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Mousa, Zeina

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TERROR TALK:  
*A Genealogy of the Racialization of the Muslim Body and of Right  
Wing Anti-Terrorism Rhetoric in Trump's America*

BY  
ZEINA MOUSA

NASRIN RAHIMIEH PH.D  
DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

JAYNE LEWIS, PH.D  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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For the Muslims who struggle to find their identity, for those unsure of  
their place in an unaccepting society, and for those whose voices are  
silenced

*Speak now or forever hold your peace*

*What is a Muslim? Is it Faith? Is it Practice? Is it racial other? How do you become Muslim? Is it contagious? Sikhs and Hindus are Muslims, Arab Christians are Muslims, if they look the part. But not all of them, it goes without saying—only those that fit the threat profile. Black Muslims are, well, Black. Obama is a Muslim. So is Assata. Are we all Muslim now?*

—Sohail Daulatzai and Junaid Rana, “Left”

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## *Abstract*

On September 11th, 2001, men working for the extremist group, Al-Qaeda, hijacked commercial airplanes and targeted several United States federal buildings: The Pentagon, The White House, and the World Trade Center in New York City. This caused an uproar within the US state and civil society, along with a mass-media coverage on the “terrorist” attacks; this event also resulted in an outbreak of hate-crimes towards Muslims, and those who were believed to be Muslim. The Muslim body was somehow identifiable. A set of religious beliefs turned into an indicator of appearance, and it was the way that the United States utilized biopolitical tactics to marginalize and control this new racial “other.” It is tactics such as Special Registration, among others like preemptive strike that were implemented by the Bush administration that exacerbate the discourse surrounding Muslims as “terrorists.” The term becomes racialized, and the identity of the Muslim becomes intertwined within its meaning. Islam as a religion has been turned into something that can be aesthetically identified. Things like special registration have become ways to make legible and simplify a set of religious beliefs. Sets of thoughts. Ideas.

On November 9th 2017 Donald Trump was elected as the next president of the United States. The predecessor to the first black president--Barack Obama--and former reality TV star, was inaugurated in January 2017. The rhetoric during his campaign explicitly targeted minority communities such as the black, latinx, and Muslim population living in the United States. Trump’s tactics such as the border wall, discrimination towards black people, and the Muslim ban heightened the number of hate crimes. Donald Trump’s rhetoric spurs from a long-intact pattern of the Muslim as “other.” In this thesis, I trace a genealogy to reveal the structures that were the foundation of the United States that allow President Donald Trump to continue using the rhetoric of terror to expel Muslims from this country. I analyze Donald Trump's Muslim Ban, the president's own rhetoric, as well as alt right news media. I use Giorgio Agamben’s framework of the state of exception, as well as the histories involving the Spanish Inquisition and the expulsion of the Moors to lay bare the power structures that created what Nicholas DeGenova calls the specter of Terror.

***Keywords: Donald Trump, Muslim Ban, Terror and Terrorism, Islam, Anti-Blackness, Race, Racism, Color line, Dogma Line, War on Terror, Muslim, Racialization, Religion, State of Exception, Spanish Inquisition, Colonization, Orientalism, Right-Wing, Media.***

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# INTRODUCTION

## From 9/11

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On August 15, 2016, Donald Trump spoke to a national audience to address his initiatives on “Radical Islamic Terror” as a potential presidential candidate. He stood before thousands, his speech broadcast to millions, as he mobilized the American public against the force of terror that he claimed to have waged war on America. In his call to arms he invoked past war victories to rally the American public once more against a new enemy—the Muslim. Images of a war-torn America riddle his speech as he lists terror attack after terror attack that plagued the United States. He called for a battle that must be waged—that must be won—against Islam. But unlike during the Cold War, debatably, there is no solid entity that the United States can annihilate. Terrorist organization become the target, justifying military intervention in countries that the US seeks to invade. Donald Trump perpetuates the figure of the “terrorist” to sway the American public into waging yet another war abroad; if one is seen as “savage”—terrorist—it becomes both easy and justifiable to take their life.

Donald Trump draws a parallel between enemies of the past, and the current enemy—Islamic terrorism—by invoking the Cold War; this paralleling rhetoric links the struggles of the past to those of the present, grounding the Muslim as a recurring antithesis to the United States. He begins by stating that states that “today we [the United States] begin a conversation about how to Make America Safe Again.”<sup>1</sup> He establishes that the United States had been safe in the past, but something had interfered and created a danger that haunted America. His next statement goes on to claim that “in the 20th Century, the United States defeated Fascism, Nazism, and

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<sup>1</sup> Trump, Donald J. “Full Speech: Donald Trump Addresses Radical Islamic Terrorism.” *The Hill*. August 15, 2016. Online.

Communism.”<sup>2</sup> By invoking past wars in naming previous enemies of the state, Trump connects the newest threat to histories of “oppression” the United States claims to have endured, acknowledging a pattern that links Islamic terrorism to the evils that were. Nazism, a known evil, is paralleled with Islamic terrorism, creating a space in which it is justified to use violence and bloodshed to fight against this threat. He spends the next few minutes listing terror attack after terror attack, both in the United States and in Europe:

In Europe, we have seen the same carnage and bloodshed inflicted on our closest allies...Children slaughtered, girls sold into slavery, men and women burned alive. Crucifixions, beheadings and drownings. Ethnic minorities targeted for mass executions. Holy sites desecrated. Christians driven from their homes and hunted for extermination. ISIS rounding-up what it calls the “nation of the cross” in a campaign of genocide.<sup>3</sup>

During this introduction, he paints a picture of a war-torn West. Europe and America have been plagued by the same “carnage” and “bloodshed,” living under the constant danger of being attacked. The war becomes religious in his reference to “Christians driven from their homes and hunted for extermination.” In these opening words, he establishes, not only that “terrorism” is a threat, but also that Islam and Muslims have become the threat. He deems terrorism as a religious act, linking it to Islam, and regarding it as something antithetical to Christianity.

Donald Trump utilizes discourse revolving around safety in his claim that we need to “make America safe again,” as if his terrorists have waged a gory war on America and now there is a battle to be fought to protect the American public.

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<sup>2</sup> Trump, Donald J. “Full Speech: Donald Trump Addresses Radical Islamic Terrorism.” *The Hill*. August 15, 2016. Online.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

The figure that is regarded as Muslim, or terrorist for this matter, is not necessarily one who merely follows Islam. In another speech, Trump discusses his plans for registering Muslims who reside on the homeland, and those who are immigrating from Muslim countries. His plans, however, were not necessarily aimed at the Muslim who is unveiled and white-passing, but the one who is bearded, veiled, with dark-skin, and non-native born. His goal was to reference the image of “Muslim” that had more to do with the persona created by the media, than what a Muslim actually is. In “Left,” Sohail Daulatzai and Junaid Rana state that religion becomes raced insofar as “Sikhs and Hindus are Muslims, Arab Christians are Muslims,” and just about anyone that appears to be bearded or veiled with darker complexion becomes intertwined with the label “terrorist.” “Who are Muslims?” Daulatzai and Rana ask. The Muslim, to them, doesn’t seem to exist. The figure of the “Muslim” that circulates in the media is nothing more than a construct, and what Daulatzai and Rana refer to as “...a figure, a ghost, [and] a lie.”<sup>4</sup>

As Daulatzai and Rana predict, Trump reifies the concept of Muslim to construct an antithesis to US expansion. Muslim majority countries like Afghanistan and Iraq become targets of US imperialism and economic growth; therefore, to justify militant intervention it becomes necessary to create anxieties about Muslims on the homeland in order to invade the source. The Muslim now needs to be identifiable, generating a corresponding need to target black and brown communities in search of the Muslim. Defining “Muslim” in anti-black sentiments allowed for the policing and exclusion of the communities that have already been deemed as “other” and “enemy” since the era of slavery—the rhetoric evolves to adapt the changing times, but the message remains the same. The US identifies a new target to keep the systemic forms of

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<sup>4</sup> Daulatzai, Sohail and Junaid Rana. "Left." *Journal of the Critical Ethnic Studies Association* 1.1 (2015): 39-43. Print. 39.

oppression alive. The goal is now one that is not out of pure hate, but instead a strategy in order to come to power.

