

Alley von Eberstein

Dr. Williams

IDVS 490-001

Islamophobia and the Muslim Other

The FBI reported in 2017 that of 1,749 religious hate crimes, nearly 19% were anti-Muslim. This number has increased significantly over the past years, being just 13% in 2012, however, this percentage should be 0%. Understanding discrimination towards Muslims is extremely important because they have been discriminated against for the past 19 years, simply for being Muslim in the United States. There are currently 3.45 million Muslims living in the United States, of which about 75% were born Muslims. They typically face discrimination every day, whether it is a comment on a Muslim woman's hijab or getting beaten in an alleyway. The discrimination ranges but it exists on all levels. Muslims are usually easy for people to point out by the way they dress or speak. This is particularly difficult because those people who discriminate against them can easily find them. This makes them accessible targets. How have attitudes towards Muslims changed in the United States since September 11, 2001, and what can we do to end discrimination against them?

This topic is not widely acknowledged. There are thousands of people living in the United States that are grossly misinformed about Muslims and Islam, whether through education, familial biases, or the media. They believe that all Muslims are radical extremists like those who attacked on September 11th, when that could not be further from the truth. The public needs to be cognizant of the Islamic faith and the Muslim people. The Pew Research Institute found that 41% of the U.S. adult population believe that Islam encourages violence more than other faiths, when in reality, only 0.02% of the Muslim population is *at risk* of becoming extremist.

Discriminating against an entire population based on a minority extremist community is not fair or reasonable.

Moreover, in recent years Muslims have been put in the spotlight. There has been travel bans in place for Iran, Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Somalia – all Muslim majority countries – since the beginning of the Trump administration when Donald Trump came in office. Both the travel bans and President Trump’s recent drone strike on an Iranian General has raised tensions further against Muslims within the United States. Large portions of Muslims in the United States are immigrants, which is a hot-button issue in recent years. With thoughts of building a wall to curb immigration from Mexico, one can only imagine how drastic the reaction would be if large amounts of Muslims immigrated to the United States, whether as refugees or people simply wanting a change. Muslims are often discriminated against for their nationality, religion, and ethnicity, meaning people can hold prejudice against many things Muslims represent, not to mention if a particular Muslims identifies as LGBTQ or handicapped. The endless number of other categories a Muslims person could fall into are astronomical. With particular people already hating one aspect of their identity, it only snowballs from there. Attitudes towards Muslims have negatively changed in the United States since September 11, 2001 with increased discrimination against the Muslim population, and we can end this discrimination through a more well-rounded education and protective public policy.

Literature Review

The five main issues associated with this topic are Muslims as a collective “other,” Islamophobia, race and racism, terrorism and the “war on terror,” and education.

History

Historians tend to believe that perceptions of Muslims in the United States have been negative since the 1960s with the hijacking of an El Al flight being defined as the start of modern, international terrorism.¹ They go on to suggest that despite tensions always existing between Christian Americans and Muslims, September 11, 2001 can be attributed with raising] tensions and making Muslims the modern face of terrorism. Historian Kathleen M. Foody writes in her article, “Muslims in the American Media: From Texts to Affects,” that ““anti-Muslim attitudes are embedded in larger social and political processes than the fear of Islam””.² Most Americans began labelling all Muslims as terrorists since the 9/11 attacks, but the animosity between Christian Americans and Muslims has existed for a very long time. Historian Karen Leonard writes in her article “American Muslims and Authority: Competing Discourses in a Non-Muslim State,” “some American Muslims have managed to see the events of September 11 as an opportunity... others, however, saw September 11 as a major setback for Islam in America.”³ Historians accredit most of the animosity to the founding of the U.S. and how embedded in Christianity it was.

Historians believe that education and awareness is the best way to end the discrimination against Muslims. Historian Richard Crockatt states in his article, “No Common Ground? Islam, Anti-Americanism, and the United States,” that “the evidence from the history of civil rights in the United States and elsewhere in the last 40 years suggests that, while legislation does not remove prejudice at a stroke, over time, and in conjunction with the active fostering of new

¹ Beverly Gage, “Terrorism and the American Experience: A State of the Field,” *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 1 (2011): 90.

² Kathleen M. Foody, “Muslims in the American Media: From Texts to Affects,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 29, no. 2 (2018): 244.

³ Karen Leonard, “American Muslims and Authority: Competing Discourses in a Non-Muslim State,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25, no. 1 (2005): 18.

attitudes among young people, it has an educational effect on public opinion.”⁴ Further, Foody also suggests that “attention to the constitution of the public, the role of affect, and the significance of emotion are all essential to analyzing and combating Islamophobia today.”⁵ Raising awareness of the discrimination against Muslims will not solve the problem, but will significantly decrease the discrimination against them.

