Rima: One of the Arab sisters who married a Black Muslim opened the Qur'an in her father's face and said, "Look, it says here, as long as he's a good Muslim." [Her father] wasn't practicing true Islam. If he did, life would be a lot different.

Mohammed: Next week, a movie is going to come out of Hollywood . . . called *Executive Decision*. It's a blatant attempt to defame Muslim brothers in Chechnya. Do you remember the number of people who died when this country shot a civilian plane flying over the Persian Gulf?

Khaled: Any Muslim who stands against injustice is labeled a terrorist. Look at Proposition 21.[1] Since we're dressed a certain way today, I guess that means we're a gang and that gives them the right to arrest us! When you talk about Prop. 21, you have to talk about Black youth in prison—and the antiterrorism bill, where Muslims all over this country are put in jail and not told any evidence against them—in America! This struggle has

to be handled on many fronts. Muslims are able to connect these things because of their belief in the oneness of Allah.

In the late 1990s, Rima and the Arab sisters of whom she spoke, Mohammed, and Khaled were actively engaged in Muslim student organizations. They prayed regularly, attended the mosque, and participated in Islamic religious and educational institutions. For them, being Muslim entailed carrying out basic religious practices such as prayer and being part of the Muslim community and U.S. civil society. In the late 1990s they were among Muslims from many countries of origin, and race and class positions, who were disaggregating religion (Islam) from culture (e.g., Arab) and articulating who they are as distinctly Muslim. Rima is a Palestinian American and was twenty-three when we met. Like Rima, many young adults I worked with articulated Muslim First, Arab Second as an alternative to ideal concepts of marriage, gender, and race that underscored Arab cultural authenticity, the dominant middle-class articulation of Arabness. Many of the young adults I worked with were political activists who were also staking a claim in global and domestic politics. Mohammed exemplifies this. He is a South Asian Muslim student activist who made the above statement at a political rally aimed at ending U.S.-led sanctions on Iraq in 2000. Khaled is an African American Muslim community leader. He made these remarks at a Muslim student organization's political rally focused on raising awareness about U.S. government policies, such as the Omnibus counterterrorism bill of 1994, that disproportionately target Muslim immigrants, as well as U.S. government policies, such as Proposition 21, that disproportionately target African Americans (Muslim and non-Muslim). Mohammed and Khaled express one of the main arguments of this chapter, that the articulation Muslim First among my interlocutors came about in continuity with the emergence of a global Muslim political consciousness in the San Francisco Bay Area in the late 1990s.

Indeed, many young people with whom I worked practice Islam because they believe, because they worry about their souls, because they want to be good people in the eyes of God. Young adults' relationships to God and to the divine are, above all, the most crucial ways that Islam matters in their lives. Yet matters of faith, religious practices, understandings of piety, the way people live their piety, their relationship to God, and their level of observance are not the focus of this chapter. This chapter focuses on the ways in which some young adults are articulating a global Muslim political consciousness. These young adults participate in Muslim spaces in the Bay Area where a discourse of global Muslim social justice circulates. I use the term "Muslim spaces" to refer to mosques, Islamic educational institutions, student groups,

and political events where my interlocutors were actively involved (Metcalf 1996). These Muslim spaces, and the concepts of Islam that circulate within them, are produced out of a set of historical conditions that gave rise to a vibrant period of institution building among diverse Muslims in the Bay Area in the late 1990s. These conditions include global economic neoliberalism and related changes in Muslim immigration to the Bay Area; global Muslim responses to the crystallization of U.S. empire in Muslim-majority countries; and the related rise in Islamophobic discourses and policies in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. Within these transnational historical contexts and relations of power, in Muslim spaces and beyond, and in relationship to Islamic sacred texts and the divine, my interlocutors developed a language for rearticulating Arab cultural authenticity as Muslim First, Arab Second.[2] Through the language of Muslim First, these young adults challenge racism, militarism, and white middle-class assimilation, as well as the limitations of middle-class Arab cultural politics and their Muslim communities. They debate matters of empire, racism, family, and gender through their discussions of sacred texts, thus crafting a "religiously constituted political consciousness" (Werbner 2002a). By contextualizing concepts and practices of Islam within varied local and global histories and power relations, this chapter disrupts Orientalist notions that Islam exists outside of history.

