

Souls

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The Story of Islamophobia

Junaid Rana

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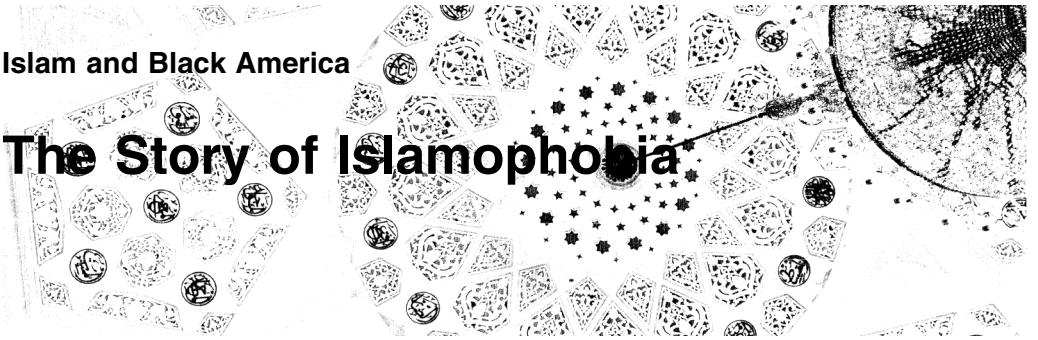
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Souls



Junaid Rana

This article examines the historical construction of the figure of the Muslim through the concept of race and Islamophobia. As a threat to white Christian supremacy, and in relation to anti-Jewish racism, the Muslim is constructed through a racial logic that crosses the cultural categories of nation, religion, ethnicity, and sexuality. The placement of the Muslim in the U.S. racial formation encompasses a broad race concept that connects a history of Native America to Black America to immigrant America in the consolidation of anti-Muslim racism.

Keywords: ethnology, Islamophobia, Muslim, race/racism, religion

Introduction: The Life of a Concept

> Today, racism has been largely—though not entirely, to be sure—detached from its perpetrators. In its most advanced forms, indeed, it has no perpetrators, it is a nearly invisible, taken-for-granted, "commonsense" feature of everyday life and global social structure.... [If] we define racism as *the routinized outcome of practices that create or reproduce hierarchical social structures based on essentialized racial categories*, then we can see better how it extends from the transnational to the national to the experiential and personal, from the global debt burden to racial profiling, from Negrophobia to Islamophobia.[1]

The term Islamophobia has a fairly recent origin. Emerging as a neologism in the 1970s it only became popular for European anti-racist activists in the 1980s and 1990s. September 11, 2001 was certainly a watershed moment for its use both in Europe and the United States. The term came out of a growing need to address the place of Muslim migrants in Northern countries, and the supposed divide between the Western and Islamic worlds. Indeed, in the latter half of the twentieth century large populations from Muslim countries migrated to Europe and North America, signaling economic shifts that required large pools of new labor reserves. Along with Middle East conflicts tied to the legacy of Zionism and

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the occupation of Palestine, several Gulf Wars, the aftermath of 9/11 and the revitalization of American imperialism in Iraq and Afghanistan—events Tariq Ali refers to as Oil Wars[2]—Islamophobia has risen throughout Euro-America and its connected satellites. In response to this, anthropologist Pnina Werbner has argued that Islamophobia is a particular kind of racism. As she argues, this racism is grounded in the fears of social and economic deprivation elicited in the complex relationship of Islam to the West, including the history of European sectarian wars, the Crusades, and the Inquisition—all integral to the formation of Western capitalism and modernity.[3] Thus for Werbner, Islamophobic racism is reflexive and relies on mutually constituted histories of imperial conquest, subjection, and systematic forms of oppression. Simply put, Islamophobia is a gloss for the apparent anti-Muslim racism that has collapsed numerous groups into a singular category of Muslim.

As is evident in the word itself, Islamophobia refers to a fear or hatred of Islam and Muslims. In the argument over whether Islamophobia counts as racism, the first order of debate is whether religious hatred is necessarily racial.[4] That is, if religion is not innate, is it possible for it to be embodied as phenotypic or biological expression? For many scholars in Europe discrimination is defined in terms of xenophobia and prejudice, whereas scholars in the U.S. have long argued for the importance of talking race and racism. Similarly, many of the arguments for the use of Islamophobia are based on the disarticulation of the concepts of race and racism, citing it as a form of cultural prejudice and religion-based discrimination. In many ways this debate over Islamophobia as racism mirrors the debates over the utility of the race concept in the shift from biological racism to cultural racism. It was mostly in the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s, heavily influenced by a concessionary multiculturalism, that the concepts of culture and ethnicity seemed to replace race and racism as the tools of analyzing difference and identity, oftentimes displacing mobilizations for social justice. In this post-racial argument, race is a debunked concept premised on the faulty biological notion of scientific racism, and Islamophobia is not racism since religion is considered a social practice. Islam as religion, then, is translated as cultural practice, and Islamophobia is the result of a belief in Islam's cultural/religious inferiority. Then, if anti-Muslim sentiments persist, on what basis is culture recognizable in groups of people? Is it enough to argue that culture is essentialized and made to seem natural in Islamophobia? An untethered notion of culture is far from sufficient to explain Islamophobia.[5] Quite to the contrary, the use of culture is central to race and racism, and in particular, Islam and religion are important aspects of a genealogy of the race concept.[6]