While not many historians discuss it, those who do believe one of the main issues of discrimination against Muslims in the United States is Americans viewing Muslims as a collective “Other.” Otherizing Muslims means that Christian Americans clump all Muslims together and see them all as having the same culture, beliefs, social standing, and so on. This leads to defining all Muslims as terrorists and all terrorists as Muslims. Crockatt explains the lives of American Muslims and otherness very thoroughly, stating the following:

“We could start... with the experience of American Muslims at home in the aftermath of September 11: the widespread suspicion of individuals who were thought from their appearance to be Muslims (including Sikhs whose turbans were taken to be Muslim headwear),²⁹ the instinctive fear of Muslim-looking passengers on airlines, the arrest of Muslims on suspicion of terrorism often on the flimsiest basis, demands on Muslim leaders to go ever further in condemning the attacks of September 11, and more generally the readiness to assume the worst of Muslims and suspect them of instigating all major accidents, disasters and crimes (such as the Anthrax scare and the crash of Flight 587 on Long Island in November 2001). Nor, of course, were such suspicions current only after September 11, as the initial reaction to the Oklahoma bombing demonstrated. Encompassing all these instances is the association implied in the term ‘Islamic terrorism’ between the religion of Islam and political extremism.”⁶

Most Americans, after 9/11, saw all Muslims as terrorists and were therefore suspicious, which led to widespread discrimination against all Muslims in the United States.

⁴ Richard Crockatt, “No Common Ground? Islam, anti-Americanism and the United States,” *European Journal of American Culture* 23, no. 2 (2004): 139-140.

⁵ Foody, “Muslims in the American Media,” 251.

⁶ Crockatt, “No Common Ground,” 134-135.

Not many historians write about modern Islamophobia, but those who do believe that is a result of the mainstream American culture and media. Foody states that Islamophobia results from “distant social experiences that mainstream American culture has perpetuated in popular memory.”⁷ Furthermore, Foody suggests that movies such as *American Sniper*, plays in the Christian Americans view of terrorism and Islamophobia.⁸ She also suggests that “news media, film, television, and even political cartoons represent Muslim generally and Arabs specifically as threatening, dangerous, and entirely foreign,” fueling the rise of Islamophobia.⁹

Historians have conflicting ideas of terrorism and the “war on terror.” Historian Beverly Gage writes in her article “Terrorism and the American Experience: A State of the Field,” that the war on terror has deep historical roots.¹⁰ Foody suggests that acts of terrorism as “committed by a very small portion of the world’s vast Muslim population,” and that the war on terror is directed at Muslims.¹¹ In contrast, historian Brian Michael Jenkins writes in his article, “The Land of the Fearful, or the Home of the Brave?” that “American presidents made it clear that the war on terrorism was not a war on Islam.”¹² Even between historical scholars there are discrepancies about the war on terror and terrorism.

Most historians do not write about education, but those who do believe that the current public education system fuels discrimination against Muslims. Susan L. Douglass and Ross E. Dunn write in their article, “Interpreting Islam in American Schools,” that “the current habit in American education of essentializing religions, civilizations, and ethno-racial groups in the

⁷ Foody, “Muslims in the American Media,” 233-234.

⁸ Foody, “Muslims in the American Media,” 250.

⁹ Foody, “Muslims in the American Media,” 250.

¹⁰ Gage, “Terrorism and the American Experience,” 93.

¹¹ Foody, “Muslims in the American Media,” 244.

¹² Brian Michael Jenkins, “The Land of the Fearful, or the Home of the Brave?” in *The Long Shadow of 9/11*, eds. Brian Michael Jenkins and John Paul Godges (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2011).

interests of either patriotism or cultural self-esteem” damage public ideas of Muslims.¹³ They further suggest that “even the sequencing of chapters influences the degree to which students perceive Muslim history and culture either as a dimension of the human community to which young Americans belong or as antiquarian, essentialist and exotic.”¹⁴ Islam is also made ahistorical, meaning that students are taught that Muslims think and behave a certain way because they always have.¹⁵ This severely damages the perceptions of Muslims in modern American culture.

Geography

Geographers generally use geopolitics to examine how attitudes towards Muslims have changed in the United States since September 11, 2001. Most public perceptions of Muslims in the United States are fueled by the media and education. Geographer Anna Mansson McGinty writes in “‘Teaching Against Culture’ in Geography of Islam,” that stereotypical depictions of Muslims in American media dominate the current public perceptions towards Muslims and has fueled discrimination since 9/11.¹⁶ Furthermore, Neil Smith writes in “Ten Years After,” that “the Arabs and Muslims who do exist in the American perception are overseas and foreign.”¹⁷ American’s exaggerated notion of Muslims has become more extreme since the 9/11 attacks and continues to maintain the discrimination against Muslims in the United States.

