

Augustana College Augustana Digital Commons

Op-Ed Pieces

Political Science


2016

Remaking American Greatness

Aubrey M. Waddick

Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/polsoped>

 Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#), and the [Social Influence and Political Communication Commons](#)

Augustana Digital Commons Citation

Waddick, Aubrey M.. "Remaking American Greatness" (2016). *Op-Ed Pieces*.
<http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/polsoped/17>

This Opinion is brought to you for free and open access by the Political Science at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Op-Ed Pieces by an authorized administrator of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

Aubrey Waddick
Dr. Mariano
POLS 344
3/18/2016

Remaking American Greatness

Let's face it, Islam won't make America great again. For the past several months the United States has been hemorrhaging greatness through a bloody process know as a "primary election." How sadly we've seen, by the TV's last gleaming, politicians assassinate self and party in unbelievable feats of moderate discourse. Discourse aimed at bridging the insurmountable obstacles which rips the very social fabric of America.

Luck for us, Donald Trump's vacuous campaign rhetoric promises to sop up the mess. Like Little Boy Dutch, Trump's (stubby) fingers have expertly thumbed our greatest national wound; Muslims in America. To truly understand how to make America great again, we as a country need to know why Islam is so threatening to so many.

The first thing that makes Islam so menacing is its secretive nature. This group of 1.6 billion people is highly exclusive, and as Trump, Carson, Huckabee, and others demonstrate, popular leaders know next to nothing about Muslims or their intentions. From [comparing refugees to rabid dogs](#)¹, prophesying the rise of Sharia law², or even claiming Muslims are actually American³, politicians have divided opinions. As a 2015 Pew Center study⁴ reports that

1 Hutchinson, Sikivu. "No, Trump's Racist Anti-Muslim Proposal Is Very American." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 15 Dec. 2015. Web. 16 Mar. 2016.

2 Beinart, Peter. "The GOP's Islamophobia Problem." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 13 Feb. 2015. Web. 17 Mar. 2016.

3 Liptak, Kevin. "Obama Rebutts GOP Muslim Rhetoric in First U.S. Mosque Visit." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 3 Feb. 2015. Web. 17 Mar. 2016.

4 Lipka, Michael. "Muslims and Islam: Key Findings in the U.S. and around the World." *Pew Research Center RSS*. Pew Research Center, 2015. Web. 17 Mar. 2016.

our leaders are not alone in their disquiet. Some 55% of Americans surveyed state they know almost nothing about the religion. Despite the fear Islam has instigated in the past fifteen years, our collective ignorance remains surprisingly high.

From these incredible statistics, one truth is evident: Muslims have clearly done a great job keeping themselves a secret.

Sure, there are a few places to learn about Islam, like the Interfaith Center of New York, the Institute for Religious Tolerance, the Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign, the State Department's website or numerous publications on Muslims in America, the local library, or a simple google search. Literary scholar Stephen Phelps even argues that reading a children's book discussing Islam could help overcome negative stereotypes associated with the religion⁵. But those sources aren't fun or exciting. A book or online workshop won't entertain the average American the way a Trump rally will, and you can be sure the Islamic community and their supporters know that. Why don't Muslims hold violent rallies or publish poorly sourced, incendiary 'inter-faith' click-bait? Simple. To keep Americans completely in the dark on Islam, so Muslims can achieve their ultimate plan of living normal lives.

Although Islam is an informational enigma to most Americans, chances are that most Americans have engaged with a Muslim or their numerous social contributions in one way or another. The Pew Center estimates that Muslims make up 1% of the current American population, with over 3.3 million individuals. Despite their small numbers, they have managed to infiltrate the upper tiers of society. Muslims make up almost 10% of American doctors, and remain some of the best educated⁶ populations in the United States. Most are middle-class, and

⁵ Phelps, Stephen. "Critical Literacy: Using Nonfiction To Learn About Islam." *Journal Of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 54.3 (2010): 190-198. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 18 Mar. 2016.

⁶ Yan, Holly. "The Truth about Muslims in America." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 9 Dec. 2015. Web. 17 Mar. 2016.

live in communities across the United States. They work in every industry, from food services to the sciences, and have even taken leading roles in modern politics.

There are American-Muslim neurosurgeons, like Ayub Ommaya, who saved millions of lives by inventing an intraventricular catheter system. There are American-Muslim architects like Fazlur Rahman who revolutionized skyscraper structure and is largely responsible for the way the Chicago skyline looks today. There are nobel winning chemists, business entrepreneurs, writers, rappers, boxers, and comedians, who are all Muslims and all Americans.

The mystery and ignorance surrounding Islam has become a useful political tool in recent campaign rhetoric. Candidates like Fiorini and Cruz were quick to note the sudden and tremendous invasion of Syrian refugees and the security threat they pose. Indeed, according to a White House Press briefing, the Obama administration is fulling willing to accept a whopping 10,000 refugees⁷. To put that in perspective, that's nearly 0.001195% of the population of New York City.

The prospect of new immigrants with hard to pronounce names is enough to strike fear in the very heart of any patriot. Therefore, it may terrify many people that Muslims are *already living here*. They are *already a part* of American society. Keeping new Muslims out and tracking those already living here won't change the way Americans relate with other Americans. It's time that the United States face the truth. Islam alone won't make America great again. It's going to take all of us working together to regain the ideals we've lost this election cycle.

⁷ United States. White House. Office of the Press Secretary. *Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest, 9/10/15*. By James Brady. Print.