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Introduction

My Muslim American Life

In August 2011, almost exactly ten years after the terrorist attacks of 2001, the Associated Press published an article titled “With CIA Help, NYPD Moves Covertly in Muslim Areas.” The article’s authors, Matt Apuzzo and Adam Goldman, described how the New York Police Department was working with officials “on loan” from the CIA to develop a massive and covert surveillance program that directly targeted the entire Muslim community in and around New York City.¹ Initially, the NYPD flatly denied the reporters’ findings. “Someone has a great imagination,” NYPD spokesman Paul Browne said.² The AP then posted on their website a trove of leaked internal documents from the police department that proved not only the existence of the program but also that the department felt free to lie outright to its public about its actions. Veteran police reporter Len Levitt also gained access to internal documents, and on September 5 published an article (reprinted two days later by the *Huffington Post*) on the scope of the surveillance.³ Levitt noted that the NYPD had placed confidential informants in seven Muslim student associations (MSAs) at local colleges and that Brooklyn College, where I teach, and Baruch College had been listed as MSAs “of concern.” Levitt wrote about one confidential police report that listed “42 top tier ‘persons of interest,’” which included “a lecturer at Brooklyn College.” For weeks, people assumed that this lecturer must be me.

Frankly, I wondered the same while also thinking that it would be absurd for the police to waste their resources on me. The Asso-

ciated Press called me to ask me if I thought I was being surveilled, and a *New York Times* columnist also interviewed me about the report. Later, someone I know and trust who was shown the file told me that it had identified someone else. Of course, just because I was not the person named in the report does not mean that the NYPD has not spied on me. It just means I don't know for sure.

Others have learned something different. Mohammad Elshinawy is a young Egyptian American from Brooklyn with a popular following among New York's devout Muslims. I know Mohammad, who was once my student, and he and I also spent some time together when I was writing my book about Brooklyn's Arab Muslim youth. I could tell even then that he was a rising star with religious conservatives. Always dressed in a galabeyya with a kufi on his head, a fist-length beard on his chin, and sneakers on his feet, Mohammad commanded the respect of Brooklyn's young Muslims with his eloquence, intelligence, scholarly knowledge, and mastery of Qur'anic Arabic. It wasn't just the young people who were attracted to Mohammad. He has also been the subject of fastidious NYPD surveillance. According to Apuzzo and Goldman, Mohammad's popularity had initially attracted the interest of the FBI, which became concerned that he might have been recruiting young men to fight overseas. That investigation was concluded with no charges filed. Yet the NYPD decided to pursue the matter—and Mohammad—further.⁴

I wondered what it's like to know you've been surveilled by the police, so I contacted Mohammad to ask him. He invited me to one of the regular classes he offers on the Qur'an at Masjid Al-Ansar, a simple storefront mosque in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, that, as reports indicate, has also been under NYPD surveillance. After the class, we went to a quiet room in the mosque's basement to talk. Boxes of canned foods, ready to distribute to the needy, surrounded

us as we sat on the carpeted floor. I asked Mohammad what he felt after learning about the surveillance on him and its extent.

“Apprehension,” he said, after thinking a while. “To what degree is this going to affect me?” He shared that he carefully considered his actions and that he would “try to take a stand and get past this hump.” Mohammad was referring to being a plaintiff in a lawsuit filed by the ACLU (still pending as of this writing, in January 2015) against the police department. “There’s no reason why we should consider ourselves second-class citizens,” he said, speaking about Muslim Americans generally. “I’m born in this country like anybody else,” he said.

From the documents leaked to the AP, we know the character of the surveillance practiced on Mohammad and the NYPD’s views on the young man. Labeling his race as “ME,” that is, Middle Eastern, the police files describe Mohammad’s views as “hard-core Salafi ones.”⁵ (*Salafis* are scriptural conservatives who seek a belief system based on their understanding of the early days of Islam, and the police department operates under the assumption that they are particularly prone to violence.) One report states that the “TIU [Terrorism Interdiction Unit] believes that [Mohammad] is a threat due to the fact that he is so highly regarded by so many young and impressionable individuals,”⁶ as if charm were a weapon. In the same report and under the heading “Surveillance Objective” is written, “Target moves on a daily basis to many different spots. Every day of the week is beneficial. . . . [Most beneficial would be] after 1500 (after target gets off of work),”⁷ revealing essentially that Mohammad is a hardworking young man. The spying even invaded his love life and followed him around the city. The report continues, “Surveillance has revealed many things re: this target. His change of auto, the fact that he was going to get married b/c surv[eillance] observed him shopping for diamond rings w/ a female in the diamond district.”⁸ I asked him about this detail. “I

