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2019

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Mir, Shabana and Sarroub, Loukia K., "Islamophobia in U.S. Education" (2019). *Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education*. 313.

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Islamophobia in U.S. Education

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Introduction

Anti-Muslim sentiment has grown in scale and visibility far beyond its association with the horrific attacks of 2001. The US government’s “War on Terror,” which began after the attacks, often pervades the domestic landscape as a war on Islamic religious “extremism.” The definitions and content of such religious extremism are so extensive that they encompass large numbers of Muslims, and they highlight Muslims as being inherently problematic. For example, the success of the 2016 presidential campaign can be said to have relied significantly on a right-wing Islamophobic fear-mongering that shariah was set to take over the US. As we grappled with the writing of this chapter about Islamophobia in US education, it became clear to us that the work that educators do daily in schools, colleges, and universities cannot be separated from a politics that undermines democratic and pluralistic values. Our chapter aims to examine current political and policy practices that are ultimately eroding a long-held and highly valued goal of “education for all.” In the first part of the chapter, we explain how “Islamophobia” has become a social fact of school life for many young people in US public schools. We then present an analysis of the Islamophobia as politically situated in higher education settings. Throughout the chapter, we offer ideas for curbing and ultimately eradicating an Islamophobia that is toxic to the educational aims of the United States.

Published in *The Routledge International Handbook of Islamophobia*, edited by Irene Zempi and Imran Awan (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2019), pp 298–309.
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U.S. school-age Muslim youth in context

In our review of news media outlets between 2015-2017 about Islamophobia and schools, we discovered 55 documented cases of “Islamophobia” in the US and 61 in North America, and these account for only the ones reported in major newspapers, so they do not include cases that were not reported regionally or nationally, and in many of the federally refugee designated sites. While these incidents have continued to occur over time, scholars of education have attempted to address from multiple angles how key stakeholders such as schools, students, parents, and educators might negotiate this cultural and social reality. For example, in her 2011 letter from the editorial board of the high school journal, education scholar Kate Allman wrote the following as part of the call for research and practice pieces in connection to Islamophobia:

In a recent *Newsweek* article, Denis MacShane brought national attention to “Islamophobia”, a term that has been used for the past two decades to describe an irrational fear of Islam that results in discriminatory practices towards those perceived to be Muslim. As William Dalrymple explained in a follow-up in *The New York Times*, this renewal of those fears stems from the American tendency to see the Islamic world as a “single, terrifying monolith” – prejudicial perceptions that continue to result in the marginalization of Muslims from the social, political, and public life of the nation and our schools.

While this journal is uncomfortable with the term “Islamophobia” for its etymological generalizations, we, like others, argue that *Newsweek’s* widespread publication of the term offers scholars an opportunity to raise questions about the current culture of fear directed towards Muslims in America. More specifically, we think that it is important to explore how fears targeted at Muslim students are surfacing in *schools* – particularly secondary schools – and how this problem might be addressed in and through curriculum and pedagogy.

In line with Allman’s call for research on the topic, we agree that this is a critical time for US public schools because multiple populations of students face discrimination, marginalization, and the very real fear of being targeted as potential threats to society. Several years ago in the United States and in the aftermath of 9/11, an ELL high school boy from Mexico who had been in the United States for 5 years and who was enrolled in ELL class Loukia was observing (Sarroub 2007), noted that people

thought he was an Arab Muslim and gave him a hard time about it, calling him “sand nigga” and “towel head,” so he proceeded to get a tattoo on his left arm that said in block letters, “LATINO” and would hold up his arm whenever he heard these labels, which he found insulting. At the time, the young man was friends and interacted daily at school with Iraqi, Kurd, and Syrian refugees from the Second Gulf War, who themselves sometimes experienced the name-calling as well as the furtive looks from their peers and people in their Midwestern city. Since that time, young Muslim people in the US who are school aged often have been perceived as a national security risk (Fine and Sirin 2008), and popular culture has further exacerbated this idea of “othering” Arabs and Muslims in films and other social media (cf. Mahdi 2016). As noted by *The Guardian*:

Fifty-five percent of Muslim students surveyed by the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) ... reported that they were bullied at school in some form because of their Islamic faith. That’s twice the national percentage of bullying reported by all students, regardless of their religion. According to the CAIR survey, verbal harassment is the most common, with non-Muslims calling Muslim students terrorists or referencing bombs.