For my interlocutors, Islam is a framework for contending with patriarchy, capitalism, empire, racism, and war.[3] Accordingly, I have followed scholars like Lara Deeb, Minoo Moallem, and Victoria Bernal in avoiding terms such as "Islamic revival" or "Islamic resurgence," which they contend suggest a return to a fixed way of life (Deeb 2006; Moallem 2005; Bernal 1994, 3). As we will see, Islam is not an untouched, timeless tradition that these young adults have "revived," but is subject to change in the context of local and global conditions, such as young adults' engagements with U.S.-led war and its varied manifestations in Muslim-majority countries and in the United States, the gendered discourses of U.S. empire, immigration patterns of and political shifts in Muslim-majority countries, engagements with racial-justice, antiwar, and Islamic-feminist discourses and movements at the turn of the twenty-first century, and a myriad of local realities related to life as an Arab Muslim in the San Francisco Bay Area at the turn of the twenty-first century.

The Emergence of Muslim First

Amina Wadud argues that for migrants, a distinct Muslim identity becomes more and more important in the United States. When migrants come to the

United States, their relationship to Islam entails "undefined qualities result-ing from cultural experiences whether or not they include aspects of volition regarding an acceptance of definitions given to methods or conclusions of historical study" (Wadud 2006, 20). She explains that, in the West, people are asked to distinguish themselves and are asked questions such as, "Are you a *practicing* Muslim?" (20). To a certain extent, Wadud's argument that new concepts of Islam among immigrants are a consequence of the migra-tion experience helps explain my research findings. Yet my research also shows that a more specific argument is needed. Identifying as Muslim First, Arab Second is a recent current among Arab immigrants and Arab Amer-ican Muslims. As I illustrate below, this identification has been shaped by migration to the United States *and* historical and cultural changes in home countries. In the Arab world in the 1950s and '60s, during the period when my interlocutors' parents were growing up, a pan-Arab cultural identity pre-dominated. This was differentiated by religious affiliation, such as Muslim or Christian, nation of origin, and village of origin. More than intergenerational differences were at play as second-generation Arab American Muslims devel-oped a distinctly Muslim identity more than their parents had, as we will see. I worked with college students in the Bay Area, where college campuses are exceptionally multiracial. This compounded the differences between parents' concepts of religion and identity and those held by their children. While some Arab American young adults with whom I worked attended racially or ethnically diverse mosques before college, the Muslim communities they joined after entering college tended to be much more diverse.

A series of historical and demographic shifts that took place in the 1980s and '90s globally and locally propelled the shift toward a distinctly Mus-lim identity among these young adults. The meanings of Islam that they encountered on their campuses, at Islamic education programs, and within Bay Area Islamic institutions, reflected a new moment in Bay Area Muslim politics that was specific to a post-1980s period of massive growth in Muslim migration to the Bay Area and in Muslim-specific community-based orga-nizations. When my interviewees' parents came to the Bay Area and estab-lished their community-based organizations in the 1960s and '70s, there was a disproportionately larger number of Christian than Muslim Arabs in the Bay Area. Moreover, while articulations of Arabness dominant in the Arab world at that time did not foreground religiosity, they were more specifically constituted by a sense of pan-Arabism *and* subsets of that identity, including religious and other differences. It is important to note that Arab national-ism, from its inception, has drawn upon Islamic histories and ideas. Indeed, in colonial and postcolonial periods, there has been less of a focus on Islam

and a development of nationalism that relies, to a certain extent, on the construct of secularism and Western modernity. Thus, community-based scholar Hatem Bazian contends that Arab nationalism, in its most heightened period of anticolonial pan-Arabism, does not represent a shift away from religiosity or Islam but a moment in which secular notions of Arab nationalism were put forward while other aspects were pushed back. Arab countries have become, overall, more religiously focused in the past thirty years, a consequence of many historical factors. They include the Iranian revolution and its reverberations, shifting U.S.-Middle East relations beginning in the 1970s, Israel-Palestine politics, revivalist movements across the Muslim and Christian worlds, and a general increasing religiosity of all sorts on a global scale. The failures of Arab regimes and Arab nationalism, the failures of leftist movements in the region, and the fall of communism in general are additional factors. Rising contradictions in the structures of Arab nation-states between state and nonstate actors contributed significantly to this rising global Muslim consciousness. For instance, the growing powers of U.S.-backed dictators who ruled Arab states to the detriment of the majority of their citizens has inspired a growing disconnection between state and nonstate actors.