Trump discusses Muslims who live on the homeland insofar as creating yet another dichotomy—moderate vs. radical Muslim. The black and white nature of his constructions reveals the nature of “othering;” it creates an exact opposite of that which is in power. Although there are nuances and complexities that the concept of “good vs. bad” Muslims doesn’t account for, it provides the foundational understanding of the hegemonic mechanisms being deployed. Trump states that “those who do not believe in our constitution, or who support bigotry and hatred, will not be admitted for immigration into the country.”<sup>5</sup> Sunaina Maira explains the perpetuation of the idea of the terrorist as delegitimizing “violence by non-state actors that threaten a particular state.”<sup>6</sup> She says that the figure of the terrorist goes beyond just delegitimizing acts of violence, and that it is “embedded in the framework of liberal politics. Terror is an “epistemological object” defined by modernity and attributed to the “nonmodern” and “nonliberal”.<sup>7</sup> The state takes it upon itself to try and distinguish between those who are good citizens and bad citizens—good Muslims and bad Muslims.

These dichotomous categories are the ways in which the state can justify its attack on “the bad Muslim” and seek backing from “native informants” (good Muslims) for these attacks on Islamic countries and tactics here in the US to find terrorist activity. The good Muslim is one that agreed with US politics, and showed patriotism and backing of US state tactics, while also advocated for the freedom of “oppressed” Muslim women from the clutches of Islamic states and fundamentalism. The bad Muslim is the terrorist, the enemy, the savage, and the one whom the

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<sup>5</sup> Trump, Donald J. “Full Speech: Donald Trump Addresses Radical Islamic Terrorism.” *The Hill*. August 15, 2016. Online.

<sup>6</sup> Maira, Sunaina. ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Muslim Citizens: Feminists, Terrorists, and U.S. Orientalism. Print. 633.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 633.

US sought to eliminate. Maira explains that “‘good’ Muslim citizens are key to the War on Terror because their testimonials affirm the humanitarian premise of U.S. invasions that presumably liberate oppressed peoples around the world. This is the paradox of “benevolent imperialism,” or what Paul Gilroy calls “armored cosmopolitanism,” which intervenes to shock and awe other nations into supporting the United States and the globalizing of neoliberal capitalism.”<sup>8</sup> It was the good Muslims that essentially gave “credibility” to the claims of the US on terrorism. The public condemnation of the “bad” Muslim by the “good” Muslim reaffirmed the notion that not all Muslims are “bad” and that the US must deal with those that are bad for the sake of the good. They help the US imperialist agenda and create the public identity of Muslims.

Repressive state apparatuses have become normalized in the policing of the Muslim body—they are the “homegrown terrorist” and easily blend into the civil society. Trump asserts that he “will need to restore common sense to...security procedures.”<sup>9</sup> Referring to such security measures such as invasion, surveillance, torture, etc. as “common sense” normalizes what is criminal, and illegal, in any other context. The normalization of these apparatuses is exemplified in Trump’s rhetoric; he is standing before thousands of spectators who are cheering after every reference to keeping troops abroad, or asking Muslims to assimilate or be killed. He boldly states that “assimilation is not an act of hostility, but an expression of compassion.”<sup>10</sup> It is those who abide by American law, and those who deny Radical Islam, who are to be accepted into American Civil Society. Otherwise, they are excluded, subject to violence, or their countries invaded. It is the fear of the outsider—the non-white immigrant—that drives the rhetoric behind

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<sup>8</sup> Maira, Sunaina. ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Muslim Citizens.” 634.

<sup>9</sup> Trump, Donald J. “Full Speech: Donald Trump Addresses Radical Islamic Terrorism.”

<sup>10</sup> Trump, Donald J. “Full Speech: Donald Trump Addresses Radical Islamic Terrorism.”

the dichotomy of “good” vs. “bad.” It becomes a goal for the United States to ensure that American safety is not compromised by brown outsiders.

The terrorist is that which is enemy; that which is deemed enemy. The Muslim has been constructed in the eyes of the US government to be that which is deviant, and inherently evil. Racialized notions of terrorism continue to be perpetuated by the state through figures like Donald Trump, Steve Bannon, and former President George Bush; furthermore, it is important to understand that even though there has been major backlash at Trump’s overt racism, his rhetoric is nothing new. This thesis analyzes in turn the historical, media, and rhetorical aspects of the idea of the Muslim that trump perpetuates and exploits. The racialized figure of the terrorist is merely a new way of perpetuating already existing hegemonic ideologies. Being Muslim in the United States does not connote a set of beliefs or a religion, but instead represents the roadblocks to US empire.

We have already seen and examined President-elect Donald Trump’s rhetoric; moreover, this thesis will expand on these rhetorical devices and investigate similar news media addressing Radical Islamic Terrorism, for its deployment of rhetoric that equates terrorism with Islam, and justifies US imperialism. I go on to deconstruct alt right news reporting on Trump’s speeches. I will also trace the genealogy of the attempt to ban Muslims from entering the US to show the recurring rhetorical patterns that facilitate the policing and subjection of the Muslim. Terrorism becomes the new way national identity is formed, and the ever-present specter of the Muslim becomes the means for both the left and the right to deploy and fulfill their agendas.

# CHAPTER ONE





# In 1492 Columbus Sailed the Ocean Blue

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Trump's invocation of past battles reinvents the figure of the Muslim that has always existed as the racial "other" in the United States. The figure of the Muslim has always existed to represent an alternative to dominant modes of whiteness, and this continues to impact the ideas circulated around the Muslim body in contemporary society.

## *The Spanish Inquisition*

During the Spanish Inquisition, Spain underwent a cultural purification (*limpieza de sangre*, or purification of blood) process which caused the expulsion of the Muslim and Jewish citizens—known as the Moriscos, or "Moors."<sup>11</sup> The Morisco "who had come to Europe first as conquering warriors in 711, then as grand chiefs and caliphs who turned marginal Iberia into the most advanced nation in western Europe, returned to the continent as lowly immigrants."<sup>12</sup> The Moors, who once ruled the Iberian peninsula, were now targets of the new European empire. The Moor became a figure that had to be expelled in order to allow the conquering party to come to power. The Moor was "the first and foremost a figure of uncodified and uncodifiable diversity."<sup>13</sup> According to Anouar Majid, for European countries to expand, there was a need to create a racial "other" in order to remain the dominant power and maintain control over those they needed out of the way. This "other" became the Muslim, and in doing so, religious

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<sup>11</sup> Medovoi, Leerom. *Dogma-Line Racism - Islamophobia and the Second Axis of Race*. Duke University Press. 2012. 56. Print.

<sup>12</sup> Majid, Anouar. *We Are All Moors*. University of Minnesota Press. 2009. 1. Print.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

difference became transposed into racial otherness.<sup>14</sup> When the Spanish colonized the Americas, they referred to the natives as “Muslemans” to identify them as the racial other.<sup>15</sup> The United States’ foundation relied on the Muslim as the enemy to colonize, and since then, nothing has changed. This type of differentiation of Moors from their conquerors created them in the image of the enemy; to create this enemy, a dogma line was created.



Figure 1.1: Map of the Islamic Caliphate during in the years after Prophet Muhammad’s death. The Caliphate expanded throughout the Middle East, Africa, and the Iberian Peninsula and turned into an empire. The Spanish forced the Muslims out of the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 when they came to power during the Spanish Inquisition.

Source: The Bloggers who say “Ni!”

<sup>14</sup> Majid, Anouar. *We Are All Moors*. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



Figure 1.2: A Moor of Spain  
Source: HubPages



Figure 1.3: African Moor in Spain  
Source: HubPages

### ***The Creation of a Dogma Line***

W.E.B DuBois, in his book *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, argues that the problem of the color line eventually is extended to include other “dark races,” and situates the outlook of the time—1904—for the “dark races” as rooted in the history of slavery, arguing repeatedly that we cannot understand the current conditions of African-Americans or any issues of race without understanding clearly the history of slavery. DuBois narrates a history of slavery that moves beyond the United States and begins in 1441 so that he can illustrate that the institution of slavery affected nations globally as opposed to just the Americas. The institution of slavery creates the problem that is the color line: “the family group is struggling to recover from the debauchery of slavery...the surrounding and more civilized

white majority is cut off from its natural influence by the color line...”<sup>16</sup> The reason that black families, as DuBois states, are still struggling to recover from slavery, is that the vestiges of the institution of slavery remains through the exclusion, impoverishment, and disenfranchisement that African-Americans face. Such things are absolutely not inherent, but are direct results of the system of slavery. DuBois thus counters the opposing arguments that African-Americans are “inherently” unable to ‘advance’ or move beyond their impoverishment, as he reveals the immense role of slavery in producing their conditions today.