(*Irshad 2015*)

While some educational scholars have resisted the term “Islamophobia” to describe patterns of discrimination within schools, Islamophobia has taken root in schools and among youth in public schools, and there is no end to it in sight.

As recently reported by news media outlets such as *Mother Jones* (Rizga 2016), which devoted attention to Islamophobia in US schools, the Census Bureau estimates that there are 1.8 million Arab Americans in the United States, an increase of 51 percent since 2000, and 45 percent of high school students have heard racist remarks about Arabs in their classrooms. In a recent poll, 54 percent of Americans said they did not want to accept refugees from places like Syria, worrying that the government does not have the ability to screen out potential terrorists. Since 2012, 21,000 Syrian refugees have relocated to the United States, with roughly 50 percent being under the age of 14 and attending US schools, and they too continue to experience both discrimination and marginalization in their schools and communities.

Furthermore, the role of discrimination may be a major factor in Muslims’ emotional struggles as social and cultural targets. Although

American Muslims are likely to share the same general values and aspirations as their fellow Americans, there remains a strong anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States (Ravitz 2009). According to the Pew Research Center (2009), 58 percent of Americans see Muslims as facing a lot of discrimination. American Jews, at 35 percent, are the next highest group who report facing discrimination. Overall and during the past ten years, a dramatic rise in Islamophobia and hate crimes toward Muslims has manifested itself in the forms of community opposition to several proposed Islamic centers across the country, vandalism of mosques, anti-Muslim rhetoric in the media, and violence toward American Muslims (Esposito and Lalwani, 2010).

Within US public schools, there has been increased lack of awareness and need to recognize and respond appropriately to Islamophobia when it takes place on school grounds. Whereas Sarroub (2005) and Muir and Zine (2018 [1999]) had respectively reported and crafted ways prior to and shortly after 9/11 in which schools and teachers could constructively and productively accommodate Muslim students, this became more difficult both after 9/11 and during the years leading to the 2016 US presidential election. "I was afraid they [teachers and administration] would have their own opinions and give priority to the others," reported one California student when asked about reporting Islamophobic bullying to teachers. One in five Muslim students reported being discriminated against by school staff. A 2014 study by Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) study found 29% of students who wore hijab experienced offensive touching or pulling of their scarves. These incidents are taking a psychological toll on Muslim youth. "At a crucial time in their identity development, they're suffering from chronic trauma," says Dr. Halim Naeem, a psychotherapist and president of The Institute of Muslim Mental Health. Dr. Naeem says that in the last few months alone, he has seen increased cases of depression, anxiety, image issues, paranoia, and substance abuse among Muslim American youth (Irshad 2015).

Additionally, Muslim students in schools are not the only ones who suffer from discrimination in schools during "Islamophobic" events. Teachers, too, sometimes bear the brunt of discrimination and ill-will. For example, a teacher in Gwinnett County, Georgia received a handwritten note telling her that she should hang herself with her head scarf rather than wear it on her head (Sharpe 2016). As in this teacher's case, all educators bear the responsibility of not only teaching students but also fostering understanding and facilitating awareness and minimizing acts of hate, racism, and discrimination because the short and long-term effects on young people are deleterious (Herzig 2014).

Imagining and implementing a response to Islamophobia in U.S. schools

Our review of the research literature on Islamophobia and schools reveals several key studies that demonstrate the scope of the problem as well as ways to address it. The research spans a wide array of transformative pedagogies as well as theoretical understandings to enact change to improve the human condition within educational settings. Importantly, they offer tangible options for communities and schools to engage in conversation and practices that promote a more just and open society.

One line of productive research focuses on better understanding Muslim identity in different contexts and across different ethnic groups. Zine's (2004, 2006) work, for example, focuses on critically examining resources for anti-Islamophobia education to counteract neo-Orientalist representations. She also explores how gender and womanhood are negotiated among young women who wear the hijab. Similarly, Fine and Sirin (2008) conducted a mixed methods study to better understand the identities of Muslim youth aged 12-18 and found that young women and women negotiated discrimination and marginalization in gendered ways.

