

**MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES:
9/11 AND AFTER**

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Jawaharlal Nehru University
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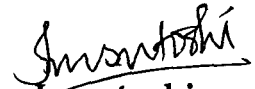
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DECLARATION

I declared that the dissertation entitled "MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES: 9/11 AND AFTER" submitted by me for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree to this university or any other university.

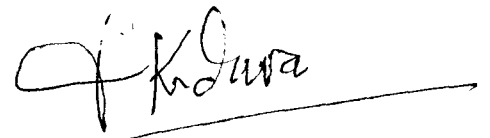

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



Prof. Abdul Nafey
Chairperson



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Supervisor

*To my dearest Acha and Abba,
the two most beautiful person on this earth
created by God.*

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Before anything else, I thank the Almighty for the knowledge and wisdom.

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The research remains a human attempt to learn and enhance the wide pool of knowledge, and it will be a pleasure if there will be any positive contribution. While I regret and take the sole responsibility of any errors.

*“I went to the woods because I wanted to live deliberately.
I wanted to live and suck out all the marrows of life!
To put to rout all that was not life.
And not when I come to die, discover that I have not lived.”*

19th July 2007
Imsutoshi

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Preface

The United States of America is a land of Immigrants- a land marked by the existence of multi-diversified cultural, racial, religious, and ethnic groups assimilated from around the world. The American Muslims, comprising of diverse ethnicity and culture, forms an important minority group of an ever expanding American pluralism. Though the Muslim community in the United States are a marginalized group, yet, after the 9/11 attacks, they have gained much importance. The American Muslim community is now an important field of study for researchers, and also for policy makers. “*Since September 11, there has been a predictable outpouring of scholarly work on Islam, Muslims, and Muslims in the United States, ranging from very good to very bad.*”¹ This research will be a case study of the Muslim Communities in the United States, with an emphasis on post-9/11. It is an attempt to highlight the living conditions of the American Muslims: how much the American Muslims are being accepted by the Americans as a part of America; and how far has the process of assimilation progressed. As the most misunderstood community in the United States, it is a challenge to probe deeper into the matter and to understand and highlight the existing problems of the American Muslim community.

Chapter one reflects upon the first arrival of Muslims in the United States. The origin of Muslim in the United States has been traced to the era of slavery when the slaves were brought to the United States by the colonial rulers. But there are differences in views regarding their origin, because some scholars say that Muslims had come to the ‘new world’ even before the slaves from Africa were brought to the new world. Baring the different views of their origin, the fact remains that, ultimately, with the growth of the Muslim population in the United States because of immigration, reversion, and conversion, they have established themselves as a strong diversified minority group.

Three hypotheses are being raised to be researched upon;

- 1) As a democratic country the US offers various democratic values to all its citizens including the Muslims. American Muslims enjoy equal political, economic and judicial rights.

¹ Karen Isaksen Leonard (2003), *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, p. 138.

- 2) American Muslims are confronted with the dilemma to strike a balance between their strong religious beliefs and to assimilate with the mainstream society.
- 3) After the 9/11 attacks they face new challenges and discrimination.

The first two hypotheses are discussed in the second chapter. The American constitution guarantees religious freedom and other democratic rights to all its citizens, notwithstanding race, gender, religion, or any other distinction. As the American Muslims comes under this democratic set up, they too are granted equal democratic rights. They can worship their own God and carry on their religious practices with freedom. However, it is a general prevalent conception that the Western liberal set up and the Islamic laws, based on the Quran, are incompatible. Moreover, from both the sides, the Americans and the American Muslims, there have been misconceptions about each other and both are suspicious of each other. For an American Muslim, to get assimilated into the mainstream American society is to discard many of his/her religious and traditional Islamic practices. Not to assimilate means further isolation. Therefore, the question is how an American Muslim will cope with this critical situation; to maintain their distinct identity, and at the same time assimilate into the mainstream American society.

One of the biggest disaster for the American Muslims was the 9/11 attacks. After the attacks the position of the Muslims in the United States underwent a dramatic change. They were confronted with unprecedented attacks and discrimination all over; in the work place, in the public places, in educational establishments. Whatever hard work that the American Muslims had done, in the past years to accommodate themselves into American society, seem to have vanished. The most difficult challenge for the American Muslims after the 9/11 attacks, perhaps, is to reorganize themselves and build up their image and identity. The public reaction to the attack and the response of the government through various regulations, especially targeting the American Muslims, makes the task very difficult but not unattainable. Many Muslims and non-Muslims are working relentlessly to accommodate the Muslims into the mainstream American society. The third chapter of the research deals with this aspects of American Muslims.

In conclusion, various observations noted during the research will be summarized. American Muslims condition at present, and especially, after the 9/11 attacks highlight the kind of situation they can face in the future. If the American Muslims can maintain their distinct identity in the United States; if they can still integrate into the mainstream society

by maintaining their distinct identity; if they could bring out some plans to fight against prejudices against their community in the United States but at the same time avoid being isolated; these are some of the important questions which is faced by the American Muslims presently and which will continue to linger in the near future.

Chapter One

Introduction: Muslims in the United States

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States. With a population of more than six million, about three percent of the total population, American Muslims form a part of an expanding American pluralism and an increasingly important minority group.¹ Since Islam did not originate in the United States, the rise of Islamic culture in America is first of all a story of immigration.² The fast growth of population is because of the rapid influx of immigrants and high mortality. The Muslim population in the United States is also increasing on account of conversion, 'reversion,' and inter-faith marriages. American Muslims comprise about 100 subgroups based on language, race, culture, and nationality.³

Early Muslims in the United States

The first permanent Muslim settlers in the United States were the African slaves who were transported from Africa to the 'New World' by the colonial rulers. Slaves from Africa who professed belief in Allah and Muhammad and did not eat pork, presumably Muslims, came to the United States throughout the slavery period (1616-1693).⁴ She narrates the story of African American slaves, who professed Muslim, from the celebrated autobiographical book *Roots* by Alex Hailey. In the book, the author traces his origin to Jaffure, a village in Africa, from where his ancestor, Kunta Kinte, was forcefully taken as a slave to the United States by the colonial rulers. Like the case of his father over ten millions of slaves were brought to America during this time out of which twenty to thirty percent or more were

¹ Jane I. Smith, "Patterns of Muslim Immigration," *Muslim Life in America*, U.S Department of State: Washington D.C., pp. 18-19.

² James A. Beverley, "Islamic Faith in America," *Facts on Files*: 2003, p. 43.

³ M. Arif Ghayur, "Muslims in the United States: Settlers and Visitors," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*: Volume 454, March 1981, p. 150.

⁴ Asma Gull Hasan, *American Muslims: The New Generations*, New York: 2001, pp. 14-17.

Muslims.⁵ Because of the limited availability of sources, the arguments presented on the data available are more tentative than conclusive in the study of early Muslims in the United States. However, available evidences do permit several statements on Muslims in early America. Firstly, their number reached into the thousands. Secondly, they made genuine and persistent efforts to observe and preserve their faith within their families, and sometimes outside their families. Thirdly, Islam and ethnicity were important in the process of social stratification within the larger African American community. Fourth, cultural phenomena found in segments of the African American community, such as ostensibly Christian worship practices and certain artistic expressions, probably reflect the influence of these early Muslims in the United States.⁶

Violently separated from Africa, a few of the slaves kept their own memoirs in Arabic or continued to recite Quran, creating for themselves a reputation for scholarship that set them apart from other slaves.⁷ But it cannot be proven as to whether they retained their Muslim identity because of the fact that they were not given the space and freedom to carry on their religious activities. Lack of family structure, proper peer institutions, illiteracy, lack of freedom, and segregation even from one another soon resulted in a mishmash of identities among the slaves and their descendants.⁸ According to Michael A. Gomez, "*It is difficult to know the extents to which Muslims in early America had opportunities to engage in corporate expressions of their faith. At first glance, it seems highly improbable that the host society would allow Muslims to assemble and for prayer. But evidence suggests that such assemblies may have taken place. First of all, there are recorded instances of Muslims performing salat, or prayer, as individuals. In some cases, such prayer was conducted in a threatening environment.*"⁹ One major reason for the disappearance of the Islamic culture and practices among the earliest Muslim was the extreme difficulty of keeping contact with their motherland. Comparatively, recent immigrants can keep contact with their homeland through mass media and various other means that they are constantly reminded about their identity, culture, and practices. However, chances and circumstances did not permit so much privilege for

⁵ Ibid., p. 17.

⁶ Ghayur, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*: Vol. 454, March 1981, p. 672.

⁷ Robert Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 17-18.

⁸ Iftikar H. Malik, *Islam and Modernity: Muslims in Europe and the United States*, London: Pluto Press, 2004, P. 166.

⁹ Michael A. Gomez, "Muslims in Early America," *The Journal of Southern History*: 60 (4), Nov., 1994, p. 692.

those earlier immigrants, and gradually they discarded their original identity and developed newer identity.¹⁰

Many of the slaves simply followed their master's practices and many others were forced into conversion, because of which Islam was marginalized. Few individual slaves like Yarrow Mamout became well known. Mamout was known as a faithful Muslim because he refused to eat pork or drink alcohol – both of which are forbidden by Islamic law.¹¹ Some scholars argue that Islam had come to United States nearly two centuries before Christopher Columbus's venture in 1492; Muslims sailed from Spain and parts of the Northwestern coast of Africa to both South and North America, and were members of Columbus's own crew.¹² Ethno-linguistic analysis shows connections between certain peoples of the West African coast and Native Americans living around the Gulf of Mexico. But there is also speculation that Muslims, probably from Andalusia or North Africa, might have visited the Americas before the fourteenth century as such accounts exist in Arabic sources dating from the eleventh century. A more controversial idea is that of former British naval officer Gavin Menzies, who believes the great Chinese Muslim admiral, Zheng He, sailed around the Cape of Good Hope and landed in the Americas in 1421. There has been lack of scholarly research into the earlier stage of Islam on the United States, and also lack of dialogues between historians of Africa and the United States. The primary documentation for this inquiry includes autobiographical and biographical sketches, newspaper articles and advertisements for runaway slaves, slaveholders' records, and the testimony of slaves and their descendants.¹³

The year Columbus discovered America, 1492, was the same year of victory for the Christian conquista of Andalusia, so it is not surprising that Muslim should have accompanied the first Spanish explorers in America. There were of course examples of others of Muslim descent who were in America before or concurrent with the enslaved West Africans, such as Selim the Algerian. But the real story of Islam in the United States must begin with the large numbers of African Muslims enslaved in antebellum America. The French

¹⁰ Ghayur, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*: Vol. 454, March 1981, p. 152.

¹¹ Beverley, 2003, p. 20.

¹² Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, pp. 50-51.

¹³ Gomez, *The Journal of Southern History*: 60 (4), pp. 672-673.

Scholar Sylviane Diouf offers the tentative suggestion of fifteen to twenty percent of the African slaves being Muslim, or somewhere between two and three million. The actual number of Muslims enslaved in the United States has been estimated around 30,000. African Muslim slaves, mostly from West Africa, were remarkable for their literacy, propensity to become involved in or instigate slave rebellions, and ability to maintain a sense of religious identity in the face of oppression. The American system of chattel slavery, where children were separated very young from their parents, did however ensure that Islam, or any other religious/ethnic identity, could not be maintained through successive generations.¹⁴

According to the Arab geographers, their ancestors had sailed the Atlantic from Spain and Portugal, landing in South America as long ago as the tenth century and on to the coast of Brazil by 1150 and gradually to the north. A sixteenth century Egyptian, called by American “Nosereddine” (Nasr-al-Din), lived in the Catskill mountain area of present-day New York State. There is some evidence of the early presence of people of “Moorish descent” in the Appalachian mountain regions, who amalgamated with other groups to form the multiracial Melungeon people.¹⁵ However, there is little evidence on how many of these early Muslims continued to practice Islam.

Waves of Immigration

Most scholars of Islam focus on the Muslim influx to the United States from different parts of the world from the late 19th century, which some of them term as ‘waves’ of immigration. The earliest arrival, the first wave, occurred between 1875-1912 from Ottoman Empire, (present day Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel), when thousands of Arabs immigrated to the United States. Most of these immigrants were Christian men but a sizeable number were Muslims comprising of Sunni, Shi’i, ‘Alawi, and Druze. Some Syrian and Lebanese were fleeing from conscription into the Turkish army, which they felt had little or no connection to their own national identities. Others went to the United

¹⁴ Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a Christian Country has now Become the World's most religiously Diverse Nation*, San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2001, pp 239-241.

¹⁵ Catherine L. Albanese, *America Religions and religion (Third edition)*, New York: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999, pp. 292-293.

States for economic gain, to earn sufficient money so that they can support their family back at their native place, because they had seen Christians from their homeland return from the United States with considerable wealth, and despite their reluctance to go to a setting in which they would be surrounded by non-Muslims they were tempted to try their luck. Most of them were from an agriculture background, but they quickly adjusted to city life. They settled in the Eastern United States, the Middle West, and along the Pacific coast. Many sought to assimilate as soon as possible and blend into what they perceived as mainstream U.S culture. Willingly or involuntarily they “Americanized” their names, shed many traditions, and became a largely invisible minority.¹⁶ World War 1 brought major devastation to Lebanon that many were forced to flee to survive. Menial work, such as migrant labor, petty merchandizing, or mining was what most of them would end up doing. One of the most common occupations was peddling which required little capital, language skills, or training. Others served as cheap laborers on work gangs, as, for example, those contributing to the construction of railroad in the Seattle area. Women sometimes found work in mills and factories, where they worked long hours under extremely difficult conditions but did well economically.¹⁷ Lebanese and Syrian communities are found in Dearborn, Michigan; Ross, North Dakota; and Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Syrian Americans are found in even larger numbers in New York, California, New Jersey, and Florida.¹⁸

By 1907, some immigrants were working in Henry Ford’s automobile factory in Highland Park, Michigan, and in 1916, Ford’s sociological department counted 555 Arab men as employees.¹⁹ This link to the burgeoning automobile industry in Michigan established an immigration pattern that continues to this day; in fact, by some estimates, one of the largest Arab American communities in the United States is in Dearborn, Michigan. As more and more of these immigrants decided to stay in the United States, they began to establish institution to further their religious life. “Mother Mosque”, in Rapid Cedars, Iowa was established in 1919. The same year a Lebanese immigrant helped construct the first

¹⁶ Audrzej Kulczycki, and Arun Peter Lobo, “deepening the Melting Pot: Arab-Americans at the turn of the Century,” *The Middle East Journal*: 55 (3), 2001, p. 461.

¹⁷ Smith, 1999, pp. 53-54.

¹⁸ Mohamed Nimer, *The North American Muslim Resource Guide: Muslim Community Life in United States and Canada*, New York: Routledge, 2002, p.

¹⁹ Michael R. Feener (ed.), *Islam in the World Culture: Comparative Studies*, California: ABC CLIO, 2004, P. 290.

mosque in the Detroit area. In 1920, hundreds of Turkish Muslims from Balkans and Anatolia established a Detroit chapter of Red Crescent, the Muslim equivalent of the Red Cross.²⁰ The Turkish group is the third major Middle Eastern ethnicity in the United States. They form 6 percent of the total number of the estimated Muslims. They are spread across New York, California, New Jersey, and Florida. They work in professional and technical positions.²¹

The demise of the Ottoman Empire after the Second World War brought the second waves of immigration from the Middle East. Many people coming to America at that time were relatives of Muslim who had emigrated and established themselves to some extent in the United States. This group of immigrants emerged basically because of political unrest and economic instability in their native states. But in 1924 the United States passed the “national origins quota system” immigration law, which imposed quota systems of immigration for particular nations and thereby, curtailing the immigration of Muslims.

For most part of 1930’s not much was witnessed in the rise of Muslim immigration in the United States. Immigration was open only to relatives of people already living in America. They formed the third wave of Muslim immigration to United States. The fourth wave of immigration (1947-1960) saw the rise of Muslim immigrants, especially from outside Arab countries. Muslims from Eastern Europe, Soviet Union, and the South Asian countries of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh came to the United States. Most of the earlier Muslim Immigrants had well settled in rural as well as urban areas. However, the new groups of immigrants were mainly from urban backgrounds and were well educated, who came to the United States in the hope of continuing their education or receiving advanced technical training. They settled in big cities like Chicago and New York. South Asian Muslims have moved to the United States for a variety of reasons. Most of the Muslims from India were drawn by the exceptional opportunities in terms of work and research conditions, and by the remuneration offered by the Americans in the field of education and research.²²

In Pakistan, Ahmadiya, who were declared non-Muslim by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s government in 1974, migrated in large numbers especially to the United

²⁰ Ibid., p. 291.

²¹ Nimer, 2002, p. 32.

²² Ibid., p. 33.

States. Other Pakistanis left their country during periods of military rule. Violent rivalry between Muhajir and Sindhi community encouraged a number of Muhajirs to immigrate to North America. Bangladeshi Muslims emigrated to the U.S during the 1971 civil war. Most of the South Asian Muslims would stay back and live in United States because of better job and career opportunities, higher earning, and higher standard of living of which they had become accustomed to. South Asian Muslim emigrants during this time were mainly professionals, especially doctors and engineers, as well as scientists, teachers and businessmen.²³

After the creation of Israel in 1948, many Palestinian Arabs lost their homes and livelihoods. After Israel declared independence in 1948 about 750,000 Palestinians were forced out of their homeland, in 1967, another 300,000 were displaced. Palestinian refugees who lived in Lebanon were again displaced by Israel's frequent raids in that area after 1978. Most of these refugees and displaced person immigrated to the United States.²⁴ More than 80 percent of Palestinians are Sunni Muslims. Muslims of Palestinian ancestry have also come to the United States from Jordan. Many Palestinians and Jordanian Americans are small-business owners, but a growing segment is composed of middle-class professionals. Today they live in pocket communities in Chicago, Illinois; Paterson and Jersey city, New Jersey; and Cleveland, Ohio. After the 1952 revolution in Egypt, Egyptians who lost favor with the regime of Gamal Abdul Nassar also fled to the United States.²⁵

In 1965 President Lyndon Johnson sponsored an immigration bill that repealed the long standing system of quota by national origin. This opened the way for the fifth wave of immigrants mostly from Middle East, South Asia, and South East Asia.²⁶ Flow of immigrants gained strength which contributed to a more public affirmation of cultural differences and a growing ethnic identity.²⁷

Muslims have come from all over the world to America and have settled in every part the United States. There are substantial subgroups of Muslims in the United

²³ Aminah Muhammad Arif, *Salaam America: South Asian Muslims in New York*, London: Anthem Press, 2002, pp. 36-38.

²⁴ Nimer, 2002, pp. 29-31.

²⁵ Feeener (ed.), 2004, p. 293.

²⁶ Smith, 1999, pp. 51-52.

²⁷ Kulczycki, and Lobo, Summer 2001, p.146.

States that includes the Egyptians, the Iraqis, and the Yemenis. Most of them live in California, New Jersey, and New York. The Iraqis are the most diverse of all the subgroups with roots in the Arabic-speaking world. In addition to the Shi'ite-Sunni divide, there are the Muslim-Christian and Kurdish-Arab divides. They live in Dearborn, Detroit, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Yemeni laborers began to arrive on U.S. shores in the 1960s. Many settled in Detroit, working in assembly lines. Some settled in California, especially in Delano, working as farm laborers. 1990 census shows small numbers of Moroccans, Saudi Arabians, and Algerians.²⁸

Iranians started coming to the United States in the 1950s, but emigration increased only after the 1979 revolution. 1990 census counted only 235,521 Iranians. Immigration increased after 1990 with 89,000 people, mostly, Muslims, arriving from 1991 to 1997. Now about 12 percent of all estimated Muslims of immigrant origins in the United States can trace their roots to Iran. They work in car retail and rug businesses, and a small number in professional and managerial occupations. The largest concentrations of Iranians are found in Los Angeles, California; and Miami, Florida.²⁹

The Afghans are among the latest arrivals of Muslim immigrants. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the wars that followed ravaged the country and left four million refugees. 1990 census counted about 31,000 Afghans in U.S. Between 1991-97 about 13,600 Afghan immigrants were admitted in the United States, most of them settled in California, New York, and Virginia. Balkan Muslims came from Albania, Bulgaria, and the former Yugoslavia, and represents about 3 percent of the estimated Muslim Immigrant population. About 40,645 came from former Yugoslavia, about 32,000 from Bosnia and some few Albanians. They mostly settled in Chicago, and Detroit.³⁰

Muslims make up one-third of the inhabitants of Africa and are found in each of the countries in Africa. Long series of coups in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and Uganda, accompanied by famine and draught, ethnic wars, Civil wars, and many other

²⁸ Nimer, 2002, pp. 32-34.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 31-32.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

disturbances left millions of Africans homeless. Many of them took refuge in the United States and they add to the growing ethnic diversities among the American Muslim community.³¹

Conversion and Reversion among the Americans

“Conversion to Islam in North America follows patterns found in other areas of the Muslim world. There are two primary modes of conversion to Islam in America: (1) Social conversion, and (2) individual conversion. Social conversion historically has been the most common way people have made their way into Islam. Social conversion denotes widespread conversions among family, clan, and social group, because of cultural desires to maintain group solidarity.” The largest social conversion group in the United States is composed of former members of the Nation of Islam who broke off to form the Muslim American community and now constitute approximately 20 percent of North American Muslims.³² Reasons for conversions among the individuals vary according to individual’s interests and convictions. Personal crisis with the person’s earlier religion is the most common cited reason among the individual converts. Many traditional Protestants question their religious values, which they think is losing its cohesion. Whereas, Muslim theology offers simple and easy teachings, which is much easier to follow and understand than to follow the theological debates and complications involved in Christianity.³³

Anglo-Americans

There has been a significant number of Anglo- Americans choosing to adopt Islam as their religion and way of life. However, from the beginning of the history, Islam had thought of itself as a universal religion with a message for all people. It was no surprise, therefore, that there were American converts. Already in 1888 Mohammad Alexander Russel Webb had become the first mainstream American to embrace Islam, a former journalist who had become a diplomat, and after his contact in the Philippines with Indian

³¹ Ibid., pp. 29-37.