Slavery is the root of the impoverishment of African-Americans today; the problem of the color line did not disappear with emancipation, but instead extended to today and became globalized. Very simply, Dubois implies that the problem of the color line is the fundamental question of how differences among humans can be assessed, which the idea and concept of race has sought to address. This problem emerges from modern slavery and its production of the division between black/slave and white. The problem of the color line operates globally. He states that:

We must remember that the twentieth century will find nearly twenty millions of brown and black people under the protection of the American flag, a third of the nation, and that on the success and efficiency of the nine millions of our own number depends the ultimate destiny of Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, Indians and Hawaiians, and that on us too depends in a large degree the attitude of Europe toward the teeming millions of Asia and Africa.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois. *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The Essential Early Essays*. Ed. Nahum Dimitri Chandler. New York: Fordham University Press, 1904. 38. Print.

<sup>17</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois. *The Problem of the Color Line*. 117.

DuBois stresses that anti-blackness has extended itself onto other “dark races.” Anti-black rhetoric is used in order to “otherize” brown peoples in the United States. The color line remains intact in the twenty-first century, except now it includes a variety of black and brown peoples, rather than just Africans like during the time of slavery. For instance, the word “terrorism” has become tagged to “Muslim;” this demonization of an already racialized notion of the Muslim places Muslims on the other side of the color line. The orientalist figure of a dark, bearded, and evil man becomes the image that is dispersed; this colonial logic plays itself out in the news media of today, especially during the Trump administration. The color line remains intact defining whiteness as the standard, and places brown and black people on the other side; the color line exists, but it extends to more than just the black race.

The Dogma Line, as Leerom Medovoi explains, is that extension of the color line onto figures like the Muslim that are races constructed without the use of color. The origins of race are actually embedded in a figure that was not a race to begin with, which acknowledges that race is a construct in any sense. Color is imposed on a religious belief, which is what separates the color line that DuBois discusses from the Dogma Line that Medovoi theorizes about. The underlying structures and hegemonic mechanisms with the “dogma line” are similar to the color line; however, Medovoi expands on the color line, and complicates the idea of it, in order to include races that were created using other indicators separate from skin color. The dogma line is a “racism without race.”<sup>18</sup> Rather, it is the “racialization of Arabs in America has never been understood as a matter of the “color of one’s skin” but instead as fluctuating, geopolitically motivated judgment about Islam.”<sup>19</sup> The color line, as DuBois describes, was embedded in a much more complex ensemble of racial strategies, and “these strategies have constituted the

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<sup>18</sup> Medovoi, Leerom. *Dogma-Line Racism*. 48

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 44.

historical life and social death of other populations yet have been equally relevant to the racialization of American blacks.”<sup>20</sup> Medovoi argues that racism originated in Spain

“The word “race” . . . first came into existence in Spain, and wherever it is used in the modern world it is in origin a Hispanism. . . . In Spain in the later Middle Ages, where it started out, it certainly carried a negative charge. Raza (raça in medieval spelling) meant a “defect” or “blemish” in the weaving of a piece of cloth. A bolt of cloth, sin raza (“without any defect,” “with no snags”) was naturally worth more, and so by extension the ethnically pure were, for the purposes of the Inquisition, “sin raza de judíos/moros”: “with no Jewish/Moorish blemish on their pedigree.”<sup>21</sup>

The figure of the Muslim was the first to be raced; the word “race” was coined in response to the Muslim. The Europeans used the Muslim to create the concept of race in a figure that wasn’t race at all. The racialization of the Muslim, the creation of the dogma line, paved the way for the color line.

### ***16<sup>th</sup> Century: Slavery and the First Muslim Ban***

Black Muslims were the first Muslims on United States soil when they were enslaved and brought from Africa to the Americas via the transatlantic slave trade. The first Africans—not all Muslim—were brought to the New World in 1501.<sup>22</sup> The threat of Muslims dictated who was to enter and exit the land before the creation of the states. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a version of a Muslim Ban was enacted in order to curb slave rebellions on the newly discovered land. Spain and England “feared that enslaved Africans would be more susceptible to revolt if they were

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<sup>20</sup> Medovoi, Leerom. *Dogma-Line Racism*. 44.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 55.

<sup>22</sup> Diouf, Sylviane A. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. New York: New York University Press, 2013. Print.

Muslim.”<sup>23</sup> This was because on December 25, 1522 a slave rebellion consisting of “20 enslaved Muslim Africans used machetes to attack their Christian masters on the island of Hispaniola.”<sup>24</sup> Rather than realizing that these slaves revolted due to the poor treatment and violent enslavement, the Spanish Catholic authorities blamed their religion, Islam, for their rebellion. The uprising led to the banning of “slaves suspected of Islamic leanings.”<sup>25</sup> In order to enter the United States, one had to prove that they were “Christian...[and] that there was no Muslim or Jewish blood among their ancestors”<sup>26</sup>. The decree also stated that Muslims and Jews were to be forcibly converted to Christianity<sup>27</sup>. These conversions led to revolts amongst Muslim slaves; Muslim slaves tended to be intelligent since they were educated and literate<sup>28</sup>. Slaves would usually protest the conversions by praying in public, keeping their Arabic or African names, writing in Arabic, rejecting Christianity, and practicing Islam on the plantation<sup>29</sup>. The remnants of the discrimination against the Moors created an association between Muslims and Jews. This decree “did little to halt slave insurrections in either Spanish or British America”<sup>30</sup>. This is because religion had far less to do with the revolts than the harsh treatment of slaves. The uprisings would continue, not because the rebels were Muslim, but because they were forcibly taken from their home and placed under conditions that were too brutal to endure.

This ban, although not as widespread or as documented as President Trump’s Muslim ban, is the precursor to such rhetoric that has allowed for tactics such as NSEERS. The

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<sup>23</sup> Lawler, Andrew. “Muslims Were Banned From the Americas as Early as the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.” *Smithsonian*. 2017. Online.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Lawler, Andrew. *Smithsonian*. 2017. Online.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Diouf, Sylviane A. *Servants of Allah*. 146

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 8

<sup>29</sup> Imam Zaid Saafir. Lecture at the University of California Irvine. During the Muslim Student Union Islam Awareness Week. February 7, 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

establishment of the Muslim as a threat to the establishment of this country remained intact; furthermore, the Muslim remained the “enemy” to US empire and expansion for centuries to come.

### *Codifying the Uncodifiable*

Creating the figure of the Muslim using the Moor is the attempt of the Europeans to codify the uncodifiable. The creation of an “anthropology” of Islam, as Talal Asad discusses, was an attempt to make Islam legible to the Europeans.<sup>31</sup> In order to have an “other,” the East must create an opposite and inferior figure. The figure of the Muslim that originated in 1492 paved the way for the colonization of the Middle East and South East Asia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The East came to represent this “other.” Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said, can be shortly defined as a form of ideological domination over what the “West” called, the “Orient”; Orientalism, according to Said, paved the way for colonialism of the Middle East and South East Asia. Said describes the process of this domination as “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western Style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>32</sup> The “West” has done so through an ideological manipulation and domination of the inner-workings of the culture that is being colonized. Orientalism was brought on by the British and French imperialism of the Orient. The Orient was no longer “a free subject of thought or action.”<sup>33</sup> This was a type of hegemony that created an “Other” in order to justify actions of domination.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Asad, Talal. “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam.” *Qui Parle* 17.2 (2009): 1-30. 15

<sup>32</sup> Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979. 3. Print.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 7.