took my fiancée to go buy her a diamond ring, and even then I'm being tailgated," he told me. "Many times we knew we were being tailgated," he explained, "it's just like, what are you going to do? Call the cops on the cops?" He laughed. "It's quite a predicament!"

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Looking closely at the NYPD surveillance program, we can get a larger sense of its dangerous presumptions and misguided activities. The program began in 2002, when Police Commissioner Ray Kelly hired David Cohen, a former deputy director for operations at the CIA, as his deputy commissioner of intelligence. Cohen succeeded in getting a judge to relax provisions of the Handschu Agreement, a 1985 consent decree developed in response to a lawsuit against the NYPD for spying on the constitutionally protected activity of political groups in the 1960s and 1970s. The Handschu Agreement previously allowed police surveillance only when officers had specific information a crime would be committed or was being planned. Under the new rules adopted in 2003, police no longer needed evidence to begin an investigation, just the *possibility* of criminal activity.

Cohen established four units in his Intelligence Division—the Demographics Unit, the Intelligence Analysis Unit, the Cyber Intelligence Unit, and the Terrorism Interdiction Unit—and hired Lawrence Sanchez, a CIA analyst, to oversee intelligence. Using data from the 2000 US census, the intelligence division proceeded to chart where the Muslims in New York lived.⁹

This mapping has precedents. It recalls a 1919 map of ethnic New York drafted by the NYPD and New York State Police that identified certain ethnic neighborhoods in an effort to root out socialists, communists, and anarchists.¹⁰ It's reminiscent of when the Census Bureau provided the government with information on where Japanese Americans lived to assist the War Relocation Authority in interning them during World War II.¹¹ And it bears a resemblance to

specially tabulated statistics on Arab American populations, indicating zip-code-level breakdowns of Arab Americans by country of origin, which the Census Bureau produced for Homeland Security from August 2002 to December 2003.¹²

The NYPD did more than exploit publicly available data, however. They also sent out “rakers,” plainclothes officers who could blend in to the community, and “mosque crawlers,” informants working for the police. (Rakers were so dubbed because Cohen described their actions as akin to “raking an extinguished fire pit.”)¹³ The Intelligence Division viewed everything about ordinary Muslim life as suspicious and catalogued it all. They established sports leagues as a way to spy on Muslim youth.¹⁴ They recorded license plate numbers from the cars of mosque visitors. They noted where Muslims got haircuts and they eavesdropped on conversations in cafés.¹⁵ They considered it suspicious when café televisions were tuned to Al Jazeera and when they were not. (The “Egyptian Locations of Interest Report” states that in one café “the Al Jazeera news channel is prohibited inside this location because the owner feels it brings extra scrutiny from law enforcement.”)¹⁶ They made more than seventy-five visits to thirty-four “targeted” travel agencies in South Asian communities around New York to discover that there were four principal airlines to Pakistan: Pakistan International Airlines, Emirates Airlines, Kuwait Airways, and Gulf Air.¹⁷ They also often got facts wrong, identifying Sephardic Jews and Lebanese Christians as Syrian Muslims, Coptic Egyptians as more numerous than Muslim Egyptians in New York, and Sunni Muslims as Shi‘i Muslims.¹⁸

More troubling still, the NYPD designated selected mosques as “Terrorism Enterprises,” meaning any visitor to these Muslim houses of worship could be investigated and that speech, including sermons, would be monitored and recorded.¹⁹ “It was an unprecedented moment in the history of American law enforcement,” Apuzzo and Goldman write in *Enemies Within*, their book

about the surveillance program. “The NYPD regarded houses of worship—and everyone who prayed there—as possible criminal organizations.”²⁰

