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Good Muslims, Bad Muslims, and the Nation: The “Ground Zero Mosque” and the Problem With Tolerance

Chris Earle

The local controversy over Cordoba House or the “Ground Zero Mosque” peaked at a May 2010 Lower Manhattan Community Board meeting that was open to the public. Examining the tolerance rhetorics evoked both for and against Cordoba, this paper argues that both tolerance rhetorics function differently to re-center the white non-Muslim subject and to structure inclusion and belonging within the nation. Extending the literature of tolerance, which tends to focus on the discourse of normative subjects, I analyze the tolerance rhetorics of two Muslim-American rhetors whose testimonies reveal the tensions, contradictions, and complicities involved in claims of national belonging.

Keywords: Tolerance; Nationalism; Muslim Rhetorics; Racism; Inclusion and Belonging

Over the spring and summer of 2010, the proposal to build an Islamic community center two blocks north of Ground Zero in New York City became ensnared in debates about national identity and belonging. Both local and national deliberations over Cordoba House,¹ derisively dubbed the “Ground Zero Mosque,” grappled with the appropriateness of an Islamic community center near the site of a terror attack. By August, the debate became the focus of national politics in an election year. President Obama framed his support of Cordoba in terms of religious freedom, which he extolled as “essential to who we are.”² Happy to take up the opposing view, Newt Gingrich depicted the people behind the Cordoba as “radical Islamists who want to triumphally [*sic*] prove that they can build a mosque right next to a place where 3,000 Americans were killed by radical Islamists.”³

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The local controversy came to a head a few months earlier in May, when the Cordoba Initiative approached the Lower Manhattan Community Board 1 (CB1), which includes Ground Zero, to engage in an open dialogue about the project. Although Cordoba was an as-of-right project and CB1 had no official power to approve or deny it, a resolution for the project was debated and ultimately passed at a highly contentious May 25 CB1 meeting that was open to the public.⁴ Because the meeting included an open session during which all attendees could speak on the matter, the meeting lasted for over four hours. Despite the deliberations often verging on breaking down as audience members booed, jeered, and insulted speakers, attendees debated the intent behind Cordoba, the sensitivity of the project to 9/11 survivors, and the extent to which Islam is compatible with the West. What may be most interesting—and troubling—is that both pro- and anti-Cordoba rhetors couched their stances in the language of tolerance. The CB1 deliberations focused on whether Muslims shared “our” commitment to tolerance and, then, whether “we” should tolerate “them.”

Analyzing the pro- and anti-Cordoba tolerance rhetorics made in front of CB1,⁵ this paper contributes to a burgeoning body of scholarship in rhetorical studies examining the tensions between belonging and unbelonging, inclusion and exclusion within the US nation.⁶ One particularly generative site to study the construction of the US nation has been immigration discourse and especially the dominant and denigrating depictions of non-white migrants and refugees.⁷ While much of this work focuses on the US–Mexico border, a smaller body of work also investigates discourses about Arab and/or Muslim subjects,⁸ especially as these discourses serve as a pretext for the war on terror.⁹ Together, this scholarship names a crisis of national borders and identity, in large part a crisis of whiteness,¹⁰ that necessitates the bolstering of symbolic and material borders and the regulation of racialized others.

More recently, scholars in rhetorical studies emphasize how marginalized others speak back to dominant discourses, enact citizenship, and gain entrance to the US nation.¹¹ Josue David Cisneros calls for scholars to attend to migrants’ and other marginalized subjects’ creative and resistant rhetorics of cultural citizenship, through which the very borders of the nation and between citizen and other are opened for subversion.¹² However, Karma Chávez, following Toby Miller, cautions that enactments of cultural citizenship and appeals to inclusion and belonging often risk reproducing dominant visions of the nation.¹³ This tension is particularly evident in marginalized subjects’ negotiation of liberal tropes like equality and human rights.¹⁴ The question these studies raise, and that this paper addresses, concerns whether, and to what ends, dominant tropes and discourses can be appropriated and rearticulated by marginalized subjects.

Tolerance rhetorics, so salient in a post-9/11 neoliberal moment, offer a particularly rich opportunity to address this question. Although tolerance has meant very different things in different contexts, it is typically understood as a means to promote stability and/or protect minority positions and identities.¹⁵ However, scholars in critical theory and critical race studies have more recently revealed tolerance to rationalize certain forms of racism and inequality.¹⁶ Wendy Brown, for

instance, theorizes tolerance as a practice of governmentality, whereby tolerance operates politically and socially to produce and regulate subjects, to organize relations of power, and to legitimize the liberal democratic state.¹⁷ Importantly, Brown demonstrates tolerance to promote political stability in some cases while furthering oppression, exclusion, and violence in others. As Brown contends, tolerance can both supplement *and* block claims for liberal equality.¹⁸

In this paper, I draw upon the literature on tolerance, especially as articulated within multicultural discourses, examining how the competing Cordoba tolerance rhetorics alternately construct the US nation, position Muslim subjects, and structure belonging. Further, I contribute to this scholarship, which tends to focus on the discourse and enactments of normative subjects and states, by considering the possibilities and pitfalls of Muslim subjects appropriating the language of tolerance. While pro- and anti-Cordoba rhetors certainly evoke tolerance differently—and imbue it with conflicting meanings—I argue that both forms of tolerance rhetorics function to re-center the white-non-Muslim subject in the national imaginary, and, as such, to severely limit the space for Muslim Americans to claim national belonging or to critique anti-Islamic intolerance.

In what follows, I first detail how two anti-Muslim bloggers spurred the local controversy over Cordoba, focusing on how their clear anti-Islamic intolerance set tolerance as the key trope of the deliberations. Next, I turn to the tolerance rhetorics made at the CB1 meeting by non-Muslim rhetors against and in support of Cordoba House, illustrating how both sides affirm the nation as tolerant *and* assume the right or power to set limits on what is tolerable; the key disagreement centers on whether Muslims are tolerant “like us” and, thus, whether they fall within what “we” can and should tolerate. Having set the stage, I conclude by examining the tolerance rhetorics mobilized by two Muslim-American rhetors to illustrate the tensions, contradictions, and complicities involved in claims of national belonging.