The colonization of the East heavily relied on the concept of *Orientalism* in order to be successful. By creating a version of the East that both demeaned and dehumanized the East, the imperialism was justified. By having control over the ideologies being spread about the Orient, they were able to gain control over the lands. Western ideology became the dominant ideology, and, as Louis Althusser would say, they could not escape from that ideology now that it was proliferated as the main way of thinking. The images of the East being spread inevitably effected the views that the world has on the Orient. Said is not giving a run down on stereotypes; with stereotypes, there comes with them a kernel of truth. Stereotypes are generalizations about cultures and races, whereas Said is not working with “‘truth’ but representations.”<sup>35</sup> Said says that hegemony—as defined by Antonio Gramsci to be a combination of coercion, consent, and leadership—gives “Orientalism the durability and strength that [he has] been speaking about so far.”<sup>36</sup> Through Orientalism, as established before, comes discourse of inferiority and power. Said argues that the Orient “is not merely *there*, just as the Occident itself is not just *there* either;” since the notions of the “Orient” are fictionalized, and constructed, they do not exist.<sup>37</sup> He goes on to explain that the “West” created characteristics of the East in which they used to define themselves, and therefore these notions are also non-existent—there is no “there” in the West either. This type of claim is what essentially caused much backlash from Said’s critics; these regions obviously exist, and his argument is thought to be too totalizing. In saying there is no “there” there, he is also potentially denying the existence of the people, the frameworks that exist, the societies and traditions.

In attaching the figure of the Muslim to the “Orient” there are paradoxes that are introduced insofar as “a majority of Arabs in the United States, for instance, are actually

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<sup>35</sup> Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

Christian. The majority of Muslims in the United States are not Arab, and many are not even Middle Eastern; there are approximately an equal number of African American Black Muslims and perhaps twice as many South Asian Muslims in the United States as there are Arab Muslims.”<sup>38</sup> The Muslim “race” is tagged to other races that may or may not believe in Islam; the Moor is not someone who believes in Allah—the Muslim God—but is now a figure that stands for anyone who is not considered to be part of the social mainstream.”<sup>39</sup> The racialized nature of the war on terror during the Bush administration is heavily rooted in the figure of the Moor and Orientalism.

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<sup>38</sup> Medovoi, Leerom. *Dogma-Line Racism* 46

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

# CHAPTER TWO

# The War on ~~Muslims~~ Terror

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Terrorism is conceptualized by the US government through the “War on Terror”—a form of justification for the United States’ project of “global policing.” For the United States to perpetuate its hegemony, it must find a reason to militarily colonize certain areas; in Iraq and Afghanistan, the terrorist becomes a figure that the American state sought to police, and eliminate.

## *The Specter of Terror*

Nicholas De Genova, in “Antiterrorism, Race, and the New Frontier,” provides a thorough explanation on the creation of a National Security State and the way in which the US uses antiterrorism discourse to advance its hegemonic motives. De Genova uses former President Barack Obama’s speech to exemplify the normalization of an anti-terrorist “state of emergency.”<sup>40</sup> In his speech, Obama states that “this generation faces a great test in the specter of terrorism,” mimicking Bush’s previous speech on the fact that “we *know*” that the terrorists are out there plotting against us.<sup>41</sup> Both presidents state this so matter-of-factly;<sup>42</sup> the normalization of the “Muslim terrorist” and the “specter” like a phantom that will always be there, hovering, ready to attack the US. This rhetoric of the terrorist, a ghost, a figure that is ever-present and always watching, begins to drive the rhetoric behind the war on terror; after 9/11, the US saw

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<sup>40</sup> De Genova, Nicholas. "Antiterrorism, race, and the new frontier: American exceptionalism, imperial multiculturalism, and the global security state." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 17.6 (2010): 613-640. 615.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 618.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 618.

itself as vulnerable to terrorist attacks, and waged the war on terror to target Muslim majority nations that they felt posed a threat, but also, targeted these countries in order to create an opportunity for more security and surveillance tactics here in the states.

### ***Premediation and the Threat of Terror***

In determining the criminality of certain bodies the state also premediates the future, insofar as creating the circumstances in which the bodies that it is attempting to control are incriminated, even if it means through manipulation. Richard Grusin explains how, after 9/11, the media took a shift from reporting on the past to reporting, not on the present, but on the future. He expands on the notion of “remediation,” which is the way that new media refashions old media. An example give of this is given about videogames being remediated films by taking on the “interactive movie” portrayal.<sup>43</sup> Premeditation is the logic in which the future has already been “premeditated,” according to Grusin. It is not the type of futuristic prediction that is meant to be looked back on in the future, but it is a potential future that is presented to the people of the present in order to serve as a sort of warning. Grusin explains that “Premediation is in some sense a fundamentally American response to 9/11.”<sup>44</sup> The “immediacy” of this catastrophe shook Americans, and from then on, no longer was this “immediacy of disaster” going to happen; the goal became to stop it before it happened again.<sup>45</sup>

In a sense, the US lost its innocence during 9/11; it became the biggest disaster to happen on the homeland by an outside force. War on the homeland, unless one is referring to the civil war, had always been separate, and away, from its own borders, and this retaliation from a

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<sup>43</sup> Grusin, Richard. "Premediation: Affect and Mediality after 9/11." *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*. 2010. Print. 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

foreign enemy became the way in which national security, surveillance, and the persistent state of emergency became normalized. These things were all put in place in the name of 9/11, to prevent an “immediate” disaster such as this one from ever happening. The American people wanted to see the future “not as it emerged immediately into the present, but before it even happens.”<sup>46</sup> This need for preemptive strike came from the need to know where the enemies were, and the need to prevent them from acting as those who caused 9/11 did.

Grusin seems to be saying that 9/11 showed the primary signs of premeditation, like the type the Bush administration undertook in DeGenova’s piece, and that media began to be fixated on the threat that is to come, rather than the threats that has already come. He says that rather than reporting on what already happened, the media reports on what may come in such a way to assume that the future is already going to play out the way that the past has mediated it to be. He uses the example of the DC Snipers in saying that “what was distinctive about this media event was the extent to which the snipers themselves were both part of and made possible by the news media, in which they participated not only as viewers of their own mediation, but also as programmers.”<sup>47</sup> The media created the means for premeditation to take place and “the public often loses sight of the news media’s participation in the fabric or network of forces out of which such acts of terror emerge.”<sup>48</sup> When he says “no murder, no crime, no police, no law enforcement, no media,” he is referring to the fact that the media has almost taken on the role of the police, and the detective. In today’s society, the media plays the role of attempting to catch the terrorists instead of merely reporting. They have become, in effect, the same as the police, or the law enforcement, and appear as an extension of them insofar as using the media to undertake this “preemptive strike” role. In short, the media acts to police what is being proliferated and

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<sup>46</sup> Grusin, Richard. "Premediation." 21

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

controls the anxieties of the population insofar as blowing out of proportions disasters that they think are going to happen. According to Grusin, 9/11 wasn't premeditated by the media like the anthrax scare or the sniper attacks. The low level of anxiety created by the media that is sought to be maintained in society did not exist before the twin towers fell. What 9/11 did was create a mass-media simulacrum of terror. It triggered the need for prevention, and what the media did was *create* fears in order to serve as warnings for society about the evil that could be, the evil that might be, and the evil that is coming.

9/11 caused an uproar amongst the US state and civil society, along with a mass-media coverage on the "terrorist" attacks; this event also resulted in an outbreak of hate-crimes towards Muslims, and those who were believed to be Muslim. The Muslim body was believed to be identifiable. A set of religious beliefs turned into an indicator of appearance, and it was the way that the United States utilized biopolitical tactics in order to marginalize and control this new racial "other." After 9/11, the Bush administration sent troops back into Afghanistan, and the "war on terror" commenced. This war targeted a specific geographical location in which it believed was attacking terrorism at its roots. The War on Terror became a way to identify the Muslim "other" as the enemy of US empire.

Something similar to Afghanistan happened in Iraq. The US state uses its power and hegemony to justify its own violence against these territories, and denies its part in doing so. The media creates what Grusin calls a "low-level of anxiety,"<sup>49</sup> and uses it to gain support for the war; this "War on Terror" identifies and targets the enemy for the means of preemptive punishment for a future terror attack.<sup>50</sup> According to Grusin, the War on Terror was highly premeditated in that by "premeditating the war, remediating it before it happens, the formal

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<sup>49</sup> Grusin, Richard. "Premediation." 24.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 26.

structure of U.S. news media effectively supported U.S. military doctrine, participating in the preemptive remediation of a future (premeditated) war.”<sup>51</sup> That is, the Bush doctrine of preemptive war required a preemptive media plan, a premeditation of the inevitable future (or of any number of possible inevitable futures, as long as they all led to war with Iraq).<sup>52</sup>

Premeditation is not prediction; the conventions of premeditation “require that the future be premeditated in ways that are almost indistinguishable from the way the future will be mediated when it happens.”<sup>53</sup> The War was the way that America ensured that 9/11 would never happen again; an attack of such immediacy was going to be prevented in every way possible. The war in this sense was a tactic of prevention.