Without a doubt, the diversity of the Islamic world in terms of nationality, language, ethnicity, culture, and other markers of difference, would negate popular notions of racism against Muslims as a singular racial group. Yet, current practices of racial profiling in the War on Terror perpetuate a logic that demands the ability to define what a Muslim looks like from appearance and visual cues. This is not based purely on superficial cultural markers such as religious practice, clothing, language, and identification. A notion of race is at work in the profiling of Muslims. This rationale begs the question of how Muslims are racialized? In other words, how is religion racialized, and what are the signs of a religion that are then signified as racial difference? As I argue, the figure of the Muslim is one that has been historically racialized through popular forms of racial assignment based on a relationship of biological and cultural ideas. Second, this ethnological history of the race-ing of Islam goes back to the genealogical foundation of the race concept. And although my discussion is based mostly on evidence in Europe and the Americas, the impact of a racialized Islam is a global one.

In an important essay in the *Genealogies of Religion*, Talal Asad critiques the notion of religion as a transhistorical essence made common in anthropological frameworks by Clifford Geertz. Religion in the anthropological imagination, Asad argues, must be



"Nation of Islam" *1998 © Daniel O'Shea*

thought of as contingent and dynamic, as opposed to a Eurocentric conception that defines religion as bounded and universal. To undo this essentialism of universality, religious symbols must be thought of as intimately linked to social life, and thus the concept of religion must change alongside social practice.[7] To study the concept of religion, it must be framed in terms of a historically specific construction and examined as it changes over time.

This influential critique has led to important theoretical and conceptual shifts in ethnographic practice for scholars of religion and modernity. Yet, there is a lingering question as to the place of the race concept in relation to religion. Far from being transhistorical, the concepts of race, religion, and modernity must be put into specific context. Following Asad's critique, the task of this essay is to frame the construction of the religious figure of the Muslim as a racial figure based in notions of universality. Thus, this argument is one of the recuperation of Islam and the figure of the Muslim in the history of the race concept. In doing so, this history is central to the recovery of how race and religion commingled in the formation of modernity.

This racial ethnology of the Muslim is based in a relationship of the religious to the racial echoed in the modern configuration of racism. That is, a concept of the racialized Muslim developed as a geographically external other, demonized through notions of the body, but also through the superimposition of cultural features onto Muslims and non-Muslim groups. Because this process of racialization was not exclusively based on phenotypic or physical difference, although often imputed, dissimulation was a strategy of disguising or concealing religious difference to prevent the interpretation of racial difference. In the American context of racial formation, Islam represented a liberatory racial identification for African Americans. This translated into a threat to white Christian supremacy that was then used to further racialize immigrant Islam. Through this logic, the figure of the Muslim became racialized through social and cultural signifiers across national, racial, and ethnic boundaries.

From conquest of the New World to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Islam figured as an important aspect of the early formation of the U.S. racial formation across a Black and Brown Atlantic. Resurrecting this genealogy complicates the history and formation of

the race concept, revealing a complex and overlapping racialization of racial categories such as Black and Brown with religious categories such as Islam and Muslim. The racialization of Islam emerged from the Old World, was placed on New World indigenous peoples, and subsequently took on a continued significance in relation to Black America and the world of Muslim immigrants. Thus, the category of Muslim in the U.S. is simultaneously a religious category and one that encompasses a broad race concept that connects a history of Native America to Black America to immigrant America in the consolidation of anti-Muslim racism.

Race and Religion

The scholarship on the history of the race concept is curiously silent about the place of religion. For example, the canonical work of Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, makes scarce reference to religion. In their usage, race is most commonly associated with culture. In what they refer to as the evolution of modern racial awareness they argue that

> the emergence of a modern conception of race does not occur until the rise of Europe and the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. Even the hostility and suspicion with which Christian Europe viewed its two significant non-Christian ''others''—the Muslims and the Jews—cannot be viewed as more than a rehearsal for racial formation, since these antagonisms, for all their bloodletting and chauvinism, were always and everywhere religiously interpreted.[8]

At the end of this passage, in a footnote, they cite evidence for the emergence of anti-Semitism as anti-Jewish racism in eighteenth century Europe, excising the relationship to anti-Muslim racism. If indeed religious persecution against Jews and Muslims was not yet part of a racial formation, as they argue, could it still have been racism, or evidence of the formation of a proto-racism? Further, there is a clear demarcation here between what is conceptualized as the religious and the racial. The former seemingly a category in flux and related to the cultural, and the latter a category that is static and based in biological notions of naturalized difference. They continue

> It was only when European explorers reached the Western Hemisphere, when the oceanic seal separating the ''old'' and the ''new'' worlds was breached, that the distinctions and categorizations fundamental to a racialized social structure, and to a discourse of race, began to appear. . .the Europeans also ''discovered'' people, people who looked and acted differently. These ''natives'' challenged their ''discoverers'' pre-existing conceptions of the origins and possibilities of the human species. The representation and interpretation of the meaning of indigenous peoples' existence became a crucial matter, one which would affect the outcome of the enterprise of conquest. For the ''discovery'' raised disturbing questions as to whether *all* could be considered part of the same ''family of man,'' and more practically, the extent to which native peoples could be exploited and enslaved. Thus religious debates flared over the attempt to reconcile the various Christian metaphysics with the existence of peoples who were more ''different'' than any whom Europe had previously known.[9]

In this passage the narration of a religious clash between the Old and New World is represented as Christian and indigenous heathen, eliding Old World religious difference between Christian, Jew, and Muslim. For the discoverers it was precisely their understanding of the religious other and religious difference that was the lens towards understanding racial difference in the New World. A concept of race not yet materialized formally in

language was left to cultural difference. Here religion is defined in terms of broad ideologies of belief, but also as states of being in relation to cultural notions of civilization and barbarity—as the terms of inclusion or exclusion within the "family of man." These were clearly innate and naturalized categories in which religion was not just belief but a level of human evolution. Religion was thought of as a universal category of natural being in a hierarchy of civilizations, and hence the fervor to convert non-believers.