³² Gary Laderman, and Luis Leon, *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions (Vol. 1)*, California: ABC CLIO, 2003, P. 135.

³³ Ibid., p. 136.

Muslims, assumed their faith.³⁴ Estimates of the number of Anglo- Muslims in United States range from twenty to fifty thousand. In recent decades, there has been a growing community of Muslims in the United States among African Americans and the immigrant communities from the 'old world', in addition to a sprinkling of Muslim converts amongst European Americans.³⁵

Some Anglo women who have married Muslim men convert to Islam. While there is no compulsion for such women to convert, because the children will be raised according to the religion of the father, a number of them do choose to adopt Islam. Probably, more than half of the inter-marriages, between immigrant Muslim males and non-Muslim American female, end up in the wives conversion to Islam. Some find the intellectual appeal of a great civilization of scholarly, scientific, and cultural achievements a refreshing antidote to the often- intellectual and secularist climate of contemporary west. One of the reasons for the spread of Islam in the various parts of the world over the centuries has been the straightforward simplicity of the declaration of faith and five pillars that an observant Muslim is obliged to follow. For some Americans this directness is an appealing alternative to what they may find to be confusing Christological doctrines and Trinitarian affirmations espoused by the Christian church. Some Americans have found its egalitarian platform a variable alternative to a Christianity that sometimes seems inextricably bound to prejudicial practices. Some Anglos without intimate personal relationships or close family connections hope that in a religion so explicitly community oriented they may find solace from loneliness.³⁶

Converts among Hispanics

Islam first appeared in the barrios of the American Northeast in the early 1970's, mainly the first generation Puerto Ricans from New York, many of these converts entered Islam by affiliating with the African- American mosques. Since then, immigrant Muslims have tried to organize missionary movements among Latino populations with the end of integrating them into established Sunni mosque communities. Hispanics have

³⁴ Albanese, 1999, p. 294.

³⁵ Malik, 2004, p.160.

³⁶ Smith, 1999, pp. 65-66.

found much in Islamic culture that is akin to their own cultural heritage, specially the importance of the family structure and specifically designed roles for men and women. Divorce, which has been growing in American Hispanic communities, is noticeably much lower among Latino Muslim couples.

One illustration of the growth of Latino Islam is a missionary effort in New York entitled PIEDAD (Propagacion Islamica Para la Educacion y Devocion de Ala'el Devino). A Puerto Rican convert began PIEDAD in 1987, and it has focused particularly on Latinas who are incarcerated. Another Islamic Latino organization in the El Barrio area of New York City called the Alianza Islamica, began some fifteen years ago as an outgrowth of the Darul Islamic movement, illustrating the close association between Hispanic converts and the African American Muslims. In California, Association Latina de Musulmanes en las Americas (ALMA) seeks to spread Islam among Spanish- speaking people, educating them about the contribution of Islam to their society and culture with the hope of bringing them back to their ancestors' way of life.³⁷

Islam among African Americans

Islam among the African American dates back to the era of slavery. In the later years the gradual influx of immigration added to the growth of Muslim community in the United States. Apart from this, there has been growth of the Muslim population from inside, through conversion especially among the African-Americans. There were some Muslim Missionaries who worked to spread Islam in the United States. One of the most successful Muslim missionaries in the United States was Muhammad Sadiq, a member of Ahmadiyya. The Ahmadiyya established a center in Chicago, Illinois, and they distributed the English translated version of Quran to the masses. Traveling around the country, he praised Islam as a religion of peace and reason. He targeted African Americans for conversion, promising that Islam offered them equality and freedom. Many blacks feel Muslim traditions reflect their African ancestry. Some Africans Americans also remember that Christianity was

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 66-68.

forced upon black slaves, and for them, Islam is closely tied to the struggle for civil rights and ethnicity.³⁸ Saudi Arabia began to fund Islamic missionary efforts in both Muslim and non-Muslim nations around the world. It funded institutions and Islamic centers in the United States, helped distribute literature about Islam, and even sought to train some Americans as Muslim missionaries. As a result most Americans even today are far more familiar with the *Wahabi* version of Islam.³⁹

The process of conversion and reversion to Islam, among the African American community, is greatly attributed to the role played by different leaders of various organizations, who were trying to build a strong African American identity in the United States. Teachings of Noble Drew Ali, Elijah Muhammad, and Louis Farrakhan proved attractive to the African American because in the midst of discrimination and segregation, the message of these leaders: that the Africans were the 'original people' and therefore superior than the whites, that Islam was the true religion of African, the white Americans were the blue-eyed devil, and Islam is a religion of peace and equality proved to be what the African American needed at the hour. It gave them immense confidence, pride, and self-respect in their race and culture, and brought some sense of freedom and liberation from their lowly living condition. The identity building among the African Americans was empowered through organizations such as the Nation of Islam (NOI), and the Moorish Science Temple.⁴⁰ "As immigrant Muslims built a firmer foundation in the United States, African American Muslims, especially those in W.D. Mohammad's American Society of Muslims, also strengthened their position in mainstream American politics and society. Indeed, they came to be nationally recognized."⁴¹

The Moorish Science Temple of America

Black Islamic movement in the United States may be traced to Timothy Drew who was born in North Carolina, but started his activity in New Jersey in 1913

³⁸ Beverley, 2003, p. 26.

³⁹ Feener (ed.), 2004, p. 294.

⁴⁰ Nafey, *Journal of Peace Studies*: Mar- Apr, 1998, p. 37.

⁴¹ Leonard, 2003, p. 19.

with blacks and Asiatic. He called himself Noble Drew Ali, Prophet of Islam, and headed a church called Moorish Science Temple of America. Noble Drew preached a return to Islamic teachings that held the answers of true happiness. He rejected all labels such a Negro, colored, or black because he preached that American Negroes were moors who came from Morocco, and that salvation can be achieved only when the blacks discard all the identities forced on them by the white Americans: the white Americans Christian God, and Christian ethos. His teachings were embraced by many black Americans, and so the rate of conversion and reversion increased. But at the same time because of the rise in Negro pride, tensions grew with the whites. The Moors manufactured and sold “various nostrums and charms” such as Moorish Mineral and Healing Oil, Moorish Antiseptic Bath Compound, and Moorish Herb Tea for Human Ailments. Closely associated with “root work” were occult sciences, magic, and numerology as part of their religion, gaining popularity hand-in-hand with illegal lotteries that were a constant source of hope to the chronically poor and unemployed.⁴² In 1929 Ali was arrested and jailed and shortly after his release he died. However, his ideas and his preaching were followed by many in different parts of the United States.⁴³ After the death of Drew Ali the Moors faced cohesive leadership until the Nation of Islam came and overshadowed the Moors. In this regard the Moorish Science Temple became the forerunner of Nation of Islam

The Nation of Islam

The Nation of Islam, the best known African American Muslim organization in the history of the United States, began around 1930 in the Detroit area, where W.D. Fard, a mysterious peddler probably of Turkish or Iranian origins, promoted the idea that Islam was the original religion of the ‘Blackman.’ One of the most prominent leader was Elijah Poole, later changed his name to Elijah Muhammad. The Nation of Islam promoted the idea of the Moorish Science Temple, that Islam is the religion of the African and that the black people, by nature, Muslims. Elijah Muhammad called forth all the African Americans to abandon all the habits and practices that were forced on them by the white Americans, and that they should learn

⁴² Dannin, 2002, p. 29.

⁴³ Smith, 1999, pp. 78-79

how to live life independently without any interference and help from the whites. He proclaimed that the blacks, and not the whites, were the chosen race and there will be an end when God will would destroy whites and restore the black Islamic nation to its original place of glory.⁴⁴

It was believed that the Nation of Islam was more a separatist movement of the blacks from the whites than a religious organization. The African American Muslims would argue that '*asabiyyah*,' or group solidarity is more important and should be given priority over the *Ummah*, or the universal Muslim community. Therefore, tensions and division occurred between the African American Muslims and the American Muslims from the other parts of the world, particularly the Arab Muslims and the South Asian Muslims. It was a kind of counter racism organization of blacks against the white. The movement expanded in mid century America despite efforts by FBI in the 1950s and 1960s to limit its scopes through harassment of its leaders.⁴⁵

Not until the time Malcolm X took over the leadership of the Nation of Islam did the organization became more inter-racial Islamic organization. After his pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) in 1964, Malcolm X left Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam. He renounced Elijah's teaching, because the Nation of Islam taught people how to separate basing on race, whereas, the Qur'an talks about equality of all human beings, regardless of race. He rejected the claim that the whites were blue eyed devils. Thus, Malcolm X became a popular figure not only among the African Americans but also among other racial group.⁴⁶ The Nation of Islam became a more mainstream organization after the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975. His son Wallace D. Muhammad succeeded him. He agreed that many of his father's teachings were wrong. He merged the Nation of Islam into orthodox Sunni Islam, and set up American Muslim Mission which is to become the largest African American Sunni Muslim organization in the United States. He brought many drastic changes within the Nation, firstly, by dismantling racism which according to him was one of the most un-Islamic characters of the Nation propagated by

⁴⁴ Feener (ed.), 2004, pp. 292-293.

⁴⁵ Laderman, and Leon, 2003, p. 126.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 125-126.

his father. He further denied the divinity of W.D. Fard, and his teaching of white people as devils. Nation of Islam under him was more decentralized and more inter-racial.⁴⁷

In the later years, Louis Farrakhan took over the leadership of the Nation of Islam, and revitalizes the earlier teachings of Elijah Muhammad. It is currently a black-power movement dedicated to the old separatist ideal of establishing an independent nation (Jane I. Smith, 1999, p. 94). Mainstream Muslims today actively dissociate themselves from the current Nation under the Farrakhan, mostly because the Nation reveres Wallace Fard, its founder, as an incarnation of Allah.⁴⁸ Earlier, Nation of Islam did not involve in the politics of the United States, but in 1984 the Nation decided to support the presidential candidacy of Jesse Jackson. And in 1990 the Nation fielded two of its candidates in the congressional elections.⁴⁹ Though the Nation of Islam provides large number of social services, under the leadership of Louis Farrakhan it still remains a controversial organization.

Ethnic Diversities in American Muslim community

A striking feature of the American Muslim community is its internal diversity. According to Iftikar H. Malik, *“historically and ethnically speaking, there are three main categories of Muslim communities across United States: descendants of slaves, consisting of mainstream Muslims and the Nation of Islam; White Muslim converts; and Muslim immigrants and their families. Each of these categories can be further subdivided on the basis of class, gender, sect, ethnicity, nationality, profession, and age.”*⁵⁰ As said earlier, the Muslim communities in the United States came from all over the world. They all came to United States from their home nation, with established culture, practices, and ideologies, and thereby making the community even more intricate. Beyond the common identity they share as Muslim, they are internally diverse, professing a variety of beliefs, observing dissimilar rituals, and reflecting cultural as well as historical differences.⁵¹ Ali S. Asani, Professor of the Practice of Indo-

⁴⁷ Fenner (ed.), 2004, p. 297.

⁴⁸ Hasan, 2001, p. 63.

⁴⁹ Nafey, *Journal of Peace Studies*: Mar- Apr 1998, p. 43.

⁵⁰ Malik, 2004, p. 161.

⁵¹ Laderman, and Leon, 2003, p. 125.

Muslim Languages and Culture at Harvard University, says, “*Muslim Americans are a remarkably diverse group, belonging to more than fifty different ethnicities and nationalities, mirroring, in fact, the diverse face of America itself. They come from many parts of the world and represent many different interpretations of Islam. Indeed, no other country in the world has a Muslim population that is as diverse as that of America. It is, therefore crucial that this plurality is recognized in our understanding of what it means to be Muslim in America today. The plurality of cultures and interpretations within Islam in America presents a unique sense of challenges. As Muslim Americans come to terms with the challenges posed by this internal pluralism, as well as the pluralism of America.*”⁵²

The immense problem in the study of American Muslim community is the gap in subcategories between South Asians, Arabs, and African Americans according to the published results of different Muslim groups. The American Muslim Council, for instance, divides Muslims by race and national affiliation, with South Asians making up 24.4 percent, African- American, 42 percent, Arabs, 12.4 percent, Iranians, 3.6 percent, South East Asians, 2 percent, European Americans, 1.6 percent, and others 5.4 percent.⁵³ Whereas, others differentiate Muslims into two broad categories: the immigrant Muslims who came from variety of region outside North America. They include the Muslims South Asians, and Europe. The second category comprises of African American slaves who practiced Islam, and also those who were converted to Islam later.⁵⁴ According to Ali Asani, an Ismaili Professor originally from Kenya, says “*You have all these Muslims from different ethnic and cultural background coming together here who have never even been in touch with each other. In theory, you know that they exist, but when you encounter them on a day-to-day basis and practice your faith with Muslims who may have a different cultural expression, this is new. I think this is what being Muslim in America means—having to deal with the diversity, the pluralism within Islam itself.*”⁵⁵

⁵² Ali S. Asani, “So That You May Know One Another”: A Muslim American Reflects on Pluralism and Islam,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*: Vol. 588, July 2003, p. 49.

⁵³ Laderman, and Leon, 2003, p. 130.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁵⁵ Eck, 2001, p. 266.

Difference in beliefs among American Muslims

Muslims in the United States are not merely divided on racial, ethnic, political, nationality etc., but they are also divided on the lines of sects basing on their understanding and practices of Islamic culture. With the increase of Muslim immigrants through 1980s and after, *“critical mass was achieved in the Islamic community. With the solidarity brought by numbers came renewed devotion and conscious dedication to the faith, as the multiplication of new mosques suggests. Immigrants found in Islam a way to maintain connection with their past and with members of their community in the United States. as they expanded the presence of Islam in the nation, their cultural accommodation increasingly included a reaching back to the Muslim heritage and a reinsertion of it in organized form in their own context. Patterns of expansion, for Muslims, included the religious practice of Islam.”*⁵⁶

Both the major sects of Islam, Shi'ite and Sunni, are present in the United States. Their numerical representation in the United States is generally not different from those of the world as a whole.⁵⁷ There are some prominent sects of Shi'ites, two of them being *Ishmai'lis*, or the *Twelvers*, and the *Seveners*. Ismai'lis, or the Seveners, traces their origin to a disagreement over the successor of the sixth Imam in 765 A.D. They recognize the line of the seventh Imam.⁵⁸ Nizari Isma'ili Shi'ites, followers of Aga Khan, is a larger and faster growing segment of American Islam. They recognize Aga Khan as the living Imam. Thousands of Nizaris, who trace their roots to East Africa and South Asia, came to the United States in the 1970s as refugees. Because of the wealth and riches he has, Aga Khan funds all sorts of humanitarian and charitable causes throughout the world. There has been a revitalization of the Isma'ili sect in America. American Isma'ilis are active, raising money for many causes. The Twelvers are a major sect of Shi'ite Islam who generally believes that the twelfth Imam went into hiding in 873 A.D. but remains on earth and still secretly guides his followers. Twelvers in

⁵⁶ Albanese, 1999, p. 299.

⁵⁷ Nimer, 2002, p. 9.

⁵⁸ Feener (ed.), 2004, p. 296.

the United States mostly came from Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, and Pakistan, but they may be from anywhere⁵⁹

Sufism in the United States

Sufism is an Islamic sect that is loosely affiliated with Sunni Islam. Sufism is a complex part of the history of Islam, sometimes greatly appreciated and at times rejected as a deviation from the true faith. Members of the Sufi order of mystic Islam had originally come to the United States in 1910 under the leadership of Pir Hazrat Inayat Khan (1881-1927). But their numbers were always small. However, in the 1960s and 70s, Sufi groups took advantage of a more open U.S. migration policy and began establishing orders in the United States.⁶⁰ In addition, a number of white Americans began to turn to Sufism as a religious path and in the later years, Sufism in the United States became a cross-class and multi-ethnic phenomenon.⁶¹ Sufis sought mystical contact with the divine through asceticism and contemplation as well as ecstatic ritual, music, and dance. Its literary expression, for example the writings of the thirteenth century Persian-Turkish poet Rumi, has been particularly attractive to non-Muslim intellectuals and has accounted for a fair number of recent conversions.⁶²

Other important Muslim sub-groups in the United States

This radically conservative movement has shaped militant Islamic movements in other parts of the Middle East and throughout the Muslim world ever since it emerged in 1803 under Muhammad ibn-Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), whose views became dominant in Saudi Arabia in the first decade of the 19th century. Wahhabism became the ruling Islamic ideology of Saudi Arabia in the 1930s. Al-Wahhab promoted a very strict following of Islamic law in every part of life including the running of nations. Very conservative American

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 296.

⁶⁰ Nimer, 2002, p. 26.

⁶¹ Feener (ed.), 2002, pp. 296-297.

⁶² Peter W. Williams, *America's Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty First Century*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002, pp. 455- 456.

Muslim leaders often look to Saudi Arabia and its Wahhabi ideology as a standard for pure Islam.⁶³ Traditionally, the Druze community lived primarily in the mountainous region of Lebanon and in some parts of Syria. Whether the Druze is considered Islam or not has been a subject of great debate. Many immigrants from Lebanon living in the United States, who are settled in regions like Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee in the South and up to Washington in the West, are identified as Druze.⁶⁴

An impressive development in the Muslim community of the United States is that, despite their differences in ethnicity, nationality, and their beliefs, a common identity platform is fast emerging.

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⁶³ Nimer, 2002, p. 27.

⁶⁴ Smith, 1999, p. 64.

Chapter Two

Muslim Identity in the United States

The biggest problem of Muslims is the issue of identity and integration, and to lose their identity is their greatest fear. American culture and society was known as 'Melting Pot' because of its characteristics that could accommodate any culture, group of people and giving a new look, a more Americanized look; any culture gets assimilated and diluted in the system. A similar trend is feared by the conservative Muslims, who think about conserving their Islamic culture and identity, as well as the identity of an 'American'. This has given rise to exclusiveness and the others to think that Islam is foreign or the 'others'. Asma Gull Hasan points out that the Muslims in America has easier time in understanding America than the Americans trying to understand Islam because of the ill notions they have built about when it comes to Islamic culture, value and tradition.¹ She also points out the essence and similarity of Quranic teaching with that of American values; about self- respect, an emphasis on family, and the importance of education, of supporting oneself, of contributing to society, and of individualism, self- improvement in an open and free environment. These Islamic values complement an American lifestyle, and, for that reason American Muslims believe that they, as Muslims, preserve some of the best aspects of American culture.² Salam Al- Marayati, one of the founders of Muslim Public Affairs Council, and many other likeminded American Muslims say that Islam and democracy go hand in hand, and the United States, in its respect for the dignity of each person and its commitment to freedom of worship and expression, rests on what they considers Islamic foundations.³

Many Muslims lost their identity and cultural practices in the earlier days because they became easily Americanized and readily assimilated with the mainstream culture. However, newer immigrants were hard headed and preserved their identity. They were deeply rooted in their beliefs and maintained their religious and cultural practices and tenets. Immigrant Muslims in America have strong attraction to what America offers, political-economic freedom and the comfortable life. But on the other hand these Muslims come to the United States with their own ethical, cultural and moral values which they tend not to give up. Therefore, it becomes difficult to maintain the identity of an 'American Muslim'. The most fluid groups are the second-third generation Muslims who consider themselves to be more American

¹ Asma Gull Hasan, *American Muslims: The Next Generation*, New York: Continuum, 2001, p. 10.

² *Ibid.*, p. 242.

³ Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a Christian Country has become the World's most religiously Diverse Nation*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001, p. 223.

than their parent generations. Thus, American Muslim parents face generational strains in their relation with their children. Imam Mumtaz Qasmi, an immigrant from India who heads the Muslim mosque in Sacramento, California, says these strains are very much in evidence in the community he serves. In India people revere their parents almost like gods, but in the United States immigrants often earn much higher salaries than their parents did and show them little respect except once or twice a year on ceremonial occasions. The most notable shift, according to Muslim leaders themselves, however, is that Muslim immigrants practice religion more intentionally in the United States than in their countries of origin.⁴

Misconceptions about Muslims in the United States

From the beginning the Muslims formed a group of marginalized community in the United States. Most Muslims, just like any other immigrant group, came to the United States for better and comfortable life. However, on reaching the land which they heard and thought of as the 'Melting Pot' proved to be more difficult. In the early days- up to the early twentieth century- the Muslims faced the problem of alienation. Being a religious minority different from the dominant Judeo-Christian, the American Muslims found it difficult to assimilate into the existing community and culture. An important reason for this inability to assimilate with the mainstream culture and community is that the Muslims who immigrated to the United States came from well established culture, and for this reason it became very difficult for them to discard their cultural identity and assimilate with the mainstream culture.⁵ The earliest immigrants found it difficult to maintain their identity because there were no mosques and no organizations, which will take up their interest and through which they could follow and practice their religion freely. Right from the beginning the Muslims faced many problems. They were also confronted with the task of how to correct the misconceptions of the American public view about Islam. They also faced the problem of cultural differences. The multi-diversified culture of the United States with the existing liberal outlook of the society was a big hurdle for a Muslim whose religious teachings and rituals in many cases clashed against the American way of living.