Another area of research inquiry that is more or less connected to resilience, or to use feminist philosopher's Judith Butler's words, "insurrectionary acts," with which young Muslims in the US adapt to challenging situations by creating positive and counter narrative pathways. One such study by Abu-Ras, Senzai, and Laird (2013) demonstrates that in spite of the initial national, negative response, 9/11 led to positive changes in people's religious identities and facilitated adaptive action that strengthened community bonds. In the same vein, Maira (2010), reports how Muslim East Asian high school students fostered a sense of belonging via the dissenting citizenship of these immigrants that questions cultural consumption, cyberculture, as well as gendered notions of dissent and "good" Muslim" identity. Shabana's book (Mir 2014) offers a powerful and important critique of young women on a college campus who weather the combined "double-scrutiny" of their nation and their community as Muslim women, and thus experience competing and sometimes conflicting dualities that are negotiated daily in their quest to pursue higher education.

While our aim is not to provide an exhaustive list of research on Islamophobia and US education, and given that our review of relevant literature uncovered recently published doctoral dissertations that include promising directions in better understanding how Muslim youth "make

it” in schools, a key area of research that we deem as critical currently sponsors immediate, pragmatic, and reform-minded pedagogies in the schools that address how and what young people read, write, and talk about in their classes with their peers and teachers. One example is the work of Allman (2017) in which she examines the counter-stories generated by Muslim youth in a North Carolina high school as they resist national discourses. These serve as important texts that actively enact identities within their school that support their reality rather than the one imposed on them by negative media portrayals. Loukia, in *All American Yemeni Girls* (Sarroub 2005), describes in ethnographic detail how the high school administration coordinated with Yemeni community members ways to accommodate academic, religious, social, and cultural norms across settings with the assistance and leadership of students as well as school/community liaisons. Forman (2004) and Bigelow (2010) establish connections between youth linguistic and cultural practices of Somali students in their respective educational settings, and they emphasize the importance of research and policy decisions that are grounded in the lived realities of these young people.

Lived realities of young people currently include mixed messages about what it means to be educated and to belong in the United States. As war, famine, displacement continue to ravage areas of the world from which people will flee and seek refuge, it is essential that schools and communities find ways to counter pervasive stereotypes and harmful actions toward Muslims and all people. After all, the United States, Europe, and other nations have long histories of participation for providing refuge to so many of the worlds’ peoples, despite the intermittent, troubling, and alienating international policies that sometimes emerge as government leadership changes. If the aim is to educate all children, then it follows that civic responsibility in and out of school must work hand in hand with calling attention to and stopping Islamophobia.

Islamophobia in US higher education

In this section of our chapter, we shed light on the repercussions of Islamophobia for US academia, faculty, and students in post-secondary settings. The focus is mainly on key events and trends that occurred during the past two decades. Specifically, Shabana draws on her ethnographic work in university settings to bear on Muslim students’ experiences of Islamophobia in campus culture.

The travel ban

Politicians and the US government have participated in apportioning collective guilt to Muslim Americans for any terrorist attack that had any Muslim involvement, and they have generated widespread belligerence, hostility, and suspicion regarding Muslims. Every terrorist attack involving a Muslim is followed by an uptick in the level of anti-Muslim attacks by individuals, groups, and government agencies. After the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, for instance, physical and verbal attacks on Muslims were reported after the bombing (Sacchetti 2013), with a Saudi student injured in the blast being treated like a suspect in the news and by law enforcement (Byers 2016). After the San Bernardino shooting, Republican presidential candidates raised the specter of war. Trump called for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives could figure out what is going on.” Trump’s campaign manager explained that the ban on entering the US would apply to tourists and potential immigrants – in fact “everyone” (Kozłowska 2015). While Democratic candidates were not beating war drums, the language of war was still present under a thin veneer of Countering Violent Extremism policies, where Muslims are all regarded as security risks, unless they are “saved” from the danger of a violent Islam. “The vast majority of Muslims are on our side of the battle unless we drive them away,” Hillary Clinton said (Oliphant and Whitesides 2015) .