In a more recent context George M. Frederickson makes similar arguments to the classic work of Omi and Winant in his *Racism: A Short History*. Here, Frederickson makes more explicit a relationship of religion to race in fifteenth-and-sixteenth century Spain in the conflict between Catholic Spain and Jews and Muslims. The argument, however, follows a similar tendency of other scholars of race in tracing the modern antecedents of what they refer to as anti-Semitism in this era, although acknowledging similar, if not worse, treatment of Muslims. As Frederickson argues: "in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries an intensification of the conflict with the Moors heightened religious zeal and engendered an increase in discrimination against Muslims and Jews."[10] The clash between Catholicism and Islam clearly had ramifications in which an imperial shift was taking place. But as empires were shifting, power was also displaced in the ideological containment of both Jews and Muslims. Like other historians, Frederickson argues that Jews faced on-going intolerance and pogroms as a minority community under the protection of the Moors that was then transferred to Muslims by the late fifteenth century.

For historians of race then, the story of the race concept emerges out of the religious exclusions practiced in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. For historians like Frederickson these exclusions are attributable to the anti-Semitism practiced against Jews, displacing any discussion of anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia. In Howard Winant's magisterial *The World is a Ghetto* he argues that the early sources of racism derived from competing imperial projects based in religious ideology. For European capitalism to expand, a religious other was created in the Islamic rivals of the Turks and the Moors. Alluding to the conquest of the Americas and the Atlantic slave trade, Winant argues that treatment of the Muslims and Jews served as the paradigmatic example of racial othering and internal and external ethnic cleansing.[11] Echoing Frederickson, Winant continues

> The Jews were the early "outsiders" of premodern Europe. In the Crusades Jews were as fiercely assaulted as Muslims, and a series of expulsions drove the survivors from most of the later imperial powers as they were consolidated as nation-states (in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), and as imperial ambition dawned. The Inquisition founded in 1229, came by the sixteenth century to embody fairly racial anti-semitism with its renewal of persecutions against *conversos* or *novos cristoes*. Now it was no longer the Jew' beliefs, but his or her essence, as depicted in the doctrine of *limpieza de sangre*, that was seen as unredeemable; thus even conversion was not acceptable: only expulsion or extirpation would generally suffice.[12]

The coming of racist violence and racism is curiously marked as anti-Semitism in this passage. Winant clearly appears to be attributing this to Jews and their outside status, but easily could have been speaking of Muslims. The prospect of conversion or death for Jews and Muslims was itself the act of shifting the religious into racial conceptions. For the explorers, it is important to note that Muslims and Jews constituted an early category of religious–racial other to transpose onto indigenous groups of the New World in the form of racial thought. This model of race was, as I argue, part of a shifting conception of religion as it related to notions of race. Spanish Jews and Moors could be racially cleansed through conversion and the test for their purity of blood. In the dissimulation of religious

belief, racialization became an issue of religious passing—hence the phenomenon of crypto-Muslims and crypto-Jews. To pass as a Christian meant to adopt different styles of dress, appearance, bodily comportment, and religious ritual.

The history of the race-concept then follows a path toward its secularization in the eighteenth and nineteenth century through the emergence of scientific racism and a subsequent eugenicist philosophy that was shored up in the ideology of white supremacy throughout Europe and North America. Here the relationship of modernity to race defined modern racism. This shift from religion to biology is often seen as the particularizing of racism rather than its expansion. That is, racism in its modern form privileged biological difference as natural difference without including religion. Hence, in the modern form of racism we see the displacement of religion, and second the displacement of Islamophobia as racism. Yet, the lingering effects of this displacement in modern racism evoke a connection between race and religion. Importantly, Islam was an important feature of the early story of the race concept, offering an important insight into the incorporation of Muslims into modern forms of racism.

Old to New: Muslim, Jew, Indian, Negro

Simultaneous to the process of imperial renewal in the *Reconquista* was the clear formation of ideas of race. Historians of race often place the origins of this European concept to roughly the fifteenth-and-sixteenth century Spain as a process of discovery that led explorers to the New World and inevitable contact with Native Americans. The conventional argument places the formation of race (*raza*) in terms of the religious opposition of Christianity to the so-called American Indian heathen. Here religion becomes the central feature from which to understand notions of biological and cultural difference encapsulated in the race concept.