These conditions developed in the context of an expanding U.S. empire in Muslim-majority countries. According to Mahmood Mamdani, the rise of Islamic movements in the late twentieth century did not emerge wholesale from within Muslim-majority nations. The United States, in its zeal to counter communism and the Soviet Union, contributed to its rise. During the Cold War, the United States funded and fought "proxy wars" in other nations in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Central America rather than a head-on war with the Soviet Union (Mamdani 2005). In the late Cold War, the focus shifted to Afghanistan, specifically when the Soviet Union invaded the Central Asian nation in 1979 (119-20). In 1979, Jimmy Carter began a program of covert operations against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan (Hirschkind and Mahmood 2002, 342). This program only intensified under Ronald Reagan. Over the course of the Afghan war, the United States poured more than three billion dollars into organizations of Afghan fighters, known as the *mujahideen* (342). In addition to the *mujahideen* from within Afghanistan, the CIA actively recruited Islamic extremists from around the world, especially Arab nations, to be trained in Pakistan and to fight in Afghanistan against the Soviet forces (Mamdani 2005, 131). The United States actively encouraged the radical nature of the groups, as it found that they could make the more radical groups of Islamic extremists and *mujahideen* into more effective vehicles for the anti-Soviet struggle (155). Overall, the major influence that

the funding and training from the United States had on the rise of Islamic extremism came from the CIA's recruitment and training of such extremists from a wide array of nations. This larger context contributed to the articulation of varying ideologies that characterize Islam as an alternative to the perceived failure of Arab nationalism as a mechanism for independence from Western imperialist rule.

These events preceded the period of massive growth in Muslim migration to the United States and the Bay Area, which peaked in the late 1990s. Between 1985 and 2010, Bay Area mosques increased from three to forty-eight.[4] This growth was a consequence both of shifts in U.S. immigration policies that opened the doors to more migrants from Muslim-majority countries and of large numbers of Arabs coming to work for the IT industry in Silicon Valley. The migrants came from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Morocco, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Malaysia. Scholar and community activist Hatem explains that "90 percent of all those who came during this period came to work in Silicon Valley."[5] In addition, many recent Muslim migrants came to the Bay Area as a result of political crises in their home countries—crises in which the United States was heavily involved: the Iranian revolution; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; the invasion of south Lebanon; the Bosnian war; and the Iraq war. Many migrants were riled by what was happening in their countries of origin or in other Muslim-majority countries before they came to the Bay Area, particularly since many felt that a global war against Muslims was emerging and that existing nationalist movements were becoming less viable as mechanisms for resisting Western intervention.

These transnational conditions contributed to shifts in the ways people affiliated with Arabness and Islam in the Arab world and in the Bay Area at the time when my interlocutors entered college. Political debates in the Arab world were grappling with the demise of Arab nationalism and the growing possibility of Islam as an alternative to the pan-Arab identity deployed by nationalists (Majid 2000, 21). One intellectual view posed that pan-Arabism was losing its meaning, particularly in light of what many saw as the catastrophes of the Gulf War in the 1990s, the end of the first *intifada* (uprising), and the failed Middle East peace process of the mid-1990s (Cainkar 2005). Islam was filling a moral, spiritual, social, and political vacuum created by the demise of Arab nationalism (Cainkar 2005). A rampant desire for a new social agenda in the Arab world and the diaspora emerged.[6] In the Middle East, South Asia, and elsewhere, Mandaville argues, young people have been at the forefront of the new Islamic movements and ideologies of the 1980s and 1990s, which were diverse in scope and entailed a wide spectrum of

positions. From pluralists to communitarians to radicals, the spectrum of political affiliations among Muslim activists is heterogeneous (Mandaville 2007, 294). As we will see, these currents have taken on local form in the Bay Area in the articulation of a global Muslim consciousness. As community activist and public scholar Hatem Bazian put it,

> Especially since the first Gulf War, people began realizing that existing political and economic structures have been used to divide us and further control us. Many of us [Muslims] do not want to fall into that dynamic. A consciousness developed that sees differences as an enhancement rather than a hindrance. Sunnis, for example, can recognize differences with Shi'i Muslims but do not have to accept their religious interpretations.