This negative climate against Muslims has affected recruitment, enrollment, employment, curriculum, pedagogy, institutional climate, and student experiences in US higher education. After the San Bernardino shooting, Larycia Hawkins the first black female tenured professor at Wheaton College, expressed solidarity with the Muslim community by posting a photograph of herself on Facebook wearing a hijab, with an accompanying statement asserting, “As Pope Francis stated last week, we worship the same God.” Wheaton retaliated by placing Hawkins on administrative leave and started proceedings to terminate her employment. Eventually, Hawkins agreed to resign. Such public consequences, apparently for a statement of goodwill and ecumenical harmony, send a clear message that academic work and speech in matters of Islam is politically charged and, in these days of employment precarity, solidarity with Muslims can be ill-afforded. Such administrative behavior also conveys the notion that anti-Muslim racism is acceptable. Disturbingly, just one year later, five Wheaton football players abducted a freshman from his dorm, put a pillowcase over his head, tied him with duct-tape, played

Middle Eastern music, implying that he had been kidnapped by Muslims, and then made offensive comments about Muslims, even attempting to insert an object into the freshman's rectum, while joking about having sex with a goat (Schelkopf 2018).

In Chapel Hill, North Carolina, the horrific cold-blooded murder of three Muslim American students, Deah Barakat, Yusor Abu-Salha, and Razan Abu-Salha, caused academic communities to become aware of the real danger faced by their Muslim students. Deah, a Syrian-American student at the University of North Carolina's School of Dentistry, had just married Yusor, a North Carolina State University graduate, two months prior, and Yusor's sister, Razan was a student at North Carolina State University. Their neighbor, Craig Hicks, knocked on their apartment door, and when Deah answered, shot all three, execution-style, in their heads. Commentators linked the murders with the election cycle, the hate-mongering of Fox News and other media outlets, the War on Terror, and "anti-extremism" programs, arguing that it was no surprise such pervasive anti-Muslim hate would result in such violent acts (Stancill 2016).

The Trump administration continued not only with discursive Islamophobia but with concrete policy. In 2017, Trump's executive order (and his main election promise to anti-Muslim voters) temporarily banning immigration to the US from the Muslim-majority countries of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen took effect. This caused widespread unease among current students, student applicants, and faculty, as their ability to pursue an education, to travel and then to return to continue work, to conduct international internships, and to visit family in their countries was now shrouded in doubt (Deruy 2017; Cohen 2017). Students have been detained at airports, and on occasion, they have been handcuffed like criminals (Wong 2017). Students who are from Muslim-majority countries not on the travel ban have also reported difficulties entering the US (Wermund 2018). A new travel ban applicable to Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela (in limited cases), and Yemen was announced later in 2017 (New York University 2017).

In the wake of the travel ban, thirty-two higher education organizations submitted an amicus brief on Trump vs. Hawaii, stating that the Presidential Proclamation of the travel ban put at risk the financial, educational, social, and cultural benefits that international exchange bring to the US and to American higher education (Fields 2018). The overall numbers of international students in the US have certainly shown a decline (Redden 2017b) after years of rising steadily, "amid widespread concern that prospective new students could be deterred by the current political climate and uncertainty about immigration policies in the United States"

(Redden 2018c). After the 2016 presidential election, over 250 colleges and universities joined the #YouAreWelcomeHere campaign to offset the political and cultural negativity and to allay international student concerns about difficult US immigration procedures (Redden 2017a). In protest against the travel ban, many foreign scholars have declined to attend US conferences. Higher education scholars are concerned that prospective international students and faculty in general, whether from Muslim-majority nations or not, have negative perceptions of the US as “unwelcoming or unsafe,” with ambiguous and difficult visa policies (Redden 2018b). In this political climate, Canadian universities have successfully lured faculty away from American universities (Redden 2018a).

Students have suffered in the current ideological milieu due to its implications for everyday life, academic work, travel, and visas. Even before the travel ban in 2012, over 400 New York faculty demanded an end to the NYPD’s stop-and-frisks and surveillance of Muslims, explaining how an anti-Muslim climate harmed their students:

Students ask in class if they are being spied on. They tell us in private of their fears about speaking in class. They come to office hours in tears because they now look with suspicion at new members of the Muslim Student Association for fear they might be the police, and that is not the way they want to look at other Muslims. And they, Muslim and non-Muslim students, courageously speak out and begin to organize against the police practices and the climate they foster — and they welcome faculty to join them.

