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# The Racialization of Muslim-Americans Post 9/11: Causes, Themes, and Effects

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"I stopped talking about Islam altogether. I stopped defending, I stopped mentioning, I stopped praying, I stopped being Muslim. I separated myself entirely from that identity."[1] After 9/11, Muslim-Americans like Shawna believed that the only way they could be presumed innocent of a crime they were not even remotely related to was by renouncing their Islamic identity. This Islamic identity is seen incompatible with one's American identity. Muslim-Americans have been racialized to represent a 'dangerous' and 'uncivilized' group. This racialization is not based on skin color but a religious identity. Several American establishments and structures, such as the government and media, have contributed to racializing Muslims.

In this paper, I will attempt to answer three research questions on the racialization of Muslim Americans after 9/11. Firstly, I will define racialization and delve into the concept's roots. I will also explore the connection between Islamophobia and racialization, and how Muslim men and women are racialized differently. Secondly, I will be explaining ways in which Muslim-Americans have been racialized, specifically expanding on the role of American government and American media. Lastly, I will highlight how Muslim-Americans have mobilized against this discrimination, discussing the role played by the Mosque and the reaction of Muslim home countries to this hostility.

Most of the scholarly sources I have utilized scan the post 9/11 era, but I have looked at a few pre 9/11 sources to set the background for the 'othering' of Muslims. I also use literature on racialization and literature on the Muslim American experience in the post 9/11 era. Saher Selod's work informs a significant portion of my argument. I use her piece to define racialization, the connection between Islamophobia and racialization, and the gendered racialization of American Muslims. Selod is a leading expert on the racialization of Muslims and passionately argues how American citizenship and Islam are deemed incompatible in the post- 9/11 era. I quote the increasing number of Muslim immigrants to America, taken from the Pew Research Center, in the post 9/11 era, to explain the minimal effect of Islamophobia over the want for a better life.

My literature scans the racialization of Muslims during the presidencies of Bush, Obama, and Trump, and how these presidencies solidified Muslim as a racial identity. I dive deep into Smeeta Mishra's and Aysel Morin's pieces, amongst others, on media's role in the racialization of Muslims; primarily discussing *New York Times'* coverage of the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and the United States' subsequent invasions; and the more recent incidence of the San Bernardino shooting and the un-Americanization of its perpetrators.[2] I am looking at a few primary sources such as newspaper articles, blogs, and interviews, to expand on the daily experiences of Muslims of different races in the post 9/11 era. I use these primary sources to describe the mobilization of Muslims to justify their beliefs and prevent themselves from attacks.

I intervene in this relatively new discourse by not only defining the racialization of Muslims but by arguing how and why Muslims have been racialized. I explore American law and American media as justifications for the rapid racialization of Muslims in the post 9/11 era. Moreover, I fill the following gaps in my larger argument on the racialization of American Muslims: how have home countries reacted to this Islamophobic racialization of Muslims; how racialization has differed during different American presidencies; how Muslims have mobilized in response. The literature is still missing the entirety of Trump's policies towards Muslims, because of his regime's newness, and it is lacking a detailed reaction of Muslim countries to the treatment of Muslim Americans, because of limited sources on home countries' reactions.

In this paper, I argue how American structures and establishments, such as American law, politics, and media, are the root causes of the racialization of Muslims into one entity that transcends the common definition of race. This has shifted the discourse on Muslim-Americans' diaspora typology, from

labor to 'victimized' diaspora. Common themes that characterize this racialization are the loss of white privilege for white Muslims and the gendered nature of the racialization. Finally, I explore the effects of this racialization by highlighting mobilization methods employed by Muslim Americans to respond to unfair persecution in the post 9/11 era.

Although Muslims largely migrated for better economic opportunities in the 1970s and 1980s, this labor diaspora has turned into a 'victimized' diaspora, not only because of the cause of its creation but because of its treatment in the host country. I will argue that this shift in diaspora typology was caused by the trauma of 9/11, using Robin Cohen's concepts of labor diaspora and victim diaspora, and expand on the concept of a victimized diaspora below.