Geographers believe that education can lead to a better understanding of Islam and Muslims and can help combat the radicalized view that all Muslims are extremists. Geographer

¹³ Susan L Douglass and Ross E. Dunn, “Interpreting Islam in American Schools,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 588, (2003): 70.

¹⁴ Douglass and Dunn, “Interpreting Islam,” 57.

¹⁵ Douglass and Dunn, “Interpreting Islam,” 60.

¹⁶ Anna Mansson McGinty, “‘Teaching Against Culture’ in Geography of Islam,” *The Professional Geographer* 64, no. 3 (2012): 363.

¹⁷ Neil Smith, “Ten Years After,” *The Geographical Journal* 177, no. 3 (2011): 205.

Nicole Nguyen suggests in her article, “Education as Warfare?: Mapping Securitised Education Interventions as War on Terror Strategy,” that “education alone is not the answer but it is absolutely critical to success” and “education could work to combat ‘drivers of terrorism’ whereby education acts as a ‘force for peace and progress.’”¹⁸ Geographers believe that while education cannot defeat discrimination against Muslims in the United States, it is a necessary step in the right direction.

Nearly all geographers discuss Muslims as a collective “other”. Geographer C.R. Nagel states in his article “Geopolitics by Another Name: Immigration and the Politics of Assimilation,” that there is a sense of otherness associated with Muslims, and that all Muslims are seen as the same in American society.¹⁹ McGinty also suggests that Americans have constructed an “otherness” of Islam and Muslims, and that this “otherness” reinforces American’s idea that Islam is inherently violent.²⁰ Nguyen further suggests that the only way to end discrimination is to break down the “representation of a menacing brown Other looming in the dangerous, lawless Middle East.”²¹ Muslims as a collective “other” must be abolished in order to take steps toward a more equal society.

Not many geographers talk about Islamophobia, but those who do suggest that Islamophobia is the main cause of discrimination against Muslims in American society. Kristin Sziarto, Anna Mansson McGinty, and Caroline Seymour-Jorn, in their article titled “Diverse Muslims in a Racialized Landscape: Race, Ethnicity, and Islamophobia in the American City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin,” write “Islamophobia not only associates Islam with both ‘terrorism’ and

¹⁸ Nicole Nguyen, “Education as Warfare?: Mapping Securitised Education Interventions as War on Terror Strategy,” *Geopolitics* 19, (2014): 125.

¹⁹ C.R. Nagel, “Geopolitics by Another Name: Immigration and the Politics of Assimilation,” *Political Geography* 21, (2002): 971-987.

²⁰ McGinty, “Teaching Against Culture,” 359.

²¹ Nguyen, “Education as Warfare,” 114.

the politics of the ‘clash of civilizations,’ but also with visible bodily characteristics,” meaning that Americans discriminate against those who they believe are Muslim simply due to their appearance.²² They further explain that this is why people “perceived to be Muslims, Arabs, or Middle Easterners” like “Sikhs, Arab-Christians, and others” suffer discrimination.²³

Once again, not many geographers discuss race and racism, but those who do suggest that race plays a large role even within Muslim communities. McGinty suggests that race can lead to further generalizations within the Muslim community.²⁴ Moreover, Sziarto, McGinty, and Seymour-Jorn found that Muslim populations are often geographically dispersed by race and that “these general demographic patterns demonstrate how Muslim identities and lives are intimately shaped by US race relations and urban racialized landscapes.”²⁵ Geographers James G. Gimpel, Wendy K. Tam Cho, and Tony Wu also found that Arab Americans experienced many attacks after 9/11, expanding Islamophobia to race.²⁶

Most geographers agree that terrorism and the “war on terror” have only fueled discrimination against Muslims. Nguyen suggests that by clumping Pakistan and Afghanistan together, the government “conflates terrorism as originating from Afghanistan and Pakistan and operating indistinguishably through brown bodies.”²⁷ McGinty states that the political rhetoric and language in media coverage used while describing the “war on terrorism” has also fueled biases toward and discrimination against Muslims.²⁸

²² Kristin Sziarto, Anna Mansson McGinty, and Caroline Seymour-Jorn, “Diverse Muslims in a Racialized Landscape: Race, Ethnicity, and Islamophobia in the American City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 24, no. 1 (2014): 3-4.

²³ Sziarto, McGinty, and Seymour-Jorn, “Diverse Muslims,” 3-5.

²⁴ McGinty, “Teaching Against Culture,” 361.

²⁵ Sziarto, McGinty, and Seymour-Jorn, “Diverse Muslims,” 18.

²⁶ James G. Gimpel, Wendy K. Tam Cho, and Tony Wu, “Spatial Dimensions of Arab American Voter Mobilization After September 11,” *Political Geography* 26, (2007): 338.

