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The Common Discourse of Islam in America

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Professor Magalhaes

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The Common Discourse of Islam in America

During the political season, many domestic and foreign policy issues are brought from the woodwork and have a rather large impact on the popular discourse and public opinion on various issues. This political season, there has been a large amount of discussion about Islam in America, the Muslim image to Americans, and various other depictions of Muslims within the media. The discourse that has been seen over the last year in the wind up to the presidential primaries is one that has not really been seen. With the refugee crisis in Europe affecting the nations at large, with an extremist sect of Islam waging war on the west as a whole, it is tough to have a civil conversation at time about the subject of Islam in America. When we look at the skepticism of various candidates being discriminatory against Muslims, blatant discrimination is clearly something that should not be supported, however, when it comes to the skepticism of allowing refugees to be allowed into our country en masse like there have been in Europe, the results can be extremely drastic to societal norms. Within multiple countries of Europe, there is a clear issue when it comes to the process of which people are allowed to be labeled as a 'refugee' and given safe haven within the country. For example, the primary case that is extremely problematic is the correlation between the sex attacks in Cologne, Germany on New Year's Eve and Muslim migrants and refugees. These attacks were perpetrated by primarily middle-eastern and North African men, and primary Muslim men. Approximately 1,000 men assaulted an extreme number of women outside the Cologne Cathedral, in what is generally known in Arabic

countries as ‘Taharrush,’ which, in Arabic literally translates to ‘harassment.’ Quite frankly, the concept that there needs to be a more effective screening and vetting process for migrants and refugees is not discriminatory, for these attacks should never be permitted in society, yet seem to get little recognition in the media when it is portrayed by people of Muslim faith. Secondly, Britain has had an issue with various migrant issues as well. In Britain, the Muslim denomination of the Deobandi, “controls around 45% of British Mosques.” This denomination is also the same denomination of that of the Taliban, and is a rather conservative and harsh variation of the belief system. From the same article, it states that ‘Television and music for the purposes of entertainment are frowned upon ... if not banned. Women are advised not to emerge from their homes any more than is necessary.’ This attitude is something that should not be permitted, as that is a restriction of freedom of expression, and directly impedes upon our first amendment rights. That said, the issue at hand is allowing these ideologies to affect America, and why there is a fear behind Islam coming to western countries. In my time in America, I have interacted with a large number of people who follow Islam, and they have all extremely westernized and egalitarian views on it. Even today’s visit to the Islamic Center of the Quad Cities shows how modern and egalitarian Islam can be – however, the issue remains that many people in the middle east and North Africa don’t share the same western interpretation of Islam, and goes so far to show that the view of women is not the same in those countries. According to a pew research study, it shows that countries under Islamic Sharia Law show that a large majority of people believe that a wife must ‘always obey their husband.’ These attitudes are not liberal, and are not permissible within America, let alone other western societies. With all of that said, there will always be people who are Islamophobic as they are scared and ignorant of other cultures, but, there must be an understanding of what a country is getting into when bringing this number

of people into a country with an entirely different belief set and ideology. The same expectation should be put upon any ideology, and furthermore, should be evaluated to see if it restricts the rights of the individual, and not just the rights of a group. With that said, the extremist views of Islam as a whole in the presidential race should be toned down and actually be opened for discussion – just as any idea or belief would be. It isn't perfect, but it isn't the enemy either.

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