It is important to emphasize why Muslim-Americans are considered a diaspora group. Although 'Muslim' marks a religious affiliation, not a national one, most Muslim immigrants are from the Middle East and South Asia. Using Cohen's list of characteristics common to diasporas, Muslim-Americans are deemed a diaspora group because, "they have been dispersed from an original center to two or more foreign nations; they retain a collective memory about their original homeland; their ancestral home is idealized and there is a desire to return, and they continue in various ways to relate to their homeland."[3] Cohen describes victim diaspora as "the idea of dispersal following a traumatic event in the homeland, to two or more foreign destinations."[4] Cohen highlights that labor diaspora can be considered a subtype of victim diaspora, describing labor diaspora as immigrants voluntarily or forcibly dispersed for economic reasons. The initial immigration of black Muslims to America took the form of slavery, but the immigration of the first Arab and South Asians Muslims to America was largely trade-based. However, particularly Indian Muslims, have wavered between both types. As Cohen argues, Indians were recruited for their 'indentured labor'; thus, they fall in both the labor and victim diaspora categories.[5]

Currently, most Muslim immigrants coming into America are from the Middle East, seeking asylum and haven in the first world. The 'traumatic event' in their country, such as war, famine, terrorism, and widespread abuse of human rights, forced them to escape dangerous living conditions. However, not all Muslim-Americans intend to migrate to America to seek protection. Wealthy businessmen from the Emirates and India and international students from South Asia immigrate to America for better economic and educational opportunities. Thus, the United States hosts a mix of Muslim-American immigrants; ones that escaped a traumatic event and ones in search of better socio-economic opportunities. However, this mix of labor and victim diaspora becomes a wholly 'victimized diaspora' because of the escalation of Islamophobic sentiments, which constitute both physical and psychic violence in the post 9/11 era. I define a victimized diaspora as a diaspora group whose traumatic conditions in the host land, instead of the homeland, define its identity; thus, differentiating it from victim diaspora. Therefore, the Muslim-American population, despite its diversity in its reason to immigrate, can be considered a victimized diaspora.

Muslim-Americans are victimized by a process termed racialization. I will employ scholar Saher Selod's definition to explain racialization. Selod describes racialization as a phenomenon that is ever-changing and transcends skin color. It encompasses cultural, religious, and social identity that lumps people in a group together; "Miles (1993) argues that racial meaning can be given to various forms of difference such as ideological and cultural traits allowing for a discussion of the racialization of some groups without relying on phenotypical differences."[6] She argues that anti-Muslim discrimination, which informs the racialization of Muslims, has been ignored until recently. Selod recognizes that race is of utmost importance in America and black Muslims have undeniably a more difficult Muslim-American experience than white Muslims do; however, she argues, that race theory can move beyond a Black/White paradigm to talk about issues that are often ignored, such as Islamophobia and immigration. Furthermore, without discounting the difference of experiences between black, brown, and white Muslims, she firmly believes that their Muslim identity unites them and racializes them into one entity.[7]

This racialization has led to further discrimination of all Muslims. Although the American Muslim population is heterogenous, Muslims are "cast as a potentially threatening *Other* based on racial characteristics." Craig Considine, a leading expert on the post 9/11 Muslim experience, argues that American Muslims are identified and labeled through racial differentiation and perceived cultural features

such as religious symbols, i.e. a beard or a head covering.[8] While Muslims are not a "race," they are examined through a racial process that is demarcated by physical features and racial underpinnings.

Before diving into this paper, it is important to establish the number of Muslims in America. The Muslim population in America has increased from 2.35 million to 3.45 million from 2007-2017, making it more than 1% of the total US population. These statistics are surprising in the wake of Islamophobic attacks against Muslim Americans. However, this can be attributed to the rise in immigration from war-torn countries such as Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Some of this also includes Muslims migrating for better opportunities. A mix of labor and victim diaspora can define the Muslim population in America.[9] However, as I argue, this mixed intention diaspora has now transformed into a victimized diaspora due to its treatment in the host country.

