their research sites before the events of 9/11. These scholars, representing a range of disciplines, had thus already built relationships of trust that other researchers initiating projects since 9/11 have found difficult to establish, due to an atmosphere of increased suspicion.² The result is a collection that explores what Andrew Shryock in the epilogue has called disciplinary inclusion, an ambivalent process of belonging that is constrained by public discourse. In the

United States after 9/11, this discourse inevitably locates Muslims as poised between the choice of being either the assimilable “good Muslim” or the supporter of Islamic terrorism (see Mamdani 2004).

MUSLIMS, ARABS, AND SOUTH ASIANS IN THE UNITED STATES: CROSS-CUTTING CATEGORIES

Estimating the number of Muslims in the United States has been a difficult and often politically charged project.³ The U.S. Census Bureau does not collect data on religious identification, in part because of the principle of church-state separation.⁴ Because Muslims represent a quite a small percentage of the American population, figures drawn from general surveys tend to be unreliable. There are, therefore, widely varying estimates of the number of Muslims in the United States, ranging from 0.4 percent to 2 percent of the total population, with most agreeing on a figure of 0.5 percent. According to one survey, the Muslim population nearly doubled between 1990 and 2001.⁵ More recently, a 2007 study by the Pew Research Center that focused specifically on Muslim Americans concluded that Muslims constitute 0.6 percent of the United States population, or a total population of 2.35 million (Pew Research Center 2007, 9). Of these, 65 percent were born outside the United States (Pew Research Center 2007, 15), yet 77 percent of all Muslim Americans are now citizens (Pew Research Center 2007, 16).

Some 26 percent of the Muslims in the United States self-identify as black (Pew Research Center 2007, 17), and most of these are African American. African American Muslims have played a key role in the emergence of Islam as a visible presence in the United States, but there has been considerable tension within the various black Islamic movements about whether to focus inward on local community building or outward on building ties with the transnational ummah (community) of Muslims. Most groups focused on African American empowerment and drew sharp boundaries between themselves and immigrant Muslim groups. Until the mid-1970s, there was thus little contact between African American and immigrant Muslims, even among Sunni Muslim groups. The Nation of Islam, founded in 1930, was at one time the largest Islamic movement among African Americans and played a prominent role in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. This movement, which also had an urgent political and economic agenda, rested on a separatist ideology. It adhered to beliefs and practices that were quite distinct from (and even ran counter to) the principles of Sunni Islam. Members had few ties to the broader Muslim world. The Nation of Islam changed direction dramatically in 1975, when Warith Dean Mohammed became the imam, renamed the organization, and moved its doctrines and practices toward Sunni Islam.⁶ As African American Muslims

have focused increasingly on participation in a global community of Muslims and a universal Islam, ties between African American and immigrant Muslim communities have begun to develop in the United States, especially with the establishment and growth of Islamic institutions such as schools, advocacy groups, and national organizations. Nevertheless, many mosques continue to be dominated by a single ethnic group (for an account of this divide in the Iranian Muslim community in the late 1980s, see, for example, Fischer and Abedi 1990).

Of Muslims born outside the United States, approximately 37 percent are from Arabic-speaking countries and 27 percent are from South Asia (Pew Research Center 2007, 15). There are also significant populations from Iran (12 percent), Europe (8 percent), and sub-Saharan Africa (6 percent) (Pew Research Center 2007, 15). The largest immigrant groups of Muslims are thus Arab and South Asian, and most of the authors in this volume focus on these two populations. The histories and public perceptions of the two ethnic groups, Arab and South Asian, are very different, however (for a useful overview of the development of Muslim communities in the United States, see Leonard 2003).