²⁷ Nguyen, “Education as Warfare,” 115.

²⁸ McGinty, “Teaching Against Culture,” 359.

Sociology

Sociologists generally agree that after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, all Muslim people were perceived as threats and terrorists, largely due to the media and public discourse. Sociologist Lüfti Sunar, in his article “The Long History of Islam as a Collective ‘Other’ of the West and the Rise of Islamophobia in the U.S. after Trump,” goes so far as to suggest that “controlling and shaping perceptions of Islam is essential for the continuation of world domination of the West” and that in most Western societies there is a “considerable negative perception” of Muslims.²⁹ Krista McQueeney, in her article titled “Disrupting Islamophobia: Teaching the Social Construction of Terrorism in the Mass Media,” states that the language reporters use “can have powerful effects on viewers’ perceptions of who is – and who is not – a terrorist.”³⁰

Sociologists believe that the way to end the discrimination against Muslims is through mass communications and education. McQueeney states that “most students associate terrorists with Arabs and/or Muslims,” due to how mass media has portrayed terrorists in the news.³¹ She further states that “in a media landscape in which Arabs and Muslims are painted as Other, it is not only that the reporters are labeling individual Arabs and Muslims as “hater” and “losers.” It is also that they are painting all Arabs and Muslims as terrorists.”³²

Sociologists believe that labeling Muslims as a collective “other” largely fuels the discrimination against them. Erik Love, in his article “Confronting Islamophobia in the United States: Framing Civil Rights Activism Among Middle Eastern Americans,” writes that “since at

²⁹ Lüfti Sunar, “The Long History of Islam as a Collective ‘Other’ of the West and the Rise of Islamophobia in the U.S. After Trump,” *Insight Turkey* 19, no. 3 (2017): 36.

³⁰ Krista McQueeney, “Disrupting Islamophobia: Teaching the Social Construction of Terrorism in the Mass Media,” *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 26, no. 2 (2014): 304.

³¹ McQueeney, “Disrupting Islamophobia,” 300.

³² McQueeney, “Disrupting Islamophobia,” 304.

least the period of European colonialism in the seventeenth century, the Orient has been seen as Other, mostly through projecting depraved characteristics on to people from the region, invalidating non-Christian religions and asserting that the Orient is irrational, backwards and in need of salvation.”³³ McQueeney states that “controlling images of Arab and Muslim Others – while not directly causing individual attitudes or behaviors – reinforce mainstream assumptions of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists.”³⁴ Because of Americans viewing Muslims as a collective “other” that need to be saved, discrimination and prejudice only increases. Sunar even states that “when a group is an ‘other,’ it is easier to suppress them and exclude them from the public sphere. For this reason, the otherization of Muslims in the U.S. is an important aspect of the prejudices against Islam.”³⁵

Sociologists believe that Islamophobia is a collaboration of many different things and is largely fueled by history and the media. Sunar writes that “Islamophobia is fed by a long history of ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and racism.”³⁶ Erik Love, in the chapter “Toward a New Civil Rights Era,” from his book *Islamophobia and Racism in America*, suggests that Islamophobia is inherently racist.³⁷ Most sociologists agree with this direct link between racism and Islamophobia. McQueeney also suggests that journalists, politicians, and film producers often promote Islamophobia through “the ubiquitous association of Arabs and Muslims with terrorists in mainstream Western media contributes to negative and stereotypical attitudes toward Islam,” even without meaning to.³⁸

³³ Erik Love, “Confronting Islamophobia in the United States: Framing Civil Rights Activism Among Middle Eastern Americans,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, no. 3 (2009): 409-410.

³⁴ McQueeney, “Disrupting Islamophobia,” 299.

³⁵ Sunar, “Long History of Islam,” 36.

³⁶ Sunar, “Long History of Islam,” 36.

³⁷ Erik Love, “Toward a New Civil Rights Era,” in *Islamophobia and Racism in America*, (New York: New York University, 2017).

³⁸ McQueeney, “Disrupting Islamophobia,” 299.

Most sociologists believe that most Americans associate terrorists with Muslims or Arabs. Love even suggests that the “war on terror” is “racialized Islamophobia.”³⁹ McQueeney states that the term terrorism is socially constructed and is defined by the government and media, so many people are misinformed about what a terrorist really is.⁴⁰ Ramon Grosfoguel writes in “The Multiple Faces of Islamophobia,” that most stereotypes suggest that Muslims are racially inferiors and therefore, it is easy to associate terrorism and terrorists with Muslims.⁴¹ Charles Kurzman, David Schanzer, and Ebrahim Moosa write in their article “Muslim American Terrorism Since 9/11: Why So Rare?” that “Muslim-American terrorism has remained rare, both in comparison with other causes of death and in comparison with the expectation of Islamic terrorists,” there is simply conflated coverage by the media that suggests otherwise.⁴² Louise Cainkar writes in her book *Homeland Insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American Experience After 9/11*, that most Americans “did not necessarily charge that all Arabs and Muslims in the United States could have or would have committed such a deadly attack on Americans, but they did assert that Arab/Muslim communities silently supported the attacks,” raising prejudice and discrimination against Muslims.⁴³

Solving the Problem

Geography

Geographers generally agree that to combat Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims, people must be properly educated on Muslims and their culture. Most geographers

³⁹ Love, “Confronting Islamophobia in the United States,” 425.