The racialization of Muslims is anything but a new phenomenon. African American Muslim migrants have been persecuted since the 1960s. This was most pronounced during the peak of the Nation of Islam movement; "…black Muslims feel themselves an isolated and unappreciated appendage," argued Elijah Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam. Furthermore, Arab Muslims had always been categorized as the 'others', according to Hilal Elver, a leading scholar on the pre 9/11 treatment of Muslims. He uses Edward Said's conceptualization of racial discrimination against Muslims to argue that Muslims were always seen as vile and depraved. The role of the American government in racializing Muslims will be discussed later in the paper, but it is important to mention the government's hostility towards Arabs since the early 20th century. The United States denied immigration from the Middle East to 100 per year in the 1930s. Samuel G.W. Benjamin, the first U.S. Ambassador to Persia, said that this decision was taken based on a "matter of blood rather than education."[10] This shows a clear racist element against Middle Easterners. Besides, US foreign policy has been dictated by Islamophobic elements well before 9/11. The Iran hostage crisis in 1979, the TJW hijacking in 1985, the Gulf War in 1991, and the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, all led to a racialized and discriminatory perception of Muslims.[11] A recent article in *Buzzfeed* emphasizes how, even before 9/11, Muslims were considered curious beings and this curiosity often turned into fear of the unknown. In the article, the author describes how he was forced to remove his *kufi* in school during the pre 9/11 era because the school considered it a distraction causing fear of unfamiliarity for staff and students.[12]

There is an intrinsic link between Islamophobia and the racialization of Muslims that needs to be explained before breaking down the ways Muslims have been racialized into one group. In the context of the "war on terror", the racialization of American Muslims generates actual experiences of exclusion and abuse for Muslims. These experiences are captured by the term Islamophobia. Racialization leads to Islamophobic actions and sentiments; "Muslims have historically been one of these groups that experience racism, as have other faith-based groups, most obviously Jews. Their racialization is accomplished not only by reference to religion but other aspects of culture such as physical appearance. Muslims can be racialized, and how this occurs can be understood as constituting Islamophobia. Islamophobia is, therefore, a specific form of racism targeting Muslims, and racialization is a concept that helps capture and understand how this works, in different ways at different times, and in different places."[13] Considine argues that Islamophobia has resulted in racialization due to the construction of an imagined archetype of Muslims that is visibly dissimilar to other Americans and inimical to Western culture.[14]

Within the racialization debate, it is important to establish how this racialization of Muslim-Americans has impacted white Muslims. Selod argues that a white woman loses her white privilege as soon as she dons the hijab. She is then not only white but a Muslim, which is a racial identity on its own. Selod further argues that Arab bodies are rejected from whiteness regardless of their assigned racial classification.[15] She goes as far as comparing Muslims to Latinos; "Some Latinos can be racially classified as white, yet they are not treated as white in the United States."[16] Due to the entrenched propaganda against Muslims, one tends to look at the religious covering before the skin color. Thus, the racialization of Muslims transcends skin color and, instead, emphasizes religious belief and physical expression of those religious beliefs.

Muslims have been effectively racialized in American law as well. As discussed previously, this racialization precedes 9/11 which caused the persecution and victimization of the whole Muslim diaspora. This can be situated within the larger historical discrimination and attack on Asian-Americans in the United States. Neil Gotanda, a scholar on American law and the law's relationship with the racialization of Muslims, explains that Asian-Americans were considered 'permanently foreign' and 'othered' through US laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and Japanese Internment camps. This idea of the Asian as the traitor and spy is now attributed to Muslims. He further argues that the Muslim racial category follows the dual track of Asian-American racialization, especially the similarity between the 'model minority' and 'good Muslim' racial stereotypes.[17]

Since 9/11, the different presidencies in the United States have actively contributed to the racialization of Muslims. George W. Bush reigned over the United States when the global tragedy occurred. Bush announced a war against any country harboring terrorists, then immediately invaded two Muslim countries. Through his vitriolic speeches, defining terrorism as 'Islamic' in nature, he developed an Islamophobic discourse that constructed and equated 'terrorists' to Muslims.[18] Furthermore, in his 2002 State of the Union speech, President Bush identified Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, as the axis of evil, further propagating his views on the 'crusade' against Islamic terrorism. President Bush was also the mastermind behind the USA PATRIOT Act, which "attacked the civil liberties of Muslim immigrants and citizens in the United States by making secret searches and wiretaps without probable cause legal and allowing the deportation of non- citizens for associations with unfavorable political organizations."[19] Furthermore, the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS), enacted in 2002, required non-citizen men over the age of 16 from twenty-four Muslim countries to undergo fingerprinting and interrogations.[20]