⁴ Wuthnow, *America and Challenges of Religious Diversity*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005, p. 62.

⁵ Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003, pp. 51-53.

Americans have pre-conceived misconception about Islam which in turn widens the communication gap and thus makes it more intolerant for the masses to accept and accommodate Islam as a part of American culture, unlike Judeo-Christianity which is accepted as the dominant and accepted religion by the Americans. Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, traces its origin to the Prophet Abraham, and Muslims consider their Jew and Christian cousins as “Brothers of the Books”.⁶ Despite this kinship, Islam is the religious tradition about which many Americans have the most negative stereotypes- extremist terrorism, saber-rattling *jihād*, and the oppression of women.⁷ At Ahl- Al- Beit Islamic Center of Denver, Imam Muhammad Kazerooni worries about misguided impressions of Islam: “*The American population makes its decision before they see a Muslim for the first time in their life based on what they hear and what they’ve been told and the way Muslims have been presented. This is one of the problems we have to face*” He also thinks that Christians are inhibited from developing better relations with Muslims by two deeply held assumptions: that “*Christians has a monopoly on the truth*” and that Muslims are basically terrorists. He believes that Muslims will have to do the lion’s share of the work to bridge the gap.⁸

Americans view of Muslim may, to some extent, be rooted in the country’s religious origins, and they may also be traced to the historical conflict transmitted and polarizes through generations by history, literature, folklore, media, and academic discourse.⁹ The resurgence of Islam throughout the world has shaped the public image of an Islam dominated by its most radical voices. And for this, Muslim community leaders often spent countless hours interpreting Islam to non-Muslim neighbors.¹⁰ Some American Christians saw Islam as a misguided religious tradition, a Christian heresy, and even a sign of Anti- Christ. They create violent image about Prophet Muhammad and considered him as a false Prophet.¹¹ Therefore, for many years, many Muslims tried to hide their identity and names and sometimes changed them so that they will sound more American. The American Muslims in those days were unable to assert themselves because they were a small group of minority whose culture and tenets were getting drowned in the vast sea of American culture. At the same time, Muslims did not run headlong to embrace American culture.

⁶ Hasan, 2001, p. 50.

⁷ Eck, 2001, p. 232.

⁸ Wuthnow, 2005, pp. 65-69.

⁹ Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Political Islam: Clash of Culture or Clash of Interest*, Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 8.

¹⁰ Eck, 2001, pp. 233.

¹¹ R. Michael Feener (ed.), *Islam in World Culture: A Comparative Study*, California: ABC CLIO, 2004, pp. 286-287.

The ordinary religion of Islam continued in Muslim communities. As in their land of origin, in this early century version of American Islam, family and an extended network of kin formed the basis of community. Women spent much of their leisure time in informal visiting, mostly with relatives. Men often gathered in coffee houses and clubs catering to different ethnic groups. The public male dominance of traditional Islam was apparent in Muslim neighborhoods, in which the main street of business was frequented almost entirely by men. Although many Muslims had stopped praying five times daily, in other ways Islam kept on directing them in their ordinary lives and attitude towards one another.¹² Like the Muslims all over the world, Muslims in the United States has their Islamic faith based upon the *Five Pillars of Islam*; *Shahada* (the most basic tenet of all the five pillars for a Muslim) which states that there is no God but God and Muhammad is his Prophet; *Salat*, which is expected from every Muslim believer, praying five times a day facing Mecca; *Zakat*, which is taxing 2.5 percent of the sum value of one's possession; *Fasting* during the month of *Ramadan*, which ends with the festival *id al-fitr*; *Hajj*, every Muslim is expected to take a pilgrimage to Mecca, the original home of Muhammad and the site of *Ka'ba*, once in their life.¹³

Relation between American Muslims and Americans

One of the events that soured the relation between the Americans and the Muslims was the Iranian revolution and the simultaneous hostage crisis in the early 1970s. In a poll of mainstream Americans conducted in 1981, 56 percent of the respondents cited hostage as coming to mind when Iran was mentioned; also commonly cited, after *Khomeini*, oil, and the *Shah*, were *anger*, *hatred*, *turmoil*, and *troublesome country*. Moreover, 50 percent of the respondents described "all" or "most" Muslims as "warlike and bloodthirsty," 49 percent described them as being "treacherous and cunning," and 44 percent as "barbaric" and "cruel".¹⁴ Many will not think twice before they start to accuse a Muslim for bombing or some misadventure, for example, the bombing of Oklahoma City. The media and the people were quick in concluding that it was another attack by a Muslim which later was proved false. It was a white man who had bombed the City, but many events had already occurred by then. Muslims

¹² Catherine L. Albanese, *America Religions and Religion* (Third edition), New York: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999, p. 298.

¹³ Hasan, 2001, pp. 59-61.

¹⁴ Fawaz A. Gerges, "Islam and Muslim in the Mind of America: Influences on the Making of U.S. Policy," *Journal of Palestine Studies*: Winter 1997, 26 (2), p. 70.

were attacked and questioned and they were met with demonstration outside their homes, Islamic centers and mosques.

According to Fawaz A. Gerges the equation of Islam with “terrorism” has done considerable damage to the image of Muslims in the United States. Several polls conducted in the 1990’s clearly show that America’s images of Islam and Muslims can be dramatically affected by the latest headlines, particularly with respect to suspicions about terrorism. He also highlights same Oklahoma City bombing incident, when a poll was conducted by coincidence on the very day of the incident. According to the poll, there was a sharp increase in negative attitude toward Muslims. Afterward it became clear that this bombing was not related to Islamist terrorism and subsequent poll showed a steady, statistically significant increase in “favorable” attitudes toward Muslims on a number of key issues.¹⁵ Another incident was the first terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on February 26, 1993. All of the suspects who stood trial and were convicted were Muslim extremists. Once again, the American Muslim community had to face allegations that Islam is a religion that advocates violence.¹⁶

The most common blunder is the stereotyping of all the Muslims. There are many as many Muslims as Christians or Jews, who think about a proper family, have good faith in God, fight against social evil and encourage liberty and fraternity. But when anything goes wrong linking with Muslims, the entire Muslim community gets tarnished, and equal treatment of hatred and violence are meted out to them. The most surprising finding is that Americans have very little knowledge about the Muslims. And very less effort is taken to learn about Islam and its culture. Muslims are required to establish a ‘new tradition’ in a more or less self-conscious way if they wish to remain Muslims. Their minority status within their adopted countries often leads to majority society to look upon them as a unitary community, no matter how different some segments may be from others. For these and other reasons, these Muslims are tempted by a single definition of Islam, and the radicals are more than happy to offer their vision of a unified global *ummah* struggling to reassert itself.¹⁷

Common problem that has been debated frequently among the leaders and clerics of American Muslims are the influence of the American culture and public education system. Dancing, dressing, public bathing, status of Muslim women in contemporary American society including their education, professional pursuits, and family related matters

¹⁵ Gerges. 1999, p. 12.

¹⁶ James A. Beverley, “Islamic Faith in America,” New York: *Facts on Files*. 2003, p. 38.

¹⁷ Hillel Fradkin, “America in Islam,” *The Public Interest*: No. 155, Spring 2004, p. 39.

including abortion, polygamy etc. are some issues which stands contradictory to the American culture.¹⁸

Mosques in America

It was always difficult for the Muslims in America to establish mosque. There were resistance, apprehension, and suspicion on the idea of a mosque being erected in the neighborhood, and a fine story of such an event is narrated by Diane L. Eck. In Massachusetts, the Muslim community decided to erect a mosque. But the idea was thwarted by the neighborhood. The property on which the mosque was to be established was bought by some neighboring buyers through some unfair means, even when negotiation to buy the property was getting finalized. Muslim community of New England has experienced fear and pain along with growth. In March 1990 a three-alarm fire swept through the Quincy mosque, Massachusetts, causing an estimate \$500,000 worth damages. The fire was attributed to arson, but the investigation was inconclusive and no one was arrested.¹⁹ But there are instances where churches in US have always offered an extended hand of friendship whenever the Muslims wanted to establish a mosque. Churches in North America offered the use of their own facilities for prayers and conduct of Islamic weekend schools. Many long abandoned churches or church buildings on sale were offered first to the Muslim community at discounted prices to facilitate their continued use for worship and education.²⁰

The mosque has become a visible symbol of the Muslims in the United States and it has been acting not only as prayer house but also educational and cultural center. The mosque functions and plays similar role like the Catholic Parishes and Jewish Synagogues. One important factor to be noted is that the Muslims, in order to survive and assimilate into the mainstream American society need to come together as a minority community and lend support to organizations and institutions that will render services to meet the needs of the Muslims and also promote Islamic culture and traditions. However, because of the divisions within the religion and also ethnic diversities makes it difficult for the Muslims to come together and form a strong-bounded community. American Muslims developed the

¹⁸ Abdul Nafey, "Perspectives of American Muslims and their Islamic identity," *Journal of Peace Studies*: Mar-Apr 1998, p. 38.

¹⁹ Eck, 2001, pp. 229-230

²⁰ Saleem Kidwai, "Muslims in America: Opportunities and Challenges," *Journal of Peace Studies*: 9 (6), Nov-Dec 2002, pp. 30-31.

Sunday school method for their children, following the lead of their Christian neighbor to pass on their religious heritage, this would be followed by services at noon which replaced the traditional Friday observance.²¹ Establishing Mosque met with some unlikely resistance in the initial years but now there are more than a thousand mosque established in all over the United States.

It is estimated that more than 2300 mosques, schools, Islamic centers, Islamic publishing houses and so on had been set up in the United States. The role of the mosque is now extending beyond simple meeting the needs of the community: it is becoming the sacred space which the ideal Muslim community may come to life. Freedom in the United States permits these religious groups to practice their religion, as religious organizations are protected by the Constitution.²²

Dr. Omar Khalid, (a senior research scholar at the Aga Khan Program in Islamic Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge), photographer and chronicler of mosque architecture, explains three types of mosque architecture that now flourished in the United States. *“First, there are mosques that embody a traditional design transplanted from one- or several – Islamic lands,”* Dr. Khalid points out. *“Second, there are those that represent a reinterpretation of tradition, sometimes combined with elements of American architecture. Third are the designs that are entirely innovative, like those of the Islamic society of North America’s headquarters in Plainfield, Indiana..... Will evolve which will be happy blend between nostalgia and innovation..... The new emerging mosques in the West are a far cry from just domes and minarets.”*²³ One important consideration in mosque architecture is the space for women to worship. American Muslim women play an integral role in the mosque activities and in the Muslim community. The growing number of mosque shows that Muslims are gradually asserting themselves that they are an integral part of the American pluralist society. It is a matter of self-confidence and security among the Muslim community and also the awareness for the need of establishing centers for educating the younger generations.²⁴ The words of Jamal Badawi, *“If you lose your children, no number of mosques will help you,”* is echoed among the Muslims all over the United States.

²¹ Albanese, 1999, p. 297.

²² Aminah Mohammad-arif, *Salaam America: South Asian Muslims in New York*, London: Anthem Press, 2002. pp. 123-124.

²³ “American Mosques”, *Muslim Life in America*, Department of State U.S: Washington D.C., p. 38.

²⁴ Kidwai, *Journal of Peace Studies*: 9 (6), Nov-Dec 2002, p. 31.

Islamic schools in the United States

Islamic schools, in addition to the mosque, and often connected to mosque, serves as a place where Muslim children and adults construct their identities. Schools' function differs in administration, while some schools encourage boys and girls to mingle others maintain strict gender segregation. The main debate is over the preference of Islamic schools or public schools. American Muslims are despaired over drugs, the dating, and the saturation with entertainment culture that are so much part of the public school experience. These parents therefore, establish Islamic schools for the preservation and maintenance of Islamic culture and identity among the younger Muslims. Many argue that the idea of Islamic school is not the only solution for educating the younger Muslims about Islamic culture. They can go to Public schools and maintain their identity as well. For instance, women can wear *hijab*, a symbol of Islamic tradition, and go to a Public school, thereby, maintaining Islamic culture, and at the same time other Americans will come to know about Muslim culture as well. According to the Council of Islamic Schools of North America, there are more than two hundred full-time Islamic schools in North America, with twenty three of them in New York alone. Huge buildings are being constructed to open Islamic schools accommodating thousands of young Muslims. Amid the debates of preferences, the American Muslims are slowly in the process of realizing their interest of establishing an Islamic educational system.²⁵ Many Islamic schools stress the concept of Islamic identity in their mission statements bylaws. They also place an equally significant emphasis on the quality of their reading, math, and science programs. Parents who send their children to Islamic schools seek to ensure their children are not only aware of their Muslim identity, but are also able to compete for jobs and college seats after graduation.²⁶ According to Hakim M. Rashid and Zakiyyah Muhammad, "*The role of America's Public school is clear: to perpetuate the world view of the dominant American culture. The role of the Islamic school must be equally clear, to produce self-reliant, competent, and, above all, God-fearing Muslims who are not afraid to place Al-Islam in the marketplace of ideas competing for the soul of America.*"²⁷

The education system in the United States does not offer scholars to know much about Islam and the Muslim world. Although school curricula have become

²⁵ Eck, 2001, pp. 283-285.

²⁶ Mohamed Nimer, *The North American Muslim Resource Guide: Muslim community life in United States and Canada*, New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 53-55.

²⁷ Hakim M. Rashid, and Zakiyyah Muhammad, "The Sister Clara Muhammad School: Pioneers in the Development of Islamic Education in America," *Journal of Negro Education*: 61 (2), Spring, 1992, p. 185.

increasingly sensitive to diversity, this inclusiveness has not been extended to Muslims. Many textbooks and teachers' lectures depict Islam and Muslim in grossly distorted ways. The entire school curriculum made no more than passing reference to Muslims in history, in connection with the Crusades, perhaps, or the fall of Constantinople to the Turks. The cultural and social conditions of learning about Islam and Muslims in American schools, however, slowly began to change in the 1970s. This pattern is most conspicuous in the instructional materials that teachers and students read. To the extent that young Americans are exposed to interpretations of Islam and Muslim history independent of the mass media, they get from the commercial textbooks that school adopts, as well as from ancillary print and visual materials selected by teachers. Teachers also receive guidelines for instruction about Islam from national, state and local educational agencies. It is no exaggeration to affirm that commercial textbooks, together with the academic standards documents that most states have recently developed, are the intellectual tools with which most young Americans undertake any study of Islam and Muslim.²⁸ The Council on Islamic Education in Fountain Valley, California, was established in 1990 to stimulate Muslim involvement in public school textbook hearings. The Council formed a panel of education consultants to advise publishers of social studies and world history textbooks on their treatment of Islam. The organization has developed instructional materials on Islam and Muslims for use in public and private schools.

American Muslim Women

The Americans view Islam as a religion that oppresses women.²⁹ The social status of Muslim men and women would be regarded as unequal by the Americans. Muslim man can marry any woman as long as their children are raised as Muslims, but a Muslim woman can marry only Muslim man. Worship at mosques is segregated by gender, with men occupying different sides of the worship areas from women, and women relegated to the rear or the balcony. The social Muslim women in the US lead less oppressive lives than they could in Afghanistan or Saudi Arabia, where a woman may be thrashed for letting her veil slip in public or for walking to the drugstore at night without a male escort. They enjoy considerable freedom and rights than the Muslim women in other parts of the world. A difference line for American Muslim women will be between those who prefer to wear *hijab* and those who do not

²⁸ Susan L. Douglass, and Ross E. Dunn, "Interpreting Islam in American Schools," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*: July 2003, Vol. 88, pp. 52-53.

²⁹ Hasan, 2001, p. 33.

want to wear them. Muslim women, in traditional Muslim cultures do not appear in public without *hijab*.

For Americans, the *hijab* looks repressive and may serve as symbolic proof of the stereotype that Muslim women are oppressed. For American Muslims, the *hijab* represents the eye of the storm, with the storm being how American Muslims are interpreting the Qur'an and bringing their modern perspectives to it. To some wearing *hijab* is a way of showing physically, a preservation of traditional Islam, as it was practiced in the country from where the immigrants came, or to show that they are serious about being a Muslim. To others, wearing *hijab* is an act of devotion, a way of serving God.³⁰ Many Muslim women would argue that wearing *hijab* is a personal choice and they are proud to maintain their modesty and womanhood by covering up themselves. But there are others who would prefer not to wear *hijab* because it symbolizes that one is different from the rest and further ignites the passion among the people to look at them as different and not one of their own. Wearing *hijab* means to face discrimination in the work places and public places. Many were reportedly terminated from their job because they wore *hijab* and did not follow the uniform dress code of the workplace. But many Muslim women say that too much attention is being given to what a woman should wear and what not to wear. Due credit should be given on the role of American Muslim Women. Though women tend to dress with modesty in keeping their Islamic teachings, most women in the United States, especially those working women, are very conscious of their visibility if they wear traditional dress. So, notwithstanding a sentiment of schizophrenia, they tend to wear western dress for work and activities outside the home and keep their traditional garments for when they are with their families.³¹

Once married, a Muslim woman is expected to raise the family, taking care of the children and work within their home. They are not allowed to work outside their home. But American Muslim women have the advantage over Muslim women from other countries in that they get education, get married and still work outside their home.³²

Many American women convert to Islam by marrying Muslim men. Katherine Millet talks about two American women married to Muslim men, Seema Imam and Elizabeth Martin. These women testify that unlike what general public perceives, to be a Muslim woman is not a difficult job. Wearing *hijab* is no problem for them despite the fact that

³⁰ Ibid, p. 35.

³¹ Arif, 2002, p. 67.

³² Katherine Millet, "American by Birth, Muslim by Choice," *The Reference Shelf*: 2003, 75 (1), p. 90.

it is considered to be a symbol of oppressing women. Though just like any other society many evils and dissensions occur within a Muslim family, and also the fact that they might be constantly under attack because they are Muslims. Yet, they prefer to be a Muslim because it satisfies their spiritual needs as well as keep them under control through the various Islamic laws.³³ For Ayesha Hussain, getting dressed each day is a fraught negotiation. Ms. Hussain, a 24 year- old magazine writer in New York, is devoted to her narrow- legged jeans and determined to incorporate their bash modernity into her wardrobe while adhering to the tenets of her Muslim faith. “*It’s still a struggle,*” Ms. Hussain, a Pakistani American confided, “*But I don’t think it’s impossible.*” Some follows a more conservative path by wearing loose- fitting cloths, harem- style trousers, and covers their hair, neck and shoulders with brightly patterned *hijab*. This is reconciling their Islamic faith with the dictates of fashion, and viewed by many as a political charged symbol of radical Islam and of female subjugation. In pure aesthetic terms, the devout must work to evolve a style that is attractive but not provocative, demure but not dour- friendly to Muslims as well as non- Muslims. Arra Nomani says that clothing is all more significant because what a Muslim woman chooses to wear “*is a critical part of her identity.*” Injecting fashion into a traditional wardrobe is “*walking a fine line*” said Dilshad D.Ali, the Islam editor of Beliefnet.com, a website for spiritual seekers.³⁴

Problems of Adjustment

According to Aminah Mohammad Arif, to apply the Shari’ah law strictly in the matter of divorce, childcare, marriage, inheritance, and adoption is to come into conflict with American law. Problems do occasionally arise in questions of childcare but on the whole the vast majority of American Muslims respect American legislation.

Prayers

The American Muslims also had to adapt the site of prayer itself, which is central to Muslim life. In Muslim countries, the periodic public call to prayer from the minaret is a regular feature of the urban scene. In the United States, however, such behavior can

³³ Ibid., pp. 86-94.

³⁴ “Women and Dressing,” *The Asian Age*, New Delhi: 14th April 2007, 14 (58).

be seen as a disruption of public order and is therefore not usually practiced.³⁵ Quran encourages Muslims to offer *salat*, daily prayers at the mosque, or masjids as well as at home. But in the United States, mosque attendance on Fridays is not so common among the Muslims like the church attendance for Christians on Sundays. The problem being that Friday is a working day and work cannot be compromised with the prayers. It is estimated that as few as 3 percent or as many as 14 percent of adult American Muslims attend weekly Friday prayers at mosques or Islamic centers.³⁶ Muslim leaders emphasize the unchanging aspects of Islamic practices, and yet it is also evident that change is occurring with the influence of the American culture. Although prayers continue to be said in Arabic, sermons are increasingly given in both Arabic and English or entirely in English. Gender roles are also changing, nationally 78 percent of those attending Friday prayer services are men, but in fact women are routinely present as well which is in marked contrast to services in many Muslim societies. A study of mosque administration boards also found that, approximately two-thirds of such boards permitted women to serve in various mosque governing bodies.³⁷

Food habits

Even food habits in America, which negate the Islamic law, on many occasions especially in social gatherings, are pass-ons. American Muslims would compromise with the food habit on social occasions, though there are some who would strictly adhere to their Islamic faith and maintain isolation. There are three main items forbidden to Muslims: pork, meat from animals not slaughtered according to their ritual, and alcohol. To these can be added blood, animals which have been consecrated to a pagan deity, and intoxicating substances other than alcohol.³⁸ In the United States, alcohol is important not only in the social life of individuals, but often also in their professional lives. It then immediately becomes more difficult for Muslims to maintain this religious prohibition. So they, therefore, admit that for professional reasons, or even for social reasons, they do sometimes transgress, particularly businessmen and businesswomen, as they are unwilling to compromise their integration into American society.