### *Premeditated or Premeditated?*

If “premeditation” is strictly defined as the media’s take-over of the apparatus of the police, then 9/11 wasn’t premeditated, but the trigger of future premeditated crime; however, I tend to want to expand this understanding of premeditation into the actual, physical, creation of future circumstances. It is these unintended consequences that I will elaborate on in the analysis of the roots of the problem—in a sense, I will argue that 9/11 was indeed “premeditated,” or “premediated,” in the sense that the United States created the circumstances in which it was to happen. In Charles Hirschkind and Saba Mahmood’s article “Feminism, the Taliban, and Politics of Counter-Insurgency,” they address the very much ignored roots of “terrorist” groups like the Taliban. They argue that the United States played a part in “creating the miserable conditions

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<sup>51</sup> Grusin, Richard. “Premeditation.” 26.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 28.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 29.



under which Afghan women were living”<sup>54</sup>. As a part of its Cold War strategy, the United States provided both economic and military support to the Taliban, according to Hirschkind and Mahmood.

The United States had also continuously bombed Afghanistan, making it hard for aid and food to come into the country. During the Reagan administration, General Zia of Pakistan overthrew the prime minister; then, he worked with the United States government hoping to economically benefit; the CIA would train Pakistani instructors, not the *mujahedeen* directly, and would also give their aid to the most extreme Islamic group in Afghanistan.<sup>55</sup> There were a variety of groups in Afghanistan, some secular, but by giving the aid to the most extreme Islamic group, the image of the Islamic extremist became fore fronted.<sup>56</sup> Hirschkind and Mahmood explain that this marginalized the voices of the other groups. Giving weapons and money to groups that threw acid in the face of women who refused to be veiled “had gradually, over a period of ten years, created the political climate in which the emergence of the Taliban was a predictable outcome.”<sup>57</sup> To elaborate on my answer to the posed questions, in a sense, the United States has indeed “premeditated” the 9/11 attacks by creating the circumstances in which the Islamic Fundamentalist groups came about by aiding and funding them. The United States was highly involved in bringing these group to power, and destroying the countries they came from, which was essentially what allowed the Taliban to take over Afghanistan, and later Al-Qaeda to take down the twin towers on the date of 9/11. Although the US didn’t give direct aid to Al-Qaeda—this group was formed at the end of the Soviet invasion—resources that were given

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<sup>54</sup> Hirschkind, Charles and Saba Mahmood. “Feminism, the Taliban, and Politics of Counter-Insurgency.” *Anthropological Quarterly*. 2002. Print. 341.

<sup>55</sup> Hirschkind, Charles and Saba Mahmood. “Feminism, the Taliban, and Politics of Counter Insurgency.” 342-343.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 343.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 343.

were done through Pakistan which made the US blind. The issue here is the refusal upon the US to take responsibility of weapons distribution and lack of development of Afghanistan's economy.

Trump asserts that he would have kept troops in Iraq for oil purposes, while Hillary Clinton sent them in to spread democracy. Trump distinguishes his goals from that of the left by claiming that "the era of nation-building will be ended. Our new approach...must be to halt the spread of Radical Islam."<sup>58</sup> Rather than building an empire, he aims at unifying the United States against the common enemy—the terrorist. Regardless of one's place in politics, the Muslim remains an antithetical figure.

### *Where the Law is Written as Law*

This manipulation of facts in order to advance the state's motives becomes a theme found quite often used by the United States government. Terrorism, for instance, is the way that violence against Muslims is justified; they are seen as antithetical to US advancements and are classified as "enemy." These circumstances are seen in the creation of what Giorgio Agamben calls the "state of exception" that he describes as "an anomic space in which what is at stake is a force of law without law (which therefore should be written: force of law)."<sup>59</sup> For example, the imprisonment of "deviant"—as Slavoj Žižek would call it—bodies in Guantanamo Bay becomes a way in which the state can gather them in a place that is both foreign and domestic, under the reach of the law, but not close enough to force enforcement<sup>60</sup>. The piece "Where is Guantanamo" by Amy Kaplan explains the significance of the placement of Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. This

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<sup>58</sup> Trump, Donald J. "Full Speech: Donald Trump Addresses Radical Islamic Terrorism." Full Speech.

<sup>59</sup> Agamben, Giorgio. "State of exception." *Nova srpska politička misao* 12.1+ 4 (2005): 135-145.

<sup>60</sup> Mitchell, David, and Sharon Snyder. "the Materiality of Metaphor." *The disability studies reader* (2006): 205.

“modern Gulag,” is the “state of exception” that Agamben writes about.<sup>61</sup> It is a lawless zone, “a legal black hole, a legal limbo, a prison beyond the law, a “permanent United States penal colony floating in another world.”<sup>62</sup> Its acquisition is rooted in imperialism. The US helped Cuba gain independence from Spain and created a treaty in order to disallow them from having full autonomy; the Platt Amendment reserved to the United States the right to intervene in Cuba militarily and to control its economy and its relations with other countries,” and coerced Cuba into giving up certain rights to the US and also stealing Guantanamo Bay.<sup>63</sup> This understanding of the creation of Guantanamo Bay as a State of Exception makes it easier to understand the critical workings of US empire today. The Cuban government says that “Guantanamo Bay continues to be an illegitimately occupied territory.”<sup>64</sup> The manipulation of circumstances for the US’s benefit in Cuba is only one example of the continuous “states of exception” that are created both on the homeland and abroad (i.e. Ab Ghraib) in which the US excuses itself from crime in order to take down who they consider to be “criminals.”

### ***Abu Ghraib: Putting on a Show***

Similar to Guantanamo Bay, the Abu Ghraib incident used similar normalization rhetoric and techniques to pass the torture that was ensuing off as legal, or at least justifiable. Abu Ghraib was a prison complex in Iraq during the War on Terror; those imprisoned underwent extensive torture, sexual assault, and extremely harsh treatment. The scandal was also documented by the eleven soldiers who partook in the torture. The types of images regarded the posing of the soldiers next to piled, dead, and maimed, bodies.

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<sup>61</sup> Kaplan, A. "Where Is Guantanamo?" *American Quarterly* 57.3 (2005): 831-858. 831.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 831.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 835.

<sup>64</sup> Kaplan, Amy. "Where Is Guantanamo?" 836.

Michel Foucault discusses punishment before the prison as one that is extravagant and spectator-worthy; he argues that “a parade of body parts became central to popular violence and the imagination that fueled it.”<sup>65</sup> Foucault theorizes that the birth of the prison put an end to the gory display of punishment; however, the contrary is evident in cases such as Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib where the torture of prisoners remains a documented and displayed form of torture and punishment.



Figure 2.1: Spc. Sabrina Harmon poses with a smile next to a dead Iraqi prisoner inside the Abu Ghraib prison.

Source: “Setting the Conditions for Abu Ghraib”, Michelle Brown



Figure 2.2: Spc. Charles Garner and Spc. Sabrina Harmon smile behind a group of tortured and naked Iraqi detainees.

Source: “Setting the Conditions for Abu Ghraib”, Michelle Brown

The above figures 2.1 and 2.2 are examples of the documentation of the torture on the Iraqi prisoners. The “parade of bodies” and the “imagination” remain ways in which punishment ensues, except instead of being displayed in front of a live audience, pictures of the violence that ensued are dispersed. These pictures are only two examples of the horrific nature of the torture. The images are almost pornographic, depicting naked bodies in contorted positions, some covered in blood, while others are flailed, bound, and dragged. The level of violence that is

<sup>65</sup> Daulatzai, Sohail. *Black Star Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. 175. Print.

inflicted on the Iraqi prisoners is normalized—the soldiers are smiling next to the bodies as if they aren't human beings that they have just killed. The dehumanization of the Muslim body dates back to the colonization of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If one is seen as less human, they become disposable, and imperialism is justified and perpetuated. These bodies are not animals, but human beings that have been completely rendered without agency, and have seemingly become play toys for the recruits.