Bush's presidency was categorized by anti-Muslim rhetoric that informed public opinion. Reaction to Obama's election exemplifies the Islamophobia perpetuated by Bush. Obama was classified as a Muslim, and because of that, he was automatically classified as a foreigner. This proves that the common discourse was that one's Islamic identity is incompatible with one's American identity. Obama's 'association' with Islam made him distance himself from anything even slightly Islamic. President Obama signed a four-year extension to the USA PATRIOT Act, continued ongoing military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, and failed to close Guantanamo Bay detention camp as promised.[21] Obama, like Bush, contributed to a 'Muslim as terrorist' narrative by initiating drone strikes in Northern Pakistan that killed thousands of civilians and supporting the invasion in Afghanistan. The FBI under Obama's administration pursued "dubious sting operations against American-Muslim targets."[22] Furthermore, Obama was criticized by the Muslim-American community for failing to condemn Israeli actions against Muslims.[23]

Donald Trump's presidency can be described as the most overtly Islamophobic administration, leading to an escalation of the racialization of Muslims. Trump's 2016 presidential election was categorized by vitriolic anti-Muslim rhetoric; during his presidential race, he suggested that Muslim Americans should register with the federal government. One of his first acts as president was to sign an executive order that temporarily banned individuals from seven predominantly Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States.[24] Beyond legal changes, Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric has solidified Islamophobia in the United States. To quote a few examples, Trump described the Orlando shooter's parents as Afghan Muslims; "The children of Muslim American parents, they're responsible for a growing number... for whatever reason… a growing number of terrorist attacks." At one of his first interviews on CNN right after his inauguration, Trump said, "I think Islam hates us." Furthermore, before Trump announced the Muslim Ban, he was asked on Fox News if the ban would apply to a Canadian businessman who is Muslim. Trump responded, "There's a sickness. They're sick people. There's a sickness going on. There's a group of people that is very sick."[25] All three post 9/11 presidents constructed anti-Muslim rhetoric that led to the racialization of Muslims into one dangerous entity. Thus, the largely labor diaspora turned into a victimized diaspora through, amongst other reasons, the Islamophobic tendencies of American presidents.

It is essential to expand on the reaction of Muslim host land countries to structured Islamophobia perpetrated by the United States' government. While Muslim-Americans mobilized against unfair

persecution by US law and politics, home countries of Muslims settled in America failed to provide ample support to their suffering external communities. Homelands rely on remittances that constitute a significant percentage of a country's GDP. The reaction of South and Southeast Asian countries to post-9/11 persecution of Muslims is anything but surprising. Instead of resisting the indirect intervention of the US government in the domestic and political affairs of these countries, these countries' governments adapted to the war on terror narrative and marginalized legitimate Islamist opposition movements within their borders. Muslim countries' alliance with the Islamophobic government of the United States proves these countries' dependence on the United States and their dismissal of anti-Muslim rhetoric in America in the name of economic benefits. This is telling of the dismissive attitude of the homelands, that holds its relationship with an oppressive government above the treatment of its former inhabitants by that government.[26]

To further expand on the government-sanctioned racialization of Muslims that perpetuates Islamophobia, it is important to note the gendered racialization of Muslim-American men and women. "Muslim men and women are not racialized in the same way, but rather in gendered ways. Men are more likely to be viewed as if they are disloyal and a threat to national security. Women who wear the hijab are constantly questioned about their nationality and cultural values because the hijab signifies foreignness and misogyny to their fellow private citizens," argues Selod.[27] Muslim women's right to exist in public spaces is questioned if they don the hijab. Interviews of Muslim-American women after 9/11 prove that the hijab not only became an indicator of Islam but un-Americanness. Moreover, mainly due to mainstream media, as will be discussed in a later section of this paper, covered Muslim women are seen as helpless victims of an oppressive system. Selod carried out interviews with Muslim-American women who wore the hijab to understand their daily public experiences. Nazia, a 37-year-old Indian Muslim who wears the hijab, shared that even before 9/11, people used to question her in public spaces and tell her, "you don't have to do this in America." In another instance, Maryam, a 29-year-old Syrian American *hijabi* woman was told to "go home", even though she was born in the United States.[28]