All of this netted, the NYPD was later forced to admit, not a single lead on suspected terrorist activity.²¹ After the facts of the program were no longer deniable and due in large part to the mobilizing efforts of New York’s Muslim communities and their allies, the department announced in April 2014 that they would disband the Demographics Unit. They did not however announce a halt to other aspects of their Muslim community surveillance, including designating mosques as “Terrorism Enterprises.”²²

Nor has the NYPD announced an end to using informants to monitor Muslim communities without any probable cause. We now know the inner workings of informant life. One informant, Shamiur Rahman, who was a regular attendee of Mohammad’s lectures, emerged from the shadows in October 2012, revealing on his Facebook page that he had been sent by the NYPD to observe Muslims and “bait” them into saying inciting things, particularly statements containing “jihad” and “revolution.”²³ For this he was paid as much as a thousand dollars a month and given leniency on misdemeanor marijuana possession charges.²⁴ According to a *New York Times* report from May 2014, such practices are continuing.²⁵ The end of the Demographics Unit does not mean the end of bias-based policing of New York’s Muslims, who can still count on being treated by the NYPD as harbingers of terrorism just by going about their everyday affairs.

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Why would the NYPD expend such massive resources—the counterterrorism and intelligence units are staffed by nearly a thousand employees and operate with a combined budget of over a hundred million dollars (2010 figures)—to spy on the mundane and the ordinary? The reasoning behind their actions must be their belief

that Muslims will almost necessarily become, if they aren't already, terrorists or supporters of terrorism. Testifying before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in 2007, Lawrence Sanchez, the CIA official who worked with the NYPD, explained how the NYPD aims to crawl not just into the mosques but into the souls of Muslims to reveal their true essence, even before they know themselves. "Rather than just protecting New York City citizens from terrorists," Sanchez said, "the New York Police Department believes that part of *its mission is to protect New York City citizens from turning into terrorists.*"²⁶ From there, he explained how it was proper to trample on the constitutional rights of ordinary Muslims. Testifying that the NYPD now scrutinizes "what most people would say would be non-criminal, would be innocuous, behaviors that could easily be argued in a Western democracy, especially in the United States, [are] protected by First and Fourth Amendment rights," Sanchez said, "[we don't] look at them in a vacuum, but . . . look across to them as potential precursors to terrorism."²⁷

The same prejudicial assumptions of the inevitably violent Muslim have been found in training documents used by both the FBI, which also hired a former CIA official, Philip Mudd, to run its counterterrorism operations, and the US military.²⁸ (The manner in which domestic law enforcement generally has been integrated with the country's intelligence services during the War on Terror also begs serious study.)

Nor is this assumption limited to the United States. In Guantánamo Bay, scores of prisoners have been cleared for release since 2010 by the US government's own Guantánamo Review Task Force, and yet dozens of these men remain behind bars and bereft of hope, most having been incarcerated without charge or trial for more than twelve years. Why? Because Congress and the Pentagon have dragged their feet on releasing the men, arguing that they should not be freed due to the future possibility that they will

return to their home countries only to take up hostilities against the United States. In this case, a past of abuse by the United States might make that argument more tenable, but even here a New American Foundation study found that 8.8 percent of returned captives have undertaken “militant activity,” significantly below the Pentagon’s official estimate of 14 percent.²⁹

Then there are the drones. In 2012, the *New York Times* described President Obama’s vastly expanded program of drone warfare during the War on Terror and reported that when it authorizes a strike, the White House “in effect counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants . . . unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent.”³⁰ This partly reflects a shell game used by the White House to show how they are minimizing civilian casualties, and former CIA officials have expressed dismay at the concept. One called it “guilt by association” that has led to “deceptive” estimates of civilian casualties. “It bothers me when they say there were seven guys, so they must all be militants,” a CIA official told the *New York Times*, adding, “they count the corpses and they’re not really sure who they are.”³¹ A year after this revelation, President Obama stated that “the high threshold that we’ve set for taking lethal action applies to all potential terrorist targets, regardless of whether or not they are American citizens.”³² But what qualifies as a “potential terrorist” has never been delineated. And while the official line is that the US military does not target males in Afghanistan and other declared or undeclared war zones solely because they are of military age, the *Nation* has shown that the practice not only continues but is even recorded in internal reports that mention MAMs (military-aged males),³³ as if all males of that age are reducible (and thus justifiably killed due) to their potential for terrorism.