Intolerant Beginnings

The controversy started quietly.¹⁹ The thirteen-story Islamic community center, planned for a former Burlington Coat Factory that was damaged on 9/11, was proposed as an expansion of a Mosque that had been in nearby Tribeca since 1983. The organization behind the center, Cordoba Initiative, was founded in 2004 by Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf to facilitate interfaith and intercultural understanding, and to improve Muslim–West relations. An author, activist, and spiritual leader, Imam Feisal, who identifies himself as a moderate Muslim, unequivocally spoke out against terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11, including in his 2005 book, *What's Right With Islam is What's Right With America*.²⁰ Nonetheless, by August 2010, a *Time Magazine* poll found that 70 percent of national respondents believed building Cordoba would be an insult to the victims of 9/11.²¹

Outside of a handful of conservative bloggers, however, few raised any objections when the plans were first publicized in December of the previous year. That month,

the *New York Times* profiled Cordoba Initiative's early plans for Cordoba House, depicting it as an opportunity for cross-cultural understanding and for dissociating Islam from the terrorist acts putatively undertaken in its name.²² Imam Feisal is quoted as stating, "We want to push back against the [Islamic] extremists," and as hoping that an Islamic community center in Lower Manhattan "sends the opposite statement to what happened on 9/11." That same month, Imam Feisal's wife, Daisy Kahn, who is the executive director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement, explains the project in similar terms to *Fox News's* Laura Ingraham. Lauding Cordoba's moderate approach, Ingraham tells Kahn: "I like what you are trying to do," and "I can't find many people who really have a problem with it."²³

However, by the time Cordoba House was up for approval by the Lower Manhattan Community Board 1 (CB1) on May 25, 2010, the tenor had shifted dramatically. Cordoba House began gaining negative publicity after CB1's Financial District Committee unanimously approved the project on May 6.²⁴ Chief among the dissenting voices were two conservative writers, Pamela Gellar and Robert Spencer, known for their anti-Islamic stances. Gellar's and Spencer's blogs, *Atlas Shrugs* and *Jihad Watch*, which had long published anti-Islamic invective, became central hubs for the anti-Cordoba movement. Indeed, Spencer reports that 2.9 million people visited *Jihad Watch* in July 2010, by far the most since the site's 2003 launch.²⁵

Through Gellar's "Stop Islamization of America" (SIOA), self-described as a human rights group, Gellar and Spencer began in early May to organize large scale protests against Cordoba.²⁶ Their efforts gained national publicity on May 13 when Gellar was a guest on *Fox News's* Sean Hannity's radio show. After Hannity opens the segment by explaining that a "giant Mosque is being planned to be built in an area right adjacent to Ground Zero," Gellar calls for listeners to attend a June 6 protest, which, as she does not fail to note, is the anniversary of D-Day. In her opening remarks, Gellar rails against the threats posed by "Islamic jihadists" and "Islamic supremacists," referencing Cordoba as a "Mega-Mosque on sacred ground" and as a stab into the heart and soul of America.²⁷ Not to be outdone, national tea party leader and radio host Mark Williams labels Cordoba as a "Mosque for the worship of the terrorists' monkey-god."²⁸

Although less hateful critiques of Cordoba were also in circulation, the most intolerant voices echoed the loudest. Not only did the efforts of Gellar, Spencer, and Williams pave the way for the national discussion that would unfold over the summer, but also they prompted local politicians to call for tolerance. Elected member of the New York City Council, Margaret Chin issued a statement "to speak out against hate and bigotry," making clear that "Lower Manhattan has no room for bigotry."²⁹ Similarly, State Senator Daniel Squadron makes clear that "Religious intolerance, demagoguery, and fear mongering have no place in the discussion about the development on and around the World Trade Center site."³⁰ As such, the stage was set; the debate over Cordoba would be a matter of tolerance.

The Cordoba Initiative itself only cursorily evokes tolerance as a justification for and a virtue of the center. Instead, the Cordoba Initiative asserts claims of cultural citizenship and the center's political and economic impact. Cordoba House is

represented as an American project that will create a much needed space for the "moderate" Muslim voice; that will participate in the re-building of Lower Manhattan; and that will serve all residents as a "vibrant world class facility" supporting the arts, education, and global engagement. Nonetheless, multiple anti-Cordoba rhetors attribute tolerance claims to the Cordoba Initiative, often expressing anger by what they perceive to be the condescending labeling of the opposition as intolerant bigots.³¹ However, as the following analysis reveals, the deliberations were much more complicated than an easy reading of intolerant opposition versus the tolerant proponents might suggest.

Anti-Cordoba Tolerance Rhetorics: "We Better Open Our Eyes"

During the CB1 open session, anti-Cordoba rhetors most frequently forward anti-Islamic logics like those circulated by Gellar, Spencer, and the media. However, I argue that the performance of anti-Islamic intolerance actually functions to affirm the nation's tolerance. Or, rather, the anti-Cordoba tolerance rhetorics mark their anti-Islamic claims as justified and even necessary, and, as such, as upholding the value of tolerance. To accomplish such a feat, anti-Cordoba rhetors make two, interlocking tolerance claims: they represent Islam as inherently intolerant, and they claim that the US has erred in being too tolerant, too dedicated to diversity and multiculturalism.

First, many anti-Cordoba speakers represent Islam and Muslims as essentially intolerant, often mobilizing stereotypes and misinformation unrelated to the proposed center. For instance, multiple speakers raise concerns about Sharia Law. Leading this charge is CB1 board member Marc Ameruso, who during both the executive and open sessions repeatedly calls for the resolution to be tabled in order to provide time to further investigate the Cordoba Initiative and its funding sources.³² Skeptical of Imam Feisal's self-identification as a moderate and peaceful Muslim, Ameruso explains that he cannot support Cordoba without first knowing Imam Feisal's stance on Sharia Law. As he explains, "If anything is intolerant, it's Sharia Law." Another speaker echoes this concern, chronicling what he sees as Cordoba Initiative's lack of transparency as to who they are, what they stand for, and where they receive their funding. It seems that all Muslims are under an obligation to prove themselves "good" by professing their opposition to "bad" Muslims.³³