⁴⁰ McQueeney, “Disrupting Islamophobia,” 300.

⁴¹ Ramon Grosfoguel, “The Multiple Faces of Islamophobia,” *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2012): 31.

⁴² Charles Kurzman, David Schanzer, and Ebrahim Moosa, “Muslim American Terrorism Since 9/11: Why So Rare?” *The Muslim World* 101, (2011): 471.

⁴³ Louise Cainkar, *Homeland Insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American Experience After 9/11* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation. 2009).

believe that to do this, the concept of “otherness” needs to be destroyed. They also generally agree that the war on terror is racialized, and we must also overcome this to end discrimination against Muslims in the United States. This is where they divide; Nearly every geographer has different ideas on how to reach a society sans-discrimination.

In their article on voter mobilization, Gimpel, Cho, and Wu found that civic engagement among Muslim communities improved following 11 September 2001.⁴⁴ They stated that to end the discrimination, Muslims must rely on public policy and government programs.⁴⁵ They believe that to overcome the discrimination, Muslims must be more civically engaged and actively participate in voting and insert themselves into the state and federal governments.⁴⁶ While Neil Smith agrees that civic engagement has improved since 9/11, he believes that there is no need for it.⁴⁷ Smith states that the war on terror is not racialized, but instead just a necessary step that the U.S. government must take.⁴⁸ Smith’s take is an outlier among other Geographers, Historians, and Sociologists; he is the only person to believe that the war on terror is not racialized. In contrast to both Smith and Gimpel, Cho, and Wu, Nagel writes that while civic engagement is necessary, it is more important to actively fight back against the government.⁴⁹ Nagel states that most nations try to make immigrants assimilate to their culture, and it is important for populations to fight back against this.⁵⁰

As mentioned before, most geographers believe that education is a cornerstone to ending the discrimination against Muslims that is so clear in the United States, however, most disagree

⁴⁴ Gimpel, Cho, and Wu, “Voter Mobilization,” 330-351.

⁴⁵ Gimpel, Cho, and Wu, “Voter Mobilization,” 330-351.

⁴⁶ Gimpel, Cho, and Wu, “Voter Mobilization,” 330-351.

⁴⁷ Smith, “Ten Years After,” 203-207.

⁴⁸ Smith, “Ten Years After,” 203-207.

⁴⁹ Nagel, “Geopolitics by Another Name,” 971-987.

⁵⁰ Nagel, “Geopolitics by Another Name,” 971-987.

on how to educate. McGinty, in her article about the geography of Islam, writes that simply talking with students about Muslims and confronting their idea of otherness verbally will end the discrimination.⁵¹ She further states that “particularly with the political climate after 11 September 2001 (hereinafter 9/11) and the political rhetoric of ‘war on terrorism’ and ‘clash of civilizations’ in mind, we need to seriously reflect on how we most effectively can represent and talk about Islam and Muslims in the classroom without reifying Islam as a monolithic construct of ‘Muslim culture’ as a singular and timeless entity.”⁵² By talking about these subjects and properly teaching Islam to students, discrimination against Muslims will end.

Conversely, Nguyen writes in her article about education as warfare, that the U.S. public school system generally “positions terrorism as only stemming from Islamic brown bodies.”⁵³ Nguyen believes that by misinforming students and teaching biased content, the public school system breeds discrimination against Muslims and “brown bodies,” or anyone from the Middle East.⁵⁴ Rather than simply talking and overcoming “otherness,” Nguyen suggests that U.S. public schools need to teach less about nationalism and America, and more about other cultures.⁵⁵ Public schools need to teach American wins and losses; they need to teach the good and the bad, no matter how it makes the U.S. government look.

Finally, Sziarto, McGinty, and Seymour-Jorn take a different approach. The authors do not try to fix the problem.⁵⁶ They state that Muslims are an extremely racially divided community, however, they do not offer solutions to solve this or discrimination.⁵⁷ They were the

⁵¹ McGinty, “Teaching Against Culture,” 358-369.

⁵² McGinty, “Teaching Against Culture,” 360.

⁵³ Nguyen, “Education as Warfare,” 123.

⁵⁴ Nguyen, “Education as Warfare,” 115.