Muslim men are also subjected to this treatment but in the private sphere. For example, Saleem, a Lebanese white-passing doctor, was often stuck in situations where his patients demanded a new doctor after realizing Saleem is a Muslim name.[29] Muslim men, because of their Islamic names, are often detained in airports and subject to intense scrutiny. Even renowned individuals are not free of such scrutiny. Kamal Hassan, a well-known film actor and director from India, was stopped at Toronto airport and extensively searched, because of his Muslim-sounding name.[30] Certain states, such as Arizona, require all non-citizens to carry documentation. Although this targets Latino immigrants, this can also be seen to discriminate against Muslims based on their Muslim names. Muslim men are also seen as despots of a patriarchal and oppressive regime that violates basic human rights, as will be further discussed within the context of American media's portrayal of Muslims.[31]

Muslim men are rarely approached in public by strangers like Muslim women who wear the hijab. Selod emphasizes that the Muslim men she interviewed avoided discussing politics and religion in the workplace to prevent being seen as anti-American or foreign. Selod's interviews of Muslim-American men and women demonstrate how, "Muslim men are more likely to be questioned about their loyalty to the USA and treated as if they are a threat to national security, whereas Muslim women who wear the hijab are treated as a threat to Western cultural norms and values."[32] Muslim men have often been questioned about their allegiance to the United States, as if they are a threat to national security, in institutional settings, such as college classrooms and airports. Aziz, a 30-year old South-Asian management consultant, was asked by his professor if he had been to a terrorist training camp. This association with terrorism stigmatized Aziz in front of his classmates and suggested that he was disloyal and dangerous to the United States. Muslim students at colleges have often *jokingly* been called terrorists by their classmates, implying that Muslim men have questionable associations with America's enemies.[33] On the other hand, Muslim women, as explained above, are seen as helpless victims of an oppressive system that is insensitive to American culture and values.

Such racialization of Muslims is promoted and propagated by American media. Well before the September 11 attacks, the American media portrayed Muslims as the dangerous 'other'. After the 1993

World Trade Center bombing, the *New York Times* published a series titled 'Muslims in America'. A poll was conducted as part of the series and 43% of Americans were found to see Muslims as religious fanatics. Other newspaper editorials urged the government to eliminate Muslim immigration to the United States altogether. The 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City was blamed on 'radical Islamic networks' by *PBS*.[34]

This racialization by American media exacerbates anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiments. Considine highlights that in a study on news coverage from *LexisNexis Academic* and *CNN* on terrorist attacks in the US from 2011 to 2015; attacks by Muslims, especially foreign-born Muslims, were given drastically more coverage although these types of attacks are far less common than others. Terrorist attacks by Muslims received, on average, 449% more coverage. According to research, a perpetrator who is not Muslim will have to kill an average of seven more people to receive the same coverage as a Muslim perpetrator does.[35]

The case study of the San Bernardino shooting further exemplifies the othering and racialization of Muslims as a single dangerous unit. The San Bernardino shooters were described as Pakistanis but were born and raised in the United States. Terror news is typified to frame incidents related to Muslims within the war on terror argument and contextualize violence by Muslims as a war on the American nation. Extensive background stories are provided to de-Americanize the convicted. The *LA Times* described the attack in the following way; "The attackers were "devout Muslims," displayed no "warning signs," were not a part of any organized "terrorist cell," but were "self-radicalized…" The newspapers presented the perpetrator, Syed, as a 'devout Muslim' who 'memorized the Quran' as evidence of his deep commitment to his religion. This emphasis on a perpetrator's religious background is largely absent when an attack is committed by a non-Muslim. Tashfeen Malik, the second perpetrator, was described as secretive and mysterious because she wore the *niqab*.[36] By creating imagined connections between Islam and terrorist characteristics, American media has typified terror news as a radical Islamic terrorism domain; and thus, acts in concert with anti-Muslim laws. Media is another force within the host society that contributes to Muslim American's alienation through racialization.