³⁵ Peter W. Williams, *America's Religions: From their Origins to the Twenty First Century*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002, p. 453.

³⁶ Wuthnow, 2005, pp. 59-60.

³⁷ Ibid., 2005, p. 62.

³⁸ Arif, 2002, p. 63.

As to the question of whether Muslims are allowed to eat with non-Muslims, this question does not seem to arise in America because the Qur'an says they can eat with People of the Book. Yvonne Haddad, however, says that of all Muslims in the United States, the South Asians are the most punctilious in their observance of forbidden foods and not eating with non-Muslims, because they have lived alongside the Hindus, who traditionally offer food to the gods, which is absolutely forbidden in Islam. Food indicates religious belief and it also symbolizes identity. Medieval Christian Europe raised wine and pork into cultural symbols to stand against Islam, Muslims in the United States, a Christian country, has made the avoidance of pork and (to a lesser extent) alcohol into the ultimate symbol of their otherness.³⁹

Financing

Financing agreements acceptable under Islamic law include buy-sell and buy-lease agreements, interest-free loans, cost-plus-profit contracts, stock investments, and partnerships. In seeking financing from other sources, Muslims may find obstacles in the form of states and federal laws. In addition, many of the non-profit groups trying to help them face funding issue. Now the task is to create an alternative financing system for financing the American Muslims. Several local Islamic financing programs have recently begun or are in the planning stages like Phillips community Development Corp, and the Minneapolis Community Development Agency, The Minneapolis Consortiums of Community Developers, Dalsan Auto Dealer, a few companies such as American Finance Lariba and MSI Financial Services offer car and equipment leasing and interest-free financing for houses and business. A Twin Cities group working to form an Islamic credit union, Banks such as Wells Fargo & Co. and University Bank are exploring how they can help Islamic businesses and encourage home ownership.⁴⁰

The term Jihad and its usage

The usage of the word *jihad* has been a controversial focus. Asma Gull Hasan differs to agree with the conventional explanation of the word *jihad* and brings out the difference of the Muslims in other countries and American Muslims in using and practicing

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 65-66.

⁴⁰ Sheryl Jean, "Beliefs and Banking," *Muslim Life in America*, U.S Department of State: Washington D.C., PP. 46-49.

the term *jihad*. Most of the Arab and Muslim world will use *jihad* as a tool of anti-American, anti- Western, and anti-Christianity. And this is a general view percolated to the world wide public. But American Muslims think of *jihad* in its true form and define it as a struggle. It is not a holy war against any community but merely a struggle to strengthen one's beliefs against corruption and anti-Islamic forces.⁴¹

Other Problems

There are other problems such as in the case of sports, especially the clothing, dances with modern music, proms, which require that one should have a partner of the opposite sex, are equally condemned by the traditionalist. There has been a tendency to compromise however, because parents know that sport is an important part of education in America and they want their children to succeed professionally as well as academically. They try to rationalize the issues and stresses on trust and confidence placed on their children, at the same time the children try to compartmentalize their lives to resolve the tensions as to please their parents.⁴² Dating is generally prohibited for all Muslim young people, even in the U.S. "We have marriage first, love later," explains Abdul Hadeem Dogar, director of the Islamic foundation in Villa Park. Once married, Dogar says Muslim woman generally is expected to have children, take care of them and not work outside the home.⁴³

Muslim family in the United States

Muslim parents are very apprehensive of how their children will grow in the United States and constantly reflect concerns about their children. Robert wuthnow in his book *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* says;

In suburban Chicago, a Muslim mother says that her children constantly face problems at school her son's teacher taught on square dancing, which violated his understanding about no dancing with the opposite sex. The public showers after gym class violate Muslim teachings about modesty. The other students make fun of her children for fasting at noon during Ramada. She has generally been able to negotiate successfully with the school authority to resolve these

⁴¹ Hasan, 2001, p. 49.

⁴² Arif, 2002, pp. 98-100.

⁴³ Millett, *The Reference Shelf*: 2003, 75 (1), p. 90.

problems although she remains troubled. Another woman who attends the same Islamic center says that her daughter suffered embarrassment from wearing the traditional scarf, or 'hijab'. There have been a lot of tears rolling down her face because of the children teasing her". Not being able to go on group dates or to swimming parties has also been difficult for the daughter. In Southern California, a Muslim man worries about the kinds of values Muslim children are being exposed to in the United States, especially the permissive views about sexuality and the lack of respect for parents. Keeping the daily prayers also becomes more difficult: "Kids want to do all the fun things that got to wake up at five in the morning and go to the mosque, they say, 'you've got to be out of your mind: my classmates don't do that!'"⁴⁴

Parents exercise control over their children's social interaction and acquaintances. They will be encouraged to intermingle with their community. Girls are kept under stricter surveillance and enjoy less freedom than the boys. They are put to Sunday schools and summer camping so that they are attuned to their culture and religion. The problem is that the younger generations are getting more Americanized be it in their language, dressing, social life, and many of their life courses.⁴⁵ But this problem is checked by the fact that they face certain kind of racism which make them conscious of who they are and therefore offering them to get attaches to their fellow mates to stand together and assert themselves against any prejudices. At its best, the younger generation will maintain a double culture, one that of an American and other being the identity of their culture and Islamic values. The change of air among the younger generation American Muslims are felt all over with positive outlook. They are striving to maintain their identity as an American and as a Muslim, unlike many of their parents and older generation immigrants who thinks that American culture is a bad influence. As this younger generation grows up they see the difference of being a Muslim in America and a Muslim in their home Country which parents had left behind in search for better living. They could see that they enjoy greater freedom, emphasize on gender equality, ethics of hard work for which every person is paid accordingly, and even greater freedom of participation in community life.

Genieve Abdo says that, *"young Muslims born or raised in the United States are often more observant of conservative Islamic practice than their parents. More and more young women are wearing headscarves even if their mothers did not cover themselves. Islamic matchmaking agencies now advertise in many Muslim newspapers and*

⁴⁴ Wuthnow, 2005, p. 65.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 2005, p. 62.

magazines as arranged marriages become more common. Hundreds of Muslim students' association linked nationwide through the internet encourage lifestyles free of alcohol, drugs and premarital sex. They sponsor campus activities that include lessons in the Koran and the hadiths (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) and host communal iftars during Ramadan."⁴⁶

Many American Muslims now hold important position in American government and politics. They serve in military, which was an area of controversy for a long time. Even Muhammad Ali refused to enroll in the military during Vietnam War owing to his Islamic faith. When immigration started, parents were the main educator of Islam, but now Islamic schools have been endorsed with an increasing role. The proportion of parents preferring Islamic schools to the state schools is still very small. Most parents do not wish to sacrifice the economic and professional future of their children nor to compromise their social integration into American society. Full-time Islamic schools might encourage the youths to develop an isolationist behavior, most parents therefore prefer to look after their children's religious education themselves. Others choose to use a system of private lessons at home, calling on the services of an imam, for example. Altogether, in spite of the growth in Islamic schools, the parents' role in transmitting Islamic values and a sense of a distinct identity on to their children remains a crucial one. The part played by Islamic schools should not be underestimated, however. As well as building up the community, they offer a religious education which is perceived by children as more rational than religious life at home, which does not extend beyond a few mechanical rituals.⁴⁷

Second generation American Muslims present similar characters to their parents in their religious observance, their behavior varying according to the requirements of their religion. Few observe the daily prayers, but they do attach more importance to the fast, and in general to the month of Ramadan. Qur'anic prescriptions on food are on the whole observed by the second generation. Some follow this rule not only for the reasons given by the first generation, but also out of respect for their parents. The insistence on *halal* food is more flouted, however. The prohibition on alcohol is also often ignored, because younger generations wish to both respect their traditional and religious prescriptions and to integrate into the host society. But the avoidance of alcohol can also become a means for young Muslims to mark their distinct identity. According to Aminah Mohammad-Arif Muslim identity in America comes in two forms: It can be passive, some young people practicing religion as

⁴⁶ Geneive Abdo, "Islam in America: Separate but Unequal," *The Washington Quarterly*: 28 (4), Autumn 2005, p.9.

⁴⁷ Arif, 2002, pp. 98-100.

their parents have taught them, mechanically and without genuine interest in it. This is, however, mostly the case in younger children. As they grow older, they tend either to completely reject their religious heritage, or they seek to discover it anew and to perpetuate it in the new country they have adopted.⁴⁸

One important reason is the Americans unable to accept Islam as its own. The long history of the United States has been dominated by 'Judeo-Christian', but what must be seen and taken into account is that the population over six million and rapidly growing, America should accept that it is a society of 'Judeo-Christian-Islamic.' What is required on the part of American Muslims is to construct identity which is not culturally and sectionally biased. It is true and has been noted that Muslims came to the United States from all over the world bearing different ethnicity, practices, language, etc. but in the United States they should come up to a platform where every Muslims should be known as American so that they will have stronger voice. Though so much has to be tolerated and adapted.

Stephen Prothero, the head of the department of religion at Boston University was asked, "*Will the phrase Judeo-Christian-Islamic ever be as widely embraced?*" to which he replied, "*I don't think so, largely because it's too long, the term Abrahamic America is becoming pretty widespread. But right now, we're in the midst of a debate over whether Islam can stand alongside Judaism and Christianity as one of the three great American faiths.... We're having trouble with the conversation because we don't know anything about Islam.*"⁴⁹

In an interview with imam Feist Abdul Rauf, he was asked, what are the key differences between being a Muslim in America and being a Muslim in the Muslim world?, to which he replied that it has many aspects, sociological, family, and economic, because of which faith is practiced deliberately in the United States and not because of social pressure. He says that this could be done, broadly, because there is a sense of freedom in the United States. Religion is much personal though there is negative media attention to one's 'Islamicity'. He compares the Muslim American condition to that of Christians in Rome who were fed to the lions. The lion in the US is the media.

Being aware of their minority status they not only perceive United States as a pluralistic, diverse, secular and indifferent to religion, but they also see it as a society dominated but Christians. Though many had faced discrimination and have been treated

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp 98-100.

⁴⁹ Jay Tolson, "In America: An F in Religion," *U.S. News & World Report*: April 9, 2007, 142 (12), p.28.

unfairly, yet, most assert that living in the United States has been good and argue that the nation's laws and customs provide desired freedom and opportunity. American Muslim leaders have often stated they feel freer in America to practice their Islamic faith than in many Muslim countries. Not only the values which Islam share with the American culture, many believes and advocates about the special important role American Muslims could play in the international Muslim *ummah*. Thus a man wrote that Muslims could make 'an essential contribution to the healing of America' by becoming more visible and ceasing to 'cast doubt on the compatibility of Islam, democracy and human rights', he further wrote 'Muslim all over the world are looking with high expectations toward the *ummah* in the US and Canada. Its dynamism, fresh approach, enlightened scholarship and sheer growth is their hope for an Islamic renaissance worldwide. Perhaps the *mujaddid* of the 15th century and the second millennium of the common era will be an American Muslim, inshah Allah.'⁵⁰

The question of Islam in America is extraordinarily complicated and burdensome, both for Muslims and non-Muslims. Two questions are raised as important reasons among many; that of Islam in America and America in Islam. In most case the defining line of relationship between American Muslims and America stems from the question of America in Islam, especially, in modern times.⁵¹ America's involvements in the politics of Arab nations or Muslim states has resulted in either developing positive outcome or created negative impact, both in international relations and domestic relations with the Muslims. America's role in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine issue, and other Islamic states on many instances were failures and the outcome soured the relationship between United States and the involved state and its people.⁵²

Aminah Mohammad-Arif agrees that the relation between America and Muslims in America are shaped more by international events than by the behavior of Muslim immigrants in the United States. Major crisis in the Muslim world can lead to vandalism against mosques or xenophobic attacks on individuals against American Muslims.⁵³ During the Gulf War, for example, mosques and shops, especially those owned by Arabs, were torched, and women, especially if they wore the veil, were attacked. The attack on the World Trade Center in February 1993, and against the FBI building in Oklahoma in April 1995, both

⁵⁰ Karen Leonard, "American Muslims, before and after September 11, 2001," *Economic and Political Weekly*: 37 (24), June 15, 2002, p. 2294.

⁵¹ Hillel, *The Public Interest*: Spring 2004, p. 37.

⁵² Wuthnow, 2005, p. 62.

⁵³ Arif, 2002, p. 238

provoked renewed 'Muslim bashing' and 'Arab bashing'. Muslims are threatened not only by a certain ambient hostility towards Islam, which is sustained by American foreign policy, but also as immigrants. They also face discrimination. In 1996, there were 232 discriminatory acts reported against Muslims as compared to 60 in 1995. Most of these discriminatory incidents happen in the workplace. Some veiled women for example, have been abusively dismissed. Civil rights protection organizations nearly always intervene in such cases and offending company is often forced to reverse its decision.⁵⁴ He says that in any kind of discrimination American Muslims react on two extreme bases: dissimulation and/or assimilation on one hand, and on the other mobilization. Some immigrants are keen above all things to become well integrated into American society, and so they choose dissimulation as their safest option. In some cases this implies assimilation. Dissimulation does not imply renunciation of Muslim identity. In most cases they assert their Islamic identity even though it is not proclaimed loudly, and to pass on their culture to the younger generation. There are cases where they changed their names to sound more American and get assimilated to the society. They even renounce their religion and ethnic identity to be more accepted.

The other chose to mobilize and rally together not only to oppose discrimination but also combat ignorance, and to raise their community profile. They are to change the wrong images conceived by non-Muslims, to attract new converts and to promote Islam as an accepted religion together with Christian and Jews.⁵⁵

The American Muslim community is at a crucial crossroads. It is experiencing an existential crisis. Students of Islam in the West are beginning to ask questions about the future of Islam, and Muslims in an increasingly Islamophobic West are growing wary of the unrest and growing tide of extremism in the Muslim world. At the same time, American Muslims have reached a critical mass. This gives them a presence that promises influence in the mainstream society, and a visibility that also attracts backlash, as people fear its growth and influence. Scholars like Fawaz A. Gerges, maintain that contemporary Arab and Muslim experience is similar to that of communities such as American Jew and Irish Americans, who too were assimilated only after being discriminated against, marginalized and oppressed.⁵⁶ The determination of the American Muslim community to make an impact on the political, theological and cultural scene on North America, and the growing fear and prejudice against

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 239.

⁵⁵ Ibid, pp. 242-243.

⁵⁶ Barbara McGraw, and Jo Renee Formicola (ed.), *Taking Religious Pluralism Seriously*, Texas, U.S.A: Waco, 2005, p. 127.

Islam and Muslims in the United States, has created a unique situation for Muslims. Unlike Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Mormons, and others, American Muslims do not yet have a place in American society.⁵⁷ Muslim immigrants who started coming to the United States in the early 1960's had already tasted the elixir of Islamic revivalist fervor and experienced brutality and autocracy of their governments of origin, which were interested in either crushing or co-opting emerging Islamic movements. Though there was deep hostility and prejudice against them, the Muslims could organize themselves and establish Islamic movements because America offers political and religious freedom, and its negative characters were nothing in comparison with the stifling character of despotic regimes in Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Sudan, and Palestine.⁵⁸

The degree of Muslim integration in America is revealed by their average household income, which is higher than that of the general population. Two-thirds of Muslim households earn more than \$50,000 per year, as compared to a median U.S. household income of \$42,158, and a quarter of Muslim households earn \$100,000 or more. This is undoubtedly both a cause and effect of their high level of educational attainment: more than a third of Muslim Americans have advanced degrees, compared to 8.6 percent for the population as a whole. They tend to live in improving neighborhoods in central cities and in the suburbs. On the whole, residential segregation is low, although it appears to be increasing as Muslim begin to gather more in their own enclaves. It is unclear whether this represents a durable trend, but it could be that integration of Muslims into American society is slowing down.⁵⁹ Because of high educational qualification the American Muslim could create a crucial mass of intellectual Muslim elite in the United States. The American Muslims found that the American society could provide them the freedom to rethink the Islamic civilization project and to indulge in serious rejuvenation of the stagnant Islamic sciences which was not available in the Muslim world, and that they could revive Islamic civilization through the intellectual revival of *ummah* and spread it throughout the world including America. Intellectuals such as Ismail Farooqi and his Islamization of Knowledge Project, and Sayyed Hossein Nasr and his Islamic Philosophy and Islamic Science Project are inactive of this thinking.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 128.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 127-129.

⁵⁹ Daniel Benjamin, and Steven Simon, *The Next Attack: Failure of the War on Terror and a Strategy for Getting it Right*, New York: Times Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2005, p. 119.

⁶⁰ McGraw, and Formicola (ed.), 2005, p.129.

What many people, especially scholars agree on is that Muslims in America begin to have a different identity than Muslims from other nation. Though they come from different countries bearing different culture, language and race, yet, in order to maintain a common distinct identity, they evolve into what is commonly known as ‘American Muslims.’ Some scholars feel that American Muslims practices the purer form of Islam because their interpretation of their religious text Qur’an, is unbiased. They would pay attention on the passages that emphasizes American values such as self-respect and gender equality. They realize that religion is culture biased and that American culture has made them into a better Muslims than they would have been elsewhere. American Muslims say that they become more Muslim in the United States than they were back home. There are instances where women will wear *hijab* only after coming to America. Thus, strengthening the Islamic identity and asserting Islam openly. Be it attending the Friday prayers, or fasting during *Ramadan*, or observing daily prayers, many American Muslims feel that they do it more often in America than they had done it in their land of origin. The younger generation has become much bolder and more vocal in advocating their religion and asserting their identity.

Freedom of religion in the West, and America in particular, would produce Islamic ideas and ideology and then be exported back to the Muslim world where they would be introduced and tested in the hope that they would stimulate and galvanize social and religious reform. The later generation Islamic leaders in the United States work to improve the conditions of Muslims and increase political and economic influence in the United States, they tend to improve the conditions throughout the Muslim world. organizations such as CAIR (Council on American Islamic Relations), AMC (American Muslim Council), MPAC (Muslim Political Action Committee), KAC (Kashmiri American Council), AMA (American Muslim Alliance), and AMJ (American Muslims for Jerusalem), use the available resources of the American Muslim community to fight for freedom, democracy, and self-determination of the Muslim world.⁶¹

These leaders realized that the most important goal was not to assimilate and disappear into the great melting pot, like many who had come before them. They needed to defend and consolidate Islamic identity in the United States society and be accepted. In Barbara A. McGraw and Jo Renee Formicola edited book, *Taking Religious Pluralism Seriously*, Muqtedar Khan writes about “American Muslims and the Rediscovery of America’s

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 129-130.

Sacred Ground". He divides the development of American Muslim community in the last three decades into two phases. The first phase entailed consolidation of the Islamic identity, and the second phase entailed making an impact on the American society. To fulfill these goals nearly two thousand Islamic centers and over twelve hundred Islamic schools have mushroomed within the last three decades. Several Islamic movements such as ISNA (Islamic Society of North America), and the ICNA (Islamic Circle of North America) emerged to galvanize momentum and favor in adherence to Islamic practices so that the Islamic identity of the immigrant community did not dissipate. The conversion to Muslims, both black and white Americans, and the revision to Muslims, mostly by the black Americans added strength to this momentum. Thus the aspiration of American Muslim leadership became as follows:

- 1) Defending the Islamic identity of Muslim in America, as against assimilation.
- 2) Developing intellectual and political resources capable of making significant social and political changes in the Muslim world.
- 3) Making an impact on American society.

But there are two dimensions that act as hurdles in realizing the full acceptance and respected participation in American democracy. The first is the ignorance about Islam and prejudice towards Arabs and Muslims which is widespread in the American society, and secondly, resistance to adjustment within the Muslim community itself.⁶²

Muslim women wearing headscarves were usually screened out at the interview stage of applying for a job. Teachers would often send Muslim girls home for wearing the headscarf. Girls were punished when they refused to wear revealing cloths in the gym classes or swimming pools. Men faced discrimination for wearing beards or caps, and for wanting a longer break on Fridays to offer the congregational Friday prayers. They faced resistance to their request for time off for Islamic festivals. Muslims in their careers could be jeopardized because Islamic etiquette and dietary laws socially marginalized them.

Many Muslims, though, were neither disturbed nor concerned. They were pleased with their material success and tried to gain acceptance in the mainstream culture by distancing themselves from Islam and Islamic practices. For those who were not keen on defending their Islamic identity, life in America was full of promises. Many realized the American dream, and enjoyed the prosperity and freedom available in America.

⁶² Ibid., p. 131.

Islamic Organization in the United States

Islamic organizations play an important role in the American Muslim community life. They are the main source of support and guidance for the community. Some important American Muslim's organizations are discussed below.