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This idea that you are seen not as a complex human being but only as a purveyor of possible future violence illustrates the extraordinary predicament of the heart of contemporary Muslim American life. To be a Muslim American today is to be full of potential, and not in the sweet way that grandmothers and elementary school teachers use the word. The state has enveloped itself in a near religious task, to sneak and peek into the conscience of one set of its citizens and residents and their coreligionists abroad. In this *Minority Report* world, the police aim to patrol the minds of Muslims for what they believe they will think and not for their actions.

Nor is this point of view limited to government. That Muslims will ultimately reveal themselves as usurpers and organizers of future chaos and terror exists in American society at large, where constructing a mosque is often viewed not innocently but as part of a larger plan for the future takeover of the country, despite how ridiculous that sounds and impossible that would be. This notion reached its media apex with massive demonstrations in 2010 against the planned construction of a Muslim cultural center in the vicinity of Ground Zero (see Chapter 8), but Muslim communities around the country have faced uphill battles to establish Islamic centers and mosques for years. In 2012, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life published a study using media sources that catalogued fifty-three examples of community resistance to new mosques in twenty-one states.³⁴ Similarly, at least thirty-two state legislatures have drafted bills barring judges from considering foreign law including sharia (Islamic legal principles) in their decisions. The guiding force behind these linked agitations is the notion of “creeping sharia,” that is to say, in their ordinary expressions of life, Muslims are both untrustworthy and conquest-minded, and soon the American Constitution will be superseded by Islamic law. In late August 2013 North Carolina became the seventh state to sign such a bill into law, and in November 2014 voters in Alabama overwhelmingly approved an anti-sharia ballot initiative. Behind both

anti-sharia bills and anti-mosque agitation is the suspicion less of what Muslims are doing and more of what they will do with the law and their property in the future. In the grammar of Islamophobia, the future is tense.

The scary, duplicitous, and secret life of Muslims is perhaps most shamelessly displayed in Showtime's blockbuster series *Homeland*. Nick Brody is a returning Marine who had been captured in Iraq and held for eight years by the terrorist Abu Nazir. Brody is essentially reprogrammed during his captivity while caring for Abu Nazir's son—who is subsequently killed in a drone strike—into adopting Islam, and when he returns to the United States, he seeks to avenge the boy's death and fight for his new faith. Brody leads a double life, a public one where he is an American hero who becomes a congressman and is eventually tapped as a vice presidential running mate, and a private one where he is not only a secret Muslim but also a secret terrorist. *Homeland's* whole suspense and momentum derive not from what Brody is but what he might become, an American hero or a Muslim terrorist. The show feeds off the same presumption of future malfeasance that is the essence of today's anti-Muslim prejudice.

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“I am in the strenuous and far from dull position of having news to deliver to the Western world,” James Baldwin wrote in 1979, and his news is simple and straightforward, “*black* is not a synonym for *slave*.”³⁵ The situation is disturbingly similar today. “Muslim” is not a synonym for “terrorist.” And yet the automatic association of Muslim Americans with terrorism has become completely institutionalized and thoroughly commonsensical, even though it flies in the face of the evidence. In fact, terrorist acts or attempts thereof by Muslim Americans over the past dozen years have been extremely rare, far fewer than the number of attacks carried out by right-wing extremists. According to the Triangle Center on