Some public responses to the al Qaeda attacks indicate popular confusions surrounding the categories of Arab, Muslim, and terrorist (see chapter 5, this volume). Stereotypical representations tend to equate the Arab and the Muslim, even though in the United States it is likely that fewer than a third of those of Arab descent are actually Muslim (see chapter 3, this volume). Many early Arab immigrants were Christian immigrants who left the Ottoman Empire and, later, Palestine and Lebanon. Reflecting the nature of national identity politics in the Middle East earlier in the twentieth century, Arab Muslims and Christians stressed their specific national identity or, in the effort to establish national organizations in the United States to facilitate integration, a common ethnic identity as Arab. They were among the many populations gradually integrating into the mainstream. The percentage of Muslim Arabs began increasing after the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which opened the United States to skilled, highly educated immigrants from non-European countries. In the 1980s, leaders began organizing as Muslims and founded national organizations such as the Muslim Students Association (MSA) and the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) that focused on the maintenance of Islamic practices rather than on a common ethnicity. Today, many Americans would be surprised to learn that most Arabs in the United States are not Muslim.

The South Asian population in the United States has been growing steadily for nearly half a century, with large numbers after 1965. They came from India, Pakistan, and, later, from Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Many first came in the 1970s and 1980s to pursue undergraduate and graduate studies. Since this influx, the South Asian subpopulation has been characterized by upward mobility, a cultural emphasis on education and notable professional success. South Asian Americans have the highest socioeconomic achievement indica-

tors of all Asian American groups. Sixty-four percent of adults of Indian background, for example, have bachelor's degrees (versus 25 percent of white Americans), and 12 percent earn law, medical or graduate degrees (versus 3 percent).⁷ About 12 percent of those from India are Muslim (Leonard 2003, 13), as are virtually all of those from the other South Asian countries.

In contrast to the equation of Arab and Muslim in the American public imagination, India is usually associated with Hinduism, and South Asia has little visibility.⁸ Historically, there has been virtually no general awareness in the United States of the significant proportion of Muslims in India and other parts of South Asia. This awareness, however, has sharpened since 9/11, given the presence of al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and the importance of neighboring Pakistan in the war on terror. Pakistan has gained sustained media visibility as a training ground for Taliban and al Qaeda-linked Islamic fundamentalists. This new visibility has had an impact on Pakistani Americans, who had often been recognized as Indian in an earlier era.

THE BACKLASH AND ITS EFFECTS

Part I describes significant discursive shifts in the United States in response to 9/11, shifts in which the media and government policies played a prominent role. There was a crystallization of the racialized category of Arab–Middle Easterner–Muslim, with racial profiling perhaps most vividly enacted at airport security checkpoints, but felt even more dramatically within many Muslim communities in the less visible processes of detention and deportation. One direct result of government policy was a constraint on the mobility of those associated with Islam and the Middle East. It became more difficult to cross national borders, so that every trip abroad carried with it the uncertainty about being able to return, even among those of the business class. Such constraints affect transnational practices and ties, and also emphasize in an immediate and personal way the extent to which the individual being hindered has suddenly been defined as Other. More pervasively, even Muslims who did not personally experience surveillance and detention were aware that it could happen to them or to someone close to them.

On the basis of research conducted among South Asian Muslim youth in a small New England city, Sunaina Maira examines how immigration and homeland security policies have affected these young people's sense of belonging and their understandings of cultural citizenship (see chapter 2, this volume). She argues that the experience of being Muslim after 9/11 must be understood in terms of the multiple contexts of everyday life and demonstrates that these youth manifest multiple modes of citizenship, which she characterizes as "flexible," "polycultural," and "dissenting," proposing the concept of polycultural rather than multicultural citizenship to characterize how these youth manage a complex set of political affiliations that cannot be described as discrete

cultures. Her research targeted a population of working class, recent (in some cases illegal) immigrants who are more vulnerable to dislocation and marginalization than are professional South Asian families who have constituted a model minority in the United States (and are the focus of the chapter by Ewing and Hoyler). She points out that labor itself contributes to this marginalization, because it dictates the time that these youth have available to pursue other aspects of the American Dream. Such forms of marginalization have been exacerbated by the increased “disciplining technology of the state” in the wake of 9/11, experienced acutely within this community in the form of arrests and deportations for visa violations.