Thus, the large influx of Muslims to the Bay Area in the 1980s and '90s came with a more distinct Islamic identity than previous migrants. They also shared a belief that Muslims were under attack globally and were marginalized in the United States. Riva Kastoryano explains that "when Islam is denounced, it reinforces identification with an Islamic community for Muslim migrants" (Kastoryano 1999, 195). The socioeconomic positions of Muslim migrants of the 1980s and '90's afforded them opportunities to establish institutions with a much greater level of civic engagement and activism than the previous generation, who came during the earlier migrant period, in the 1950s and 1960s. Through their civic engagement and activism, they brought their schools of thought, ideologies, and concepts of identity into U.S. publics on a much larger scale than my interlocutors' parents' generation.

One additional difference between these generations is that Arabs of the earlier migration came to the United States without much formal education, at most bachelor's degrees; their children were going to high school and college at the same time the new IT immigrants of the '80s and '90s were actively contributing to establishing Muslim organizations. The IT migrants had graduate degrees—most had master's degrees and many had Ph.D.s. According to Hatem Bazian, "one mosque in the South Bay has 600 Ph.D.s." This newly arrived critical mass of Muslim immigrants with significant access to social and economic resources had opportunities to form large-scale institutions such as the Council of American Islamic Institutions, which was founded in the Bay Area in 1994 and is now a national organization with chapters in over thirty cities across the United States.[7] Students played an important role in this period of growth. University of California–Berkeley students, for example, formed groups that expanded into three different mosques. Student organizing at the University of San Francisco culminated

in the Jones Street mosque, one of the largest in that city. Hatem refers to student groups as the nucleus of this emerging community. This trend toward a massive growth in Islamic institutions in the Bay Area after 1980, a trend of which students were at the forefront, parallels a similar trend that took place across the United States (Khan 2000). A range of positions, ideas, debates, and discussions on Islam and Muslim identity in the United States emerged, and people took different positions on political and social issues. The proliferation of a distinctly Muslim sense of identity during this post-1980s period can be understood as the formation of an imagined diasporic community in which members may identify with a territorial nation-state but simultaneously identify with a global Muslim community constituted by "a sense of extraterritorial nationalism" (Kastoryano 1999, 192).

My interlocutors, second-generation Arab American Muslims, told me that their parents' generation, predominantly immigrants and small business owners, shared the sense that Islamic education was not essential to being Muslim. This differed from the post-1980s Muslim immigrants, many of whom had advanced degrees. The differences in class and education of the newer Muslim migrants significantly impacted the profound growth in the establishment of Muslim institutions in the Bay Area. Second-generation young adults attending college in the Bay Area in the 1990s were exposed to these growing institutions, and many immersed themselves in Islamic education courses and the study of Arabic, the language of the Qur'an. This was essential to the formation of a new Muslim identity, and inspired the creation of several Islamic education programs in that decade, such as the Zaytuna Institute and the Qalam Institute of Islamic Sciences.

Although these two institutions do not share the same objectives or ideologies, they are both part of a broad intellectual trend that emerged during the Islamist current of Muslim-majority countries over the last several decades.[8] Mandaville describes this intellectual movement in Egypt, for instance, as one with a social consciousness that seeks reform and transformation, privileges the plight of the poor, and draws upon Islamic notions of social justice to achieve a social order that embraces the spirit of the *sharia*. In the Bay Area, this current can be seen in the work of the Zaytuna Institute and the Qalam Institute of Islamic Sciences. The Zaytuna Institute's primary focus is teaching traditional Islam and translating it to contemporary contexts. Al Qalam was created to fill a gap for students at universities who had no training in their Islamic tradition and lacked the tools needed to challenge dominant U.S. discourses on Islam in the classroom, as well as to provide them with Islamic literacy. Individuals affiliated with these institutions use the term "traditional Islam" to refer to normative practices that have

existed in continuity and have been accepted as normative over centuries among Islamic scholars. Over time, the work of these two institutions began overlapping as many youth actively involved in Muslim spaces participated in both, to different extents, contributing to the formation of a new Muslim consciousness.