⁵⁵ Nguyen, “Education as Warfare,” 130.

⁵⁶ Sziarto, McGinty, and Seymour-Jorn, “Diverse Muslims,” 1-21.

⁵⁷ Sziarto, McGinty, and Seymour-Jorn, “Diverse Muslims,” 1-21.

only geographers who did not offer a solution to the problem of discrimination. Most geographers agree on certain points including that the public needs to be properly educated on Muslims and their cultures, and that we must destroy the Muslim “other,” whether it be through vocalizing prejudice or simply teaching accurate history. Most geographers also agree that government interaction, through civic engagement or protests, is one of the keys to ending the discrimination.

History

Historians have incredibly split views on how to end the discrimination against the Muslims population. While none overtly disagree with other solutions, they don’t tend to have a consensus.

Historian Crockatt, who wrote in his article about common ground, that a proper education can end the discrimination against Muslims that has occurred in increased rates since the 9/11 attacks.⁵⁸ He states that legislation and education actively change public opinion, especially in young adults.⁵⁹ Douglass and Dunn uphold this idea, stating that textbooks are one of the root causes for discrimination against Muslims.⁶⁰ They state that by treating all religions, civilizations, and ethno-racial groups with equal interest can successfully decrease discrimination against all minorities in the U.S., including Muslims.⁶¹ Although the historians have different approaches to a more wholesome education, they both believe that public education needs to be more culturally responsive and include multiple perspectives.

Next, historians Foody and Gage confront the cause of Islamophobia post 9/11, however, they found different causes. Foody states that one of the leading organizers of Islamophobia are

⁵⁸ Crockatt, “No Common Ground,” 125-142.

⁵⁹ Crockatt, “No Common Ground,” 125-142.

⁶⁰ Douglass and Dunn, “Interpreting Islam,” 52-72.

⁶¹ Douglass and Dunn, “Interpreting Islam,” 52-72.

Christian nationalism and “liberal universalist commitments,” where people dehumanize Muslim men and feel the need to save or protect Muslim women.⁶² Foody suggests that news media, television, movies, and political cartoons all show Muslims as threatening and increase Islamophobia in the U.S., and changing this is an excellent start to combatting the discrimination.⁶³ In contrast, Gage found that the word “terrorism” has been simplified and has often misrepresented complex historical situations.⁶⁴ Gage states that the overuse of the word terrorism and the common, inexplicable relation to Islam or Muslims, has caused Islamophobia to rise.⁶⁵ Gage also states that while the war on terror is a recent development, the ideas that govern the war are not new, meaning Islamophobia has been present in U.S. society for centuries.⁶⁶ She does not offer a solution to the problem, but she does state that historians should recount events more accurately, and they should refrain from using the word “terrorism” so lightly.⁶⁷

In his article, Jenkins argues that intolerance towards Arab Americans, specifically Arab Muslims, has grown tremendously since 9/11.⁶⁸ He states that the war on terror targets Arab Americans and is extremely racialized, but it is not a war on Islam.⁶⁹ No other historian agrees or disagrees with this. He does not offer a solution, but he does state that terrorism has taken over American defense and foreign policy for the past decade, so it will be extremely difficult to overcome the fear of Islam.⁷⁰

⁶² Foody, “Muslims in the American Media,” 250.

⁶³ Foody, “Muslims in the American Media,” 250.

⁶⁴ Gage, “Terrorism and the American Experience,” 83.

⁶⁵ Gage, “Terrorism and the American Experience,” 73-94.

⁶⁶ Gage, “Terrorism and the American Experience,” 93.

⁶⁷ Gage, “Terrorism and the American Experience,” 73-94.

⁶⁸ Jenkins, “Land of the Fearful,” 205.

⁶⁹ Jenkins, “Land of the Fearful,” 198.

⁷⁰ Jenkins, “Land of the Fearful,” 196.

Finally, historian Leonard writes in her article about competing discourses that Muslim American communities are growing in political mobilization and assertiveness, and how this can contribute in ending discrimination.⁷¹ Leonard is the only historian to argue that the 9/11 attacks increased opportunities for Muslim Americans to share their stories and educate the public.⁷² While her belief in education is similar to Crockatt and Douglass and Dunn, she takes a different approach. She states that when Muslim leaders spoke publicly to share their views of terrorism, the public felt more at ease and Islamophobia decreased.⁷³ With more public education from Muslims and Muslim Americans, she hints that discrimination will decrease dramatically.⁷⁴

In short, historians believe in a variety of causes and solutions to Islamophobia and the discrimination against Muslims. Many believe that education is the best way to destroy the stigmas surrounding Muslims, but the approaches are all vastly different. While some believe to target how mass media portrays Muslims, others believe it is best to target textbooks and public education. Some historians believe that it is best to be cautious of vocabulary used while describing events to decrease discrimination, and others believe that hearing directly from Muslim leaders will decrease discrimination against Muslims. There is no clear answer that historians offer to solve the problem, but education is the most widely accepted practice.