Important scholarship points to a complicated triangle that emerged in this exchange between Christians, indigenous peoples, and Muslims. As the empire of Catholic Spain expanded, it undertook the benevolent role of sending missionaries to spread the work of a Christian God to heathens in the Americas. It was through this interaction that notions of race were consolidated through ideas of nation and religion. The Age of Discovery was on the heels of the defeat of the infidel Moor and their expulsion or conversion, along with the Jews, manifested in the Iberian Inquisition and *Reconquista*. For converts (*conversos*) to Christianity, the test of religious purity conflated notions of genetic descent and biology with religious faith and cultural notions of kinship. The distinction between pater rather than genitor as that between legal and biological demonstrated the symbolic and material importance of the notion of bloodline. This was the idea that for the converted religiosity was not only in the blood and hence could be shifted to an allegiance to a sovereign power, that is Catholic Spain.[13] The obsession in blood purity, however, led to the issuance of certificates of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) issued by the church demarcating social boundaries of belonging, heritage, and genealogy. The notion of blood purity reinscribed a consciousness of *castas* in which a social hierarchy of status claimed a pure Hispanic genealogy as coveted above mixed or tainted heritage—often associated with color and physical description, but not exclusively, and clearly of religious difference. These important features of hierarchy, religious difference, and bounded notions of kinship, have often been associated with cultural differences rather than racism. Nonetheless, they are important predecessors to the modern notion of race that would solidify in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This early definition of race through cultural definitions is significant to defining religious difference in terms of a social and cultural form of racism.

Additionally, scholars argue that the act of expulsion for Muslims was in the context of war, but for Jews was the result of a long-standing anti-Semitism. Such historiography needs clarification. War and reconquest for the consolidation of Christian Spain required that Muslims be created as a racial other. Anti-Semitism as exclusive to Jews is a narrow interpretation. The fact of conversion, although a messy business (crypto-Muslims and crypto-Jews), raises the simultaneity of Jewish and Muslim religious otherness.[14] In other words an enemy was constructed in Muslims and Jews as infidels, or heathens, and non-believers in relation to Christianity. As Michael A. Gomez argues:

> The Portuguese and the Spanish became well acquainted with Muslims, a diverse assembly of differentiated unequals that included Arabs, Berbers, Arabo-Berbers, and West Africans. Together, they comprised the unwieldy and heterogeneic category referred to as "Moors" by Europeans. Spanish use of the term *Moor* in the sixteenth century, therefore, was not necessarily a reference to race as it is currently understood. Indeed, Berbers and Arabs had had such extensive "contact with Negroes" that they had "absorbed a considerable amount of color." Rather, *Moor*, referred to a *casta* (as opposed to *nación*), a designation that "did not intend to imply a racial factor but rather a cultural characteristic—Islam."[15]

This was not the modern concept of race, but a concept of race regardless of this understanding of Islam as "cultural." These cultural characteristics were far from benign and are an important aspect of the racialization of a heterogeneous group that could only partially be classified through phenotype and appearance. Where physiognomy was not enough of a determining factor, culture was a stand in for racial difference. Here the antecedents of the Semitic-Hamitic hypothesis are evident in defining Muslims groups through racial mixture and notions of Blackness, providing the classifications of Semites, Hamites, and Negroids. All three categories of identity were associated with a notion of Muslimness. This fear of mixture provided a ruse for racial classification according to the notion of Blackness, although it was still not a palpable definition for groups that easily could blend into Spanish society. This was one of the central preoccupations for Catholic Spain—how to tell who was a crypto-Muslim or crypto-Jew once they had converted. This anxiety created tremendous animosity against Muslims, Jews, and former practitioners of these religious faiths: a fear that was an important feature in the transition of religious to racial conceptualizations.

On the other side of the Atlantic were the other heathens to the Muslims and Jews that would support the belief in the dominance of Catholic Spain.[16] The triangle that emerged in these points of contact was between the heathen Indian, the Christian, and the infidel Muslim. As recent scholarship on the encounter between the Old World and the New has shown, Native Americans were made sense of through stereotypes of Muslims. Contact with the Spanish led to a configuration of Indians-as-Muslims; and, the opposite took place in the British imagination—thinking of Islam and Muslims through the Spanish ethnologies of American Indians in the configuration of Muslims-as-Indians.[17] Throughout the sixteenth century into the seventeenth and eighteenth, ideas of racial difference were encapsulated through religious difference, and in the case of Native Americans and Muslims, sexual difference. In this configuration Muslims and Native Americans were classified as racially other—that is barbaric, depraved, immoral, and sexually deviant. The stereotype of the Muslim, as represented in literary and theological documents, imagined the "Turk" as "cruel, tyrannical, deviant, and deceiving," and the "Moor" as "sexually overdriven and emotionally uncontrollable, vengeful, and religiously superstitious."[18] This creation of the figure of the Muslim as the Christian other was part of the ideological justification of holy war and imperial expansion.