Terrorism and Homeland Security, terrorist acts perpetrated by Muslim Americans in the United States since 9/11 have killed thirty-seven people, and the majority of those deaths are attributed to two attacks: one by Major Nidal Hasan, who killed thirteen fellow soldiers in Fort Hood, Texas, and the other the series of shootings by the “Beltway snipers” who, unconnected to the War on Terror (and mainline Islam), killed eleven people. The Boston Marathon bombers were responsible for another four deaths in 2013. By contrast, 133 people were killed by non-Muslims in mass shootings in 2013 alone.³⁶ Another report, published by West Point’s Combating Terrorism Center in 2012, found that between 1990 and 2012, non-Muslim far-right extremists have committed 4,420 violent acts in the United States that have killed 670 people and injured 3,053 more, and the number of attacks has risen precipitously since 2000 and especially since 2007.³⁷ Polling data also indicate that Muslim Americans are in fact the least likely major religious group in the country to support military attacks on civilians.³⁸ And according to the investigative journalist Trevor Aaronson, the vast majority of those Muslim Americans who have been arrested on terrorism or terrorism-related charges over the past dozen years have been vulnerable losers nabbed in sting operations that come perilously close to entrapment, small-time offenders with distant links to radicals overseas, or immigrants caught lying to federal officials. According to Aaronson, independent plots that have risen to credible threats number just five—rather amateurish—cases.³⁹

Terrorism is a serious issue, and five attempts are clearly five too many. All those who have been victims of terrorism should be mourned and justice must be served. And yet some sense of perspective and proportionality surely ought to be maintained. Instead, however, the national security apparatus routinely invokes the fear of terrorism, implicitly or explicitly by Muslims, to assume ever-expanding powers over American lives and to justify military intervention overseas. The image that the country is under siege

by these Muslim terrorists and their sympathizers is regularly reinforced, and the minuscule amount of violence that can be associated with Muslim Americans is magnified and decontextualized, seen as a true expression of Islamic belief rather than occurring within the context of global warfare. In important ways, the constant promotion and creation of the Muslim American threat displaces the violence of the War on Terror overseas back on the image of the violent Muslim terrorists who must live among us.⁴⁰ Don't worry about facts. The image of the Muslim terrorist is a very useful one.

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Such images and notions matter because, taken together, they create a kind of War on Terror culture that is continuously reflected and reinforced across American society. It's important to understand not only what War on Terror culture is but also the costs it has had on Muslim Americans specifically and on social and political life in the United States generally. War on Terror culture assumes that Muslims collectively are responsible for and sympathetic to all acts of violence by individual Muslims everywhere, unless and until they explicitly say otherwise. But even then, their words are often doubted since Muslims are seen as doctrinally prone to lying and violence. If any Muslim commits a horrible act of violence, the action is automatically assumed to be a heinous political feat. With non-Muslim Americans, the situation is different, as Conor Friedersdorf explains. "When mass killers are native-born whites," he writes, "their motivations are treated like a mystery to [be] unraveled rather than a foregone conclusion."⁴¹ And there's more. A *Washington Post* columnist recently discovered that major news media won't even consider an act of violence as terrorism unless the government names it as such first, giving the government, apropos of War on Terror culture, tremendous power over labels and abdicating the media's own independence.⁴²

War on Terror culture also means that Muslim American history is forgotten, as if Muslims existed in the United States only after September 2001. War on Terror culture represents Muslims always and only through the War on Terror lens and never on their own terms. War on Terror culture means that Muslim job applicants, according to a 2014 study by researchers at the University of Connecticut, receive “32 percent fewer emails and 48 percent fewer phone calls than applicants from the control group, far outweighing measurable bias against the other faith groups.”⁴³ War on Terror culture promotes the seductive synergy of militarism and entertainment (remember when Michelle Obama, flanked by soldiers in dress uniforms in the White House, announced the Best Picture Oscar for *Argo*?) while rationalizing or ignoring the massive civilian death toll of the War on Terror. War on Terror culture means that the 9/11 Memorial, supposedly dedicated to ending intolerance and ignorance, offers pamphlets in nine languages but bizarrely not in Arabic, and the 9/11 Museum tour concludes with a film considered by many to be inflammatory toward Islam.⁴⁴ War on Terror culture is essentially the deep institutionalization of George W. Bush’s simplistic proclamation that “either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists,”⁴⁵ as if there can be no other options, as if one can’t oppose the horrors that the War on Terror delivers and the murderous nihilism of terrorism simultaneously.