As in many Muslim-majority countries, intellectual discussions that took place within the Islamic institutions my interlocutors attended in the Bay Area focus on issues including family and marriage, religious self-discipline, community building, and prayer.[9] Some discussions, such as those within Islamic education classes and mosques, were inward-focused and took place among Muslims exclusively. Others were outward-focused and often aimed to educate non-Muslims about Islam and to correct negative stereotypes about Muslims. The Orientalist-racist representations of Muslim women throughout U.S. society—in the media, education, government, and popular culture—inspired a great deal of discussion about Islamic perspectives on family, gender relations, and women's rights and responsibilities among Muslims. In this instance, outward- and inward-focused discussions merged. Young Muslims faced with these Orientalist images in their everyday lives turned to Islamic teachings to learn Islamic perspectives, then brought these outward to challenge the criticisms. Muslim student tables on campuses had informational brochures about women in Islam; Muslim student conferences, which attracted Muslim and non-Muslim audiences, included panels about women and Islam. Young men and women took questions about Islam and gender seriously, and felt it their duty to challenge negative discourses and highlight gender-egalitarian perspectives within Islam in their public work.

Student discussions about gender and Islam drew on frameworks that Muslim women scholar-activists developed and that some scholars and activists refer to as the basis of an Islamic feminist movement.[10] This movement formed in connection with a growing Islamic feminist movement in the Middle East, South Asia, Europe, and Canada, among other places (Webb 2000; Mandaville 2007; Moallem 2005). Gisela Webb traces the history of Islamic feminism in the United States in terms of a "gradual but steady emergence of a movement among . . . a critical mass of Muslim women who insist that their religious self-identity be affirmed in the midst of their acknowledgment of and striving toward solving what they see as serious problems they have faced and continue to face as women in Muslim and non-Muslim societies" (2000, xi). Webb proposes that "intra-Islamic transformation is needed and takes place through Qu'ranic texts, which are a central means for that transformation" (ibid.). This movement, which she refers to

as "scholarship-activism," is the "result of formations of networks of Muslim women involved in grassroots work on issues of jurisprudence, theology, hermeneutics, women's education, and women's rights" (2000, xii-xiii). It has favored higher religious education for women and active participation in the ongoing "reading" and interpreting of the Qur'an (Barazangi 2000); women's *ijtihad* or legal interpretation for retrieving the original flexibility and balance of *shariah* and juridical interpretation; a methodology for dealing with family and family planning issues from an Islamic perspective; and alternative interpretation of the Qur'an from a female-inclusive perspective (Hassan 2000).[11]

The materials that Muslim student activists and community organizations circulated at conferences, in their classes, and in their publications did not always parallel this movement's perspectives. Yet it was clear that the movement laid an intellectual foundation, especially for young adults grappling with questions about women and gender in their families and among their peers. At the same time, these young adults felt a responsibility to respond to Orientalist and Islamophobic perceptions about the treatment of Muslim women by Muslim men and Muslim societies that many agreed informed their encounters with racism in U.S. public spaces and institutions, as we will see.

Bringing Muslim First Home

Concepts of gender egalitarianism that circulate in Muslim spaces provided my interlocutors with a framework for contesting the narrative of Arab cultural authenticity, the narrative of identity that predominated among their parents' generation.[12] As we saw in chapter 2, the middle-class Arab immigrant politics of cultural authenticity draws upon Arabist concepts that religion is part of culture.[13] For young adults active in Muslim spaces, the intertwining of religion and culture is a concept that inspires new possibilities.

Rania is a mother of three. Her parents moved to the Bay Area from Beit Haneena, Palestine. I met with her at San Francisco City College, where she was studying nursing. She was twenty-eight years old at the time, and had been actively involved in a Muslim study group for young adults. She told me that she understands Islam differently than her parents, and focuses on what she sees as her parents' ambiguous relationship to Islam. According to Rania, "We did not study Islam, did not read the Qur'an, did not pray, and my parents did not expect me to wear *hijab*."

Nidal was a college sophomore when I interviewed him. His parents had migrated from Palestine in the 1970s. He was active in Muslim student

organizations and attended classes at a Muslim school in the East Bay. He was developing a relationship with a South Asian woman he had met through an online Muslim dating site. Like Rania, Nidal tells me that, to his parents, "the religion was the culture and the culture was the religion. The only thing that made us Muslim was the fundamentals, like there is only one God, Allah, and Mohammed is his last messenger, and the whole idea of heaven and hell and the line of prophets from Adam and Eve on."