The construction of Muslims as American Indians was in part derived from ethnological theories. In biological terms, American Indians were described as descended from North African Muslims, in social terms, they were seen as sharing similar cultural practices and values ranging from religious beliefs and rituals, marriage practices, kinship, and sexuality.[19] Through Christian eyes, both Muslims and American Indians were considered Sodomites that engaged in widespread homosexuality. Hence, comparisons of American Indians were made to Muslims of North Africa and Turkey that implied perversity and lasciviousness. Further, this inference was not only based on sexual practices deemed immoral, but the construction of forms of masculinity considered unsuitable to a patriarchal Catholicism. This comparison between American Indian and Moor connected an othering practice with imperial desire. That is, the ideological enemy created of the Moor in Christian Europe, served the purpose of racializing Native Americans.[20]

As Islam and Muslims were eclipsed in European politics through the scramble of competing imperialisms, it was slavery that was to take over the space left by Muslims and American Indians. Early on the concept of the African Negro was placed into a logic that paired it with Moors, Indians, and Jews. In the context of the American colonies and then the formation of the United States, religion was not far from the construction of the logic of nation and race. Notions of the racialized Muslim were placed on African slaves as enslavement was justified through a process of benevolent domination (e.g., the Hamitic hypothesis, later to reemerge in nineteenth-and twentieth-century narratives of Black Muslims in the U.S.), and indeed the forced migration of African Muslims to the Americas.

From Infidel to Terrorist, Slave to Immigrant

The history of Islam in the Americas elaborates upon this complex relationship of religion to the race concept. Indeed from conquest to slavery and the legacies they produced, Islam played an important role in constructing alternate ideas of self-identity to dominant modes of whiteness and Christianity. Throughout this formative period of the U.S. racial formation, the history of Islam in America has for the most part remained a submerged genealogy. The incorporation of Muslims into American racial conceptions is undoubtedly complex. From Black America to immigrant America, Islam played a significant role in shaping racialized identities in the context of a perceived Christian nation.

With the contact made by Columbus in the Americas in 1492, Islam arrived in the New World. Converts, both crypto-Muslims and crypto-Jews, arrived as sailors on the ships of the explorers. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries enslaved Muslim Africans continued to practice their religion, and indeed launch the first slave revolt in Brazil.[21] From this remarkable history, which still requires much historical recovery, Islam remained a vital and important part of the history of the Black diaspora. A racial hierarchy emerged among enslaved Africans of which one of the axes of status was religion. Muslim slaves were early on identified in racial terms as ''overly tanned'' and ''Moor,'' giving an Arab valence to their African-ness.[22] Such was the migration of racial and religious beliefs that European conceptions of the Muslim/Arab enemy continued its presence in the Americas.

This imperial struggle between European Christians and North African Muslims that ended in Spain's removal of its Muslims and Jews provided powerful ethnological knowledge to describe the foes of Christianity. The notion of an infidel Muslim as a menacing figure was transferred into the Americas as part of the reigning ''common sense.'' The fact that many enslaved Muslims were literate was both a sign of civilization, and a danger to

the white enslavers on their assumed monopoly of knowledge. The power of literacy established African Muslims as a threat because of their education and the possibility of harnessing this potential for social and political organization. Further, this awareness of Muslim difference was racialized through African ethnic identities. Descriptions of phenotypic appearance such as coloration and physical description was often coupled with ethnic identities such as Mande, Fula, Wolof, etc.[23] African identity was translated into American racial categories in which religion and notions of culture remained a central aspect. What is unclear, however, is whether white enslavers intentionally sought African Muslims for specific purposes in the slave economy. This possibility raises the issue of an American plan of conquest of Muslims as an ideological position of superiority specific to a history of interaction between Christianity and Islam. It also raises a complexity based on religion to the construction of the U.S. racial formation.

This genealogy of enslaved Muslim Africans as Moors takes on a different path with Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple in the early twentieth century. Seeking to displace notions of biological race, Noble Drew Ali and his followers sought identification with the category of "Moorish American" as descendants hailing from Morocco in contrast to enslaved Africans. For them this was a shift from racial categories to ethnic and religious categories that they hoped would shield them from discrimination and prejudice. But their Blackness remained a racial fact despite their notions of entitlement to national citizenship. This awareness culminated in the production of Moorish American identity cards as an alternative to the being racialized as Black Americans. This act of assimilation was doomed to failure because of the definitions of proper citizenship and American nationality defined through whiteness. Nonetheless, the turn to Islam and Afro-Asiatic solidarity is noteworthy for its construction of a complex genealogical relationship to African Islam.

During the 1920s this history of overlap took on yet greater significance in the multiracial interactions and alliances formed by the Ahmadiyya Muslim movement in the U.S. As Richard Brent Turner notes this was one of the first multiracial models of American Islam, providing an important link between immigrant Muslims and African Americans. The Ahmadis from a then undivided India disseminated information on Islam and converted white and Black Americans, and included followers whose numbers included Arabs, Persians, Africans, Tartars, Turks, Albanians, and Yugoslavians.[24] The role of Ahmadis in the U.S. was an important link to the Nation of Islam and the Moorish Science Temple in forging pan-Islamic unity. The mission of these South Asian Ahmadi Muslims was in large part to overcome racial and ethnic separation that existed not only in the Muslim community, but the U.S. and globally. For many who followed the Ahmadis in the U.S., conversion to Islam was to repeat the belief in the possibility of a deracialized Islam of Noble Drew Ali, a position continued in the Nation of Islam.

As Robert Dannin argues, the context for the success of Islam in the African-American community at this moment had much to do with economic displacement during the Great Migration and Great Depression, and the structural obstacles that prevented access to resources from organizations such as the Christian (read white) church and labor unions.[25] For many in the Black community, Islam offered liberation from race through religious difference, and the idea of multiracial egalitarianism. The belief that religion superceded race provided the hope that to identify as a Muslim meant entitlement to full citizenship rights as an American. In the case of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad posited a theory of race based on the idea of the true nature of Black people: "the very nature of the black man is a Muslim."[26] This was another attempt at subverting the biological determinism of the race concept with notions of religion and culture. Yet both of these movements remained trapped by the early twentieth-century logics of race that would not allow them to transpose their Blackness.