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Because War on Terror culture ascribes a programmed and malevolent future to Muslims, it marks almost anything Muslims say about themselves as immediately suspect, part of a larger plot of apologetics at best or propaganda at worst. In this way, it not only denies the rich history of Islam in America but also sees Islam as always and forever a foreign and a foreigner’s faith to the United States. The good news, however, is that War on Terror culture is

not the only game in town. Resistance to its simplistic worldview has motivated a small but growing War on Terror counterculture, a large part of which is reflected in cultural production by and about Muslim Americans and probing scholarship on Muslim Americans in recent years. The audiences for this kind of work have also expanded and deepened.

Resistance to the dictates of War on Terror culture can be found in novels such as Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home*, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Amy Waldman's *The Submission*, all serious attempts to ponder the complexities of contemporary Muslim life. Documentary films such as *The New Muslim Cool* and *The Muslims Are Coming!* challenge conventional ways of thinking about Muslims in the United States. Major cultural institutions such as New York's Poetry House and the National Endowment for the Humanities have developed programs to educate the broader public about the lives and traditions of Muslims, here and abroad. *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* have frequently lampooned manifestations of Islamophobia through their invaluable satire. And universities, high schools, and houses of worship across the country have hosted countless speakers and held innumerable seminars with Muslim Americans in attempts to gain greater understanding of Muslim American lives.⁴⁶

Scholarly inquiry into Muslim American history, life, and realities has produced other probing work, including Hisham Aidi's *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture*, Evelyn Alsultany's *Arabs and Muslims in the Media*, Louise Cainkar's *Homeland Insecurity*, Sohail Daulatzai's *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom beyond America*, Kambiz Ghaneabassiri's *A History of Islam in America*, Zareena Grewal's *Islam Is a Foreign Country*, Deepa Kumar's *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*, Sunaina Maira's *Missing*, Timothy Marr's *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism*, Junaid Rana's *Terrify-*

ing Muslims, Steven Salaita's *Anti-Arab Racism*, Denise Spellberg's *Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an*, and many more.⁴⁷ This War on Terror counterculture reflects the desire to investigate Muslim American life beyond the clichés of law enforcement and popular culture, however overwhelming those may be, and represents a point of optimism in a general period of political pessimism. Much more, however, is needed.

This book reflects my attempts since 2001 to respond to War on Terror culture and its repercussions on Muslim American life. Some chapters are drawn directly from my own experiences. Over the past few years, I have been an extra in an Orientalist film about American women shopping in Abu Dhabi, a terrorist suspect (or at least my namesake "Mustafa Bayoumi" was) in a detective novel set in Pittsburgh, the subject of a trumped-up controversy over a book I had written, and a participant in a somewhat strange conversation with an officer of the US Citizenship bureau. Many Muslim Americans have similar stories. To be a Muslim American today often means to exist in that slightly absurd space between exotic and dangerous and between victim and villain simply because of people's assumptions about you.

This Muslim American Life is arranged in four sections: Muslims in History, Muslims in Theory, Muslims in Politics, and Muslims in Culture. In the first section, I investigate the lesser-known but no less significant aspects of American history that involve Arab and Muslim Americans. These include the early community of Arab sojourners who established "Little Syria" in Lower Manhattan (almost exactly at Ground Zero), the spiritual and musical connections between Muslim Americans and African Americans, and the legal history and present of Muslims through the prism of immigration law and enforcement. It is barely recognized, for example, that the legal precedents for contemporary immigration policies directly targeting Muslims in the United States have their roots in the Chinese Exclusion Acts of an earlier era.

“Muslims in Theory” considers not Muslims and their adherence or nonadherence to a belief system but rather how Orientalism today both replicates and differs from the classical Orientalism that preceded it, as identified by Edward Said in his influential book. The chapters here delve into the consequences of the production of knowledge about Muslims from ideological positions created and promoted by the War on Terror. Today, Orientalism is alive and well and is often promoted by Muslims themselves, but these latest practitioners are hardly the eccentric polymaths of Orientalism’s past. They are often deeply imbricated in the American power structure, where they usually reinforce old Orientalist tropes by assuming the role of the multicultural translator between societies. Understanding contemporary Orientalism is crucial to comprehending the relationship between difference and power in a pluralistic society.