Other anti-Cordoba rhetors describe the encroachment of Islamic values and customs as a physical invasion. Dr. Belsky, introducing himself as belonging to a human rights coalition against "Islamists," worries that "Islamists want to invade and bring Sharia Law." Another speaker, concerned about the "Muslims who want to kill us," names Cordoba as a tactic of war, trickery, and deception. Echoing this point, yet another speaker informs the audience that Muslims "are approved to lie and deceive [...] to spread Islam throughout this country. When they build a Mosque [...] they are taking over. Don't be deceived by the lies and deception that this is a peaceful religion." Andy Sullivan reports at the CB1 meeting on the protest signs he witnessed

in London, including “Slay those who Insult Islam” and “Butcher those who Insult and Mock Islam.” Sullivan offers a stern warning: “this is coming to the shores of America. ...[...] Our luck is going to run out. This house of evil is going to be the birthplace of the next terrorist event. Do not build this place!” The depiction of Muslims as violent enemies elides many things, not the least of which is the geopolitical forces driving terrorism and global conflict. Muslims are marked as altogether foreign, as incompatible with the West and liberalism, and as intolerant. In these statements, Cordoba is figured as an act of war, as a manifestation of violence, aggression, and invasion. In these accounts, there are no good Muslims.

What these anti-Cordoba statements evidence is how, as Wendy Brown contends, tolerance works within a civilizational discourse that identifies tolerance and what is tolerable with the West and intolerance and what is intolerable with the East.³⁴ What I want to expand upon in the remainder of this section is how the representation of Islam as essentially intolerant is evoked to both cover over and justify anti-Islamic intolerance. That is, as Ghassan Hage argues in *White Nation*, the presence of intolerance in tolerant societies should not be understood as a failure of tolerance. Rather, “the advocacy of tolerance [leaves] people empowered to be intolerant.”³⁵ Intolerance remains possible because the tolerant assume the power to set the limits on what is considered to be tolerable; in the CB1 debates, anti-Cordoba rhetors depict Muslims as beyond the pale.

What is most striking in the anti-Cordoba arguments is the way that the fear and skepticism of Islam are often framed in non-racist language: it is a matter of what Muslims do and believe, rather than who they are. Susan Butler, who identifies herself as a democrat and Obama supporter, is clear that her opposition to Cordoba is a matter of feeling rather than racist belief:

I am fearful, and I will say that possibly I am not suitably educated, but I am fearful about Sharia Law. I have heard too much that makes me very uncomfortable. I will also say that until I hear from the mainstream organizations which say that they represent mainstream, peace-loving Muslims of this country, until I hear from them stronger distancing from terrorists acts that have gone on, I am going to be uncomfortable with a mosque near Ground Zero. Possibly one hundred years from now when things are different, but we are not there yet.

Butler distances her anti-Cordoba stance from anti-Islamic intolerance in multiple ways. First, her political affiliation and her support of the nation’s first president of color indicate her commitment to anti-racism. She acknowledges that she may be missing key information, but notes that she has “heard too much”; she is merely made uncomfortable by the actions, or in-actions, of the Muslim community. Of course, it matters little that the Imam Feisal and Daisy Kahn had on many occasions, including in their presentation earlier in the meeting, denounced terrorism and violence. Butler closes by again noting her commitment to equality and anti-racism: things may get better over time.

Other anti-Cordoba rhetors appeal to a crisis of tolerance and multiculturalism. As the above-cited dire warnings suggest, the United States is figured as being too tolerant, too welcoming, and too multicultural. These rhetors give voice to what

Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley name a crisis of multiculturalism; according to this narrative, the West "valorized difference over commonality, cultural particularity over social cohesion, and an apologetic relativism at the expense of shared values and a commitment to liberty," leading to a host of social and political problems.³⁶ Importantly, as Sara Ahmed argues, the "failure" of multiculturalism is not read as a failure of the nation or the West, but a failure of the racialized other who abuses "our" openness.³⁷ As such, the remedy is a return to cohesive national values and the "rehabilitative discipline of integration."³⁸

Significantly, the crisis narrative justifies not so much a rejection of tolerance as it does a national practice of intolerance.³⁹ What this means in terms of the Cordoba debates is that anti-Islamic intolerance confirms rather than threatens the identification of the nation as tolerant, benevolent, and exceptional. One speaker makes this case:

We live in the most diverse and tolerant country ever devised by humankind and our fair city is the greatest manifestation of this. In allowing this so-called Community Center to be erected, we will replace the virtue of tolerance with the ideology of tolerism, which is tolerance without limits, the woeful acceptance of those who represent the most intolerant and illiberal societies and values, and who are enemies of freedom and democracy.

Of note, this speaker diverges from the syntax of the crisis narrative whereby the nation is typically evoked as *having been* too open, which implies that the openness started in the past, continues into the present, and *may* extend into the future. For this speaker, this nation *is* tolerant, and this tolerance and commitment to diversity is what makes it exceptional. So while Islam is evoked as inherently and uniformly illiberal and as incompatible with the West, what stands out in this passage is how a practice of national intolerance is what the tolerant nation must perform. The crisis is a matter not of repudiating tolerance but of vigilantly guarding against "tolerism" and, as she later notes, the "doctrine of multiculturalism."⁴⁰

In affirming a tolerance with limits, this speaker indicates that a certain level of intolerance—or an intolerance of certain others—is justified and even necessary. The nation is tolerant of "others," but not those marked as illiberal enemies.⁴¹ Like many anti-Cordoba speakers, she ends with a warning: "We better open our eyes and act accordingly before it's too late for our beautiful country and our beautiful city."⁴² In this telling passage, we see the two anti-Cordoba tolerance rhetorics converge: the depiction of Muslims as inherently intolerant, and the expressed concern that the nation has been too tolerant. Together, these claims reveal how anti-Cordoba tolerance rhetorics function to conceal and justify certain forms of intolerance. The tolerant nation is empowered to act intolerantly in the name of tolerance.