Sociology

Sociologists, much like geographers, do not all agree on specific plans to end discrimination against Muslims, however, most agree on a few particular ideas. Many believe that the public needs to end the idea of “otherness” in order to get rid of prejudices they may hold. Some sociologists believe that a social movement is the only way to gain social justice for

⁷¹ Leonard, “American Muslims and Authority,” 5-30.

⁷² Leonard, “American Muslims and Authority,” 14.

⁷³ Leonard, “American Muslims and Authority,” 14.

⁷⁴ Leonard, “American Muslims and Authority,” 5-30.

Muslims in the U.S. and end the discrimination against them. Lastly, some sociologists believe that stereotypes fuel Islamophobia today, and to overcome this the public must be educated.

Sociologist Cainkar does not offer a solution to the problem of discrimination, but she found that most of the discrimination occurs in the South, which is important when deciding where to target plans to end discrimination.⁷⁵

Grosfoguel and McQueeney both look at the causes of discrimination against Muslims to solve the problem. Grosfoguel found that stereotypes and equating a terrorist and Muslim contribute to the rise of Islamophobia after 9/11.⁷⁶ He states that we must overcome the stereotypes and better educate the public.⁷⁷

McQueeney states that visual media fuels Islamophobia by reinforcing mainstream assumptions of Muslims.⁷⁸ She further suggests that discrimination can be ended through education in the form of probing questions and proper visual media.⁷⁹

Sociologists Kurzman, Schanzer, and Moosa look at how Muslim communities functioned after 9/11.⁸⁰ They found that Muslims communities minimized Islamic extremists, and therefore decreased discrimination in certain areas.⁸¹ They state that when Muslims speak out against terrorism, it helps reduce violence against other Muslims.⁸² In comparison, Love stated in his article, "Confronting Islamophobia in the United States: Framing Civil Rights Activism Among Middle Eastern Americans," that many Muslim American communities rallied

⁷⁵ Cainkar, "Homeland Insecurity," 64.

⁷⁶ Grosfoguel, "Multiple Faces of Islamophobia," 10-33.

⁷⁷ Grosfoguel, "Multiple Faces of Islamophobia," 31.

⁷⁸ McQueeney, "Disrupting Islamophobia," 299.

⁷⁹ McQueeney, "Disrupting Islamophobia," 297.

⁸⁰ Kurzman, Schanzer, and Moosa, "Muslim American Terrorism Since 9/11," 464-483.

⁸¹ Kurzman, Schanzer, and Moosa, "Muslim American Terrorism Since 9/11," 464-483.

⁸² Kurzman, Schanzer, and Moosa, "Muslim American Terrorism Since 9/11," 464-483.

against terrorism, which helped decrease violence against them.⁸³ In contrast, Love writes in his article, “Toward a New Civil Rights Era,” that social movements to overcome racism are needed before the United States can end Islamophobia, since discrimination against Muslims is largely exclusive to Arabs.⁸⁴

Finally, sociologists Samman and Sunar agree that to end discrimination against Muslims, the general American public need to overcome their idea of “otherness” in association with Muslims.⁸⁵ They both believe the best way to do this is to educate the masses on the great diversity of Muslims and more specific aspects of their religion and culture that is not generally shared by the media.⁸⁶ Overall, sociologists tend to agree on educating the public as an end to discrimination, however, some believe that the only way for change to occur is through a social movement.

Conclusion

There are many ways to overcome discrimination towards Muslims in the United States. Over the past twenty years, Islamophobia has skyrocketed. Prior to September 11, 2001, Muslims faced discrimination, however, after the terror attack in 2001, the discrimination increased tremendously. Reasons people in the United States discriminate against Muslims include the idea of the Muslim “other,” Islamophobia, racism, the ongoing war on terror, and education. The best approach to end the discrimination towards Muslims in the United States is

⁸³ Love, “Confronting Islamophobia in the United States.”

⁸⁴ Love, “Toward a New Civil Rights Era.”

⁸⁵ Samman, “Islamophobia and the Time and Space of the Muslim Other,” *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2012): 107-131.

Sunar, “Long History of Islam,” 35-52.

⁸⁶ Samman, “Time and Space of the Muslim Other,” 107-131.

Sunar, “Long History of Islam,” 35-52.

to properly educate students on Islam and Muslim people; while this approach may not show results immediately, it is the most beneficial solution for the future.

