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Reconciling Hyphenated Identities: Muslim American Youth Reflect on College Life in the Midst of Islamophobia

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Reconciling Hyphenated Identities: Muslim American Youth Reflect on College Life in the Midst of Islamophobia

Muslims make up more than 1.8 billion people of the world population and have been displaced globally in waves due to the political tension in their homeland. The tragedy of 9/11 forever changed the landscape of this nation for Muslim Americans and created hostility and fear. Islamophobia has been on the rise after the post 9/11 era, but due to the 2016 election cycle Muslim Americans have been placed under direct scrutiny. Muslim Americans were targeted and threatened with a Muslim registry and implemented a Muslim Ban to further ostracise them. The post 9/11 generation of Muslim American youth were the subjects of this study. The qualitative case study of UC Berkeley's Muslim American college students focused on the impact as well as the responses of Islamophobia. The framework of this paper included the effects of Islamophobia on a macro-level such national policies, meso-level such as the local campus culture, and micro-level such as individual responses. This project documents the complex reconciliation process of Muslim American youth as they brilliantly negotiate their hyphenated identity. The study also highlights their experience both inside and outside the Muslim community. The testimonials of the respondents are articulate and unapologetic and provide unprecedented access and information about the challenges of a polycultural identity. The study also focuses on the protective factors such as the details of creating the grant funded Muslim Mental Health Initiative and other coping strategies. Ultimately this dissertation documents the process of reclaiming the honor and dignity of the Muslim community through means of political activism,

teaching research, publications and mental health services. It also directs scholars to further gaps in research among a burgeoning population of the post 9/11 generations to come.