Pro-Cordoba Tolerance Rhetorics: "What Better Place to Teach Tolerance"

In light of the denigrations of Islam, the tolerance rhetorics advanced by pro-Cordoba rhetors are in many ways a needed counter-weight. In particular, pro-Cordoba rhetors

respond by calling for tolerance in the debates and by defending *these* Muslims as tolerant, moderate, and “like us.” It is important to note that calls for tolerance in the face of clear intolerance may mark an important effort. This is especially true of the handful of rhetors who critique the representation of Islam as uniform and monolithic, and who seek to dissociate Islam from the 9/11 attacks. Despite these significant differences, in this section I analyze the pro-Cordoba tolerance rhetorics, asserting that they, too, remain wedded to policing national borders. While pro-Cordoba rhetorics offer inclusion to some Muslim subjects, this inclusion is neither unconditional nor does it necessarily mark an openness to difference.

While tolerance is certainly preferable to intolerance, it nonetheless relies on a power differential between the subject and object of tolerance, between the tolerant and tolerated. Susan Mendus terms this the paradox of tolerance, wherein the tolerant tolerates precisely that which they find to be intolerable, abject, or disgusting;⁴³ tolerance never structures relations among equals. In the Cordoba debates, this power differential is most evident in the way belonging and inclusion depends on one’s proximity to or compatibility with Western and national values. Walter Ruby, a Muslim–Jewish program officer for the Foundation of Ethnic Understanding, advances this logic by marshaling his personal knowledge of Imam Feisal and Daisy Kahn. Ruby details, “I have found [Feisal and Kahn] to be moderate, unequivocally opposed to violence and terrorism, and deeply committed to American values of democracy and pluralism.” Continuing to cite Imam Feisal’s book, *What’s Right with Islam*, Ruby calls for the board to support Cordoba “for the sake of basic American values.”

Bruce Wallace, representing the organization September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, calls for “welcoming” Cordoba, which his organization believes “is intended to promote interfaith tolerance and respect.” Wallace continues, “We believe too that this building will serve as an emblem for the rest of the world that Americans stand against violence, against intolerance, and against overt acts of racism.” Two things are worth noting. First, Wallace demonstrates Cordoba Muslims’ proximity to and compatibility with US national identity, ideals, and values. While such a claim importantly counters the depictions of Islam as inherently backwards, it still establishes the US nation as the paradigm against which racialized others will be measured. The “welcoming” and tolerating of Muslims is dependent on their proximity to the dominant national identity. To be tolerable is to be different, but not entirely or altogether different. Second, not only is tolerance evoked to sustain certain national identifications—we are tolerant—but also those identifications are expressed anxiously: we must “welcome” Cordoba for the sake of our values *and* to demonstrate those values to the world.⁴⁴

Both claims re-center the nation. This is why Derrida terms tolerance as the opposite of, or the limit to, hospitality: the national body takes the foreigner in, but only to a certain extent and only on certain terms.⁴⁵ The other is tolerated and included *if and only to the extent that* the other is like “us,” or makes efforts to become like “us.” This makes sense when we consider tolerance as the threshold between integration and rejection.⁴⁶ Take, for example, the biological or bodily

connotations of tolerance. The biological body may build up a tolerance or immunity toward a pathogen, a body may tolerate an organ transplant, and a patient may tolerate a certain level of pain. On the level of the individual body, but also of the social or national body, tolerance becomes an issue of how much and of what kind of foreign matter a host can incorporate or accommodate without being destroyed.⁴⁷

It is unsurprising, then, that the tolerating of Muslims is often evoked in the name of promoting assimilation and "teaching tolerance." For instance, a woman who names herself as a 9/11 survivor underscores the opportunity Cordoba presents: "I say welcome! What better place to teach tolerance than at the very area where hate tried to kill tolerance?" Although she does not go as far as to burden all Muslims with responsibility for the terrorist attacks, she identifies Cordoba as a symbolically weighted opportunity to teach tolerance. It is possible that she means to evoke Cordoba as a means to teach everyone tolerance—non-Muslim citizens included—but she goes on to remind the audience of Lower Manhattan's considerable tolerance: "[the neighborhood has] been open to the members of the Islamic faith and to all members of all faiths [...]. In no ways to do I support closing the door to any faith now. It is unconstitutional, it is un-American, and it is just plain wrong!"

Another speaker makes similar appeals, arguing that Cordoba will "teach tolerance for all religions." While he makes important claims about teaching "the true meaning of Islam" and correcting media distortions, he concludes by stating a desire for cohesion and unity:

I also believe that we need to give our children and future generations the opportunity to feel like they are a part of the American fabric while being able to teach them about their heritage and teach them the correct morals and values [needed to be] upstanding citizens.

This speaker too is ambivalent about who *our* children are and as to which morals and values are needed for citizenship. It is likely that he believes Cordoba will promote the development of tolerance among all subjects. However, his call for integrating children into the American fabric presumes a certain otherness or foreignness in need of integration (even if Muslims ought to retain a connection to their heritage). In this way, the emphasis shifts from the need for all citizens to be tolerant to the need to *teach* tolerance in the name of assimilating racial and religious others.

While the tolerating or "welcoming" of Muslim-others counters the exclusionary nationalism evoked by anti-Cordoba rhetors, the tolerance rhetorics of supporters still seek to affirm national identifications that are perceived as under threat. As Derrida contends, to evoke tolerance is to make clear that it is *my body, my home, my nation*.⁴⁸ To claim a domain as my own is also to claim the right to determine and enforce the limits of what will be considered tolerable within that domain. Such a figuration is particularly interesting in the case of Cordoba as non-Muslim rhetors claim the power and right to tolerate and welcome—or not—those who have long been their neighbors. That is, rhetors decide on whether to tolerate those who are already cohabitants but who continue to be marked as foreign and intruding.

As such, the tolerating of Muslims can be seen as a means for promoting assimilation but also as conditional upon that assimilation.

As such, the evoking of a national “we” demonstrates the nation to be tolerant even as it sets limits on the tolerable and expresses anxiety about intolerant and unassimilated others. In this way, as Lentin and Titley suggest, tolerance “can be understood as a nationalist practice of inclusion;”⁴⁹ Claiming to tolerate others functions to sustain the nation’s image of itself as benevolent, multicultural, and exceptional.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the pro-Cordoba tolerance rhetorics are certainly preferable to those of the anti-Cordoba crowd. But both tolerance rhetorics share a hinge: they assume and express anxiety about a national “we” that may decide to include, but never already includes, Islamic others. If inclusion and belonging is conditional upon sameness, what room is there for difference? What happens when the nation faces an other who is not legible within the national imaginary?