Prisons are creations of the state that remove certain bodies from the civil society and place them in a place in which they are stripped of their rights and become subject to the extralegal actions of the state. They were created when the US gained freedom in order to deny freedoms to certain bodies, and remove liberty as a form of punishment.<sup>66</sup> In “Setting the Conditions for Abu Ghraib,” Michelle Brown argues that Abu Ghraib was not an anomaly, but part of a wider string of institutions of its nature—Guantanamo being one of them.<sup>67</sup> These bodies that were being tortured, sexually abused, and completely dehumanized were the bodies of the “enemy,” and it was being carried out by the American forces.<sup>68</sup> The normalization of such techniques of domination are apparent in the description of the events as “not quite torture.”<sup>69</sup> The extent of the not-quite-torture expanded to “sleep deprivation, exposure to heat or cold, the use of drugs to cause confusion, rough treatment...forcing a prisoner to stand for days at a time or sit in uncomfortable positions, and playing on his fears for himself and his family.”<sup>70</sup> The abuse of these prisoners was not labeled as “torture” because the bodies of the Iraqis were not seen as human enough to be considered something illegal or abnormal. The harshest sentence

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<sup>66</sup> Brown, Michelle. ““Setting the Conditions” for Abu Ghraib: The Prison Nation Abroad.” *American Quarterly* 57.3 (2005): 973-97.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 978.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 978.

given to the perpetrators of this torture was given to Charles Garner (shown in figure 2.2), who received a mere ten years in prison.<sup>71</sup> The rhetoric in the media claimed that these soldiers were a “few bad apples;”<sup>72</sup> however, this completely erases the histories involving the expulsion, detainment, and exclusion of the Muslim from civil society since the establishment of the country. This form of punishment is not new, nor is it because of a “few bad apples.” This sort of normalized violence against the Muslim has been in the works for centuries before Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, and continues to be apparent in Trump’s America in his complete exclusion of the Muslim through his “Muslim Ban.”<sup>73</sup> This type of treatment of the Muslim body is systematic, and built into the foundation of the United States.

Security is the new language of punishment, and plays the role of justification for extralegal action taken on certain communities on the homeland. Not only does the rhetoric of radical Islamic terrorism “reify the centuries-long trope of the Muslim savage and barbarian whose very existence threatens the Christian West,”<sup>74</sup> but it also plays a role in ensuring that the Muslim diaspora in the states is kept under the watchful eye of the government. The Muslim has been seen as antithetical to US advances and empire since the Cold War; the body of the Muslim is now surveilled and punished in the name of freedom and liberty. The figure of the terrorist exists in order to revitalize the security state, and “the rubric of ‘terrorism’...marks racial others as unruly populations that demand detention, deportation, and even death.”<sup>75</sup> The justification of detention centers such as Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, and the heightening of security and

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<sup>71</sup> Brown, Michelle. ““Setting the Conditions” for Abu Ghraib.” 980.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> The Muslim Ban enacted by President Donald Trump is extensively defined and analyzed in chapter 4 of this thesis.

<sup>74</sup> Aziz, Sahar. "Trump's Immigrant Ban Part of a Long, Sad Tradition." *Fox News*. FOX News Network, Jan. 2017. Online. 22 Mar. 2017.

<sup>75</sup> Daulatzai, Sohail. *Black Star Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. Print. 171.

surveillance of Muslims on the homeland is done through the “othering” of the “terrorists.” It is easy to carry out extralegal tactics such as surveilling certain populations, or the torture of detainees, when the bodies of those being surveilled and tortured are seen as the enemy.

# CHAPTER THREE



# I Enter, You Exit

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The War on Terror was a way to identify the Muslim “other” as the enemy of US empire. In short, the United States created the figure of the terrorist in order to attack Muslim majority countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. The creation of this “other” then justifies the policing of Muslims on the homeland.

## ***NSEERS***

Certain tactics such as the National Security Entry-Exit Registration—NSEERS—(Special Registration) was targeted at Muslim majority nations.<sup>76</sup> This involved interviewing males coming from these regions who were sixteen years and older upon entry and exit of the United States. The United States determined that carrying the “Muslim” identity meant that they were automatically carrying the identity of “terrorist” as well. This tactic collapsed “citizenship, ethnicity, and religion into race.”<sup>77</sup> Religion was now written on the bodies of Muslims, and not only that, those who appeared “Muslim” became subject to this very same treatment. These men recounted being treated as if guilty of a crime.<sup>78</sup> The Bush administration claimed that these areas exhibited a “heightened risk of terrorist activity;” there is no indication of Special Registration protecting against, or revealing, terrorist activity.<sup>79</sup> It is tactics such as Special Registration, among others like preemptive strike, implemented by the Bush administration that exacerbate the discourse surrounding Muslims as “terrorists.”

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<sup>76</sup> Bayoumi, Moustafa. “Racing Religion.” *The New Centennial Review*. Michigan State University Press. 2006. 270.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 277.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* 272.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 273.

### *New Beginnings*

The Trump administration represents the type of right-wing conservatism that allows for the placement of programs such as NSEERS. In “Chameleon Conservatism: Post 9/11 Rhetoric of Freedom” published in the *POROI* journal in 2003, by Sheena Malhotra and Aimee Carrillo discuss the shift in right wing politics that has come to define the US national identity and shape American understanding of the events of 9/11. Discourse of innocence and victimization became rampant; the news, TV shows, movies, pop culture revolved around this dichotomous battle between good and evil, between the US and the terrorists. There was no room for grey areas, one was either on the side of pure good—a reactionary turn to the myth of the past that understood America as a white, Christian country—or pure evil—those who are a the racial “other;” history was rewritten, or rather, forgotten, in an attempt to paint a picture of an innocent America.

9/11 caused a shift in right wing politics that would come to define the US national identity and shape American understanding of the events of 9/11. Discourse of innocence and victimization were normalized; the news, TV shows, movies, pop culture, etc. were talking about a dichotomous battle between good and evil—between the US and the terrorists<sup>80</sup>. Colonialism, Vietnam, Guantanamo Bay, slavery, and other previous atrocities committed by the United States were erased from the collective memories of right-wing conservatism in order to focus on National security after the attacks. Carrillo and Malhotra emphasize that 9/11 warranted a sort of “new beginning” in which history starts then and continues forward; history was erased, in a sense, and the beginning of time started at 9/11.<sup>81</sup> According to Carrillo and Malhotra, what takes place is that “this chameleon-like conservatism draws upon liberal discourses – such as feminism, multiculturalism, ‘democracy,’ and inclusion – in the cultural production of the U.S.

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<sup>80</sup> Carrillo Rowe, Aimee, and Sheena Malhotra. "Chameleon conservatism: Post-9/11 Rhetorics of innocence." *Poroi* 2.1 (2003): 56-78. 56.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

nation in the wake of 9/11 to articulate U.S. military aggression as a liberal democratic form.”<sup>82</sup>

The same mechanisms of hegemony remain intact, but they become disguised and reshaped to seem less explicit. Instead of being blatantly racist, like President Donald Trump has been, race and racially driven discrimination is disguised in order to give the US an illusory innocence in regards to perpetrating violence. The chameleon aspect refers to the ever-changing and shifting hegemony that is taking place in the US, the oppression and racism is the same but changes to adapt to the times; the conservatism part is referring to the shift in right wing politics to revolve around terror discourse and victimizing discourse of racism and victimization, but it has adapted to its times, so multiculturalism becomes emphasized because the US is supposed to be "post-racial" so it's not as explicit, the racism is hidden in rhetoric like "terrorist" it's embedded in larger labels rather than explicitly stated.

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<sup>82</sup> Carrillo Rowe, Aimee, and Sheena Malhotra. "Chameleon conservatism." 56.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# Eviction Notice: Muslims, OUT!

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In January of 2017, more than a decade after President Bush enacted the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, President Donald Trump enacts an executive order that reinvigorates the ban on immigrants coming from Muslim majority countries. Similar to the War on Terror, President Trump's order is perpetuated in the name of national security against the figure of "the terrorist," a construction that uses recycled Orientalist narratives that demonize Muslim refugees. This ban purports to ensure American safety, claiming that it will be "protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States."<sup>83</sup> President Trump uses the language of national security to justify his actions against these Muslim majority countries.