(Sassen and Theoharis 2012)

Stigma and covering: being Muslim on campus

In Shabana’s research, documented in her book *Muslim American Women on Campus: Undergraduate Social Life and Identity*, Shabana examined how state surveillance and a global stigmatization of Muslims as terrorists have significantly hurt Muslim college students’ psychosocial well-being. Though stigma against Islam is not new to the US, she found that Muslims are targets of bigotry, discrimination, and ignorance, and widely stigmatized for their religious affiliation and practices even in universities widely regarded as bastions of liberal diversity. There is pervasive ignorance about Islam and Muslims, against a background of Whiteness, anti-faith secularism, and Islamophobic racism, among college students and many faculty.

Shabana conducted ethnographic research in the continually lengthening shadow of state surveillance. Some of her research participants had close friends and acquaintances in the Washington, DC area who had been criminalized and harassed after the 9/11 attacks in “Operation Green Quest.” Right-wing US discourse has long featured a suspicion of Muslims who “assimilate” into the community. Accordingly, well-known Muslims with a commitment to working with the government and local communities were tarred by distant association with charities, causes, and individuals. Law enforcement officers showed up at the home of a family Shabana has known for years, and without identifying themselves properly, treated the family like criminals, trained a weapon on the 17-year-old girl, and handcuffed her and her mother for four hours (Gerstein 2007). Such actions by law enforcement, along with a global “War on Terror,” led to an atmosphere of fear among Muslim college students.

Hijab-wearing women and other visibly Muslim students are at particular risk of being targets of bigotry, prejudice, and racialized sexism. The stigma of being Muslim can also mar the quality of students’ classroom learning. Latifa, a hijab-wearing Muslim student, reported that whenever topics related to Muslims cropped up in classes, heads turned toward her, and she realized she was “in the hot seat, the designated Muslim spokesperson who must consistently voice the prototypical Muslim standpoint” (Mir 2014, p. 92). Muslims students felt like they were forced to speak for all Muslims everywhere, especially terrorists and militants who are over-represented in the news. Muslim students are assumed to possess a fundamental set of characteristics in common with a worldwide religious group — a tendency to violence and fanaticism, for example — and “the awareness of this stereotype can inflict symbolic violence and inwardly reduce the stereotyped individual” (Mir 2014, p. 34). This meant that Muslim students are stigmatized and defined even before they have an opportunity to open their mouths. The destructive power of such pervasive assumptions on post-adolescents cannot be understated.

Though being visibly Muslim — due to hijab, for example — can obligate students to represent Islam, these hijab-wearing students’ views on Islam and Muslims are often taken less seriously than those of women who do not wear hijab. Non-Muslim peers often perceive hijab-wearing Muslims as blind followers of faith and community, with “excessive” religious commitment, while Muslim women who do not wear hijab are often perceived as nominally Muslim, or “just like us” (Mir 2014, p. 92). Because the pressure to represent all Muslims, the governments of Muslim-majority nations, and the diverse cultural practices of Muslim cultures generates mental distress and stress for Muslim students, it is no

surprise that Muslim American students frequently play down Islamic affiliation and religiosity.

In previous writings, Shabana demonstrated how Muslim students navigate drinking culture on college campuses, selectively playing religiosity up or down (Mir 2009a, 2009b, 2009c). For Muslim students who seek camaraderie on campus, downplaying Muslim religiosity is a common strategy, for instance, for the sake of camaraderie that is conditional upon participation in alcohol culture. At times they drink or go out of their way to socialize in bars, clubs, and parties, arguing that this attempt to insert themselves into non-preferred activities is part of an American cultural assimilationist journey of give-and-take. But, as some of Shabana's research participants noted, "peripheral participation" in alcohol culture creates awkward encounters where the camaraderie Muslims experience is shallow, and their religiosity may be compromised. When Muslims refuse to attend wet parties and bars, they often find that camaraderie in the larger peer culture (outside the Muslim "bubble") is closed to them. One of Shabana's research participants, Fatima, for example, affirmed the importance of keeping Muslim beliefs about alcohol low-key and remarked that Muslims should not express their strong disapproval of intoxicants to their peers. Amira, when she requested juice instead of beer, made sure not to state explicitly that she was a religious teetotaler; this was not mere personal politeness, but a strategy developed to offset the stereotype of Muslims as uptight outsiders. Someone who was negative about alcohol might not get invited to parties again (Mir 2014).