FIO

A need to establish an organization at a national level was recognized with the rapid expansion and growth of the Muslim community in the United States.⁶³ The outcome of such thought was the formation of Federation of Islamic Organizations (FIO) in the 1950s, led by Abdullah Igram. While he was serving in the U.S. army during the Second World War, he was frustrated that the armed services did not recognize his identity as a Muslim. After returning home, he began to work for the recognition of Muslims in America. FIO was formed, with Igram as its president and fifty-two mosques as members. The organization, with its headquarter in Detroit, and mainly funded by Saudi Arabia, still continues to function. It played a key role in providing an umbrella of unity for American mosques in the 1950s, and it was the first attempt to provide for conversation and collaboration among Muslims in the United States.⁶⁴

MAS

Muslim American Society (MAS) is a group of dedicated Islamic activists, also called workers. It was formed to strengthen national and international ties among Muslims of all national origins and ethnicities. MAS is an outgrowth of the Cultural Society that was established in Chicago, Illinois, in 1969 as a nonprofit organization focusing on the development of educated and spiritually enriched members. The group has grown into a body of Islamic workers who meet weekly in about three hundred small study groups. As such, much of the group's work is designed to shape the religious and intellectual character of its members. The group pursued a path encouraging its members full participation in American society, and

⁶³ Smith, 1999, pp. 167-168.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 167-168.

advocating local cultural preservation for converts to Islam.⁶⁵ The group also recognized the need to offer recreational programs to the rapidly growing Muslim teen population. Following the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and the Jamaati Islami of the Indian subcontinent, the organization was created to provide structure through which the Muslim Students Associations that had begun to appear on a number of American campuses could relate to one another.⁶⁶ In 1993, the *Muslim Students Association (MSA)* youth center was launched in Brooklyn, New York. They help students handle peer pressure from the non-Muslim student body, for example, concerning drinking alcohol, or traditional head scarf worn by many Muslim women.⁶⁷ It sponsors the week long nationwide Islam Awareness Week to educate Americans about Islam. More than one hundred campus affiliates of the MSA organize a week-long program to generate awareness and understanding of Islam among their classmates.⁶⁸ Senior citizens were focused on Muslims and sustaining their faith and Islamic practices. But as the organization was taken over by the younger generations, many more Muslims became outwardly focused. They are at ease with Muslim identity and more interested in presenting a positive image of Islam.⁶⁹

ISNA

The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) which was formed in 1971 offered legal protection to affiliated properties designated for mosque use. Its headquarter is located in Plainfield, Indiana. It was an organization to foster unity among Muslims from different ethnic groups and to carry forward a mission to non-Muslims (Catherine L. Albanese, 1999, p. 298). By 1990s the organization had grown with significant assets and local roots, and began to formalize its work placing emphasize on community development. *"ISNA activities range widely and attend to virtually every aspect of Islam in the twentieth-century America. Instruction and sometimes financial assistance are provided to local groups wishing to organize around particular issues of Islamic interest, and its national services include a great repertoire of instructional materials, workshops, library facilities, housing assistance, a marriage bureau operating a computerized database for matching partners, certificates for marriage and for taking the shahada, a zakat fund, da'wa literature, an Islamic*

⁶⁵ McGraw, and Formicola, 2005, p. 135.

⁶⁶ Smith, 1999, pp. 168-169.

⁶⁷ Beverley, 2003, p. 35.

⁶⁸ Eck, 2001, p. 235-236.

⁶⁹ McGraw, and Formicola, 2005, p. 135.

book service and audiovisual center, the AMANA Mutual Trust Fund, and the ISNA Women's Committee. Among the journals ISNA publishes are Islamic Horizons, American Journal of Islamic Studies, and Al-Ittihad".⁷⁰ The organization also deals with imam training and how Muslims can respond to challenges posed by increased popular and media scrutiny following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.⁷¹ In 1985 ISNA leaders recognized the need for an organization aimed at young people born and raised in North America. *The Muslim Youth of North America (MYNA)* was formed to meet this need. It had carried on activities like producing rap-music with Muslim themes, conducted camps and other educational activities. ISNA is the largest national Muslim organization educates Muslim voters about relevant political issues and encourages intra-Muslim dialogue on such matters. It provides many other public forms for Muslim community development organizations operating under the ISNA umbrella include the Muslim Students Association, the Islamic Medical Association, the American Muslim Engineers and Scientists, and the American Muslim Social Scientists.⁷²

ICNA

In 1974 a small group of South Asian students established the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), concentrating on building a pool of Islamic activists and work in social issues. The core of ICNA's organization is the approximately one hundred study groups that meet monthly to study the Qur'an and discuss community issues.⁷³ ICNA is known for its strict adherence to the spirit and law of Islam, exemplified in its national meetings at which separate sessions are arranged for women. ICNA focuses less on pressing social and political concerns than ISNA and more on spiritual regeneration of American Muslims and the direction of youth to righteous living. Its primary publication is the monthly journal *The Message*.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Smith, 1999, p. 170.

⁷¹ Gary Laderman, and Luis Leon, *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions (Vol. 1)*, California: ABC CLIO, 2003, p. 140.

⁷² Feener (ed.), 2004, p. 299.

⁷³ Nimer, 2002, pp. 65-68.

⁷⁴ Smith, 1999, p. 171.

ICSE

The Council on Islamic Education in Fountain Valley, California, was established in 1990 to stimulate Muslim involvement in public school textbook rearing. The Council formed a panel of education consultants to advise publishers of social studies and world history textbooks on their treatment of Islam. The organization has developed instructional materials on Islam and Muslims for use in public and private schools. The Council also conducts workshops on Islamic history for social studies teachers⁷⁵ (Mohammad Nimer, 2002, p. 53).

CAIR

The Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), was formed in 1994 and has been a watchdog organization seeking to battle prejudice against Islam in both the Civic Public Forum and the Conscientious Public Forum. It keeps a close watch on Washington politics and the civil liberties of the Muslims.⁷⁶ The CAIR based in Washington D.C., is primarily concerned with cataloging acts of anti-Muslim discrimination in the United States and lobbies legislators to enact and enforce laws that protect Muslims and other minorities.⁷⁷ Its American Muslim Research Center (ARC) documents incidents and events that affect Muslim civil rights in America.⁷⁸ According to its communications director, Ibrahim Hooper, CAIR has a very large electronic mailing list. They send emails to its members whenever an incident of 'Islamophobia' is reported, or write letters to the offending party. It fights discrimination in the workplace, and take every available action to fight discrimination. Its biggest contribution is, however, the education it provides to the community about how to fight discrimination and prejudice. It has successfully restored jobs and obtains compensation for Muslims suffering from discrimination.⁷⁹ To fight against anti-Muslim prejudice in the United States; its representatives, for example, regularly appear on rather cantankerous "shock-talk" shows, where they are generally hit with a barrage of questions equating U.S. Muslims to terrorist. It also lobbies government officials on such foreign issues as the 'war on terror' and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Nimer, 2002, p. 53.

⁷⁶ Beverley, 2003, p. 70.

⁷⁷ Laderman, and Leon, 2003, p. 140.

⁷⁸ Smith, 1999, p. 175.

⁷⁹ McGraw, and Formicola, 2005, p. 135.

⁸⁰ Feener (ed.), 2004, p. 300.

However, Hillel Fradkin is critical about the Muslim organizations in the United States. He says that Muslim organizations in the United States are still at their infancy. The most well-known American organization, the AMC and the CAIR, both were founded only in the 1990s. Since they are not membership organizations, and because of the extraordinary diversity, relative prosperity, and dispersion of American Muslim's, one can hardly speak of any organized Muslim community. Muslim organizations also suffer how African-American and South Asian Muslims have complained that many major Muslim organizations were too preoccupied with an "Arab Muslims agenda"; the Arab-Israeli dispute, to the detriment of their own concerns. Similar disputes exist between traditional/moderate Muslims and the radicals. But Islam could continue to be diverse and decentralized, peacefully reflecting ethnic and sectarian differences, even producing a variety of new forms, as other religions in America have done.⁸¹

American Politics and American Muslims

In the 1990s, the community and the leadership became more confident. It was a time the new generation had grown to become the community's leaders. They were confident, successful, and deeply committed to Islam and the well-being of the Muslim *ummah*. While the members of the senior generation were content to defend, the new generation was eager to be more proactive. Their interest was not just preservation of Islamic identity, but also to assert that Islam is also an integral part of the American society.⁸² Not just forming and establishing organizations, but also for the first time, the American Muslims began to flex their political muscle on the national stage in the 1992 election campaigns. In the 1996 presidential election, more than 70 percent of Muslims who were eligible to vote did so. In contrast, the national average was just over 49 percent. In the 2000 campaign Muslims realized they represented a significant voting bloc for both the presidential candidates. The electoral importance of this increasing organized community has grown tremendously. In the 2000 and 2004 elections, the Muslim community in Michigan was identified as a key constituency in a battleground state that could conceivably affect the outcome of the presidential vote. Senior political operatives of both parties lined up to meet the community leaders. There has been

⁸¹ Fradkin, *The Public Interest*: 2004, pp. 47-48.

⁸² McGraw, and Formicola (ed.), 2005, p. 134.

growth in grassroots organization, lobbying, voter registration, and the number of delegates to national conventions and candidates for office.⁸³

Dr. Agha Saeed, a professor at California University tells his fellow Muslims, *“If you don’t vote you don’t have any weight in America.”* Omar Ahmad, with the Council on American-Islamic Relations, urged Muslims to vote with a united vision. *“Many Muslims think we can’t make a difference. We are participants in the political system whether we like it or not—we are taxpayers. Let politicians know where you want your money used. Voting is not an option, it’s an Islamic obligation.....Muslims must vote in one unit, agenda specific, as one bloc, or we will cancel each other out. To make a difference we must be united and vote together. The Muslim interest should be above all personal interests; otherwise it is selfish and destructive.”* American Muslim Political Coordination Council (AMPCC), and Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) are directly involved in lobbying the president and Congress for laws and promote Muslim rights in the United States.⁸⁴ AMPCC was formed in 1997 by four of the most powerful Muslim political action group leaders. In the 2000 presidential elections the AMPCC decided to endorse George W. Bush. As a result, Muslims in Florida gave Bush their overwhelming support. Al Gore could not command as many Muslims votes as Clinton did in 1996, and so the presumption that it was one of the main reason as to why Al Gore lost the election.⁸⁵

Asma Gull Hasan identifies two important areas as to why American Muslims cannot are not very active in American politics. First, politically American Muslims are diversified. Their diversity stems from the fact that they give more importance to the interest of their own community more than the interest of the Muslim community. For instance, an Indian Muslim will have more sympathy than for the American Muslims as a whole. This is the reason as to why though the Muslim community in the United States may outnumber the Jewish community, is still unable to influence the political policies in the American government. Though they may be active in the politics, yet, they do not occupy prominent political office because of the diversity that exists within the community. And this acts as an impediment for unifying the entire community into a single political entity and, thereby, disabling them to have a strong political voice unlike that of American Jewish. Second, Americans are always suspicious about Muslims. Muslims are always portrayed negatively and,

⁸³ Benjamin, and Simon, 2005, p. 119.

⁸⁴ Laderman, and Leon, 2003, p. 140.

⁸⁵ Beverley, 2003, pp. 69-70.

therefore, it is likely that a Muslim candidate would not have enough sympathizers and unlikely to win enough votes. She also identifies other problems too, for example, a particular candidate not only faces challenges from outside his own community but from within his own community. There are instances of jealousies among themselves which end up in not supporting each other. Muslims will not participate in American politics because they are dissatisfied with the role of United States on issues like Kashmir, Kosovo, Chechnya, Palestine, and other similar matters, where an Islam states or Muslims are involved. They think that United States actions are biased against the Muslims, and therefore they do not see much reason as to why they should actively involve and participate in American politics.⁸⁶ *“Since 2000, Muslims have been candidates in congressional races and have run for local office. Yet, in some cases, U.S. voters’ racism and ignorance had made campaigning a painful process, forcing some Muslims to question whether political activism is really worthwhile. In 2003, Maad Abu Ghazala, a light-skinned lawyer of Palestinian descent, ran for a seat in the 12th Congressional District in San Francisco. His opponent was Democratic incumbent Tom Lantos, a Holocaust survivor who is a strong supporter of Israel. Campaigning door to door with Abu Ghazal revealed the striking bias among voters. After glancing at his literature and learning his name, many declared they would never vote for a Muslim.”*⁸⁷

The American Muslims have certain advantages living in America because, the Constitution of the United States guarantees the freedom of religion and assembly to all its citizens, which is equally enjoyed by the Muslims in America as well. Mian Sharaf, a surgeon and Muslim leader said that, *“I am convinced that the resurgence of Islam will occur in America. That is a big statement to make. Why do I think this is so? Because America is the only country in the world where education is very high. But also, America, to me, is the only place left in this world where you can today stand up and literally say anything you want to say. This is a tremendous opportunity for physical, mental, and emotional growth, and it should be nourished. But in order to take advantage of it, we’re going to have to work for it”*.⁸⁸ The 1990s experienced the emergence of organizations like AMC (American Muslim Council), MPAC (Muslim Political Action Committee), AMA (American Muslim Alliance), AMJ (American Muslims for Jerusalem), and CSID (Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy). The explicit purpose of these organizations is the political mobilization of American Muslims to accumulate power that can be used to effect change in the Muslim world. They educate American Muslims

⁸⁶ Hasan, 2001, pp. 149-160.

⁸⁷ Abdo, *The Washington Quarterly*: 28 (4), Autumn 2005, p. 16.

⁸⁸ Eck, 2001, pp. 287-289.

in the nuances of democracy, pluralism, and interest-group politics. They mobilize the Muslims to participate in American politics at every level, from voting in the elections to running for office. They actively lobby Congress and the executive branch to change American foreign policy toward Palestine, Iraq, Pakistan, and Kashmir etc. At the annual country and regional conventions of Islamic movements like ISNA and ICNA American Muslims are encouraged to participate in the American political process.⁸⁹ M.A. Muqtedar Khan says that by the end of the 1990s, all of the major developments indicated that American Muslims has begun to influence American politics and culture in the Civic Public Forum and the Conscientious Forum.⁹⁰

In 1991 Siraj Wahaj (the African American imam of Masjid al-Tawqa, the mosque in Brooklyn, New York) offered the first-ever Muslim invocation in the U.S. House of Representatives, and a short time later W.D. Mohammad did the same in the Senate.⁹¹ Keith Maurice Ellison is an American lawyer and politician belonging to the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party. He became the first Muslim to be elected to the United State Congress when he won the open seat for Minnesota's 5th Congressional district (which contains the entire city of Minneapolis) in the House of Representatives in 2006. Ellison is also active on the national level in advocacy of Muslims in the United States.⁹² *"The US President's Eid greetings to American Muslims, Iftar Parties for Muslim servicemen at Pentagon, US Congress invitation to Imama Warith Deen Muhammad to give the opening prayers are indications that Islam has arrived at the religious and political horizon of the country. President Bush's celebration of Eidulfitr with a group of Muslim children at the White House on December 17, 2001, is an affirmation that involvement of Muslims in the American political system has finally succeeded in making Islam and its holy days are better known and accepted by the larger American society."*⁹³

The United States offer equal opportunity and equal justice to every citizen and the Constitution guarantees and protects these rights. American Muslims enjoy all these rights along with the rest of the other communities. Therefore, in spite of prejudices against Muslims and misinterpretation of Islam, there has been a progressive development of the Muslim community in the United States. *"In a society where there is political and religious*

⁸⁹ McGraw, and Formicola (ed.), 2005, pp.135-136.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 136.

⁹¹ Leonard, 2003, p. 19.

⁹² [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keith_Ellison_\(Politician\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keith_Ellison_(Politician)), June 19, 2007.

⁹³ Kidwai, *Journal of Peace Studies*: 9 (6), Nov-Dec 2002, pp. 34-35.

freedom, Muslims could quickly organize and freely establish Islamic movements that were constantly repressed in the heartlands of the Muslim world.”⁹⁴

⁹⁴ McGraw, and Formicola (ed.), 2005, p. 129.

Chapter Three

American Muslims: 9/11 and After

The September 11, 2001, attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center was one of the most unforgettable experiences not just for the Americans, but also for the rest of the world. The incident dramatically altered the equation of all international and domestic policies of the United States. Before September 11, 2001, the political leaders of Muslims in America were overwhelmingly optimistic; indeed, they envisioned a major role for Muslims in the United States.¹ Prior to the attacks, Islam in America was on the rise. Islam was attracting many followers from all the groups in the United States. Mosques were on the rise in every major city in North America, as well as Islamic schools and Islamic political action committees. Moreover, the American Muslims votes made a huge impact in Florida for electing G.W. Bush to the White House, and this roused the confidence among in the minds of the American Muslims.² They were also expected to play a special role in the leadership of the international Muslim *ummah*.

But immediately after the attacks the trajectory along which American Muslims were moving was changed dramatically by the events of 9/11.³ Because of the general impression that the attack was carried out by Islamic fundamentalists, the American Muslims were faced with unprecedented hostility and suspicion. The open-ended “war on terror” after 9/11 has exaggerated and traumatized further the potential for Muslims to become fully participating members in the greater American society.⁴ American Muslims, therefore, face greater burdens after 9/11 than they did before. These burdens obviously include the heightened awareness and scrutiny of their community.⁵

Right after the 9/11 attacks, Muslims in the United States faced fear and insecurity. In the initial few days after the attacks many Muslims were hoping that

¹ Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003, p. 22.

² Barbara A. McGraw, and Jo Renee Formicola (ed.), *Taking Religious Pluralism Seriously (Third edition)*, Texas, U.S.A: Waco, 2005, pp. 136-137.

³ Leonard, 2003, p. 23.

⁴ McGraw, and Formicola, 2003, p. 127.

⁵ Hillel Fradkin, “America in Islam,” *The Public Interest*: Number 155, Spring 2004, p. 48-49.

Muslims had not been responsible for the attacks.⁶ But the growing evidence that the attacks had been triggered by Islamic terrorist, and Osama Bin Laden, the leader of the international Islamic terrorist network called Al-Qaeda being held responsible, the American Muslims were brought to the spotlight.

American Muslims become a targeted community

The 9/11 attacks had devastating impact upon the Muslim community in the United States. The Muslims in America were faced with unprecedented challenges of discrimination, hostility, and prejudice. Islam fomented very high levels of Islamophobia- expressions of hatred for Muslims.⁷ Islam has been equated with Nazism. The Qur'an has been compared to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and the American Muslims have been declared to be Trojan horses and a danger to the national security and should, therefore, all be deported, and Prophet Muhammad has been declared to be a terrorist on a prominent national television show.⁸

For many Americans, the growth of Muslim population the West, especially in the United States, has generated increasing concerns about their settlement in what has been considered the heart of Western civilization and the world's preeminent superpower. In the minds of many American policymakers and opinion shapers, the coming of age of Muslim American communities represents a grave security threat.⁹ Because of all these negative remarks and perceptions raised against Muslims defending and preserving the existing achievements and assets, such as the nearly two thousand mosques, the various Islamic schools, charities, and access to media and government itself, became uphill battles.¹⁰

There were some positive responses and reactions as well. President Bush has done a great deal to make the government's necessary precautions and actions as bearable as possible for America's Muslim. And the country has

⁶ Karen Leonard, "American Muslims, before and after September 11, 2001," *Economic and Political Weekly*: 37 (24), June 15, 2002, p. 2294.

⁷ McGraw, and Formicola (ed.), 2005, p. 137.

⁸ Ali S. Asani, "So that you may know one another": A Muslim American reflects on Pluralism and Islam", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*: Volume 588, July 2003, p. 49.

⁹ Kathleen Moore, "A Part of US or Apart from US?: Post-September 11 attitudes toward Muslims and Civil Liberties," *Middle East Report*: No. 224, Autumn 2002, p. 32.

¹⁰ McGraw, and Formicola (ed.), 2005, p. 137.

responded with overwhelming benevolence.¹¹ He started meeting with religious leaders almost immediately and visited the Islamic center mosque in Washington. On September 17, 2001, President Bush met with Muslim leaders at a mosque in Washington, D.C. Afterwards, standing with Muslim leaders, he addressed the American people. *"The face of terrorism is not the true faith of Islam. That's not what Islam is all about. Islam is Peace. These terrorists don't represent peace, they represent evil and war. When we think of Islam, we think of a faith that brings comfort to a billion people around the world. America counts millions of Muslims amongst our citizens, and Muslims make an incredibly valuable contribution to our country. The Muslims are doctors, lawyers, law professors, members of the military, entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, moms and dads, and they need to be treated with respect. In our anger and emotion, our fellow Americans must treat each other with respect."*¹² Immediately after September 2001 attacks, many Christians risked their lives so as to protect mosques from being vandalized. On many university campuses, American women wore headscarves as a mark of solidarity with Muslim women.¹³ There were many non-Muslim Americans who stood along with Muslims to show their sympathy and solidarity to the community. However, such reactions were not widespread, and after a short while American Muslims had to face the uphill task of hatred, discriminations, verbal abuse, and physical abuse even more than before.

In spite of President's Bush appeal for tolerance, American Muslims faced accusations that Islam is basically a terrorist religion. These negative remarks roused the feeling of hatred among the general public and they lashed out verbal and physical abuse against American Muslims. CAIR documented more than 1,700 attacks on American Muslims from September 11 through early February 2002. These ranged from 289 acts of physical assault and property damage to 166 reported incidents of discrimination in the workplace. People who appeared like Muslims were singled out for extensive searches at airports, reports of hate mail, bomb threats, reports of public harassment, and allegations of intimidation from federal agencies, death threats and 11 deaths attributed to vigilantism against

¹¹ Fradkin, *The Public Interest*: Number 155, Spring 2004, p. 49.

¹² James A. Beverley, "Islamic Faith in America," *Facts on Files*: 2003, pp. 75-76.

¹³ Liyakatali Takim, "From Conversion to Conversation: Interfaith Dialogue in Post 9-11 America," *The Muslim World*: Vol. 94, July 2004, p. 343-246.