## ***2017: President Trump's Muslim Ban***

The creation of the state of emergency, in the words of Giorgio Agamben, allows an exception to be created around these seven countries—Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, and Libya<sup>84</sup>—in which those holding valid green cards and visas are detained in the name of national security. There is fear instilled surrounding these seven countries under the label "Radical Islamic Terror" states. Built into the executive order is an exception that involves these Muslim countries; the halt in immigration from these countries becomes exemplary of the continued use of race in order to create a colonial subject. The targeting of these seven countries

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<sup>83</sup> "Executive Order: Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States." *The White House*. The United States Government, 23 February 2017. Online.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

was based on previous terror claims, and the high number of refugees coming from those regions, specifically from Afghanistan and Syria. Within alt right news media, the enactment of President Trump's Muslim Ban is disguised within the language of "terror." Statistics are provided in order to counter the widely-spread notion that this ban is strictly a "Muslim" ban, as well as a lack of acknowledgement of the role religion had in the creation of this ban. Typically, an executive order wouldn't have this justification; the First Amendment supposedly prohibits the targeting of religion, but this ban explicitly creates fear and limitations around Muslims. Apart from the actual executive order, alt right articles shed a light on the mechanisms that justify the actions of the US government using the rhetoric of national security and US national identity. The Muslim that President Trump is keeping out of this country is not the Muslim that exists, but rather, the Muslim that has been constructed for a very specific agenda. The Muslim has always represented what is antithetical to US empire and expansion; therefore, it comes as no surprise that the US is attempting to create more anxieties towards Muslims from these regions in order to paint them as "enemy."

### ***Breitbart***

The Muslim Ban that has been placed targets seven Muslim-majority countries, and comes from the playbook of Steve Bannon, our new president's chief strategist and media leader for the far right, who is quickly turning Trump's incendiary campaign rhetoric into policy. One only needs to look at the media outlet he helped create, Breitbart News, to see this thinking and practice at work. In Breitbart News, an article headlined "Claimed 'Muslim Ban' Exempts Eighty-Seven Percent of Muslims," discusses the extent to which this ban is not specifically a

“Muslim” ban.<sup>85</sup> What this article seeks to accomplish is to deny that the US uses racialized tactics in order to enact his executive order. The title already provides a tone of skepticism towards the “Muslim Ban.” The first word in the title is “claimed,” providing an almost sarcastic tone when introducing the “Muslim Ban” in quotations, as if this supposed “Muslim” Ban was being falsely labeled. Already, questions like “who labeled the ban as such?” come to mind. Although President Donald Trump explicitly calls for the US to “unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism” and the eradication of Muslims “from the face of the earth,” this article continues to deny the place that this type of bigotry had in the creation of this ban.<sup>86</sup> The article begins by explaining that “87 percent of the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims are not affected by President Donald Trump’s Friday decision to temporarily withhold visas from citizens of seven Middle Eastern countries.”<sup>87</sup> By that reasoning, it would be ok to deny fair housing to Catholics in one state while insisting that the laws against discrimination be upheld in all others. The article claims that if the majority of Muslims are not affected by the ban, then it is not technically a “Muslim” Ban. The article goes on to provide statistics regarding why this ban is wrong to be classified as strictly a “Muslim” ban. For example, the article states that

The Muslim population in each of these seven countries, estimated by Pew Research as of 2010, is: Iran (74 million), Sudan (33.6 million), Iraq (31.7 million), Yemen (24 million), Syria (20.4 million), Somalia (9.3 million), and Libya (6.4 million). The 90-day temporary block on new visas does not apply to citizens of the six countries with the largest Muslim Populations, as determined by Pew Research—Indonesia (209 million),

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<sup>85</sup> Leahy, Michael Patrick Leahy. "Claimed 'Muslim Ban' Exempts Eighty-Seven Percent of Muslims." *Breitbart*. 29 Jan. 2017. Online. 22 Mar. 2017.

<sup>86</sup> Leahy, Michael Patrick. "Claimed 'Muslim Ban' Exempts Eighty-Seven Percent of Muslims."

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

India (176 million), Pakistan (167 million), Bangladesh (134 million), Nigeria (77 million), and Egypt (76 million).<sup>88</sup>

This argument claims that exclusion of the biggest Muslim countries discredits the executive order as a “Muslim” ban. Furthermore, the blatant distraction that this argument creates diverts the reader away from the point of the executive order: to ban Muslim refugees. In his speech on Radical Islamic Terrorism, President Trump explicitly states that “ISIS is trying to infiltrate refugee flows into Europe and the United States.”<sup>89</sup> He goes on to use Iran, one of the 7 banned countries, as an example in proving his point in reasserting its place as “the world’s largest state sponsor of terrorism.”<sup>90</sup> This shows that is he targeting not only refugees, but any Muslim country that is implicit in terrorism. This regards Muslims as a threat to the homeland. Denying that this ban is anything but a Muslim ban is contradicting the primary message of the order itself; moreover, the distraction that these right-wing articles are creating around this ban deliberately allow this type of rhetoric to be dismissed and perpetuated.

### *Infowars*

Similar to the Breitbart article, Infowars,<sup>91</sup> uses similar discursive techniques to maintain the innocence of the Trump administration and fend off criticism that their motives are not safety, but discrimination; however, this argument inevitably contradicts both the true events and the argument that the producer of the video, Paul Joseph Watson, makes in his piece “The Truth about Trump’s Muslim Ban.” Watson begins by insisting the ban ordered in the President’s first executive order, is merely a ‘travel’ Ban. He claims that “not a Muslim from [the bigger Muslim

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<sup>88</sup> Leahy, Michael Patrick. "Claimed 'Muslim Ban' Exempts Eighty-Seven Percent of Muslims."

<sup>89</sup> Trump, Donald J. “Full Speech: Donald Trump Addresses Radical Islamic Terrorism.”

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Infowars is a radical right radio show hosted by Alex Jones



countries] is banned;”<sup>92</sup> therefore, it is not a Muslim ban. He makes it clear that these countries are being banned because of their terrorist affiliation, creating a new class of “others.” He creates the image of the terrorist refugee by stating that “21% of Syrian refugees support ISIS;”<sup>93</sup> moreover, pinning terrorism to Syrian Refugees that are coming into the states. The “other” has evolved from merely the Muslim terrorist to the Muslim-refugee-turned-terrorist. Watson urges his audience to read the executive order before being “hysterical,” but contradicts himself in doing so; he points out that the order claims that those holding legal visas are not included in this ban, but there is substantial evidence of legal visa holders being detained at airports.

To dismiss critics as “hysterical” is not a reasonable counterargument. It is, in effect saying that anyone who does not support this is deluded or, in Trumpian terms, “the enemy of the people.” Watson contradicts his own argument with his inclusion of terror attacks as proof of his argument. His primary argument begins on the notion that there is a hysteria surrounding the fact that this ban targets Muslims, and takes a great portion of his video arguing against the notion of a “Muslim” ban in the way that Breitbart does; however, he uses terrorist attacks that have been classified as “Radical Islamic Terrorism” as his evidence. His need for a ban is clear: to eliminate “Radical Islamic Terrorism.” He offers as evidence the San Bernardino attacks, saying that “we are forgetting it was a Muslim that did it.”<sup>94</sup> The prospect of terrorism ensuing from Muslim nations that so threatens America is, for Watson, what Trump would describe as “a...threat that challenges our world.”<sup>95</sup> The ban promised in the campaign as a “Muslim Ban” has been redescribed with a rhetorical sleight of hand as a “Radical Islamic Terrorism” ban, as if

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<sup>92</sup> Watson, Paul Joseph. "Video: The Truth About Trump's 'Muslim Ban'." *Infowars*. 29 Jan. 2017. Online. 22 Mar. 2017.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Watson, Paul Joseph. "Video: The Truth About Trump's 'Muslim Ban'." *Infowars*. 29 Jan. 2017. Online. 22 Mar. 2017.

<sup>95</sup> Trump, Donald J. “Full Speech: Donald Trump Addresses Radical Islamic Terrorism.”

the administration were not preventing individuals of a certain faith but were simply prohibiting an ideology.