While ideals about gender and marriage are crucial to the narrative of Arab cultural authenticity, young adults who identify as Muslim First questioned these ideals. Hala grew up in San Francisco. She was socialized primarily among her extended Palestinian family. She tells me that growing up, she understood that "to marry, a woman has to come from a good background, know how to cook, seem like she can be fertile and have lots of kids, and be good to her in-laws." Abdullah, a Syrian man, tells me he learned that an Arab Muslim man would be marriageable if he "came from a good family and had a good financial background." Mona, a Palestinian woman from Jerusalem, says, "Growing up, girls could rarely go out. Girls have to stay in and guys can go out until three in the morning." According to Nidal,

All throughout my lifetime, woman is the cook, woman is the cleaner, taking care of babies, and the guy never has to clean. And if he cleans, he's a girl. This is the mentality. This is always how it's been and my sister always throughout my life was the one cleaning and I was always the one who was enjoying myself and having a good time with the guys and the *shai* [tea].

Questioning their parents' conflation of "religion" (Islam) and "culture" (Arab) formed the basis of their critique. They ask their Arab peers and their parents, "What are the things about us that are 'Arab' and what are the things that are specifically 'Muslim'?" Their study of Islam in college, at their mosques, and at Islamic education centers informs their interest in differentiating between "culture" and "religion" and has become crucial to the narrative they've crafted for selectively critiquing the patriarchal underpinnings of Arab cultural authenticity. In their estimation, patriarchy is a product of Arab culture, more than of the religion of Islam. They reconfigure the idea of being "culturally Muslim" or "Arab Muslim" into the idea of being Muslim First, Arab Second.

Zina, who comes from Jordan, was a senior in college when we met. She was active in Muslim student organizations and attended Islamic education classes after school and on weekends. I interviewed her in the financial district of San Francisco, where she was working for a temporary employment

agency. She says that Islam provided her with room to ask questions, seek explanations, and interpret the Qur'an in the context of her environment:

> The culture doesn't provide answers to questions . . . it would just be *abe* [shameful] to do this or that. My mom would say, "*Mish kwais lal banat yasawu haka*" because "*al nas biyehku alaihum*" [It is not good for a girl to do that because the people will talk about her]. I hate those words, *abe* [shameful] and *nas* [the people]. I want to remove them from the dictionary. Like those people at the Arab Cultural Center festivals. . . . If the girl's talking to a guy, it's the girl who's *ilit al adab* [without manners]. The guy, he's just charming. And when I ask, "Why shouldn't she talk to him?" they answer, "Because she's not supposed to." But then I look at Islam and it takes two. Guys and girls are responsible. The woman has to respect the man and the man has to respect the woman. Islam explains *why* it's better not to do certain things for guys and girls . . . it gives you precautions, and teaches you that some rules are there to protect and secure you. Like STDs or teen pregnancy, it helps you stay away from it.

Tala was twenty-eight years old when we met. Unlike her mother and sisters, she read the Qur'an regularly, attended Islamic education classes, and studied the Arabic language primarily because it is the language of the Qur'an. According to her, the more religious she becomes, the more leverage she has over her family. She explains that her father was strict, but that it was "more culture than religion." After becoming more religious, Tala developed a new consciousness about women and work. She explains,

> Even though the *din* [religion] doesn't say that a girl can't work, my father would still say that a woman shouldn't work. But Islamically, she has every right to do so. I think if I had been religious before I got married, I would have said no, it's not *haram* [forbidden] for a woman to work. If you want your daughter to see a doctor, wouldn't you want her to see a woman doctor over a male doctor? We need women teachers. After the women in my husband's family became much more religious, they are all studying for major degrees. They finally broke out of the [Arab] culture. I'm working on my second college degree! And when it comes to working, as a matter of fact, Islamically, what a man makes is for the family and what a woman makes is her choice, whatever she chooses to do with it.

Zina and Tala contest patriarchal authority using Islamic arguments. They share the analysis that their parents were open to this because they were

quoting from the Qur'an, relying upon religious doctrine. Here Islam provides them with a mechanism for challenging their parents without destroying the stability of their relationship. In fact, they said that their parents gained a newfound respect for them because of their dedication to Islam. Here, they do not fully reject their parents' regulatory demands. Rather, they reject certain demands—such as inequality between women and men in work and education—and rework others—such as the norm of heterosexual marriage—through Islam.[14]

In perspectives such as those of Zina and Tala and of many Muslim First young adults, Islam is more open to interpretation than Arabness. In their view, religion has more possibilities for differing interpretations, whereas Arab culture is more static. Of course, there are other interpretations of Islam that support a static and patriarchal view, just as there are varying interpretations of Arab culture.