Struggling Against the Limits of Tolerance

As I have sought to demonstrate, the tolerance rhetorics evoked in the CBI meeting identify Muslim belonging as hinging on shared value systems. It follows that Islam is tolerable so long as it does not mark a challenge to or deviation from core American values. Given that tolerance functions to sustain certain forms of national identification precisely by regulating difference, what are the possibilities for Muslim rhetors to evoke tolerance for pragmatic and resistant purposes? In this final section, I take these questions up, questions that have gone largely unaddressed in the tolerance literature, which tends to focus on the white nation’s evocation of tolerance. By juxtaposing the moving testimonies of two Muslim-American rhetors, I argue that their testimonies reveal the limits of tolerance rhetorics as a means to counter intolerance and claim belonging.

Given the circulation of anti-Islamic sentiments and fear, multiple Muslim rhetors begin their statements by establishing their sameness; almost every speaker who identifies him or herself as Muslim begins by chronicling the various aspects of their identity—professionals and citizens, mothers and fathers—suggesting that their religious identity is merely one among many. Take, for instance, the moving testimony offered by Hasam, who identifies himself as a native New Yorker, an attorney, and the vice president of the Muslim Lawyer’s Association of New York, NY:

But most of all I am a native New Yorker who, like many of you, walked outside of my building that sunny morning and saw those trade towers fall before my very eyes. And, like many of you, I had to run for cover. And, like some of you, I lost someone I knew that day. He was one of my high school wrestling captains and a fire fighter. I can’t claim to have the loss that many of you have, but I understand the pain. And that pain kept me up many nights after 9-11, so I sought refuge in prayer, as many of you did. And I went to a mosque in the East Village and when I left a man across the street yelled and me the other parishioners. He cursed at us. He said go back to your bleeping country amongst many other things.

The repeated reference to "like many of you" or "as many of you did" in this testimony demonstrates how there was little room for difference in these debates. Hasam claims belonging by demonstrating his similarity to the national ideal.⁵¹ In this testimony, there are multiple levels of identification, ranging from shared legal and cultural citizenship to shared experiences and pain. Even Hasam's Islamic faith is rendered familiar, buried under appeals to citizenship and made akin to Christianity or Judaism.

Nonetheless, Hasam draws upon these shared experiences to critique the racism and xenophobia he experienced outside his mosque. However, as Hasam continues, he slips into the logic of tolerance, neoliberal multiculturalism, and American exceptionalism:

It was a horrible remark but I didn't let it bother me because I knew New York is better than that. We are the most tolerant city in the nation if not in the world, so I wasn't about to let his horrible comment control the discussion. [...] I am asking you to uphold the principles of tolerance by supporting the [Cordoba House]. [...] There is a lot of pain in this room and that pain needs healing. But please don't let that pain get in the way of New York values of tolerance and diversity.

Interestingly, Hasam's pain and grief are replaced with pride in being a New Yorker and an American. Hasam's affirmation of the city's tolerance and his reminder that "New York is better than that" reduce racism to an unfortunate exception, a break from our otherwise laudatory commitment to tolerance and diversity. Racism and intolerance are limited to the "horrible comment" of an intolerant individual; racism is located elsewhere, but not here.

Any potential critique of racism, of anti-Islamic sentiment, or of US imperialism is tempered, if not covered over altogether. Hasam's comments reveal tolerance rhetorics to operate within what Sara Ahmed has termed the multicultural fantasy, whereby the nation's official prohibition against racism actually conceals certain forms of racism, intolerance, and inequality.⁵² Racism and intolerance are displaced to and pathologized as the practice of bad individuals. Intolerance is depicted as aberrational and/or as impossible—because *we* are tolerant! Indeed, Hasam's closing call to uphold tolerance by supporting Cordoba invites supporters to confirm their identification with the national ideal, absolving their responsibility for racism and intolerance.

Of course, Hasam may merely be appropriating the language available to him in the deliberation. We might note that by invoking tolerance, Hasam manages to critique the most overt intolerance, to set standards for how the deliberations ought to proceed, and to claim belonging: "*we* are the most tolerant." However, it is important to note the limitations and risks of such appeals. Following Hasam's complicity in concealing certain forms of racism and intolerance, it is the nation and the nation's character that are represented as under threat. As was the case with the pro- and anti-Cordoba rhetorics, the (potential) injury is represented not to the parishioners but to the nation. The nation is represented as in need of healing. This may certainly be true, and I am sympathetic to Hasam's appeal for an alternative response to pain, one that does not desire revenge and demand the policing of

borders. However, the language of tolerance depoliticizes and assuages Muslims' experiences of racism while bringing the nation's loss, and the threat to local and national character, to the fore.

It is this very concealment of racism and violence in the name of the nation that is called into question by Talat Hamdani's appropriation of tolerance discourse.⁵³ Hamdani begins by introducing herself as the mother of Salam Hamdani, an NYPD cadet, paramedic, and 9/11 first-responder, who died trying to rescue those trapped in the World Trade Center. As was the case in Hasam's testimony, Hamdani identifies herself and Salam as "good" Muslims, evidenced by their loyalty to the nation and by the way Hamdani avoids religious or Islamic cultural references. Lauding the first-responders for dutifully risking and, in many cases, sacrificing their lives without regard for whom they were helping, Hamdani asks, "Who are we as a nation?" Hamdani later answers this question, demanding that a nation founded on religious tolerance and freedom not persecute Muslims. Despite this stern warning, Hamdani forwards narratives of a tolerant, multicultural, and exceptional nation; Hamdani notes, "the United States is a collection of values, religions, and cultures," and that, "People of all faiths and values died on September 11, 2001, including more than 300 Muslim Americans [and] of different nations."