President Donald Trump might be blatantly explicit regarding his views on race, but he maintains this illusory innocence that the United States has epistemologically maintained since 9/11. The articles base their arguments that the “Muslim Ban” is not a “Muslim” ban at all on the rhetoric President Trump deploys. This article essentially utilizes statistics and claim that since most of the world’s Muslims remain unaffected, that this ban is not religiously based, clearing President Trump from being the perpetrator of religiously based violence. Maintaining the illusory innocence of President Trump, the article begins to contradict itself in that instead of acknowledging the place that Muslims have in this equation, it acknowledges the place that “terrorists” have: It states that

None of the seven countries on which a temporary visa ban has been placed were listed by name in Friday’s, executive order, ‘Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States.’ Instead, the order referenced previous laws and findings that designated three of these countries “state sponsors of terrorism” (Iran, Sudan, and Syria) and four of them (Iraq, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen) as “countries of concern” who are ineligible to participate in the Visa Waiver Program, according to the Visa Waiver Program Improvement and Terrorist Improvement Act of 2015.<sup>96</sup>

Replacing “Muslim” for “terrorist” behind the reasoning for the ban reiterates the synonymous relationship that these two words have come to have with each other in the US media. Already, it becomes apparent that this article is adopting language of security by attempting to justify the ban through the guise of safety; moreover, similar to Brexit; this ban becomes a way in which the

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<sup>96</sup> Leahy, Michael Patrick. "Claimed 'Muslim Ban' Exempts Eighty-Seven Percent of Muslims."

US government can prevent, not just Muslims, but Muslim refugees from coming into the country by painting them as terrorists and through this demonize them. The article goes on to state that “the executive order also temporarily banned refugees from all countries for 120 days.”<sup>97</sup> The body of the refugee becomes intertwined with the constructed figure of the terrorist, and is also racialized as “Muslim” in the process.

The visual medium of the reporting adds ballast insofar as depicting pictures of refugees who were accused of terror attacks and says “here’s another twenty fettered refugees who turned to terrorism after being allowed to enter America.”<sup>98</sup> This statement is based in Agamben’s notion of creating a “state of emergency.” Leahy states that “we kept them out, that’s why [Islamic terrorism] isn’t a problem in America,”<sup>99</sup> like President Bush’s Preemptive Strike during the time of the War on Terror. Furthermore, the rhetorical structures that Watson is deploying are recycled versions of the War on Terror discourse that has existed since the Bush administration. This argument exploits a small statistic that also ignores the small margin in which it would even take place. It is statistically proven that immigrants in generally commit far less crime per capita than non-immigrants. Census data from the years 1980 through 2010 showed that “men ages 18 to 49, immigrants were one-half to one-fifth as likely to be incarcerated as those born in the United States.”<sup>100</sup> The blame becomes thrown around and distracts from statistical truths in order to prove his point. His argument that this ban is not religiously motivated is not only completely void at this point, but reveals another crucial aspect of this ban as well as the evolution of the racialized terrorist: it is no longer merely “Muslim” based, but “Muslim Refugee” based.

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<sup>97</sup> Leahy, Michael Patrick. "Claimed 'Muslim Ban' Exempts Eighty-Seven Percent of Muslims."

<sup>98</sup> Watson, Paul Joseph. "Video: The Truth About Trump’s ‘Muslim Ban’."

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Perez-Pena, Richard. “Contrary to Trump’s Claims, Immigrants Are Less Likely to Commit Crimes.” *The New York Times*. 26 January 2017. Online.

Watson claims that the Muslim countries that are banning people from immigrating based on religion; moreover, he attempts to claim that these countries have no right to complain because they all ban Israelis from traveling into the land. He questions why Israelis are banned from a list of Muslim countries including Pakistan, Syria, among others; his question is obviously not researched, or he is using the same elimination tactics that the United States uses in its denial of colonialism. At this point he contradicts himself and his insistence that this is not a “Muslim” ban in his admittance that this is religiously driven. Israel is a settler-colonial regime that has oppressed not only the Palestinians, but the surrounding Muslim-majority countries. Patrick Wolfe, in "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native" published in 2003 in the *Journal of Genocide Research*, explains Israel’s motives for elimination of the native—Palestinian—is much more than merely moving them, or killing them, but extends to the erasure of their culture, and of their past--which is typical settler-colonialism.<sup>101</sup> The banning of Israelis is a ban placed on an oppressor, not placed based on strictly hate. Watson’s ignorance of the settler-colonialism is reminiscent of the United States’ claim to an illusory innocence and an erasure of the past. Watson’s claims show a complete disregard of colonialism both in the United States and abroad, as well as an obvious ignorance of the histories of the countries being banned.

### ***Liberty and Justice for All***

“Freedom” rhetoric became the dominant discourse through which militant intervention directly after 9/11 was justified. The way this takes place is through “freedom...[becoming] the dominant political discourse.”<sup>102</sup> What ends up happening is that the US desperately needs to

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<sup>101</sup> Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (2006): 387-409.

<sup>102</sup> Anker, Elisabeth Robin. *Orgies of feeling: Melodrama and the politics of freedom*. Duke University Press, 2014. 208.

maintain its innocence and democracy, and therefore “freedom” becomes something that is attacked and threatened. It is something the United States possesses that the “terrorist” countries don’t. The notion of freedom reestablishes the “sovereign state power after it was devastated by the 9/11 events.”<sup>103</sup> America post-9/11 redefines freedom, using it to motivate citizens to fight for the US against those who are threatening our way of life. But what is ignored is the cost of this freedom. When prisons were established, they were made to take away freedoms from criminals. It was a way to take away freedoms of black and brown peoples to ensure the freedoms of the rest. It reestablished sovereign state power in the sense that it gives the US power to ensue militant action where it really doesn’t belong under the veil of freedom. This term is defined in such a way to give the US an illusory innocence post-9/11. It is designed to paint the US as the progressive super power that is trying to spread democracy.

The complete lack of acknowledgement of the place that the Muslim has in this equation works toward the goal of deflection and erasure that allows the figure of the terrorist to slowly replace “Muslim” in US right-winged media. Rhetoric of safety and security becomes the way that American identity is formed and tactics such as this ban are justified.

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<sup>103</sup> Anker, Elisabeth Robin. *Orgies of feeling: Melodrama and the politics of freedom*. 208.

# AFTERWORD

## To II/9

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Islam as a religion has been turned into something that can be aesthetically identified. Things like special registration and the Muslim ban have become ways to attempt and make legible and simplify a set of religious beliefs; of thoughts; of ideas. Being Muslim in a post-9/11 world has placed our identities under the specter of terror; our livelihoods in this country are defined by the state racing our religion. We are surveilled, we are incarcerated, we are dehumanized, and our countries are torn apart by the US military.

Since Donald Trump started his campaign, the number of Islamophobic incidents have skyrocketed. Per Georgetown University's "Bridge," anti-Muslim violence remained significantly higher in 2015 than pre- 9/11 levels, with American Muslims approximately six to nine times more likely to suffer such attacks. The number of incidents in 2015 is also higher than the total number of anti-Muslim hate crimes reported in 2014: 154.<sup>104</sup> Trump's campaign has incited and encouraged Islamophobic actions across the United States.

Existing while Muslim—or “appearing” Muslim, for that matter—has left millions of people of color subject to the backlash of Trump's rhetoric, similar to the backlash following the attacks of 9/11. “Terrorism” is the new definition of Muslim identity in this country, and the actions of a few continue to wreak havoc on the way that most Muslims are viewed. Anti-Muslim rhetoric continues to be rooted in discourse on terrorism; figures like Donald Trump latch onto terrorist attacks and use them to justify Islamophobic actions and remarks. In December 2015, after San Bernardino, it was reported that “attacks on Muslims during this month constitute

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<sup>104</sup> Adbelkader, Engy. “When Islamophobia Turns Violent: The 2016 Presidential Election” The Bridge Initiative. Georgetown University. 2016. Print.

approximately 1/3 of all attacks last year. In fact, in December 2015, anti-Muslim attacks occurred almost daily and often multiple times a day.”<sup>105</sup> Matters have only worsened since 9/11, and it is crucial to recognize that the discourses in the media play a massive role in creating the figure of the Muslim to be one of “terrorist”– one that is evil.

15 years after the attacks of 9/11, Muslims continue to be villainized, detained, and surveilled. Our bodies remain under the control of the state, and the civil society continues to try and harm and exclude us. It is crucial during this time of Islamophobic resurgence that we do not remain silent. It is important for Muslims to stand up and debunk the ideologies being dispersed through the mass media. President Donald Trump is only the start of this representation; he has empowered those like him to speak up, and so we must rise up with them. Only when we have our voices heard will our experiences become relevant. Only when we speak up will we take back our place in this country that others are trying to tear away from us. We, as Muslims in this country, must speak now, or we will be made to forever hold our peace.

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<sup>105</sup> Adbelkader, Engy. “When Islamophobia Turns Violent: The 2016 Presidential Election” The Bridge Initiative. Georgetown University. 2016. Print.



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