Being Muslim can even harm one's professional future. Yasmin, in apprehension of how her Muslim background could potentially damage her career prospects, attempted to tone down her Muslim identity by requesting non-Muslim references. She argued that her influence as a Muslim was greater if she were inside mainstream dominant culture. "Can you really change things from outside the system?" she asked (Mir 2014, p. 174). Unfortunately, for many Muslim students, the luxury of authentic identities, of being "free to be" is not always available to them; many of them "cover" (Goffman 1963) their Muslim religiosity, hoping that a cultural sea-change would render them safe one day. It was in 2003 that Yasmin expressed the hope that being part of the system, even if slightly undercover, would yield better results. Fifteen years later, under President Trump's Islamophobic administration, the children of my research participants are being reared under the same fear, with the same tenuous hope.

As students like Yasmin understand that the acceptance they receive is always at risk, they often treat their own Muslim identities as dangerous,

or a pollutant, or something to be concealed or disguised. But if they do so, they may indeed comply with dominant racist demands, becoming entirely assimilated and invisible as Muslims, internalizing some level of Islamophobia.

In invisibility lies safety. In liminality one may conduct one's identity work in relative security.

Yet when the individual regards his or her own attributes as "defiling" (Goffman 1963:7), how genuine can such *safety* be? Muslim American women treated Muslim modesty, courtship, and teetotalism like dirty secrets, contaminations that reduced their normalcy quotient in campus culture.

(*Mir 2014, pp. 173-174*)

Not all Muslim students choose the path of "covering" their identities for safety. Some, like Amber, a Muslim student group officer, argued that the time for safety was no more, and she was compelled, despite her discomfort with perpetual activism, to be outspoken about being Muslim and against Islamophobic state policies.

No one else is going to do it for us and we're just going to be stomped on. And yes, it's constant pressure, but if I don't do it then I'm not going to respect myself ... There's a handful who care. And the rest, ... they don't do anything about it... They'll be like, ... "They [law enforcement and intelligence] are all going to take us all" But they're not going to do anything It [apathy] is a way to protect themselves too

(*Amber, quoted in Mir 2014, p. 174*)

Amber perceived the strategy of the "undercover" Muslims as apathetic and selfish. But her own strategy of being "loud Muslim" was in part inescapable, a choice made for her because she was already hijab-wearing and visibly Muslim. "Apathetic" or "covered" Muslims operate as *individuals*, hoping to survive the storm. Visibly identifiable Muslims are already seen as mainly Muslim, so their main strategy is to work publicly and collectively with other Muslims. As the political climate worsens, some visibly Muslim students see no option other than to abandon the "Americanization" endeavor of respectability politics.

Students like Amber seek out the safety of the Muslim student community. Muslim student groups often play a role in providing a space

where Muslims can safely be religious and find social support. Muslim students can find comfort in these groups, pray and observe Ramadan together, and indulge in some insider Muslim jokes. The Muslim sorority Mu Delta Alpha, for example, was created as just such a space to develop Muslim identity as well as a professional network for women's leadership (Hamdan 2017). The dry fraternity, Alpha Lambda Mu, also seeks to provide a space for Muslim men to adhere to Islamic values as well as find brotherhood in the community (Svokos 2017).

But some Muslim students interrogate the "insularity" of such strategies, arguing that a "cushioned" experience "can make it easy for you to live in an insulated world, where everyone you know doesn't drink" (Mir 2014, pp. 218-219). Ultimately, Amira contended, Muslims have to live in "the real world," where they are stereotyped and their religiosity is marginalized. Though many White students spend their entire college careers (and lives) blithely ignoring their non-White peers without any accusations of insularity, it is the brown or black enclaves that are marked as dangerous and wrong. The White enclave is normal; the White enclave is "the real world" to which Muslim students must adapt.