Hamdani's testimony unsettles these narratives as much as it activates them. Although the multicultural fantasy is sustained throughout much of her testimony, Hamdani's grief and anger over the non-recognition of the loss of Muslims lives *as a loss* quickly begins to break through. This becomes particularly clear as she recounts searching for her son. Her tone quickly shifts to anger and the speed and force of her words is punctuated as she abruptly turns to consider the price that she and other Muslim Americans have paid:

I searched for [my son] for 10, 12 days in Manhattan with my husband who died two years later of an unknown origin of cancer. We have paid the price too. My faith was hijacked, I suffered not only as an American and as Muslim [...] but I was investigated and interrogated. That maybe [Salam] was a terrorist. The *New York Post* wrote that down: "Missing or Hiding?"

Her son, who died helping others, was not recognized as a life lost—as an American or even as a human—and, to make issues worse, he was also placed under suspicion simply because he was Muslim. A grieving mother was interrogated, an injury made public in the papers. Although Hamdani draws upon the good/bad Muslim framework, she also undermines it by demonstrating Muslims (and Arabs and other persons of color) to be targets of anti-Islamic intolerance regardless of who they are, what they have done, and so on. Despite Salam being recognizable in many ways as a "good" Muslim and as a tolerant American, he and his family were subject to interrogation and criminalization.

Hamdani also evokes two different "we's": the national "we" but also the "we" who "paid the price"—her family and presumably other Muslim Americans. Although Hamdani immediately returns to the national "we," declaring that the criminalization of Muslims "is not what [the nation is] about," the narrative of (neo)liberal

multiculturalism and tolerance is troubled. What becomes increasingly evident in Hamdani's testimony is the racial construction of "American," how national identity is predicated on assumptions of whiteness. That is to say, Hamdani evokes narratives of the nation as tolerant, diverse, and multicultural, but her testimony reveals the narrative to be a fantasy. Hamdani's testimony repeatedly evidences how Muslims are excluded from the national "we."

Speaking of the prices Muslim Americans have paid, Hamdani returns to the Muslim "we" to forcefully conclude: "We have carried the cross. It is time to stop carrying the cross. As of this moment we refuse to carry the cross." Invoking a Christian trope, Hamdani makes clear that Muslim subjects bear the burden of the multicultural fantasy, which can only continue through the concealment of certain racisms and inequalities. Despite the slippage into the language of (neo)liberal multiculturalism and US exceptionalism, what Hamdani's testimony demonstrates is how such narratives, and the tolerance rhetorics in their name, are riddled with tensions and contradictions. Whereas Hasam's appeal to tolerance depoliticizes and marks as aberrational anti-Islamic intolerance, Hamdani's testimony refuses such an erasure. The refusal to carry the cross is a refusal to accept the existence and rationalization of anti-Islamic intolerance in the name of national tolerance. The refusal marks a rejection of the price of an only tenuous and partial inclusion. Revealing the fantasy to conceal racism and intolerance, Hamdani makes painfully clear how the national "we" is predicated on the exclusion, regulation, and policing of difference. In undermining tolerance through its appropriation, Hamdani's testimony asks us to avow the symbolic and all too real violence sustained by tolerance discourse and its accompanying constructions of us versus them, good versus evil, and West versus Islam.⁵⁴

But her testimony also does more; it points to the beginnings of an alternative pro-Cordoba rhetoric—and an ethic guiding stranger relationality more generally—that might avoid the pitfalls and limitations of tolerance. Recall Hamdani's valorization of first-responders for not stopping to ask whom they were saving. According to Hamdani, similar acts of compassion were also practiced by the nation as a whole: "After the horrors of that day, we transcended all the barriers that separated us and came together as a nation to find those who survived." Although, on its face, this narrative once again resonates with conservative discourses seeking a unified and monolithic nation, Hamdani's insistence that representational identity mattered little—whether victims were citizens, Christians, Jews, or Muslims—is in direct tension with the Cordoba debate's focus on affirming national identity and regulating Muslim subjects. That the nation "transcended all barriers" and "came together" is not just an appeal to commonality and sameness but also a buried critique of how commonality is always predicated on certain violence and exclusions. "Coming together" may be less about overlooking differences than about being open regardless of who the other happens to be (or what the other happens to believe, etc.).⁵⁵ This is not to suggest that we should or can do away with representational identity, but that we must vigilantly be on watch for when and how representation attenuates our ethical openness to the other.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have analyzed the pro- and anti-Cordoba tolerance rhetorics, arguing that they function differently to affirm the nation as tolerant, multicultural, and benevolent precisely by concealing (and rationalizing) certain forms of racism and intolerance. Or as Hage puts it, calls for tolerance empower subjects to act intolerantly. Tolerance, in a post 9/11 neoliberal moment, operates not only to position marginalized subjects within national space but also to re-center normative subjects within the national imaginary, affording them the power to tolerate or not, to welcome or cast out, to include or exclude. As the putative objects of national tolerance, Muslim-American rhetors occupy an all too narrow and risky discursive space.

Muslim-American rhetors certainly *do* creatively wield the language of tolerance, (neo)liberal multiculturalism, and US exceptionalism to claim belonging and guard against overt intolerance—an important effort given the venomous anti-Islamic intolerance circulating in the debates. However, these claims come at a cost. As Chávez has argued, claims for belonging and cultural citizenship risk reproducing dominant visions of the nation; in the CB1 debates, this meant concealing everyday and systematic forms of anti-Islamic intolerance in the name of the tolerant and multicultural nation. Hamdani's testimony powerfully reveals the violence undergirded by such a multicultural fantasy. And, at the very least, Hamdani's testimony demands a rigorous critique of any national or communal ideal and a dedication to dismantling and rearticulating discourses that structure belonging.