Several men articulate an affiliation with Muslim First, Arab Second on the basis of a critique similar to that of their women counterparts. Tawfiq is Palestinian and grew up in the East Bay among an extended family. He was a senior in college when we met and was hoping to attend medical school. In a discussion about the difference between his concept of gender and that of his parents, he told me,

> There is no other system that gives women as much as Islam does . . . and not just gives . . . but orders a man to do. Some people say a woman can't do this or that in Islam, that she has to stay in the house and can't work. Don't listen to this. It's Arabism. That's what destroyed my sister. I wish she understood that's what destroyed her. She thinks it's Islam. In Arab culture, girls have a hundred and one rules they have to follow, but the guy can do whatever he wants. It makes me so sad. Guys and girls have to be treated with the same rules within Islam. In Arab culture, girls get depressed because it's so hard on them and guys get spoiled and end up wasting their life. I love Islam so much. You can't give one child more than the other. They each have equal rights.

The framework Muslim First opens up possibilities for young adults such as Zina, Tala, and Tawfiq to destabilize the norms of Arab cultural authenticity, to call them into question, and to create new forms of sociability. In chapter 2, we saw how the claim to Arab cultural authenticity works as a form of self-Orientalism that fixes Arab culture into a rigid binary schema of "us" and "them," "Arabs" and "Americans." This has become the target of these young adults' critique. They point out that this rigidity is impossible to live

by and provides little room for flexibility, negotiation, or interpretation. This is why, when it comes to gender, they contend that Islam provides a broader ideological framework than Arab culture. At the same time, they maintain that gender roles must be organized into a heterosexual, if not patriarchal, structure.

While opting for Islam allows women like Zina and Tala to transform kinship hierarchies while maintaining family allegiances, it exacerbates intergenerational conflict and tension for others, especially when parents do not practice Islam as consistently as their children. Iman, a Palestinian woman, was in college when we met. There, she was coming to identify as Muslim, beginning to wear *hijab*, and rigorously studying Islam. She said her father was threatened by her Muslim consciousness. He equated her participation in Muslim organizations and institutions with participation in a cult. He backed his disapproval with Orientalist arguments to the effect that places where devout Muslims congregated were for brainwashing and were socially backward. At the same time, though, he found it difficult to refuse her the rights she defined as Muslim, particularly among relatives. Here, she defined certain rights as Islamic, and her parents seemed to support her. She had authority in this negotiation with her parents. Perhaps her authority had something to do with her access to educational institutions, allowing her to see herself as someone who knows more about religion than her parents.

Muslim First young adults interpret their parents' generation as tending to articulate "Arab culture" as static and unchanging. As Tawfiq says, Arabism is backwards and patriarchal, while Islam is modern and liberatory. This formulation unsettles typical immigration studies frameworks that explain intergenerational difference in terms of a vertical progression from "tradition" to "Americanization." Young adults draw on normative U.S. concepts such as equal rights and liberty, yet they weave into it their affiliation with Islam and an association between Islam and modernity and equal rights. Dominant U.S. notions of Americanization often rely upon Eurocentric ideas that assume that religiously constituted identities—particularly identities constituted through Islam—are in opposition to Americanization, assimilation, and modernity. The idea of Islam as an alternative to the "cultural traditions" of migrant parents disrupts such binaries, even as it keeps Orientalist concepts of Arab culture and modernity versus tradition in place.

Contending with Gender

Many of my interlocutors tended to idealize concepts of gender in Islam. In practice, these concepts inspired contentious debates. Several young adults

and community leaders with whom I worked were at the forefront of promoting an Islamic feminist politics. This politics challenges the discrepancy between idealized concepts of gender justice and whether and to what extent their Muslim peers realize these in everyday life. These activists who were working from an Islamic feminist perspective maintained a commitment to three main principles: (1) critiquing essentialist concepts of Muslim womanhood that circulate among Muslims and reinforce patriarchy; (2) developing alternative, egalitarian interpretations regarding the position of women in Islam; and (3) calling into question contradictions between egalitarian interpretations and everyday life practices.