For African Americans to identify as Muslim did not prevent racial classification. Indeed this position miscalculated the longstanding antagonism of Islam to Christian America. As Fuad Shaban has argued, the Puritan roots of American religious and political culture have historically positioned the U.S. in opposition to the Muslim world in its philosophical and literary foundation.[27] This position of suspicion fomented by what he calls Christian Zionism also owes itself to the legacy of racism and its emphasis in religious difference that pitted Muslim against Christian. The particular construction of American Orientalism posited a divine order in which religious and racial difference was part and parcel of imperial conquest whether through the logic of Manifest Destiny or through the missionary zeal of Christian Evangelism. This attempt toward an alternative religion besides Christianity represented a threat to this idea of American exceptionalism. Islam, through European concepts, threatened the maintenance of a racial–religious order based in the idea of white Christian supremacy. Further, the claim to Islam interfered with the racial polarities established between Black and white, but were nonetheless read as part of that continuum that understood Black Muslims as Black. Simultaneously, immigrant Muslims of all kind were beginning to enter this racial polarity between Black and white. To understand how this multiracial figure of the Muslim is racialized I will briefly expand on the incorporation of religion into modern racism.

Homo Muselmann and Modern Racism

Michel Foucault argues that the rise of the biopolitical—that is, the control over who lives and dies—comes with the presence of order, discipline, science, and the rise of modernity.[28] In terms of the race concept, it is in the seventeenth century that religious difference is biologized into a scientific racism that justifies racial difference according to hierarchies of social evolution and the binary of civilization and barbarity (again another term used to describe the regions of Arab Muslims in North Africa). As scientific racism was evacuated of religious meaning toward a racism based in imputed cultural differences of a secular kind, it has become axiomatic that racial difference is not the same as religious difference. Scientific or biological racism was also reinterpreted through the frame of a secularized racism that disarticulated religion away from phenotypic conceptions of difference. But this did not mean that religion was no longer a key component of the race concept and the practice of racism in the modern era. The atrocities of Nazi Germany against Jews in the mid-twentieth century are no small reminder of that.

Quoting Primo Levi, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben refers to the use of the term *Muselmann* for Jews as an example of the deployment of biopower in modernity. This striking example of conflation, Agamben argues, epitomizes what he refers to as biopolitical control over certain populations. Agamben's reference to *Muselmann* is to a term used to describe a bodily condition of Jews in the Nazi death camp of Aushwitz.[29] Citing several passages, Agamben explains the usage of these terms as descriptions of people dying from malnutrition, appearing as if they were "Arab Muslims" praying when seen from afar in a "swaying motion" as in "Islamic prayer rituals."[30] He continues that the origin of this derogation most likely comes from the meaning of Muslim itself, that is, one who submits unconditionally to the will of God. In the European imagination, this representation of Islam's fatalism and supplication remains in many European languages as a form of deprecation signifying a history of contact and conflict. Quoting the *Encyclopedia Judaica* the *Muselmann* is described as "used mainly in Aushwitz, the term appears to derive from the typical attitude of certain deportees, that is, staying crouched on the ground, legs

bent in Oriental fashion, faces rigid as masks."[31] This condition signals a shared and overlapping racial history of the Jew and the Muslim. Nonetheless, this final description attempts to undo the entanglement of Jews and Muslims in their history of shared racialization by referring to Muslims as Orientals and supplicants with a rigid disposition. This is itself an older description of Muslims that relies on European stereotypes of the Turk and Moor in terms of bodily comportment. Hence this conflation of the Jew-as-Muslim refers to a projection of a racialized mutability of a religious state that is not only a religious practice but somehow an essential character.

On the surface this example resonates with a certain formation of the racial state that has developed tactics, strategies, and ideologies of containment as a system of population control.[32] It is also an important component of the process of race-formation central to the notion of biopower that seeks to control the body, life and death, and populations. It is by no accident that Muslims and Jews are tied together through language in the Nazi death camps. Indeed, as I have argued, this is a manifestation of European historical conceptions that understood Muslims and Jews as the racial and religious other of the Christian. In an important sense, the Jew was the internal enemy and the Muslim the external enemy.[33] Jews were seen as existing within the European nation, whereas Muslims were a competing nation. This logic remains as a complex racial economy in terms of the inclusion and exclusion of these religious groups within the contemporary national imagination of Euro-American states.