*New York Times* has also played a significant role in racializing Muslims post 9/11. Jamal and Nadine, authors of *Race and Arab Americans before and after 9/11*, explore the representation of Muslims in *NYT* between September 2001 and May 2004. South-Asian and Afghan Muslims were exclusively described as 'Arabs' between this time. The author argues that all Sikhs, Indians, and Pakistanis alike were described as Arabs, even though South Asia is not an Arab region. After much criticism, an attempt was made to recognize the diversity of Arab-Americans by Leslie Wayne in her piece titled 'Arabs in US raising money to back Bush' on February 17, 2004; however, even in this corrective piece, Pakistanis and Iranians were erroneously described as Arabs. Arab-ness is thus deployed as a racialization tool.[37] Furthermore, *NYT,* between 2001 and 2004, falsely described Muslim-Americans as torn between conservative values of the homeland and liberal values of the host land. They were also often described as "boaters", a racializing discourse aimed at illegal immigrants.[38]

Additionally, an interesting aspect of post 9/11 news coverage of Islam was that it did not disparage Islam but criticized fundamentalism without specifying who constitutes a fundamentalist.[39] A dichotomy between 'good Muslim' and 'bad Muslim', or a 'moderate Muslim' and 'fundamental Muslim', was created without defining what characteristics one needed to possess to be considered 'good' or 'moderate'. Muslim women were seen as victims of oppression whereas Muslim men were seen as persecutors. The symbol of their oppression, the *burqa*, and its portrayal as a tool of oppression by American media was used as a justification for remaining in Afghanistan and "emancipating its women".[40]

In response to the racialization of Muslim-Americans by American media and American politics, Muslims started to mobilize against discrimination. Mosques served as safe communal spaces for Muslims to gather and have discussions on their social stigmatization and oppressive treatment. Furthermore, mosques reinforced one's Muslim identity in the absence of any structural support. Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, in their piece on Muslim-American mobilization, conclude from their interviews of sixty Muslim men, that political mobilization of Muslims was warranted after 9/11 and mosques became

the center for political mobilization. This political mobilization took the shape of the creation of interfaith alliances, the establishment of national organizations, the facilitation of press conferences and releases, and the publication of government initiatives targeting Muslim-American communities. Muslim advocacy organizations became increasingly active in the post 9/11 era; for example, the Fiqh Council of North America, Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), and Council on American-Islamic Relations are amongst many advocacy non-governmental organizations that uphold breached rights of Muslims by issuing public statements after any terrorist attack, distributing pamphlets, recording Islamophobic experiences of Muslims, launching educational advertising campaigns, and providing training for Imams.

The need to establish a greater presence in social and political life was felt throughout the diaspora, leading to a reinforcement of one's faith and devotion. Some called this the 'Muslim Moment'; "a period of rising Muslim self-consciousness, new alliances outside their own communities, and a generational change ... The notion of a distinct "American Muslim" identity gained new currency."[41] Imams educated Muslims on being patient, mosques fundraised for those forced out of their jobs, and mosque-goers organized protests in response to discrimination. The role of the Imam became more important in the aftermath of 9/11. As Andrea Elliot describes, Imams felt the need to lead the faithful in faith under fire and keep the trust of their congregation which was unfairly singled out by law enforcement. [42] The Imams in America led a "massive grassroots campaign to educate the American public about Islam."[43]

In a recent 2011 study by three experts on Islam, it was concluded that increased Mosque involvement leads to decreasing identification with the home country and increasing identification with being Muslim.[44] Thus, the mosque can be seen to unite Muslims from all countries and sects into a unit to mobilize against racialization. However, this unification of all Muslims can also be seen as a racializing tool, albeit a positive one. Most mosques, according to the aforementioned study, consist of a diverse variety of Muslims that steers away from an explicit national identity. This study further concludes that participation in Mosque activities led to higher political participation, including attending community rallies, writing letters to public officials, donating to political campaigns, or even just closely following American elections and politics; because Mosques had become an arena for political discourse. This is due to several factors, such as the attendants of the Mosque's shared identity and group-based resources that encourage civic participation and financial support from the community at the Mosque. This is consistent with research on newcomer Asian-American and Latinos who quickly integrate and socialize through their churches.[45] Shadi Hamid, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, shared in an interview that the newfound focus on Islam post 9/11 forced many American Muslims to reevaluate their place within the American community and led them to abandon steady career paths in favor of roles in government policy.[46] This can be justified by studying the increase of Muslim congresspeople from zero in the 107th US Congress (2001-2002) to three Muslims in the 116th US Congress (2019-2020).[4748]