Chapter 3 focuses on Arab integration in the Detroit-Dearborn area, which has the most concentrated and long-established Arab communities in the country. Sally Howell and Amaney Jamal examine the post 9/11 backlash in light of two contradictory assumptions: that the post-9/11 experiences of Detroit Arab communities were representative of Muslim communities in other parts of the United States, and that they were exceptional with respect to national patterns because of the high visibility of Arabs and Muslims in this area and the public’s resulting perception of their concentrated Otherness. Howell and Jamal note a contrast between national responses and local ones, between, on the one hand, national-level phenomena such as the Patriot Act, humiliation at airports and immigration points, detention and deportation without legal counsel, and unprecedented surveillance and, on the other hand, local-level experiences, in which Arabs in Detroit generally felt safer from retaliation and discrimination than Arabs in other parts of the country did. They argue that Arab Detroit was exceptional because of the established position of Muslims and people of Arab descent in local institutions such as various social services, law enforcement, and the media. They also note Arab political influence and voice at the local level due to the well-established Arab and Muslim institutions. In contrast, parallel efforts to protect the civil rights of those under suspicion by organizing at the national level have been blocked.

In chapter 4, Katherine Ewing and Marguerite Hoyler focus their research on youth from professional South Asian Muslim families living in the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina. They found that, especially for those who actively participate in local mosque or Muslim student groups, the aftermath of 9/11 intensified their struggles over identity articulation. A recurrent theme in interviews was the sense of an unnecessary tension between American and Muslim identities generated by the humiliating treatment of Muslims that had directly affected family members, reports of attacks on Muslims both locally and nationally, and the frequent projection in the media of the idea that Muslims are enemies of the United States. Despite being from middle class, professional families, these well-integrated college-bound youth nevertheless found themselves questioning their futures as they sensed the increasing difficulties of

being Muslim in the United States following 9/11. Such youth have in increasing numbers intensified their commitment to Islam, taking up an orientation purified of what they consider the cultural contaminations of their parents' homeland. Paradoxically, turning to what they regard as a purified Islam works as an integration strategy in which Islamic practice is experienced as compatible with most aspects of American culture. The sudden public focus on Muslims has thus changed the significance of being Muslim for many people. There were some who sought to hide their Muslim identity or distance themselves from it. But others were moved to reconsider their relationship to Islam and became more closely tied to or active in the Muslim community as a result.

THE CHANGING SHAPE OF COMMUNITIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Despite all of the changes precipitated by 9/11 and the war on terror, most Muslims in the United States have gone on with their lives, often participating in institutions such as mosques, schools, and Islamic banks that have been established to meet their needs as Muslims. These institutions play a critical role in fostering a sense of fully belonging to American society, especially at a time when this sense has been challenged by homeland security measures and stigmatization. The chapters in part II consider if and how the changes in the situation of Muslims have affected such institutions.

The impact of 9/11 on specific institutions is not always predictable or what might be expected. Thus, for example, the demand for spokespersons to represent and explain Islam to government bodies and to the public in the media has given Muslims increased political presence in the national arena. Yet, as Leonard has pointed out, the people who have been tapped as spokespersons have not always been established leaders within Muslim communities and institutions. They tended to be, not the leaders of national organizations, but rather those who were outsiders or marginal to them (Leonard 2003, 26). As a result, new prominence has come to certain leaders to serve as spokespersons for Muslims in the United States, sometimes at the expense of others. Such shifts can change the center and balance of power within a community or organization.

One government action that had an immediate impact on Muslim communities and on a number of Islamic institutions was the freezing of the assets of several Islamic charities that funneled charitable donations overseas. This led to a precipitous shift in patterns of Muslim charitable giving, a shift that has had identifiable institutional effects. Charitable giving is a central aspect of Muslim practice, one of the five pillars of Islam, along with belief in the oneness of God, regular prayer, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. When channels of giving to transnational organizations were blocked, many Muslims in the United States increased local giving. One effect

has been an acceleration in the construction and expansion of mosques and Islamic schools, a phenomenon noted by several contributors.