American Muslims were reported.¹⁴ Newspapers across the country reported attacks on Muslims or people who appeared to be of Middle Eastern origin. An angry crowd marching on a Muslim mosque in Bridgeport, Illinois, was turned away by the police. In Huntington, New York, a drunk driver tried to run down a Pakistani woman in a mall parking lot. The man then threatened to kill her for “*destroying my country.*” ABC News reported just hours after the attacks on September 11, “*the Islamic Institute of New York received a telephone call threatening the school’s 450 students,*” said manager Azam Meshkat. “*The gentleman was very angry and he started threatening the children. He said was going to paint the streets with our children’s blood.*”¹⁵ In addition, several mosques have been vandalized, for instance, on 12 March 2003, projectile were hurled through the windows of the largest mosques and schools in America.¹⁶

After the 9/11 attacks different individuals and groups generally reacted negatively and most of them triggered hatred in the minds of the people. While vast majority of people disapproved of terrorism, they are unconcerned with Islam and they are not anti-Muslim.¹⁷ While many reactions to the September 11 catastrophe were noble, others were not. Some troubled individuals struck back swiftly, severely and savagely at persons they believed were involved in causing the national trauma. Because many people involved in the hijackings were Muslims and Arab, a small, but maniacal number of individuals in the United States reacted by threatening, attacking and even killing innocent people who were Muslims, Arabs, and persons who looked like them.¹⁸ The first week after the disaster there were at least a half dozen Arab Americans and Muslims were murdered in response to the attack. The year after the disaster, Americans apparently committed over eight hundred violent crimes against Middle Easterners, and Arabs. In its 2001 annual report on hate crimes, the F.B.I. identified more than one thousand six hundred percent (1600%) increase in hate crime perpetrated upon persons in these groups. Cases were reported on physical assaults, desecration of Muslim places of worship, and private homes, and vandalizing of businesses.¹⁹

Many important public figures and religious leaders from other faith started to talk evil of Islam. Famous novelist Salman Rushdie shared his perspective of the

¹⁴ Beverley, 2003, p. 79.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁶ Asani, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*: Volume 588, July 2003, p. 50.

¹⁷ Saleem Kidwai, “Muslims in America: Opportunities and Challenges,” *Journal of Peace Studies*: 9 (6), Nov-Dec 2002, p. 31.

¹⁸ Jonathan K. Stubbs, “The Bottom Rung of America’s Race Ladder: After the September 11 Catastrophe Are American Muslims Becoming America’s New N....s?” *Journal of Law and Religion*: 19 (1), 2003-2004, p. 120.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 121.

dark side of Islam in November 2, 2001 issue of *The New York Times*, “*Yes. This is about Islam.*” He argued that Osama Bin Laden and the Al Qaeda is supported by Muslims worldwide. On November 16, 2001, broadcast of *NBC Nightly News*, Franklin Graham, the son of famous evangelist Billy Graham, called Islam “*a very evil and wicked religion.*” He also said, “*I don’t believe this is a wonderful, peaceful religion. It wasn’t Methodist flying into those buildings, it wasn’t Lutherans. It was an attack on this country by people of Islamic faith.*” Robert A. Morey, a popular evangelical author charged that the Prophet Muhammad was a racist, a murderer, an irrational zealot, and a sex-crazed pedophile. He invited all Christians to sign a pledge to “*join in a Holy Crusade to fight against Islam and its false god, false prophet, and false book.*”²⁰

In July 2006, Montaz Elshafi, a 28 years old software engineer in New Jersey casually opened an internal e-mail at work, the message began, “*Dear Terrorist.*” The note from a co-worker was sent to Muslims working at Cisco Systems in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, a few days after train bombings in India that killed 207, in 2006. The e-mail warned that such violent acts wouldn’t intimidate people, but would only make them stronger. Reports of such harassment and discrimination against Muslims are rising, advocacy groups say. A poll of 1,007 Americans shows strong anti-Muslim feeling. A new studies conducted by American Psychological Association suggest that the hard feelings are damaging the mental health of US Muslims. Thirty nine percent of respondents to the poll said they felt at least some prejudice against Muslims. The same percentage favored requiring Muslims, including US citizens, to carry a special ID “*as a means of preventing terrorist attacks in the US.*” About one-third said US Muslims were sympathetic to Al Qaeda, and 22 percent said they wouldn’t want Muslims as neighbors. Verbal harassment and discrimination correlate with worse mental health in studies of Muslims and Arab-Americans since 9/11, says psychologist Mona Amer of Yale University School of Medicine. Though Muslims said they wanted more contact with Americans of other religions, it may be easier for Arab Christians to integrate, Amar speculates. “*They share the mainstream religion. Muslims may have different kinds of names or dress differently and, especially since 9/11, they’re ostracized more.*”²¹

“Tali Ali, 25, has seen good and the bad of being a Muslim in heartland America. People have leaned out car windows to scream at her: ‘*Terrorist go home.*’ But strangers curious about her headscarf have also approached her apologetically to ask about Islam. ‘*I love it, actually, when people ask me questions,*’ said the pink-scarved Ali, who came

²⁰ Beverley, 2003, pp. 76-77.

²¹ “Muslims face Prejudice in US,” *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, August 10, 2006 (USA Today).

to the United States with her Jordanian father and Palestinian mother when she was five. ‘*Out here, I’m the only Muslim some people may meet,*’ said Ali, waiting for friends after Friday prayers at Cincinnati mosque. ‘*I always keep in mind that I’m an ambassador of Islam.*’ For Ali and other Muslims who live far from America’s immigrant-rich big cities, everyday life is a test of tolerance and outreach to fellow Americans who view Islam with suspicion five years after the September 11 attacks and amid bleak and bloody wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. ‘*The negative perception gets bigger by the day, despite all we do,*’ said Inykat Malik, a doctor and board member of the Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati. Karen Dabdoub fights constant brushfires in her work for the Council of American-Islamic Relations in Ohio. In 2005, a Cincinnati mosque was bombed. Fasting Muslim students were criticized in 2006 when they were allowed to avoid the cafeteria during Ramadan. ‘*We’ll get there. It’s not an easy road, but we’ll get there,*’ said Dabdoub, a Cincinnati who converted to Islam.²²

The case of Keith Maurice Ellison: the first American Muslim to be elected to the United States Congress.

Because Ellison stated an intent to use the Qur’an instead of a Bible at his re-enactment of the swearing in ceremony (the official ceremony is done *en masse* without any books). Conservative columnist Dennis Prager wrote a column criticizing him. This drew responses from organizations such as the Council of American-Islamic Relation, the American Family Association, and the Anti-Defamation League. Fifth-term Rep. Virgil Goode (R-Va), responding to “*scores and hundreds of emails*” from his constituents after the Prager articles, has also stated his view that Ellison’s decision to use Qur’an is a threat to “*the values and beliefs traditional to the United States of America.*” He also wrote, “*...if American citizens don’t wake up and adopt the Virgil Goode position on immigration there will likely be many more Muslims elected to the office and demanding the use of the Koran.*” On January 4, 2007 (the opening day of Congress), CNN reported that Ellison met Goode on the House floor to shake hands and Goode accepted an offer to talk over coffee. That same day during his oath reenactment Ellison used a two Volume Qur’an published in London in 1764 that was once owned by Thomas Jefferson and loaned to Ellison by “*the rare book and special collections division at the Library of Congress.*” According to Ellison, “*it demonstrates that from the very beginning of our country, we had people who were visionary, who were religious tolerant, who*

²² “US Muslim face hatred, curiosity,” *Times of India*, New Delhi, February 14, 2007. (Reuters)

believed that knowledge and wisdom could be gleamed from any number of sources, including the Qur'an."²³

The fact is that American Muslims were confronted with violence and harassment in the hands of some individuals, however, it cannot be said that there was widespread persecution and discrimination. The President, other high officials and low ranking security and civil services personnel continuously reassured Muslims of their security. Homes were visited, homes protected and office and business watched.²⁴ John Esposito, distinguished scholar of Islamic studies, advised the American Muslims to put forth more women and young people who speak accent-less American English to articulate their community's message, so that they would not appear like a total outside group. He said to the American Muslims that, "*Unless you tap the next generation, you are not going to make it through the next few months.*"²⁵ Journalists, talk show hosts, and the like sought out moderate Muslims, urging them to speak up and to deplore and repudiate the violent acts and those who would justify them in any way. American-born Muslims and Muslim women were preferred over immigrant men.²⁶ Because of all these kinds of support, hate crimes and violence against the American Muslims were avoided and suppressed to a great extent. On the day of the attack and immediately after, many American Muslim leaders and their counterparts around the world said that Islam has nothing to do with the death and destruction of the attacks.²⁷

Bill Aosse, who comes from a Syrian-Lebanese family, and is a member of the Muslim community in Cedar Rapids, said in a November 11, 2001, article in *USA Weekend*, "*In the best times, people are prejudiced; in the worst of times, you have to expect more hostility. But I have hard time imagining it. After all, this is Iowa, and we're Iowans.*" Imam Taha Tawil of the Cedar Rapids mosque expressed his gratefulness to the citizens of the Midwest for their support of the mosque and its people in the different days after September 11. On 19 November, 2001, he told an ABC News reporter that "*We are lucky and fortunate to be in the Midwest because of the nature of the people, who are hardworking people. That is the general picture we have and that is what really makes Muslims stay in Iowa.*"²⁸

²³ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keith_Ellison_\(Politician\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keith_Ellison_(Politician)), June 19, 2007.

²⁴ Kidwai, *Journal of Peace Studies*: Nov-Dec 2002, pp. 31-32.

²⁵ Leonard, *Economic and Political Weekly*: June 15, 2002, p. 2294.

²⁶ Leonard, 2003, p. 24.

²⁷ Beverley, 2003, pp 75-76.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

The Patriot Act and its effect on Muslim Americans

One of the familiar and predictable outcomes caused by the devastating terrorist attack of 9/11 was the U.S. government policies specifically targeting Arabs and Muslims. According to Susan M. Akram, *“The Devastating attack of 9-11 caused a familiar and predictable response in the United States on two fronts: government policies specifically targeting Arabs and Muslims; and nationwide violence against Arabs and Muslims. As the government stepped up its ‘war on terror’, the administration and federal agencies put in place one set of policies after another that focused on the Arab and Muslim Communities.”*²⁹ Ali S. Asani says that *“Many of the public explanations of Islamophobia have been the direct result of certain government policies introduced in recent months in the interests of promoting national security. They have contributed to the escalation of fear in America about Islam and Muslims. As a result, they have also created fear and anxiety among many of America’s Muslims, many of whom are afraid to attend mosques lest they be profiled. Some Muslim women are afraid to wear headscarves in public, and some even reported to changing their names so that they cannot be identified as Muslim.”*³⁰

Among the many Acts, the Patriot Act, written in response of the 9/11 attacks, is considered the most controversial. It is regarded to be written with Muslims in mind.³¹ What is Patriot Act? *“On October 24-24, 2001, the House and Senate approved sweeping antiterrorist legislation, the USA Patriot Act. The Act, besides providing law enforcement with new powers to conduct searches, employ electronic surveillance and detain suspected terrorists, made great changes in parts of the immigration law. The new grounds of inadmissibility and removal broaden the definition of terrorist activity to include the use of any dangerous device. It adds a definition of terrorist organization to include any organization so designated by the Secretary of State after certain findings, which include a finding that the organization ‘provides material support to further terrorist activity, as well as spouses and children of persons engaging in terrorism.’”*³²

The Act meant *“increased wiretapping, searches without use of a search warrant, use of internment camps for suspects, indefinite detention of suspects without an*

²⁹ Susan M. Akram, “The Aftermath of September 11, 2001: The Targeting of Arabs and Muslims in America,” *Arab Studies Quarterly*: 24 (2&3), Spring/Summer 2002, p.79.

³⁰ Asani, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*: Volume 588, July 2003, p. 50.

³¹ Abdo, *The Washington Quarterly*: 28 (4), Autumn 2005, p. 12.

³² Akram, *Arab Studies Quarterly*: 24 (2&3), Spring/Summer, 2002, p. 82.

evidentiary hearing and ethnic profiling.”³³ Additional provisions in the Act permit retroactive application terrorist provisions. Thus, a non-citizen can also be denied entry for actions he/she took even before the law was passed. Non-citizens can also be denied entry and removed for associating with terrorist organizations even if the organization was not designated at the time of his/her association with it.³⁴

According to Geneive Abdo, the Patriot Act in practice denies the Muslims their civil liberties by empowering law enforcement authorities to raid their homes, offices, and mosques in the name of the war on terrorism.³⁵ According to M.A. Muqtedar Khan, the Patriot Act has effectively nullified the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Eight Amendments to the U.S. Constitution directly, and the First and Ninth Amendments indirectly.³⁶ According to Susan M. Akram, the Patriot Act and related Administration policies since 9/11 rely primarily on racial profiling- the singling-out of Arabs and Muslims for extreme treatment- to prevent or investigate terrorist activity.³⁷

The most startling survey revealing antipathy against the Muslims in the United States was released in December 2004 by Cornell University, which found that 44 percent of Americans surveyed believed in the U.S., government should restrict the civil liberties of Muslim Americans. 27 percent of 1,000 respondents supported requiring all Muslim Americans to register their home addresses with the federal government and 29 percent believed undercover agents should infiltrate Muslim civic organizations.³⁸ This data reflects the increase in hate crimes against Muslims since the September 11 attacks. Mosques have been vandalized, children have been the targets of racist remarks in public schools, Muslims have faced discrimination in their jobs, petitions for building mosques in Muslim communities have faced campaigns of opposition by non-Muslim homeowners, and Muslims have been singled out for searches at airports and other public places.³⁹

Since 2004, the State Department has been mandated by Congress to produce an annual report on global anti-Semitism. The purpose is to protect Jews worldwide from prejudice, hatred, and violence. The United States now also funds many Christian projects

³³ Kathleen Moore, “A Part of US or Apart from US?: Post-September 11 attitudes toward Muslims and Civil Liberties,” *Middle East Report*: No. 224, Autumn 2002, p. 33.

³⁴ Akram, *Arab Studies Quarterly*: 24 (2&3), Spring/Summer 2002, p. 82.

³⁵ Abdo, *The Washington Quarterly*: 28 (4), Spring/Summer 2005, p. 12.

³⁶ McGraw, and Formicola (ed.), 2005, p. 137.

³⁷ Akram, *Arab Studies Quarterly*: 24 (2&3), Spring/Summer, 2002, p. 85.

³⁸ Abdo, *The Washington Quarterly*: 28 (4), Autumn 2005, p. 13-14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13-14.

through its faith-based-initiative programs. But the same government also supports the Patriot Act and other initiatives that systematically target Muslims and violates the civil rights on the basis of their religion. The less-than-equal status of the American Muslim community has resulted in American Muslims being the victim of illegitimate laws passed in the Civic Public Forum.⁴⁰

Because of the tightening of immigration controls, to gain entry to the United States, especially for individuals from Muslim countries is considerably more difficult.⁴¹ More than 760 immigrants (mostly Muslims) were secretly arrested and detained, some for many months. They were denied visits from family members and lawyers. According to human rights organizations, seventy men, all but one of them Muslim, have been jailed for weeks or months as “material witnesses” since 9/11, without having been charged with crimes. These and other actions, like the wholesale and seemingly random interrogations of thousands of American Muslim men, sent shock waves through the community. *“One of the most publicized cases, and one that sparked great dismay within the Muslim community, was that of the Islamic scholar and Swiss citizen Tariq Ramadan, the University of Notre Dame had offered Ramadan a teaching position starting August 2004, and the Department of State had already issued him a visa. The Department Homeland Security (DHS), however, revoked the decision in the summer of 2004. The DHS never revealed the specific charges against Ramadan, instead merely stating that the Patriot Act allowed the U.S. government to deny his visa on suspicion of terrorist connections.”* One DHS spokesperson, frustrated that it was obvious the charges were specious at best said that Ramadan had been banned because of accusations published against him on certain Web sites. That the Patriot Act allowed the DHS to hide behind their verdict was clear.⁴²

According to Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, one of the sorest points for American Muslims has been the aggressive prosecution strategy set by former Attorney General John Ashcroft, and this had *“led to a series of shoddy cases and a succession of dubious sting operations”*. Their apprehension about all these laws had been further stated as, *“Americans may have been given the impression that law enforcement authorities now possess the zeal that had evaded them before September 11, but it is questionable whether the Justice Department’s efforts have made us safer, given how few actual terrorists have been*

⁴⁰ McGraw, and Formicola (ed.), 2005, p. 128.

⁴¹ Daniel Benjamin, and Steven Simon, *The Next Attack: The Failure on the War on Terror and a Strategy for Getting it Right*, New York: Times Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2005, p. 115.

⁴² Abdo, *The Washington Quarterly*: 28 (4), Spring/Summer 2005, p. 12.

apprehended.”⁴³ “Official” American Muslim spokesmen have made charges of discrimination and persecution: profiling, hate crimes, and other anti-Muslim actions. They condemned government closures of Muslim charities suspected of funding terrorist activities and the arrest of some American Muslims charged with terrorist connections. They are critical of Attorney General John Ashcroft, the Department of Justice, and the Patriot Act.⁴⁴

American Muslim dream to make Islam as a co-existing religion along with Judeo-Christianity and to make United States as their home has been shattered. They live in fear, confusion, and extremely insecure about their future. Most American Muslims have very little use for the radicalism of militants that belong to Al Qaeda or the Taliban. They do not support terrorism or the extremism that is now threatening the United States. But they also cannot support the assault on their civil rights launched by the administration that they helped put into power. Increasingly, they are weary of the anti-Islam rhetoric coming from the Christian Right and its growing influence in the White House.⁴⁵ According to Geneive Abdo, *“This Bush administration tendency to make no distinction between the peaceful worshipper and the Islamic militant has also been a factor in cases brought by the Department of Justice in which mosques or individuals are accused of raising money for Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Group, or other radical Islamic organizations. It is no secret that many Muslim Americans believe the Bush’s administration’s support for Israel has led to more oppression for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip living under Israeli occupation. It is also well known that some imams criticize this policy and raise money of their mosques for impoverished Muslim populations, including that of Palestine, but also those of Bosnia and parts of Africa. Their fundraising is intended to ease the pain of poverty, not to support militant activity. Such criticisms of U.S. policies are protected by their constitutional activity. Such criticisms of U.S. policies are protected by their constitutional right of freedom of Expression and, therefore, should not be vulnerable to prosecution.”*⁴⁶

The changed atmosphere has had a dislocating effect and has led to a retreat from the society around them into Muslim enclaves, where their sense of self-worth is not under attack. Since 9/11 a significant number of younger American Muslims have been reeling from the outbreak of prejudice. And according to Abdo, *“Many of these young adults are going to withdraw and avoid participating in a culture that looks down on their religion and*

⁴³ Benjamin, and Simon, 2005, p. 121.

⁴⁴ Fradkin, *The Public Interest*: Number 155, Spring 2004, p. 49.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 137-138.

⁴⁶ Abdo, *The Washington Quarterly*: 28 (4), Spring/Summer 2005, pp. 12-13.

reflexively equates their way of life with violence. The isolation of American Muslims will increase unless there's a sea change in the administration's approach to the war on terrorism at home and its failure to take the foreign policy concerns of American Muslims seriously, especially the occupation of Palestinian territory.”⁴⁷

U.S. government “anti-terrorism” policies and initiatives launched since the September 11 attacks have had a profoundly negative impact on Arabs and Muslims in the U.S., largely because they have targeted members of these communities indiscriminately. Of the roughly twenty policies and initiatives implemented in the first twelve months after 9/11, fifteen explicitly targeted Arabs and Muslims. It is important to note that these policies are not part of the USA Patriot Act; they are largely creations of the executive branch. In late October 2001, the State Department issued a classified cable imposing a twenty day-mandatory hold on all immigrant visa applications submitted by men aged eighteen to forty-five from twenty six countries, most of them Arab or Muslim. In November 2001, the Justice Department announced its intention to interview some 5,000 individuals who had come to the U.S. on non-immigrant visas from Arab and Muslim countries since 1 January 2000. Later, the then Attorney General John Ashcroft announced a second round of interviews with an additional 3,000 persons. The subject’s knowledge of terrorist activity was the announced topic of these interviews.

In January 2002, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS; now part of the Department of Homeland Security) launched an initiative to track down and deport 6,000 non-citizen males from (unnamed) Middle Eastern countries who had been ordered deported by an immigration judge but had never left the U.S. In late June 2002, the Department of Justice issued an internal memo to the INS and U.S. Customs requesting that they seek out and search all Yemenis, including American citizens, entering the U.S. As a result, Yemeni Americans were removed from planes and boarding lines, waiting hours for security.⁴⁸

On 11 September 2002, the Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) implemented the Special Registration Program. crafted by Attorney General John Ashcroft, which required that “certain non-immigrant aliens” (visitors) register with the U.S. immigration authorities, be fingerprinted and photographed, respond to questioning, and submit to routine reporting. Its scope was never expanded beyond males age sixteen and over from twenty-three Muslim majority countries, plus heavily-Muslim Eritrea,

⁴⁷ Benjamin, and Simon, 2005, p. 123.