Notes

- [1] The center was eventually renamed as the Park51 Community Center and opened to little controversy in September 2011.
- [2] Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Obama Strongly Backs Islam Center Near 9/11 Site," *New York Times*, August 13, 2010, accessed November 10, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/14/us/politics/14obama.html?_r=0
- [3] Nick Wing, "Newt Gingrich Calls 'Ground Zero Mosque' Organizers 'Radical Islamists' Seeking Supremacy, Compares Them to Nazis," *The Huffington Post*, August 16 2010, accessed November 10, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/08/16/newt-gingrich-call-s-groun_n_683548.html
- [4] CB1 ultimately passed the resolution with 29 votes for, one against, and ten abstained. "Community Board #1-Manhattan Resolution," *New York City Government*, May 25, 2010, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb1/downloads/pdf/Resolutions/10-05-25.pdf>
- [5] My analysis focuses on the arguments made during the open session of the CB1 meeting. The CB1 committee provided me with the audio recordings from the meeting, consisting of three different files, lasting over four and a half hours. Over one hundred residents spoke on the matter during the open session. Unless otherwise noted, all testimonies cited are from the CB1 meeting tapes.
- [6] A recent article by Lee Pierce also investigates the Ground Zero Mosque controversy. Although we both are concerned with the construction of the US nation, our projects diverge in important ways. First, Pierce focuses on the media discourse concerning Cordoba. Second, Pierce takes as her emphasis the anti-Cordoba discourse, while I examine both anti- and

- pro-Cordoba arguments, including those made by Muslim-American rhetors. Lee Pierce, "A Rhetoric of Traumatic Nationalism in the Ground Zero Mosque Controversy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 100 (2014): 53–80.
- [7] Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, *Shifting Borders: Rhetoric, Immigration, and California's Proposition 187* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002); *Border Rhetorics: Citizenship and Identity on the US–Mexico Frontier*, ed. D. Robert DeChaine (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2012); Vanessa B. Beasley, *Who Belongs in America? Presidents, Rhetoric, and Immigration* (College Station, TX: Texas A& M University Press, 2006); Leo R. Chavez, *Covering Immigration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Lisa A. Flores, "Constructing Rhetorical Borders: Peons, Illegal Aliens, and Competing Narratives of Immigration," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 20 (2003): 362–87; Anne Demo, "Sovereignty Discourse and Contemporary Immigration Politics," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91 (2005): 291–311; J. David Cisneros, "Contaminated Communities: The Metaphor of 'Immigrant as Pollutant' in Media Representations of Immigration," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 11 (2008): 569–601; Sara L. McKinnon, "Positioned in/by the State: Incorporation, Exclusion, and Appropriation of Women's Gender-Based Claims to Political Asylum in the United States," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97 (2011): 178–200.
- [8] A smaller body of scholarship in rhetorical studies examines representations of Islam and/or Arab or Muslim subjects. See in particular: Johanna Hartelius, "Face-ing Immigration: *Prosopopeia* and the 'Muslim-Arab-Middle Eastern' Other," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 43 (2013): 311–34; Nadine 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 (2006): 235–67. For work focusing on the European context, see: Bradford Vivian, "The Veil and the Visible," *Western Journal of Communication* 63 (1999): 115–39; Radha S. Hegde, "Eyeing New Publics: Veiling and the Performance of Civic Visibility," in *Public Modalities: Rhetoric, Culture, Media, and the Shape of Public Life*, eds. Daniel C. Brouwer and Robert Asen (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 154–72.
- [9] Marita Gronnvoll, "Gender (In)Visibility at Abu Ghraib," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10 (2007): 371. Dana L. Cloud, "'To Veil the Threat of Terror': Afghan Women and the <Clash of Civilizations> in the Imagery of the US War on Terrorism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 285–306; Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2012); Stephen John Hartnett and Laura Ann Stengrim, *Globalization and Empire: The US Invasion of Iraq, Free Markets, and the Twilight of Democracy* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2006); John M. Murphy, "'Our Mission and Our Moment': George W. Bush and September 11th," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6 (2003): 607–32.
- [10] Aimee Carrillo Rowe, "Whose 'America'? The Politics of Rhetoric and Space in the Formation of US Nationalism," *Radical History Review* 89 (2004): 116; Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 291–309.
- [11] Lisa A. Flores, "Creating Discursive Space through a Rhetoric of Difference: Chicana Feminists Craft a Homeland," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 142–56; Karma R. Chávez, "Border (In)Securities: Normative and Differential Belonging in LGBTQ and Immigration Rights Discourse," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7 (2010): 136–55; Josue David Cisneros, "(Re)Bordering the Civic Imaginary: Rhetoric, Hybridity, and Citizenship in *La Gran Marcha*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97 (2011): 26–49; Marie Bernadette Calafell and Fernando P. Delgado, "Reading Latina/o Images: Interrogating *Americanos*," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 21 (2004): 1–21.
- [12] Cisneros, "(Re)Bordering the Civic Imaginary," 41.
- [13] Chávez, "Border (In)Securities," 150.

- [14] Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites, *Crafting Equality: America's Anglo-African Word* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Gerard A. Hauser, *Prisoners of Conscience: Moral Vernaculars of Political Agency* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2012); Wendy S. Hesford, *Spectacular Rhetorics: Human Rights Visions, Recognitions, Feminisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Ralph Cintrón, "Democracy and Its Limitations," in *The Public Work of Rhetoric*, eds. John M Ackerman and David J Coogan (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 98–116.r
- [15] Tolerance is often evoked to mitigate the risks posed by diversity and plurality. John Rawls, for instance, offers a procedural version of tolerance whereby religious and moral tenets must be bracketed and tolerated in order to promote public deliberation. Others such as Michael Ignatieff, Will Kymlicka, and Bernard Williams forward a normative account of tolerance designed to protect minority positions and ensure individual or group rights. See in particular: John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996); Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1989). Michael Ignatieff, "Nationalism and Tolerance," in *The Politics of Toleration in Modern Life*, ed. Susan Mendus (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 77–106; Bernard Williams, "Tolerating the Intolerable," in *The Politics of Toleration in Modern Life*, ed. Susan Mendus (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).
- [16] Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age* (London, UK: Zed Books, 2011); Jacques Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides," in Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, and Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Fantasy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998); Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, UK: Verso, 1991).
- [17] Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 11
- [18] Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 9.
- [19] A timeline of major events: In December 2009, the plans for Cordoba House were first publicized. On May 6, 2010, CBI's Financial District Committee passed a unanimous resolution in favor of the Cordoba House. On May 25, the Cordoba Resolution was debated and passed at the monthly board meeting. On August 3, the New York City Landmark Preservation Commission voted against granting landmark status to the Old Burlington Coat Factory Building, removing Cordoba's last hurdle.
- [20] Anne Bernard, "For Imam in Muslim Center Furor, a Hard Balancing Act," *New York Times*, August 21, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/22/nyregion/22imam.html>
- [21] The Poll also found that 61 percent of respondents opposed the project, while only 26 percent supported it. Alex Altman, "TIME Poll: Majority Oppose Mosque, Many Distrust Muslims," *TIME*, August 10, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2011799,00.html>
- [22] Ralph Blumenthal and Sharaf Mowjood, "Muslim Prayers and Renewal near Ground Zero," *New York Times*, Dec. 8, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/09/nyregion/09mosque.html/09mosque.html>
- [23] Laura Ingraham and Daisy Khan, "Impact Segment: Controversy Surrounds Islamic Mosque at Ground Zero," *The O'Reilly Factor*, Audio transcript, December 21, 2009, <http://www.billoreilly.com/show?action=viewTVShow&showID=2497&dest=/pg/jsp/community/tvshowprint.jsp>
- [24] Justin Elliot, "How the 'Ground Zero Mosque' Fear Mongering Began," *Salon*, August 16, 2010, http://www.salon.com/2010/08/16/ground_zero_mosque_origins/