The racialization of Muslims is a fairly new concept but is the most accurate way to situate the Muslim diaspora in the post 9/11 world. Initially a labor diaspora of the 1970s and 1980s, this has now effectively transformed into a victimized diaspora. Although thousands of Muslims still migrate to the United States, not only in search of asylum, but in search of employment, they enter the victimized diaspora discourse after living in an Islamophobic society. To further conclude, I will give a brief overview of the causes, themes, and effects of the racialization of Muslims as outlined in this paper.

Racialization of Muslims has been perpetrated by American establishments even before the global tragedy of 2001. The three main causes of the racialization of American Muslims, as explained in this paper, are racialization by American law, American presidents, and American media. Firstly, Muslims were discriminated against in American law. Muslims were banned from coming into the United States in large numbers in the 1930s. In addition, the Nation of Islam was termed as a terrorist organization, Muslims were shamelessly blamed for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center and the Iran hostage crisis of 1979, and they were disparaged as uncivilized and wild peoples during the Gulf Wars. American law contributed to this bitter narrative. This is not to say that the aforementioned incidents were not committed by individuals claiming to be Muslim but to blame two billion people for

acts committed by a few extremist individuals is a testament to the widespread Islamophobic sentiments of Americans.

Secondly, this racialization of Muslims is supported by post 9/11 presidents of the United States and codified in American law. From Bush's declaration of war against 'Islamic extremists' to Trump's Muslim Ban, Muslims have constantly been racialized into one oppressive and dangerous group. Additionally, host countries fail to provide psychological support for their former citizens and instead side with Western countries and politicians to continue the flow of remittances and aid. Thirdly, the American media is another foundational cause of the overt racialization of Muslims. Not only do news outlets portray Muslim men as uncivilized and uncontrollable fundamentalists and Muslim women as hypnotized servants of this oppressive system, but renowned American newspapers have left no leaves unturned when it comes to blaming internal terrorism incidents on Muslims. The San Bernardino case study provides an apt description of any terror attack committed by a Muslim; a detailed family history of the perpetrator is provided to de-Americanize and 'other' them.

Some common themes categorize the racialization of Muslim-Americans. Firstly, racialization is gendered. Muslim American men and women are racialized in vastly different ways; Muslim women are seen as a threat to American culture and values, whereas Muslim men are seen as a threat to American national security. Muslim women are incessantly scrutinized for wearing the hijab and are faced with unwanted opinions of strangers on how they do not have to support an oppressive regime. Muslim men, not because of their outward appearance necessarily but because of their Muslim-sounding name, are persecuted in educational institutions, offices, and at airports. Another theme that underlies the racialization of Muslims is the treatment of white Muslims. White converts and white-passing Middle Eastern Muslims feel a loss of white privilege after they openly express their religious beliefs. As is discussed in the paper, white women who don the hijab are faced with questions and seen with suspicion. White Muslim men with an apparent Muslim name face similar consequences as black and brown Muslims. Although their white privilege might advantage them in certain situations, their privilege is largely diminished when it comes to their association with Islam.

The effects of this rapid racialization include the instant mobilization of Muslims in the post 9/11 era. Several advocacy organizations have been created in response to increasing Islamophobia that is perpetrated by American structures and targets innocent American civilians who came to America to seek haven or find stable employment opportunities. Mosques became more significant post 9/11 because mosques served as educational institutions and havens for affected and threatened Muslims in need of guidance. It was also concluded through an extensive study that Muslims' participation in mosque activities directly coincided with participation in the political arena.

Muslim-Americans, despite their nationality and race, suffer at the hands of American institutions that fuel their 'victim' status and effectively transform a mixed diaspora into a 'victimized' diaspora. Although their mobilization against racialization has led to more Muslim representation in US politics and media, it is yet to be seen if the racialization of Muslims persists in the face of a growing population of Muslims and the increasing assimilation of the offspring of the Muslim diaspora.

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