The first step in properly educating the American people is banishing the notion of the Muslim “other.” Beginning as early as the third grade, students begin learning about world religions. In the state of South Carolina, the State Standard that first mentions religion does not mention any religion in particular, meaning the teacher gets to decide what religions to teach about. The first time specific religions, including Islam, are mentioned in the South Carolina State Standards is in sixth grade. In the entirety of the South Carolina State Standards, Islam is only mentioned twice. Because teachers in South Carolina have very little time to cover all the religions of the world, including Islam, they tend to summarize. This leads to the idea of the Muslim “other.” Students are not properly educated on Islam and tend to clump all Muslims together.

To combat this, states should revise the National and State Education Standards to more thoroughly include Islam. The standards should require teachers to accurately teach about the origins of Islam, the “Middle East”, and Muslim culture. The standards should also require that teachers teach the different sects of Islam and the diversity within the Muslim population. Students will learn about the Muslim world, just as they do the Christian world. Students will learn about the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam and the similarities and differences between the two. Students will learn about Islam in the United States, as well as nearly every other country in the world. Students will learn that Muslims are vastly different, just as every Christian is vastly different. Students will learn that most Muslims do not support violence, are not extremists, and are not oppressed. Properly educating students on the Muslim world will allow them to understand that all Muslims are not one in the same.

The National and State Education Standards should also include Islam throughout the grade levels. Islam should be taught periodically, starting when students first learn about religion and following through to high school. The purpose of teaching about Muslims and Islam is to educate the students not just one time, but for their entire lives. It is extremely important to begin teaching about Muslims and Islam early to combat Islamophobia that students learn from their families, the media, and popular culture such as movies and music.

Teachers must also teach about Islamophobia. Despite Islamophobia sometimes being a sensitive topic, it is necessary to understand, just as it is necessary to teach racism and segregation in the United States. Students will understand why Islamophobia rose after 9/11, including media coverage and racism. Teachers will show students media following 9/11, and how every Muslim is portrayed as Arabic and a terrorist. Students will also understand that not all Muslims are the same, and therefore, will understand that Islamophobia rooted itself in the idea of the Muslim “other.” Students will further understand that discrimination against Muslims is inherently racist, as most Muslims are portrayed as Arabic or “Middle Eastern.” Students will be taught that Islam exists in all countries and Muslims exist in all races.

In addition to teaching about Islam, National Education Standards for World History classes across the United States should be modified to include the War on Terror, or the war in Afghanistan, the Gulf War, and the Iraq War. There is no mention of any of these wars in the National Standards, yet they are an important part of American diplomatic relations. Teaching the wars accurately and without overt bias will allow students to better understand U.S. relations with the “Middle Eastern” countries’ students tend to hear the most about. The students should learn the difference between Al-Qaeda, Isis, and the Taliban, as well as what the majority of the Muslim population believes. Teaching about these wars will also allow students to better

understand why groups such as Al-Qaeda, Isis, and the Taliban exist. These are all important concepts that educators must teach for students to have a full understanding of Islam and the Islamic World.

Additionally, textbooks used in public schools should be revised. The textbooks should include Islam in the same world as us. I found in my research that while many textbooks include information on Islam, it seems otherworldly and not at all relevant. The information on Islam should be correct and non-biased. The term “Middle East” should be abolished from all lessons and textbooks; the term originated from a Western point of view, as the “Middle Eastern” countries were geographically located in the Middle East from a European point of view. Instead, educators and textbooks should refer to the region as Southwest Asia and North Africa. Furthermore, textbooks should include factual content about the war in Afghanistan, the Gulf War, and the Iraq War, as well as Al-Qaeda, Isis, and the Taliban. The content should be purely factual and as unbiased as possible, showing strengths and weaknesses of the U.S., Afghanistan, Iraq, and the groups listed.

Finally, all public-school educators should be trained to appropriately teach the revised State Standards. While some teacher education programs in the United States require teacher candidates to take classes on cultural awareness and responsiveness, most do not. The national government should require all teacher education programs to include at least one class on cultural awareness and responsiveness. Those teachers who have already graduated should have to take a three-week course designed to teach cultural awareness and responsiveness. This will guarantee that all certified teachers know how to be culturally responsive, especially when teaching different content such as 9/11. This will also make sure that teachers understand how to keep their biases to themselves while teaching content like the war on terror and Islam.

Revising the National and State Standards and textbooks to include content on the war in Afghanistan, the Iraq War, the Gulf War, the different sects of Islam, Muslims, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Isis will actively combat discrimination against Muslims in the United States. Teaching about these things give students a better understanding of the Islamic faith and the Muslim people. They will understand what exactly Islamophobia means and that the Muslim population is extremely diverse. Moreover, training all teachers on how to be culturally responsive will make sure that all educators are prepared to teach these revised lessons. By educating students on these things, they will understand our history and no longer hold uneducated, biased views towards Muslims, and will no longer discriminate against Muslims.

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