Mosques have also been affected in other ways. For example, a part of the long-term Americanization of Islam has been the tendency for mosques to function more as community centers (on the model of churches) than in the countries of origin. These functions intensified after 9/11, because Muslims felt a sense of threat and turned inward for support from other members of the Muslim community.

In chapter 5, Jen'nan Read assesses the impact of September 11 on Arab American identity and finds that the shifts in public discourse have affected intraethnic relations among Arabs, making religious difference more salient than it had been. Based on ethnographic, interview, and survey data at an Arab mosque and an Arab Christian church in Houston, Read asks whether and how the consequences of 9/11 have differed for Muslims and Christians. She asks what it means to be an Arab in America today and how this varies by religious affiliation. She also considers what ethnic options are available to Muslims and Christians and to what extent these are contingent on sociodemographic characteristics such as national origin, generational status and social class. She concludes that the events of September 11 created a cultural wedge that factionalized the Arab American community along religious lines. Christian Arabs have emphasized cultural aspects of Arabic identity but downplay political aspects that might be threatening in American society. Muslim Arabs also have strong attachments to American identity but, being more recent immigrants, they have even stronger ties to homelands and also have a sharper religious, ethnic, and racial status as outsiders.

The authors of chapters 6 and 7 are members of a research team working in the community of Bridgeview, Illinois, a suburb southwest of Chicago. Chapter 6 traces the immediate and more long-term impacts of 9/11 and its aftermath in Bridgeview. It finds that this Muslim community, though strongly affected, has demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of events such as a large demonstration against the mosque on the day after the World Trade Center attacks, smaller acts of intimidation, some painfully negative press coverage, and investigations of Islamic charities based in Bridgeview. The authors emphasize that, though there have been acts of violence and anti-Muslim rhetoric that manifest a xenophobic fear of the alien Other within, there has also been a public discourse of tolerance and a drive to learn more about Islam and Muslims. Their work critiques a mainstream discourse that posits an incompatibility between American values and the demands of Islam, a discourse that perpetuates mainstream American fears about whether Muslims can fully belong to American society. They find that, despite a lingering undercurrent of anxiety and resentment over ongoing surveillance, as well as fear of mainstream bigotry and assimilation pressure, life has generally returned to normal for most of the community.

Chapter 7 offers a portrait of the Universal School, which has served as a model for other Islamic schools across the United States. Craig Joseph and Barnaby Riedel examine how it strives to socialize students to be both good Americans and good Muslims. They point out that a central concern of Islamic schools had been to adapt the secular public school curriculum to Islam. The authors identify a shift of focus toward a greater emphasis on developing an Islamic environment that will shape the moral character of students. In the face of Muslims of a diversity of backgrounds, the Universal School has sought to inculcate what are identified as principles of a common Islam to instill in students an authentic Islamic personality that is simultaneously consistent with authentic Americanness in its universal values and virtues. They point out the recent surge in the establishment of private Islamic schools, a growth that parallels the growth in the Muslim population and is similar to the ways that other immigrant groups who came from places where religion was an important educational component, such as Catholics and Jews a century earlier, established parochial schools in their new communities. With the rising flow of charitable giving into local organizations since 9/11, this growth has accelerated.