This articulation of the Jew as the Muslim in the Nazi death camps is part of a system of knowledge that differentiated religious difference as racial. Prevalent racial theories offered the Semitic hypothesis as an ethnological explanation that was based in religious-cultural similarity and a classification of related language families. These approaches were based in polygenist theories of racial division that explained the separate creation of racial groups through descent. These differences were important in classifying the moral capacity of particular social groups and ultimately a hierarchal classification of superiority and inferiority. Thus, scholars based ethnological and linguistic explanations in a biblical anthropology that viewed Jews and Arabs as derived from the same racial stock. Indeed for many Christian theologians Islam was seen as a heretical version of Christianity, and in many senses a corrupt extension of the Judeo-Christian tradition.[34] In Nazi Germany, Semites were understood as opposed to the elite Aryan as part of the theory of racial supremacy. Semites for someone like Comte de Gobineau were a white hybrid race that had suffered from mixture with Blacks.[35]

As Mahmood Mamdani has argued in the case of Rwanda, the related Hamitic hypothesis was a theory of racial mixing used for colonial domination in which so-called Caucasians mixed with Blacks fulfilling the prophesy of a biblical story.[36] In ethnological parlance, the Semitic-Hamitic races were classified linguistically as a family of Afro-Asian languages. Yet between the cracks of ethnological explanation also lurks a relationship to Islam. This is evident in the explanations as they emerged in the nineteenth century. In the case of the Semite, Arab and Jew began to become disarticulated such that by the twentieth century anti-Semitism referred erroneously to anti-Jewish, excluding Arab Christians and Muslims.[37] For the Hamitic hypothesis a wide range of cultural groups were designated as part of this racial classification thus effacing the difference of religion.[38] This same racial theory of Hamitic inferiority provided a rationalization to justify the enslavement of Black Africans in the Atlantic slave trade. The unraveling of both theories came with decolonization and the proliferation of nationalist projects that no longer used such notions of racial ethnology. This mix of racial ethnology and popular racism that connected Muslim to Jew is an important aspect of the process of historical racialization of diverse populations of Muslims, from Arabs and Asians to Africans in this conception, into one racial group.

Conclusion: The War on Terror and Anti-Immigrant Racism

The language of anti-Muslim racism has named the Muslim as the Saracens, Moors, Turks, Orientals, Arabs, Africans, Asians, Jews, Indians, Muselmann, etc. To this language we must consider how the infidel overlaps with the terrorist, the slave with the immigrant. The race-ing of Islam does not take place in a vacuum but within the context of a specific historical relationship. In the current racial formation, Islam and Muslims have taken a familiar yet strange meaning often evoked in the language of war, conquest, terror, fear, and the new crusades. The racial figure of the Muslim ranges far and wide primarily to include populations hailing from the Middle East to Africa to South Asia.

There is a pervasive logic that connects the tropes of religion and race. The contemporary racialization of Muslims in the United States reconnects these histories. Indeed, this process has been quite wide ranging, cutting across notions of national origin, ethnicity, gender, and color. The contemporary Muslim in the U.S. is first what Nadine Naber has referred to as the "Arab-Middle Eastern-Muslim," a conflation of Arab Americans with Muslim[39], but also significantly South Asian American, and is as evident in so-called terrorist-related arrests in the U.S.: white, Latino, and African American. For the later two groups, race plays a double threat with racialized religion. Media analysis of the arrests of Latino and African-American Muslims on suspicion of terrorist activities inevitably harkens to a connection to the threats of ghettoes, gangs, and hip-hop.[40]

Indeed, Mahmood Mamdani is right to argue that in the context of the Cold War and its aftermath in the War on Terror, religious identities are often political identities that mobilize religious idiom.[41] But it is equally appropriate to ask when such political identities become racialized in the engagement with modern forms of power. Here a broadened view of modern racism as biological and cultural is required. A return to an understanding of racialized religion in the form of Islamophobia can only strengthen our analysis and complicate struggles around this emerging global racial formation.

With the U.S. War on Terror, the Muslim is incorporated into a racial formation that is adamantly anti-immigrant. Certainly anti-Muslim racism has much in common with an anti-immigrant racism premised on the social characteristics of foreign-ness. As Vijay Prashad has suggested, perhaps "immigrant" is a type of race in which racist xenophobia is a perpetual form of scapegoating.[42] Anti-immigrant racism and Islamophobia incorporate the Muslim into the U.S. racial formation in several social and cultural groups to become a singular threat: the Muslim.

Arab, Black, Latino, South Asian, and white have been collapsed into this racial category of the Muslim in the U.S. This is a particular history that I have sketched here. As American empire and exceptionalism expands in the War on Terror both domestically and globally, the historic disenfranchisement of communities of color through policing, state and popular violence, combines the immigrant with the Muslim in a reinvigorated racism that goes beyond a Black–white US racial formation.[43] U.S. racism is exported globally these days through state technologies, media and film, popular culture, and pervasive political discourses and ideologies. To struggle against the global racial formation the task of scholarship invested in liberation is to elaborate complex histories and concepts that map strategies of decolonization to undo empire.

Notes

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1. Howard Winant, *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 126 (italics in original).

2. Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* (New York: Verso, 2002).

3. Pnina Werbner, "Islamophobia: Incitement to Religious Hatred—Legislating for a New Fear?" *Anthropology Today* 21(1) (2005): 8.

4. Recently, in the context of the Danish Cartoon controversy of 2006, the argument has been made that the term Islamophobia confuses religious hatred with religious criticism. While I have reservations with this point, I think it important to make clear that my argument is not about Islamic theology, but the formal and informal forms of discrimination placed on practitioners, or those believed to be practitioners, of Islam. In other words, it is as a social group, not a religion, that I argue Muslims are racialized.

5. Culture in anthropological thought is based in colonial hierarchies that defined it in terms of civilization and the imputed categories of superiority and inferiority. This reified use of culture is often a cloak for racial ideologies of separation and biological notions of purity, ultimately threatened by the possibility of miscegenation. It is in this sense that the anthropological use of ethnology as a form of racialized knowledge production is centrally complicit in constructing the ideological edifice of racial difference and hierarchy.