⁴⁸ Louise Cainkar, “Post 9/11 Domestic Policies Affecting U.S. Arabs and Muslims: A Brief Review.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and Middle East*: 24 (1), 2004, pp. 245-246.

because, Muslims, or more specifically, non-U.S. born Muslims from Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, were considered a security risk for the United States. Prior to its implementation more Arabs and Muslims had been removed from the United States subsequent to the 9/11 attacks and the number of foreign nationals deported for their political beliefs following the infamous 1919 Palmer Raids.⁴⁹

9/11 and African American Muslims

One of the notable changes after the 9/11 attacks occurred among the African American community. Islam started to spread rapidly among the African Americans. *“Islam is growing fast among African Americans, who are undeterred by increased scrutiny of Muslims in the United States since the September 11 attacks, according to imams and experts. Converts within the black community say they are attracted to the disciplines of prayer, the emphasis within Islam on submission to God and the religion’s affinity with people who are oppressed. Some blacks are also suspicious of US government warnings about the emergence of new enemies since the 2001 attacks because of memories of how the establishment demonized civil rights leaders Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. As a result, they are willing to view Islam as a legitimate alternative to Christianity, the majority religion among US blacks.”*⁵⁰

“It is one of the fastest growing religions in America, said Lawrence Mamiya, Professor of religion in Vassar College, speaking of Islam among black Americans. Black Americans typically attend mosques separate from Muslims from immigrant backgrounds despite sharing common beliefs, according to Aminah McCloud, religious studies professor at DePaul University in Chicago. But imams in Atlanta, a US centre for black Muslims, said they were subjected to less scrutiny than Muslims from the Middle East and Indian sub-continent. Many blacks converted during the civil rights era, when Malcolm X helped popularize the Nation of Islam, attracting Muhammad Ali among others. At a street-corner mosque in one of Atlanta’s oldest and poorest neighborhoods, a recent sermon illustrated the power of the history of Islam in the US for blacks. Mark King, a new convert, and hundreds of others at the mosque listened to a preacher urge Muslims to seek God through the Koran. Followers of other faiths should seek God through their own holy books, the preacher said. King, who wears his hair in dreadlocks, converted after visiting Africa for the first time and in

⁴⁹ Ibid., 246.

⁵⁰ “Post 9/11, Islam flourishes among blacks in America,” *Times of India*, New Delhi, February 26, 2007 (Reuters).

Gambia read the Koran and realized its teaching chimed with his own belief, not least in fighting injustice. 'For young African Americans, there is some attraction to learning about traditions that have been associated with resistance to European imperialism,' said king, who has adopted the name Bilal Mansa since his conversion."⁵¹

9/11 and response of American Muslims

On September 11, American Muslim groups spoke clearly and forcefully about the tragedy. One press release said that "*The American Muslim Council (AMC) strongly condemns this morning's attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and expresses deep sorrow for Americans that were injured and killed, AMC sends out its condolence to all victims of this cowardly terrorist attack. There is no cause that justifies this type of an immoral and inhumane act that has affected so many innocent American lives. AMC supports all efforts of the investigation in order to track down the people responsible for this tragic act of terrorism.*"⁵² The American Muslim Political Coordination Council (AMPCC) also issued a statement, which said, "*American Muslims utterly condemn what are apparently vicious and cowardly acts of terrorism against innocent civilians. We join with all Americans in calling for the swift apprehension and punishment of the perpetrators. No political cause could ever be assisted by such immoral acts.*"⁵³

American Muslims were asked to put restraint in their living habits, and be cautious about their lives because of the fact that the anger in the people after the attacks was very high. For several days after the September 11 attacks, many of the Muslim women stayed inside, afraid to be seen in public. Far more easily recognized than men, because of the attires they wear, they feared insults and violence and did not want to risk exposure by standing at bus stops or taking public transportation. When they finally left their houses, they left in pairs.⁵⁴ On the 16th of September, 2001, Shaykh Hamza Yusuf had an interview with Richard Scheinin in the *San Jose Mercury News* in which he called the World Trade Center attackers "*enemies of Islam*" and "*mass murderers, pure and simple*": "*I think that the Muslims- and I really feel this strongly- have to reject the discourse of anger. Because there is a lot of anger in the Muslim..... World about the oppressive conditions that many Muslims find themselves in.....*

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Beverley, 2003, p. 78.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 78.

⁵⁴ Katherine Millet, "American by Birth, Muslim by Choice," *The Reference Shelf*: 75 (1), p. 88.

We have to move to a higher moral ground, recognizing that the desire to blame others leads to anger and eventually to wrath, neither of which are rungs on a spiritual ladder to God. It's times like these that we really need to become introspective."⁵⁵

On October 12, 2001, issue of his *Muslim Journal* W.D. Mohammad talked of fighting and dying for the U.S. flag and the need to "*claim your share of America.*" Earlier on October 5, he had also advised women followers to avoid putting themselves unnecessarily in danger by their dress: "*sisters.....should not be able to be distinguished from anybody else out on the street.....[and should] stay in the house.*"⁵⁶

Mohammad A. Muqtedar Khan, an Indian-origin political scientist wrote an essay in his website after 9/11, "*A memo to American Muslims.*" It was circulated by e-mails, newspapers and other venues. He writes, "*Muslims love to live in the U.S. but also love to hate it. . . . As an Indian Muslim, I know for sure that nowhere on earth, including India, will I get the same sense of dignity and respect that I have received in the U.S. . . . If. . . . Sept. 11 had happened in India, the biggest democracy, thousands of Muslims would have been slaughtered in riots on mere suspicion and there would be another slaughter in riots after confirmation. But in the U.S., bigotry and xenophobia has been kept in check by media and leaders. . . . It is time that we acknowledge that the freedoms we enjoy in the U.S. are more desirable to us than superficial solidarity with the Muslim world. If you disagree than prove it by packing your bags and going to whichever Muslim country you identify with.*"⁵⁷

Standing on the White House lawn on September 20, 2001, with President Bush, Shaykh Hamza Yusuf (a white American convert to Islam and one of the most influential imams in the United States), one of the six religious leaders and the only Muslim to meet privately with the president that day, lamented that "*Islam was hijacked on that September 11, 2001, on that plane as an innocent victim.*"⁵⁸ On November 2, 2001, Naomi S hihab Nye, an Arab-American poet, penned an open letter addressed "*To Any Would-Be Terrorist.*" She wrote, "*I am sorry I have called you that, but I don't know how else to get your attention. I hate the word. Do you know how hard some of us have worked to get rid of that word, to deny its instant connection to the Middle East? And now look. Look what extra work we have, not only did your colleagues kill thousands of innocent, international people in those buildings and scar their*

⁵⁵ Leonard, 2003, p. 25.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

⁵⁸ Geneive Abdo, "Islam in America: Separate but Unequal," *The Washington Quarterly*, 28 (4), Autumn 2005, p. 7.

families forever, they wounded a huge community of people in the Middle East, in the United States, and all over the world. If that's what they wanted to do, please know the mission was a terrible success and you can stop now."⁵⁹ At a special worship service at Yankee Stadium in New York, imam Izak-El Pasha told his fellow Americans, *"Do not allow the ignorance of people to have you attack your good neighbors. We are Muslims, but we are Americans. We Muslims, Americans, stand today with a heavy weight on our shoulders that who would dare do such dastardly acts claim our faith. They are no believers in God at all."*⁶⁰

American Muslims have been working to create a more pronounced Islamic identity since the 9/11 attacks, separate from but equal to mainstream American society. American Muslims are becoming more organized and vocal in their demands, petitioning school boards to establish prayer rooms in public schools for their children, taking time off during the workday for prayers, and turning to courts when they believe their constitutional rights to practice their religion have been violated. In this way, they are exercising their rights as Americans to enhance their identity as Muslims.⁶¹

There has been development of alternative in regard to American Muslims and their status in the American society. According to a recent report, written by a task force of 32 individuals from business, government and academia, *"Muslim Americans must meld into US society before suspicion and mistrust, lingering since the attacks on New York, and Washington, isolates them and sparks radicalism in their ranks. Muslim Americans remain 'largely outside the US mainstream', even though they are an often well educated and diverse group with the potential to make important contributions to civic life in America. The Muslim American community lacks strong institutions and recognizable public or political voices to gain regular access to government and media circles'. Some existing Muslim American institutions have avoided foreign policy issues for fear of drawing unfavorable scrutiny."*⁶²

According to a report, prepared after a year's study under the sponsorship by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and Washington's Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, *"Many Americans perceive Muslim Americans as not having fully and readily acknowledged the potential for radicalism within their community."* The report added, *"The climate of suspicion and mistrust and the lack of engagement threaten to*

⁵⁹ Beverley, 2003, p. 78.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 76

⁶¹ Abdo, *The Washington Quarterly*: 28 (4), Autumn 2005, p. 8.

⁶² "US Muslims face isolation, threat," *Times of India*, New Delhi: June 27, 2007.

marginalize and alienate some elements among Muslim Americans to the point that the danger of radicalization becomes real possibility.” Farooq Kathwari, co-chair of the task force, said that a radical response is always possible, *“especially among the young. They are hot blooded and they don’t want to be alienated.”* He says the historic pattern of assimilation for immigrants that sees later generations woven into the fabric of society was disrupted for Muslim Americans by September 11.⁶³

American media and American Muslims

Media has been a very important instrument which the Americans use effectively to reach out to the people. The media had generated some of the most disastrous picture about Muslims in the United States. Muslim Americans have long been convinced that the news about them is colored by negative biases. This was clearly expressed by Muslim New Yorkers who participated in focus groups well before the events of 9/11. Muslim women especially mentioned that the media’s tendency to stereotype Muslim males as violent and Muslim women as submissive. The anti-Muslims news common before 9/11, it did not weaken thereafter. According to the “American Muslim Poll” that questioned Muslims across United States in October and November 2001, more than two in three (68%) respondents said that the news media were not fair in their portrayal of Muslims and Islam.⁶⁴ Cultural bias in coverage of the Muslims world has been so pervasive in the media. American public reactions to the Suez Crisis, successive Arab-Israeli conflicts, the Arab oil embargo, the seizure of the US Embassy in Tehran and the political activism of some Islamic leaders have shaped journalist treatment of all Muslim societies.⁶⁵

Prejudice against Islam in the American mainstream presented several barriers to the practice of Islam. Islam is presented as an irrational, undemocratic faith that is opposed to equality, freedom, and peace. The demonization of Islam in the media, and the

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Brigitte L. Nacos, and Oscar Torres-Reyna, “Muslim americans in the News Before and After 9-11,” *Harvard Symposium Restless Searchlight: The Media and Terrorism*, December 8, 2002. (<http://www.apsanet.org/~polcomm/apsa%20papers/Nacos.pdf>). 4/23/06.

⁶⁵ Asani, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*: Volume 588, July 2003, p. 53.

prejudice, hatred, and intolerance it bred, made practicing Islam in the public arena a dangerous prospect. Every time there was a major political development in the Middle East, the American media would unleash attacks on Islam and its values.⁶⁶ *“The media’s strong association of Islam with extremist political violence sustained by Al Qaeda and the insurgency in Iraq did unimaginable harm to Islam’s image in America. Not only has the community lost developmental momentum, but also most of its hard-earned goodwill has dissipated. Now Islam and America Muslims face hostility and prejudice as never before.”*⁶⁷ Years ago, with the Iranian Hostage Crisis fresh in mind, Edward Said wrote about the failure of the American media and U.S experts to understand and explain the Arab and Muslim world. In particular, he argued, that *“Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed, apprehended either as suppliers of oil or as potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those whose profession it is to report Islamic world.”*⁶⁸ Karen Isaksen Leonard says that, “American scholars and the media contributed to the politicization of Muslims by highlighting overseas events in Muslim countries in the 1070s and 1980s. in the 1980s and 1990s media stereotyping changed markedly: negative images of Arabs were replaced by negative images of Muslims.”⁶⁹ Jane I. Smith is of the view that the American Muslim community is deeply concerned that anti-Islamic feelings on the part of the general public are growing rather than abating, exacerbated by international incidents of violence carried out in the name of Islam and abetted by the unfortunate portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the media.⁷⁰

News organizations were quick to identify Middle Easterners as suspects for the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995. It was also reported that the FBI was specifically looking for two men with dark hair and beards. Within hours, Arab and Muslim Americans became the targets for physical and verbal assaults. Soon after the 9/11 attacks the news organizations reported that the perpetrators of the attacks were Arabs and Muslims. Perfectly peaceful Arabs and Muslim Americans became victims of hate crimes and of the stereotypical image of Muslims and Arabs as perpetrators of violence and as terrorists.⁷¹ *“Muslims of America, themselves reeling from the impact of 9/11 on their communities and the*

⁶⁶ McGraw, and Formicola (ed.), 2005, p. 131.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 137.

⁶⁸ Nacos, and Torres-Reyna, *Harvard Symposium Restless Searchlight: The Media and Terrorism*, December 8, 2002.

⁶⁹ Leonard, 2003, p.17.

⁷⁰ Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 173.

⁷¹ Nacos, and Torres-Reyna, *Harvard Symposium Restless Searchlight: The Media and Terrorism*, December 8, 2002.

resulting insecurities, find themselves besieged on almost a daily basis by vicious hate speech emanating from various media targeted at them or their religious beliefs."⁷²

Brigette L. Nacos and Oscar Torres-Reyne conducted a newspaper analysis on news reports on American Muslims, during the time period of 12 months preceding 9/11 and 6 months after 9/11. They selected three largest daily newspapers that are published in New York City, the *New York Times*, *New York Post*, *Daily News*, and *USA Today*. They found out that "*there was a shift from a fairly limited and stereotypical coverage in the pre-9/11 period to a more comprehensive and inclusive news presentation. Besides covering and referring to Muslims and Arab-Americans far more frequently and placing pertinent stories more prominently in the post-9/11, reporters and editors selected American Muslims and Arabs more frequently as sources after the catastrophic attack on New York and Washington than in the months before. Moreover, in the wake of the terrorist nightmare, newsrooms were more inclined to publish news analyses, columns, and letters-to-editor and open their pages to mass-mediated debates with respect to the Muslim and Arab minorities. Before 9/11 the by far news theme concerned Muslim and Arab Americans who participated in the political process. After 9/11, predominant themes, namely the status of civil liberties and civil rights of American Muslims and Arabs, were hardly less problematic with respect to reinforcing the stereotypical image of these minorities. The newspapers carried more pleads for a better understanding between Muslim and non-Muslims in the United States, more assurances that most Muslims have nothing to do with terrorism and that Islam does not teach violence. There was significantly more support to protect the civil liberties and rights of American Muslims and Arabs than call to curb their freedoms in the mass-mediated course.*"⁷³

Asma Gull Hasan says that the American Muslim's main frustration lies with media coverage of the events that happens around the world, especially when it concerns with Muslims. Hasan points out that, "*Firstly, the media only reports the most sensational stories. Secondly, reporters tend to link Islam with the criminal act, as if to suggest that Muslims and Islam condone and approve of such criminal act. When a Muslim does something bad, his religion is always noted by reporters. The same is rarely true for Christian and Jewish criminals, even if their religion motivated the act. Conversely, when a Muslim is behind a positive act, his religion is rarely reported in articles and reports on the event. Third,*

⁷² Asani, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*: Volume 588, July 2003, p. 49-50.

⁷³ Nacos, and Torres-Reyna, *Harvard Symposium Restless Searchlight: The Media and Terrorism*, December 8, 2002.

the media packages information in ways that make Muslims look bad. Whether a Muslim is behind the act or not, mainstream Muslims are horrified by such acts. However, the point is not often raised by reporters.” She also says that, *“Newspapers in particular use the word fundamentalist to signify Islam, grouping Islam with terrorist acts.”* She opines that she has never come across any media coverage on the good deeds carried out by Muslims, and she attributes this negative stereotyping of Muslims by media to ignorance, that the people behind media reporting does not know much about Islam. A remedy given to correct the media reporting is to make a clear distinction between terrorists and good Muslims, because majority of the Muslims are good and they too hate the activities carried out by the terrorists.⁷⁴

Americans get most or all of their information about Muslim Americans from news. After 9/11, *“American public in general viewed Muslim Americans more favorable than before. Interestingly, after a significant increase in the volume of coverage after 9/11, fewer survey respondents said that they had never heard of Muslim Americans or could not rate their attitude towards them.”* The events of 9/11 forced the media’s hand to cover the Muslim and Arab minorities more frequently. In a strange way, this was an opportunity to present news consumers with a clearer and truer picture of these groups. The media started to take advantage of this situation and granted more access, and the members of the Muslim and Arab American community made the best of it. One way or the other, a significant part of the news on Muslim and Arab Americans changed in positive ways when it mattered most- in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.⁷⁵ However, the basic traits attributed to Islam and Muslims did not change much. Muslims were still targeted as the ‘others,’ and with suspicion. Despite highlighting the American Muslim community in the news more than before after the 9/11 attacks, yet, the media never totally changed its stand in stereotyping the Muslims. Geneive Abdo says that, *“Widespread ignorance among the general population, however, fueled by a misinformed and biased media, is a fundamental problem that has led to racism and counterproductive government policies.”*⁷⁶ Liyakatali Takim writes that since the American media portrays Muslim so negatively, it is important that the conversations in dialogue emphasize the history of Muslim co-existence with the other so as to negate the stereotypical images and myths that many hold.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Hasan, *American Muslims: The New Generation*, New York: Continuum, 2001, p. 86-89.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Abdo, *The Washington Quarterly*: 28 (4), Spring/Summer 2005, p. 14.

⁷⁷ Takim, *The Muslim World*: Vol. 94, July 2004, p. 253.

In this case, even Hollywood, the American movie industry, has not been kind to Muslims, who are often portrayed as terrorists, or simply as backward and uneducated. J.D. Hall, an African American and a Muslim actor and scriptwriter says, "I've never come across a script about Muslims where they aren't terrorists." One of the problems identified here is that there are not many Muslims working in Hollywood, creating projects that portray Muslims more accurately.⁷⁸

*"When Walt Disney animated movie Aladdin opened in 1993, some American Muslims were upset over content that they felt presented a negative image of the Islamic world. One of the lyrics on the soundtrack was the target of much criticism: Oh, I come from a land, from a faraway place, where the caravan camels roam. Where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face. It's barbaric, but, hey, its home."*⁷⁹ Suggestive headlines like *Terrorism Comes to America* and talk shows with themes like *Should We American Permit Muslims into the Country?* Give all Muslims a negative image.⁸⁰

Inyat Malik, a doctor and a board member of the Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati, said, *"The deluge of the media coverage with its negative portrayal is overwhelming. I see very little light at the end of the tunnel."*⁸¹

Challenges and opportunities after 9/11 for American Muslim community

With all the prejudices and discriminations they face after the 9/11 attacks. They are being constantly attacked, verbally and physically. American Muslims are challenged with the task to make a more visible Islamic identity in the United States, and at the same time they are faced with opportunities, to correct the Americans of their wrong conceptions about Muslims.

Islamic charities after 9/11

Charity is one of the five pillars of Islam and as such is taken seriously by American Muslims, who traditionally have been generous donors to charities that

⁷⁸ Beverley, 2003, p. 49.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Hasan, 2001, p. 87.

⁸¹ "US Muslim face hatred, curiosity," *Times of India*, New Delhi, February 14, 2007. (Reuters)

funnel money to Islamic causes abroad.⁸² Though there are instances like Lebanese-Americans giving to Hezbollah, and its related organizations, Palestinian immigrants' donations flowed to charities that have been linked to Hamas, and others gave funds operated by groups that have been linked indirectly to Al Qaeda. However, much of the funds went for legitimate charitable causes. Twenty-seven charities worldwide has been designated as supporters of terrorism, and the United States government has seized or froze large sums that have already been donated. When the American Muslim community asked the government to provide an approved list of charities to which Muslims could contribute, or to select a third party to distribute the frozen funds to recipients unconnected to radical groups, both of these proposals were rejected. Ironically, donations are now being collected by trusted individuals in cash- exactly the kind of underground mechanism that brought so much U.S. pressure on Saudi Arabia, where money collected in this fashion found its way to Al Qaeda and affiliated groups.⁸³

Ian Fisher wrote in the *New York Times*, "*Once again, with another alleged terror plot that has a possible connection to a charity, the question is being asked here, with more urgency: To what extent do Muslim charities- on the surface noble and selfless- mask movements and money for terrorists and extremist groups? The question has a long history in the US, but no precise answer. A quick bottom line, though seems to be this: charitable groups, experts agree, continue to play a role in the financing and operations surrounding terrorist groups and plots. But with more scrutiny since the Sept. 11 attacks- demonization, the charities say- the role of charities seems to be changing: diminishing somewhat but also growing more subtle and harder to detect. 'Anyone who has bothered to study terrorist financing at the most shallow level knows the role that charities have played since 1985,' Said Evan F. Kohlmann, an American expert on terrorism who acts as a consultant to American and British prosecutors. 'Even if charities aren't playing a primary role, it is almost certain that they are playing a secondary role.' Since September 11, American officials have banned many charities that still operate freely in Britain.*"⁸⁴

"One of the many cases the Justice Department has brought against Muslims on suspicion of raising money for radical Islamic groups, nearly all of them have evaporated in the course of prolonged trials. One case that has particularly riled the Muslim community is that against Sami Al-Arian, a former professor at the University of

⁸² Benjamin, and Simon, 2005, p. 123.

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 123-124.

⁸⁴ Ian Fisher, "Terrorism Plot Raises Concern about Islamic Charities," *The New York Times*, New York: August 24, 2006.