In chapter 8, Bill Maurer notes how Islamic banking was thrust into the spotlight when Islamic charities were suspected in the financing of the 9/11 plotters. But this did not lead Muslim Americans who had been using Islamic financial alternatives to transfer assets to more conventional banking institutions. Maurer finds instead a continued development of Islamic financial institutions after 9/11. The events of 9/11 did have a noticeable impact, he argues, but this had less to do with Islam and more to do with banking, finance and American ideas of law and bureaucratic formality. In reaction to the financial shocks of 9/11, Americans in general, including Muslims, took their money out of the stock market and invested in real estate. Muslims also withdrew money from charities under government scrutiny. Maurer suggests that one response to Muslims and Middle Easterners being stigmatized was a desire to increase claims of national belonging by owning one's home, a small piece of America. Analyzing the demographic characteristics of the applicants for mortgages at two rival Islamic banking companies, which use different forms of Islamic financing, he concludes that the choice of one over the other was based, not on an assessment of the financial products themselves and their conformity with Islamic law as determined by Islamic scholars, but on assessments that reveal concerns consistent with contemporary bureaucratic practices and legal consciousness in the United States. He argues that the choices people make reveal the changing status and durability of Islamic legal traditions and practices as they become fully embedded in the United States.

The book concludes with an epilogue by Andrew Shryock, who draws out what he sees as a central theme running through all the contributions to this volume: a trend toward more assertive expressions of American identity and

belonging among Muslims, Arabs, and others who were positioned as Other in the wake of 9/11. Although the process of what he calls disciplinary exclusion in the form of hate crimes, surveillance, and stigmatization is readily apparent at this juncture, Shryock calls for a closer examination of the inverse process of disciplinary inclusion. Drawing on the groundwork laid by contributors to this volume, he considers various aspects of citizenship discourse to develop a nuanced characterization of how inclusion, as both policy and desire, is reshaping Arab, South Asian, and Muslim American communities in the post-9/11 era.

Taken together, these essays suggest that in the wake of 9/11, Muslims in the United States have, perhaps paradoxically, developed a growing sense of political assertiveness and confidence in their communities and institutions. The sudden public focus on them as a threatening other exacerbated cleavages within populations with common ethnic identities, such as Arab Christians and Muslims and South Asian Muslims and Hindus, making religious difference more salient than common ethnicity. Although some individuals chose to downplay their identity as Muslims, many others became more self-conscious in asserting it. Simultaneously, Islamic institutions, already developing along with Muslim communities, experienced a growth spurt. Yet these moves toward more public articulations of Islam have been accompanied by assertions of American identity that are consistent with their understandings of Islam and by a growing accommodation of Islamic practices and institutions to the American context.

NOTES

1. The discursive construction of the communist as internal enemy in the 1950s no doubt plays a role in shaping the perception of Islam as an analogous global threat to freedom and democracy, but within the United States, this enemy was not primarily racialized.
2. The researchers include sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and scholars of American studies, Asian American studies, and human development. Contributors to this volume first came together at a conference organized by Stephanie Platz on April 1, 2005. Other participants included Louise Cainkar and Nadine Naber.
3. Some Muslim groups, for example, have expressed concern that some researchers have minimized their numbers and significance (for a discussion of surveys that estimate the Muslim population and issues connected with process, see Smith 2001).
4. This has been an issue at least since 1790 (Good 1959, 4). Demographers have periodically pushed to include questions about religion on the census, drawing on surveys to demonstrate that most people are willing to answer such questions. But resistance to their inclusion has been based on the principle of church-state separation and concerns with government infringement on the right of privacy, especially in the wake of the Holocaust (9).

5. The CUNY-sponsored ARIS surveys, conducted in 1990 and 2001, indicate that there were 527,000 Muslims in the United States in 1990 and 1,082,000 (0.5 percent of the total population) in 2001 (Kosmin, Mayer, and Keysar 2001).
6. Louis Farrakhan subsequently split with Imam Mohammed and reestablished the Nation of Islam and its original teachings as a splinter group (for an overview of African American Islam, see McCloud 1995).
7. Percentages were calculated from U.S. Census 2000 Demographic Profile Highlights: Selected Population Group: Asian Indian Alone and White Alone (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).
8. When I tell people that I worked in South Asia, most hear Southeast Asia and think of places like Vietnam.

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