Solidarity and resistance

After patient reliance on liberal politics of evolutionary change in this "real world," supported by trust in the apparent "niceness" of politicians like Barack Obama, the Trump administration's overt racism, anti-immigrant policies, and Islamophobia have resulted in a cultural shift in marginalized US communities. Post-9/11 a vast number of Muslim Americans spoke up to clear the name of Muslims and Islam from the assumed taint of terrorism, misogyny, and violence. Though Muslim American students still often "cover up" the stigma of Muslim identity, the post-Trump era has featured many more voices that reject the necessity of Muslim apologetics, and demand an end to racism without explaining why Muslims should be treated humanely. While Muslim American identity in the 1990s and early 2000s tended to be inward-looking, or primarily focused on "Muslim" interests, the "Islam is peace" explanations embedded in upwardly mobile Muslim communities are being drowned out by Muslim demands that the US government cease mistreating Muslims and other marginalized populations, both domestically and internationally. Muslim Americans are developing stronger and more coherent solidarity with Blacks, Latino, Native Americans, immigrants more generally, and gender and economic activists. The Black Lives Matter movement

has played a central role in a larger critical movement against predatory capitalism, economic oppression, the prison industrial complex, authoritarianism, and Whiteness. In Chicago, Black, Muslim, and Latino students organized such an imposing “Stop Trump” protest that Donald Trump canceled his election campaign rally at the University of Illinois at Chicago in March 2016. UIC faculty also wrote to the administration, opposing the rally (Linthicum and Kurtis 2016). Despite the abiding relevance of the ethnographic analysis in this chapter, a defiant, more intersectional (though not new) Muslim American movement is developing in the form of alliances in the form of protests, demonstrations, and policy demands at colleges and universities.

Among the signs of this movement is a learning resource, collectively constructed by several university scholars, known as the “Islamophobia is Racism” syllabus. The syllabus, unlike many educational frameworks, rejects liberal schema where racism, sexism, misogyny, and Islamophobia are individual or inter-personal problems that can simply be resolved by educating people to be “kind” or civil.

Even the term “Islamophobia,” despite its general utility, tends to indicate that the problem is a personal one, based in fear, and “obscures the structural and systemic production of anti-Muslim racism.” Conceptually, a focus on anti-Muslim racism is connected to an analysis of history and forms of dominance – from white supremacy, slavery and settler colonialism, to multiculturalism and the security logics of war and imperialism – that produce various forms of racial exclusion as well as incorporation into racist structures. Our primary focus is on the manifestation and impact of anti-Muslim racism in the United States. At the same time, this syllabus insists on thinking about anti-Muslim racism as a global project that overlaps and intersects with the exclusion of other marginalized groups (e.g. Black, queer, Latinx, immigrant, indigenous, etc.). It also connects the histories of various racial logics that reinforce one another, including anti-Muslim racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Latinx racism, anti-Arab racism, and anti-South Asian racism (Abdul Khabeer et al. 2018).

As Hammer (2013) contends, “Islamophobia is not about innate or natural fear of Islam or Muslims. Rather, it is an ideological construct produced and reproduced at the intersection of imperial ideology, political expediency, and the exploitation of nationalist, racial, and religious insecurities.” Despite the growth of an intersectional movement that connects marginalized and under-represented groups and communities in the United States, this is not a moment for unchecked optimism, as the

politics of White supremacy are securely in power under the Trump administration. Still, perhaps thanks to the rampant racism of this overtly anti-liberal establishment, there is potential for solidarity among a broad resistance movement to yield rich fruits in terms of systemic anti-racism. On campus (and beyond), solidarity with Muslims against Trump's travel ban became a focal point of a US politics of resistance, symbolized by the large gathering of activists and pro bono lawyers at airports to assist Muslim emigrants in the wake of the first travel ban. With growing collaboration among different marginalized groups, with social media increasingly connecting scholarly critique with activism, especially student activism, academia promises to be a fruitful location to address a larger, encompassing politics of exclusion and nativism, of which Islamophobia is a part.

Conclusion

We have documented in our chapter the ways in which Islamophobia is manifested in US education, the multi-layered damage that this inflicts on educational participants, and the strategies that generate hope for fighting Islamophobia and racism. Education in the United States is fraught with contested and contradictory policies and practices for many of students, educators, and educational institutions at all levels. With the ever-increasing number of Muslim people who are displaced and seek refuge in the United States and elsewhere because of on-going wars and conflicts in the Middle East, Near East, Southeast Asia, and Africa, it is all the more crucial to dismantle chronic anti-Muslim sentiment, action, practice, and policy such that both local and global solutions can be implemented. Education for all can only continue to work in the United States if democratic principles for education and people's well-being continue to be enacted, supported, and practiced daily and across political and ideological differences.

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