Part III (Muslims in Politics) analyzes the political consequences of the War on Terror on Muslim Americans. The chapters here underscore how repressive policies of the national security apparatus and populist opposition have produced a complicated landscape that Muslim Americans have had to navigate over the years. Both civil society and the state have created simplistic and essentially racialized caricatures of Muslim Americans that inhibit their entry into the mainstream and often even seek to muzzle their voices. Islamophobia has not only permeated law enforcement but also, as polling data indicate, mixed with a white anxiety about losing a privileged place in society, a sentiment shared by many older white Americans.

Part IV (Muslims in Culture) examines how Muslims have been represented in contemporary American culture and how American culture has been used against them, even as a weapon of war. (Chapter 13, for example, reveals the US military’s use of music as torture against War on Terror detainees.) I consider the multicultural politics of contemporary films, where African American lead

characters supposedly understand Arabs and Muslims better than their white counterparts, and examine the rise of a (putatively) highly competent CIA in film and television shows, where the police procedural replaces the action movie as the genre of choice for the War on Terror. Understanding the dynamics of War on Terror culture and its relationship to the racialization of Muslim Americans is necessary if we wish to grasp the complex interplay among culture, power, and race.

Culture, law, politics, and theory are not discrete and separate entities unto themselves. Each significantly informs the other, and this is perhaps especially true in the War on Terror, where the specter of Muslim malfeasance has had far-reaching consequences in all of these domains. Using a variety of approaches, the chapters in this book intervene in these various realms and point to the ways they are connected. The larger idea behind the book is a general program of interference in the representational and political logic that prevails regarding Muslims and Muslim Americans, and to that end these chapters are written in a variety of registers in the hope of expanding the counterculture of resistance to War on Terror logic.

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The facts of Muslim American life are important for all Americans, and not just Muslims, to understand. Because Muslim Americans are now routinely treated differently from other Americans, how American society deals with its Muslims has become a question at the heart of the democratic project itself. War on Terror culture rationalizes the differential treatment of one group of citizens, and this treatment has been generally supported by the public. Even in liberal New York City, the NYPD program of surveillance polled at a 58 percent approval rate in 2012.⁴⁸ Even more worrisome is how the surveillance of Muslim American life today is replicated on a much larger scale by the federal government, again and always in the name of fighting terrorism. Edward Snowden's revelations

into the gargantuan program of surveillance by the National Security Agency have shown that the government feels emancipated from constitutional principles of preserving privacy while at the same time requiring overwhelming secrecy for its actions, just as the NYPD has done with New York's Muslims. Even if you care little about Muslim American rights, you ought to be concerned about the government's mission creep more than any trumped up Muslim American sharia creep. The excessive secrecy of the government together with the demands of full transparency of the citizenry threatens the fundamental arrangement between those who govern and the governed. Americans of all types are expected to acquiesce to intrusions into their private lives, supposedly for greater security, while any objection is interpreted as "having something to hide."

But having something to hide—or having the right to hold an inner life and to be free to determine how much of yourself you show to others—is not only a guarantee of our democracy but also a necessary part of being human. Losing that right is troubling and dangerous for the same reason that Elaine Scarry identifies as the dark innovation of the Patriot Act. "The Patriot Act inverts the constitutional requirement that people's lives be private and the work of government officials be public; it instead crafts a set of conditions in which our inner lives become transparent and the workings of the government become opaque. Either one of these outcomes would imperil democracy; together they not only injure the country but also cut off the avenues of repair," explains Scarry.⁴⁹ A related notion is often expressed this way: democracy means that the government should be afraid of its people, not the converse. What is clear is that the metastasizing growth of the national security state specifically and War on Terror culture generally jeopardizes this fundamental arrangement between citizen and state.

This Muslim American Life examines some of the complexities of Muslim American life and highlights some of the most basic ques-

tions about how US political and cultural life is organized today. A recurring concern here is that we do not yet understand or appreciate the profound ways that the War on Terror has created a political ecology of its own, one that relies on excessive secrecy, differential rights, innovative forms of racism, expanded executive power, and permanent war, while also threatening to undermine our bedrock principles of equality and privacy, so enthralled have we become with fighting terrorism and expanding militarism. Perhaps the real issue to address is not what will become of Muslim Americans in the future, but what is becoming of us Americans.

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