- [25] Michelle Boorstein, "In Flap over Mosque near Ground Zero, Conservative Bloggers Gaining Influence," *The Washington Post*, August 19, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/18/AR2010081802582.html>.
- [26] In coordination with SIOA and the "American Freedom Defense Initiative," Gellar later directed an anti-Cordoba documentary, *The Ground Zero Mosque: The Second Wave of 9/11 Attacks* (DVD).
- [27] Pamela Gellar, "Sean Hannity Show Podcast," *Atlas Shrugs* (blog), May 13, 2010, <http://pamelagellar.com/2010/05/hannity-show-podcast-atlas-vs-muslim-american-congress.html/>
- [28] Oliver Willis, "Mark Williams Calls Allah a 'monkey god,' Is He Still Welcome on CNN's Air?," *Media Matters*, May 18, 2010, <http://mediamatters.org/blog/2010/05/18/mark-williams-calls-allah-a-monkey-god-is-he-st/164941>
- [29] Chin recounted this statement during the Public Session of the May 25 CB1 meeting. I have been unable to locate the original statement.
- [30] A staff member from Senator Squadron's office read the statement during the May 25 CB1 public session, but he also made essentially the same statement to media organizations in the preceding weeks: John Bayles, "Squadron Supports Cordoba Move," *Downtown Express*, May 21, 2010, http://www.downtownexpress.com/de_368/de_369/cordobamove.html
- [31] Many speakers also single out for criticism councilwoman Margaret Chin, who does criticize the intolerance of the anti-Cordoba camp.
- [32] Whenever possible, I identify the speakers by their name. Because the audience often yells over speakers and because not all speakers introduce themselves, I am only able to use the name of speakers in some cases.
- [33] Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2004), 15. Mamdani traces the good/bad Muslim binary to the work of Bernard Lewis. If Samuel Huntington depicted Islam as uniformly backwards, Lewis focuses on a clash within Islamic "civilizations." See especially 20–27.
- [34] Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 182.
- [35] Hage, *White Nation*, 86.
- [36] Lentin and Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism*, 13.
- [37] Ahmed, "Liberal Multiculturalism."
- [38] Lentin and Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism*, 14.
- [39] Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 291. The authors detail how appeals to crisis often justify the "crossing of certain thresholds of intolerance."
- [40] Something else of note here is the move to separate tolerance from multiculturalism. Although the speaker does not expand upon this argument, I suggest that she may be seeking to privatize tolerance.
- [41] Lentin and Titley as well as Jodi Molamed trace the development of "good" versus "bad" diversity under neoliberalism: while diversity may be officially celebrated in multicultural societies, not all diversity is recognized, desired, and valued. Lentin and Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism*, 7; Jodi Molamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 39–42.
- [42] This line of argument is mirrored in other texts, including editorials written in response to the proposal. For instance, in a September 11, 2010 letter to the editor of *The New York Times*, Stanford Anthropology professor Carol Delaney chides that while American students learn about other cultures and religions, very few Muslim countries include a similar emphasis in their curricula. "Letters; After 9/11/10," *The New York Times*, September 14, 2011, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F03E0D6153BF937A2575AC0A9669D8B63>
- [43] Susan Mendus, *Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989), 8–19.

- [44] This appeal functions within what Jodi Molamed terms neoliberal multiculturalism, which depicts the United States as a model for the world and establishes neoliberal policies and values as central to postracial freedom and equality. Molamed, *Represent and Destroy*, xxi.
- [45] Derrida, "Autoimmunity," 128.
- [46] Habermas, Derrida, and Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 16.
- [47] Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 27; Derrida, "Autoimmunity," 128.
- [48] Derrida, "Autoimmunity," 127.
- [49] Lentin and Titley, *The Crises of Multiculturalism*, 31.
- [50] We might argue, then, that tolerance can be as much about the preservation of the self as it is about protection of the minority positions or the promotion of stability. See in particular: Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 27.
- [51] The economic value of Cordoba Muslims is also evoked. The depiction of Cordoba Muslims as "good" Muslims by Hasam, Imam Feisal, and Daisy Kahn and others includes demonstrating Muslims' value to capital. These arguments are reminiscent of the economic arguments identified by Ono and Sloop in the discourse about California's Proposition 187.
- [52] Sara Ahmed, "Liberal Multiculturalism is the Hegemony: It's an Empirical Fact—a Response to Slavoj Žižek," *Darkmatter: In the Ruins of Imperial Culture* 19 (2008).
- [53] Since 9/11, Hamdani has gained visibility as a Muslim-American activist. See, for instance, one of her appearances on *Democracy Now*: http://www.Democracynow.org/2010/8/18/as_go_p_and_some_top_dems
- [54] Hamdani's potentially subversive appropriation may mark an instance of what Isaac West terms "impure politics." West contends that not all claims for inclusion and performances of citizenship are normative, and that citizenship itself can be subverted and rearticulated in the process. West, *Transforming Citizenships: Transgender Articulations of the Law* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2013).
- [55] In this way, Hamdani points to an ethic of vulnerability as outlined by Judith Butler in *Precarious Lives: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York, NY: Verso, 2004).