Florida. The Justice Department had investigated Arian for nearly a decade before it was able to indict him with new powers under the Patriot Act in 2003. Arian, an impassioned supporter of the intifada, is charged not only with raising money for the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad but it also accused of funneling this money from the United States to the Palestinians territories where, prosecutors charge, it was used to carry out suicide attacks against Israelis. In effect, prosecutors have charged Arian with acting in proxy for Islamic Jihad in the United States. The government boasts that the case against Arian, who went on trial in June, could be the most significant since the September 11 attacks. The written indictment that was responsible for landing Arian in a solitary confinement in a Florida jail, however, provides no concrete evidence of a link between the money raised for Islamic Jihad and Arian is weak. For many Muslim Americans, the truth behind the Arian case seems clear: Patriot Act allowed U.S. government finally to indict Arian based on little more than guilty by association. Because of his outspoken views of the Israeli occupation, the Patriot Act sanctioned the government to charge him as a terrorist.⁸⁵ The Patriots Act's expansion of the terrorist organization designations, and new provisions related to terrorist organizations, are designed to suppress legitimate charitable activities if favored by the U.S. government.⁸⁶

Inter-faith dialogue

Apart from the negative outcomes of the 9/11 attacks, there are Islamic leaders and Islamic scholars who see bigger and better prospects of the American Muslims; to interact with the non-Muslims and correct the Americans the many misconceptions they have about Islam. According to Liyakatali Takim, *"In the past century, Islam has become an Integral part of the American religious landscape, and gradually Muslims have become a visible part of the fabric of American society. Even though the Muslims community has been present in America since the late nineteenth century, there has been limited integration with non-Muslims before the events of September 11, 2001. The challenge for both Muslims and Christians when they converse is to seek opportunities for interpretations that can make a community see the enemy in a new way. Exposure to different interpretations within the Islamic world can educate non-Muslims not only about Islam but also about the differences within the*

⁸⁵ Abdo, *The Washington Quarterly*: 28 (4), Spring/Summer 2005, p. 13.

⁸⁶ Akram, *Arab Studies Quarterly*: 24 (2&3), Spring/Summer, 2002, p. 84.

*Muslim community and the hermeneutical tradition within Islam.*⁸⁷ Conversation in dialogue, among American Muslims and followers of other faith, will negate the stereotypical images and myths that many hold as a result of commonly negative depiction of Islam and Muslim in the media, because interfaith dialogue emphasizes on the history of Muslim co-existing in peace, and understanding with the other religious community.⁸⁸ Ima Yahya Hendi, a Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., says that, “*The First thing we did at Georgetown University was to ask the entire community to come together for an interfaith prayer. Almost 600 students and faculty members attended the largest interfaith service I have ever seen.*” According to Rabbi Kenneth L. Cohen, American University’s campus Rabbi and executive director of the campus Hillel since 2001, “*Within a few hours of the attacks, all of the clergy and campus ministers at American University were on the steps of the Kay Spiritual Life Center with hundreds of University students, faculty, and staff. I told those assembled that the Muslim community because they are no more guilty of this than anyone else on the campus. It was a very important message that was universally echoed at American University.*”⁸⁹

After the 9/11 attacks, the Buffalo Area Council of Churches (its members consist of all religious communities) kept their tradition of working together which helped in the aftermath of the attacks. In the earlier days the Council developed a number of programs to promote communication and cooperation within and between faith communities. “*Immediately after the attacks, the community gathered to issue a statement of unity and concern, asking all citizens to respond in ways that would be positive. They planned and conducted an interfaith prayer service that filled the largest churches in the area. The November 2001 annual meeting included a discussion featuring Muslim, Jewish, and Protestant speakers. That same month began a six-month educational series on The World of Islam to help other groups learn about various aspects of Islam.*”⁹⁰ The Network has four regular television programs, a weekly radio program, and three newsletters that regularly reach 2,500 individuals from more than 1,200 congregations and religious organizations in the Buffalo area.⁹¹

Muslims in America have felt the need to integrate themselves in the mainstream American society so that they could express the true identity and beliefs of Islam. This has been a popular trend with many Muslim leaders since the 9/11 attacks. American

⁸⁷ Takim, *The Muslim World*: Vol. 94, July 2004, p. 343-246.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

⁸⁹ “Accepting Differences and Sharing Goals: Buffalo’s Religious Network,” *eJournal USA*, U.S. State Department: August 2006, 11(2), p. 8.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Muslims are involving in many charitable works, and social services. Many Muslims express their patriotism and allegiance to the flag because they have realized that unless they become more vocal, they could become foreigners in their adopted homeland. Inayat Malik, Shakila Ahmad, the tour coordinator of Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati, and others sit on inter-faith councils and speak at community forums and strive, year after year, to build bridges within predominately White Christian Middle America.⁹² This indigenization of American Islam represents a silent revolution in which many Muslims have been engaged since September 11, 2001. Such increase in dialogue and interaction between Muslim and Christians shows that both the communities are trying to shift their interest from 'conversion' to 'conversation.'⁹³

⁹² "US Muslim face hatred, curiosity," *Times of India*, New Delhi, February 14, 2007. (Reuters)

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 344-345.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

In a land of immigrants the Muslims have strongly established their culture and identity and are now the second largest religious minority group. Muslims, like any other immigrant communities, face prejudice and discrimination, but life in America also offer much opportunity. In fact America is the first country in the world to become home to so many ethnically diverse people who all identify themselves as Muslim. Muslims from Arab countries, Africa, Eastern and Western Europe, South Asia, and from South-East Asian countries, all came over to the United States and settled permanently. America's heritage of religious freedom created the necessary atmosphere for Muslims of different types and backgrounds to co-exist.

Early Muslim emigrants came to the United States for economic gain. Their main aim was to attain some economic prosperity and then go back to their homeland where their family awaits them. However, with the arrival of many new emigrants from around the world, not just for economic but also political, social, and religious persecutions in their homeland, Islam was inevitably established in the United States. From the beginning the problem for the Muslim immigrants in the United States was how to establish their Islamic identity in a predominant Judeo-Christian society. Not only were they able to establish themselves but they could also convert the Americans and many African Americans to Islam. However, in the later years, such multi-diverse ethnicity, culture, and nation, became a great impediment for the development and progress of the American Muslim community. Constant conflict of beliefs and interest resulted in dis-unification among the Muslims, and because of which a dominant common identity, as American Muslims, could not be established. With the community becoming larger, and more organizations being established to take up causes and issues of Muslims, Muslims in the United States should only look forward to unify amongst themselves, and for greater understanding among its diverse sects.

It was difficult for a Muslim to integrate into the American society like the other immigrants did. The liberal practices in the United States, on many instances, did not comply with the teachings and practices of Islam. Muslims in the United States faced the problem of adjustment in many areas. Be it in their food habits, clothing, banking, education for

their children, prayers, and their living, the Muslims had to make alternative arrangements which would mean to discard many of their traditions, and religious practices. Therefore, most of the Muslims maintained some distance from the mainstream society. They avoided interacting with non-Muslims: they averted going to social gatherings because of the restriction in their food habit and drinking; and most importantly they did not participate in the American political affairs. The more they tried to keep their identity the more they became the “others” in the United States.

Americans became suspicious of the Muslims and this led to many misconceptions about Islam and Muslims; that Islam is a religion which teaches to hate, Muslims are mostly terrorist, Muslims worship false god, Islam encourage men to subjugate women, and many other wrong ideas. In recent times one of the most powerful weapons that developed to spread all these misconceptions is the media. The media is always very quick to report on incidents and events, where Muslims were mere suspects or they were responsible for the act, that happen within America and around the world, especially in the Islam world. With the media highlighting Islam and Muslims in stereotypical images, American Muslims face the burns of such reports, because what happens after the negative lashing of Muslims, American Muslims became a targeted community. There were constant attacks on the mosques, people protested and demonstrated outside the mosques and outside the houses of Muslims, there were physical attacks, discrimination in the work places and in schools and universities.

An interesting observation among the American Muslims is that, because they live in a democratic liberal society (most of the Muslims came from despotic, autocratic, and instable states), they could enjoy relative freedom over the Muslims from other parts of the world. For instance, American Muslims could voice against the policies of the American government, they could practice their own beliefs without persecution and exile, unlike their origin country. American Muslim women enjoy better status, because they could voice against any discrimination against them by their male counterpart. There is no hard and fast rules regarding wearing of *hijab* in America because of the fact that the kind of cloths one wears is one's own personal choice. Mosques in the United States underwent major transformation, not only in the architecture but also in its responsibility and its role for Muslims. Mosque was not just a place for worshipping but it became an educational center, and most importantly it became a place where Muslims could meet and interact with each other- a social meeting place. From 1950s a major development occurred among the American Muslim community. Many Muslim organizations like FIO, MAS, ISNA, ICNA, ICSE, CAIR, etc.,

emerged. The emergence of so many Muslim organizations and institutions highlighted that Islam has been strongly established in the American soil. What the Americans need to realize is that Islam is not a foreign religion in the United States anymore. But in fact it is a religion which shares a common history with the Christians and the Jewish.

Greater development occurred in the later part of the twentieth century. American Muslims started to get more vocal in their interest and their rights. Politically, they became more active than in earlier times. American Muslim leaders shared common positive attitude with the developments among the Muslims community in the United States. What eventually led to the collapse of such a thought was the uneventful incident that occurred on September 11, 2001; the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Immediately, what followed after the attacks was the unprecedented back lash on the American Muslims. American Muslims became a targeted community, even more than before. Media back lash became a major effect on the mind of the Americans, as more and more incidents committed against American Muslims were reported.

Some American non-Muslim political leaders and religious leaders tried to bring down the heat of the situation by talking about how most of the Muslims were innocent, and that it was just a handful of extremist misguided by their religion. They also said that Islam is not a religion of hate, but it is a religion of love and that the people should give them a shoulder to lean on at the hour. Many Muslim leaders also echoed the same. They condemned the attacks as not only anti-America but also anti-Muslim, and the people responsible of the attacks are not true Muslims, because Islam does not teach people to be violent and hate others. There were many positive responses from the American public towards their Muslim neighbor, and the American Muslim community. As attacks and discriminations against the American Muslims increased, many of the non-Muslim Americans offered some kind of helping hand to their Muslim friends and neighbors. All these efforts saw some restrains on the mind and actions of the American public when they met or came across any Muslims. Many sympathized and stood along with the American Muslims in their worst times. However, the fact remains that not everyone was in favor of these kind of friendliness towards Muslim community in the United States. Arabs and Muslims were called terrorist, and were asked to leave America. They were discriminated in their work place, and in the educational establishment. Many lost their jobs, and some American Muslims were denied job because they were Muslims.

Some important development occurred in the meanwhile. The most important being the interfaith dialogue. Many Americans, both Muslims and non-Muslims are encouraging, and are working in favor of interfaith dialogues, which they see is an important tool for understanding each others' religion better. It was realized that both American Muslims and non-Muslim Americans have great misunderstanding about each other. They look upon each other in apprehension and suspicion. What these leaders realized was that with this fear and misconceptions about each other they will never feel comfortable with each other, and therefore with the interfaith dialogue they intent to preach their religion and at the same time understand the other religion. They could clarify all their doubts and suspicions about each other, which ultimately will result in understanding, and make co-existence a desirable situation, especially for American Muslims.

According to James A. Beverley, *"No one living 100 years ago could have foreseen that Islam would become the second or third largest religion in America in just one century. Since the 1960s the Muslim community has emerged as a vibrant part of the religious life of the United States. Muslims in America have progressed from an enslaved minority to an ignored minority to a confident minority. American Muslims have made some significant moves since that tragic day. First, they expressed outrage at the events and sorrow for the victims. Second they took advantage of the media focus on Islam, using every opportunity to emphasize that Osama bin Laden and other terrorists do not represent Islam. Third, American Muslim leaders stood with the president as he made a crucial distinction between the peaceful teachings of Islam and the evils of terrorism."*¹

American Muslims in recent times express their confidence over Islam, that their religion is clear and compelling and that their main mission is simply to provide accurate information. Islam has a long history in the United States but in the past thirty years has expanded exponentially to become one of the most active communities in the new religious landscape of America.² The younger generation American Muslims are more vocal in their interest. They talk about their Islamic identity and at the same time they are trying to get more into the mainstream American society. Their interest also extents up to the level of influencing American politics and also to influence the decision making process. Most national Muslim organizations attempts to organize Muslims into viable interest groups that exert greater

¹ James A. Beverley, *Islamic Faith in America*, New York: Facts on Files, 2003, p. 98.

² Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a Christian has now become the World's most Religiously Diverse Nation*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001, p. 287.

influence upon U.S. political life. Organizations like the ISNA, the largest national Muslim organization in America, educate Muslim voters about relevant political issues and encourage intra-Muslim dialogue on such matter.³

American Muslims, like all minorities, have done much to the increase of human rights in the United States in the course of their struggles. They also help Muslims in other countries to achieve a greater measure of freedom from distorted views of Islam. Many eminent Islamic scholars are of the view that American Muslim community is in a better position today, than the Muslims in other parts of the world, because of democratic set up and liberal policies of the land. Taking the advantages offered by the United States, American Muslims can contribute and play a greater role in the progress of Islam. In fact, the Muslims of the United States can serve, today and tomorrow, as a model for the world's religion in reaching beyond ethnic, racial, and economic divides to achieve a common understanding.⁴

*“Even as U.S. serves as ‘a place both of experimentation and affirmation of traditional values,’ Muslims feel Islam has much to offer American society—whether it be liberation from addictions, a recapturing of fundamental moral values, or a deeper appreciation of communal responsibilities.”*⁵ American Muslims are one of the fastest growing communities in the United States. With more than six million population, a greater proportion are engineers, physicians, computer specialists, and professionals in business, finance, and academia. And lately, they are trying to make a mark in the American politics.⁶ According to M.A. Muqtedar Khan, *“Muslims have never lacked in commitment or zeal. Now they not only had gained a base to work from but also had developed the know-how to resist assimilation effectively and defend their identity from the social pressure to conform.”*⁷ The American government policies after the 9/11 attacks have resulted in a rise of anti American sentiments across the world, and in turn has further alienated the American Muslims. However, eminent scholars like Geneive Abdo talks about positive outcome for the future American Muslims. She says that, *“Over the Coming decade, Muslims will likely carve out a distinct identity that is*

³ Michael R. Feener (ed.), *Islam in World Culture: Comparative Study*, California: ABC CLIO, 2004, p. 299.

⁴ Beverley, 2003, pp. 99-102.

⁵ Jane Lampman, “Defining Islamic Values in America,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, www.csmonitor.com: August 19, 1999.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ McGraw, and Formicola (ed.), 2005, p. 136.

decisively based on perception of the 'other.' In doing so, they will develop a third way, one that allows them to embrace their religion while integrating when necessary into American society.”⁸

Many Muslims, though, were neither disturbed nor concerned with any kind of situation they faced in their daily lives. They were pleased with their material success and tried to gain acceptance in the mainstream culture by distancing themselves from Islam and Islamic practices. For those who were not keen on defending their Islamic identity, life in America was full of promises. Many realized the American dream, and enjoyed the prosperity and freedom available in America.

“The boundaries of American pluralism are gradually being redefined in more subtle, yet equally significant manner to include Islam and Muslims as part of the mainstream. For instance, mass market publishers are adding Islamic holidays to calendars, religion pages in newspapers are covering activities at mosques; radio television stations are conveying Ramzan greetings and references to America’s Judeo-Christian traditions are being replaced with this more inclusive term Abrahamic tradition.”⁹ Many scholars of Islamic studies agree that the conditions of the American Muslim lives are progressing to a better level. Hillel Fradkin says that, “Unless catastrophic terrorist attacks on U.S. soil become more frequent, it is likely that the domestic situation of American Muslims will deteriorate.” However, it would not be an easy task because “United States will continue to be in conflict with foreign Muslim radicals, and those enemies will inevitably try to rally their co-religionists with the charge that America is at war with Islam. Try as it may to repudiate this charge, the U.S. government will likely have difficulty rebutting it, even through its most benign gestures.”¹⁰

The establishing of dialogues serves as an educational experience to benefit U.S policymakers, many of whom completely misunderstand Islamic culture. It is a greatest challenge for the American Muslims to translate and implement the universal ideals of the Qur’an to the contemporary American scene. In order to successfully attain their ideals and challenges, American Muslims should unite with their co-religionists and speak out against injustices perpetrated by various Muslim governments against minorities, anti-Christian riots,

⁸ Geneive Abdo, “Islam in America: Separate but Unequal,” *The Washington Quarterly*: 28 (4), Autumn 2005, p. 17.

⁹ Saleem Kidwai, “Muslims in America: Opportunities and Challenges,” *Journal of Peace Studies*: 9 (6), Nov-Dec 2002, p. 35.

¹⁰ Hillel Fradkin, “America in Islam,” *The Public Interest*: No. 155, p. 51.

acts of violence in places like Pakistan and Nigeria.¹¹ Asma Gull Hasan envisions a second Golden Age of Islam beginning with American Muslims, just like the period of seventh century and onward- when Islam spread throughout the world; when Muslims were the foremost scholars and thinkers of the world contributing immensely to the development in algebra, geometry, creation of the number zero, modern navigation, architectural design, and many other advances. And this second Golden Age of Islam is possible because of the inner growth and strengthening of faith of Muslims in Western countries, and the successful adaptation of those Muslims to Western life without compromising their beliefs. And this will primarily begin with American Muslims because their lives are more comfortable than other Western countries. Because American Muslims freedom of thought and practice are assured under the First Amendment, and this in turn will lead to greater participation, resulting in greater influence on, American society.

One important area of struggle within the American Muslim community, and which has been one of the greatest hurdles to achieve many positive outcomes, is the dis-unification in the community. And to attain any kind of ideals, American Muslims must overcome the most significant struggle they face, to unify their community.¹² *“Since September 11, 2001, the American Muslim community is becoming more open to self-criticism about how the greatest ideals of Islam are not always reached. Although many Muslims have tried to blame the United States and Israel for all the ills of the Muslim world, a rising number of Muslim intellectuals are calling for new and radical self-criticism within Islam.”*¹³

M. A. Muqtedar Khan talks about two groups of Muslims in the United States; the “Muslim Isolationists” and “Muslim Democrats.” Muslim Isolationists are *“those American Muslims who give greater significance to the imperialistic tendencies of the United States overseas in conceptualizing American identity.”*¹⁴ They hold that the United States is an evil empire dedicated to global domination. They report that they are not impressed with America’s record on democracy or its value of freedom and equality. They have focused their attention on preventing the Muslim Democrats from engaging Muslims in the civic public forum. Their attempts have failed because more and more Muslims are participating in the

¹¹ Liyakatali Takim, “From Conversion to Conversation: Interfaith Dialogue in Post 9-11 America,” *The Muslim World*: Vol. 94, July 2004, p. 353

¹² Asma Gull Hasan, *American Muslims: The New Generations*, New York: Continuum, 2001, pp. 176-177.

¹³ Beverley 2003, p. 102.

¹⁴ McGraw, and Formicola (ed.), 2005, p. 138.

American political process. On the other hand the Muslim Democrats are those “*American Muslims who support American democracy.*”¹⁵ They have transformed American Muslims from a marginal, inward-looking immigrant community to a reasonably well-organized and coordinated interest group. It is able to fight for Muslims’ own rights and to assert their views at the national, as well as international, level. The key to the success of Muslim Democrats has been their understanding of the West and their liberal vision of Islam. They take advantage of the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom in the United States, and dreamed of a model Muslim community that will influence not only the American Muslims but also the non-Muslim communities as well. Though they do not overlook the hypocrisy of the United States in pursuing its foreign policy, yet, they are quick to acknowledge that Muslims are better treated in the United States than they are in the Muslim countries, because they have seen democracy, pluralism, and cultural and religious tolerance in action, and are fascinated by the ability to resolve political differences peacefully in the United States. Their interest is to assimilate into the mainstream society and not to spent time in battling with the American society and its way of life.¹⁶

In spite of the setback for the American Muslims in the recent times, the development and progress they have made in the United States cannot be undermined, and “*The future of Islam in America is bright. Despite the trivial of this period, religious freedom will always be protected and tolerated. If Muslims, at the individual level, resolutely accept their responsibility to defend their faith and participate more meaningfully in politics, Islam will emerge from this period better understood and more warmly welcomed than ever in the past. The Muslims are becoming more American and more Muslim in their projection of self and group interests. Evidence of this claim rests on the growing success of Muslim advocacy groups. American multi-cultural democracy, with guarantees of religious freedom and speech, makes life easier for Muslim in America than in many so-called Muslim countries.*”¹⁷

An impressive development in the Muslim community of the United States is that, despite their differences in ethnicity, nationality, and their beliefs, a common identity platform is fast emerging. What the American Muslims need to look forward to is to build bridges; amongst the multi-diversified Muslim community in the United States, and between American Muslims and non-Muslim Americans. American Muslims face an uncertain,

¹⁵ Ibid., p.138.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 140-142.

¹⁷ Kidwai, *Journal of Peace Studies*: 9 (6), Nov-Dec 2002, p. 35.

yet hopeful, future. The best possibility is that American Muslims will assimilate into American society, in a way that other religious groups have done.¹⁸ American Muslims can set up examples to Muslims of other countries, and show them the right way to follow Islam. This is a major task for the American Muslims, and for which many Muslims in the other parts of the world are speculating; to spread the undiluted version of Qur'an and to correct all the misconceptions about Islam. The task seems difficult, but not impossible. If they could cut through self-consciousness (of ethnicity, language, sects, culture, etc.) and work as a community as American Muslims, and participate even more in the democratic process in the United States, they could attain their vested interest sooner than later, and be a part of the mainstream American society. The ideals and interest of assimilation and to be accepted as one of America's main religious communities, along with Judeo-Christianity, is not far from reach. American Muslims are rapidly progressing in the United States. Their economic conditions are better than the national average. With the high educational qualifications among American Muslims, and more Muslims coming up to participate in the democratic polity of America, the future seems to be promising for the community.

¹⁸ Gull Hasan, 2001, p. 175.

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