6. There is now a vast scholarship on the relationship of the concepts of culture and race. See for example Etienne Balibar and Immanual Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (New York: Verso, 1991); David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993); David Theo Goldberg, *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America* (New York: Routledge, 1997); David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 2002); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Howard Winant, *The World Is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Howard Winant, *The New Politics of Race: Globalism, Difference, Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Visweswaran, Kamala. "Race and the Culture of Anthropology," *American Anthropologist* 100(1) (1998): 70–83.

7. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 53.

8. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, p. 61.

9. Ibid., pp. 61–62.

10. George M. Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 31.

11. Winant, *The World Is a Ghetto*, p. 41.

12. Ibid., p. 42.

13. Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (Boulder, Col: Westview, 1999) pp. 67-69; Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), p. 15.

14. See L. P. Harvey, *Muslims in Spain, 1500 to 1614* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 6–12. While admitting a widespread othering of Muslims in Spain after 1499, Harvey argues that it is impossible to determine whether this was racist given their broad coloration. Nonetheless he does point out like numerous other scholars that Moor was often associated with dark complexion or darkness. Harvey's reading relies on a definition of race that is based in phenotypic difference that only views Blackness as inferior. Cf. Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 29; and Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2002), pp. 271–272. The problem with this definition is that it reifies notions of Black and white phenotypic descriptions when racial essentialism is far more complex.

15. Gomez, *Black Crescent*, p. 5.

16. Ella Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 209–211, refers to replacing religion with race as acts of misrecognition in which a Christian demonology prefigured colonial racism. As such this provided an articulation of racial–religious categories relevant to the *Reconquista* and to the contemporary moment. Also see Aidi, Hishaam D. "The Interference of Al-Andalus: Spain, Islam, and the West," *Social Text* 24(2) (2006): 67–88, on the on-going contemporary dilemma between Christian Spain and its Muslim past, present, and future.

17. Nabil I. Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

18. Ibid., 13.

19. Ibid., 101.

20. As Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai have rightly described as the triangulation of the monster-terrorist-fag in the current racial formation, this genealogy of gender and sexuality has an old precedent in the founding logic of the race concept. See Jasbir K. Puar and Amit S. Rai, "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots," *Social Text* 20(3) (2002): 117–148.

21. Miguel Gomez has written an essential ethnohistory of the Muslim slave migration from Africa to the Americas, see Gomez *Black Crescent*, esp chs. 1–3. On the revolt in Brazil see Joäo J. Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 153–163; and Gomez, *Black Crescent*.

22. Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington.: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 44.

23. See Gomez, *Black Crescent*.

24. Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, p. 110.

25. Robert Dannin, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 25.

26. Quoted in Gomez, *Black Crescent*, p. 315.

27. See Fuad Shaban, *Islam and Arabs in Early American Thought: Roots of Orientalism in America* (Durham, NC: Acorn Press, 1991); Fuad Shaban, *For Zion's Sake: The Judeo-Christian Tradition in American Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2005).

28. See Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College De France, 1975–76* (New York: Picador, 2003), for an elaboration of the biopolitical and the modern concept of race.

29. Besides Aushwitz other camps had similar terms that tied the Jew to the Muslim: in Buchenwald they were called "tired sheiks," and in the women's camp Ravensbruck they were called *Muselweiber*, or Muslim women.

30. Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), pp. 42–45.

31. Ibid., p. 45.

32. See Goldberg, *The Racial State*.

33. Gil Anidjar's extensive argument elaborates on the place of the Arab as an ethnic group and the Jew as a religious group within this racial economy of the enemy. In his argument race, religion, and ethnicity are central to how we understand political identities and ultimately the history of the concept of the political. It might be argued that the Muslim is an extension of this argument of racial–religious continuum in relation to Anidjar's historical object of study, Europe, as well as the U.S. See Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003).

34. Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), p. 303.

35. See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), p. 174, also quoted in ftn. 39. Gobineau originally published his *The Inequality of Races* in 1853. He was only posthumously resurrected by Nazi Germany in the twentieth century.

36. Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

37. This was a strategy of the Zionist claim to Israel for Jews at the exclusion of Palestinian Christians and Muslims.

38. Edith R. Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origin and Functions in Time Perspective," *Journal of African History* 10(4) (1969): 521–532.

39. Nadine C. Naber, "Ambiguous Insiders: An Investigation of Arab American Invisibility," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23(1) (2000): 37–61; Nadine C. Naber, "The Rules of Forced Engagement: Race, Gender, and the Culture of Fear among Arab Immigrants in San Francisco Post-9/11," *Cultural Dynamics* 18(3) (2006): 269–292.

40. For an analysis of this in relation to the DC sniper, amongst other connections, see Hishaam Aidi, "Jihadis in the Hood: Race, Urban Islam and the War on Terror," *Middle East Report* 224 (2002). Available at ⟨http://www.merip.org/mer/mer 224/224_aidi.html⟩.

41. Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), p. 36.

42. Prashad *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*, 120–125.

43. Junaid Rana and Gilberto Rosas, "Managing Crisis: Post-9/11 Policing and Empire," *Cultural Dynamics* 18(3) (2006): 219–234.