Some young adults point out how essentialist concepts of Muslim womanhood create a double standard for young women and men in Muslim circles. Their critique of this double standard rests on a critique of patriarchy and a normative model of heterosexual interaction. Rana, a Jordanian woman who was active in the Muslim Student Association on her college campus, says that some of her Muslim male counterparts did not interact with her on campus in order to protect her reputation, but interacted openly with non-Muslim women. Rana says, "If women interacted with men, especially non-Muslim men in public, they would get a bad reputation." Basim, a Lebanese student activist who worked with Rana, tells me,

> The double standard is when [Muslim men] won't talk to Muslim girls, but they'll have no problem talking to American girls. Muslim girls come to Friday prayer, but they won't interact with them. Right after that, you'll see all the guys interacting in a healthy group with other girls. It happens in the back of their minds, where they'll think, "Our Muslim girls are precious and we want to protect them by not interacting with them in that way. But then it's okay to go with non-Muslim girls, because it's meaningless."

According to Rana and Basim, a dominant discourse in Muslim spaces reifies the idea of woman as the marker of community boundaries. Such discourses position Muslim women as symbols of Muslim identity who must be protected in order to protect the group as a whole. This establishes that the stakes are higher for women who transgress gender norms than for men, giving men more room for movement when it comes to normative ideals of sociability and interacting with people outside of their "community."

Several scholars write that the ways in which Muslim women in North America become representatives of Muslims in public have a polarizing influence on women's lives (Khan 2000, 20; Hoodfar 1997). Their proper behavior demarcates community from outside, and reifies community control over

women (Ahmed 1992). In this sense, Islam operates in ways similar to the deployment of Arabness as a marker of community boundaries, as we saw in chapter 2.

Several community leaders who worked with Muslim student activists talked with me about idealized concepts of marriage among young adults. Asma is cofounder of an organization dedicated to educating the public about Islam and a leader in the Muslim spaces in which many young adults engaged. She tells me,

> Many youth discuss gender equality in Islam and view Aisha, the prophet's wife, who was a scholar, as their role model. Yet a lot of young Muslim women just want to get married right away, have a husband and kids. Even though they use the reasoning that marriage is to fulfill half of their *din*, they become passive and romantic about marriage. I've seen a lot of bright girls who dropped out of Ph.D. programs to stay home and have no desire to go back. It's strong, among women, to desire nothing beyond motherhood, even though there *are* those few strong women who grew up traditionally, were married at sixteen or seventeen, are mothers and housewives, and are also activists.

Asma's observations stem from a commitment to taking the relationship between interpretation and practice seriously: Asma told me that although many young women refer to aspects of contemporary Islamic feminism, in everyday life they participate in the reduction of womanhood to wife and mother. In interviews, some Muslim men acknowledged how they often reinforce this problem. Although Tawfiq, for example, points out his parents' unfair treatment of his sister by stating that women have equal rights in Islam, he also tells me,

> If you're a woman, you have certain responsibilities to your family so you can fulfill your religion. That's fine, have your goals and study. If you want to work, fine, but *Insha Allah* [God willing], if we ever have a baby, I expect you to put that stuff on the side for a while. I'm going to help, too, but the mother is everything for the child. Take time for the babies and kids. That's Islamic rule number one. I don't expect her to stay at home all day and clean, wash, and cook, no! [laughs] and I hope she doesn't, either. I *do* expect the guy to be the breadwinner, the main supporter—to do the hard work, Islamically. I want the mother to be with the baby, 'cause the mother affects the baby more than the man, *Allah-u Aalum* [God knows].

While Abdul, a college student of Syrian ancestry, tells me that he supports women's education and career goals and wants to marry someone with whom he can have good conversation, he refers to his future wife as follows:

> When I find a wife, *Insha Allah* . . . she's going to be like a treasure box for me. . . . A priceless treasure which I cannot only make happy by myself, but will also make *Allah* happy with her. She's like an endless, priceless treasure. I get this message across to all my Muslim brothers, that a wife is the most priceless thing you're ever going to have.

Tawfiq's and Abdul's remarks and Asma's critique of young women who do not have ambition beyond motherhood reflects a problem, Muslim feminists maintain, that "women are inserted into a predetermined male discourse" (Khan 2000).

Amina Wadud provides a framework for understanding Asma's beliefs, suggesting that male-dominated interpretations of Islam put particular ideals about gender and family in place that foreclose the possibility of imagining Islam any other way (Wadud 2006, 42).[15] Wadud argues that "only in a patriarchal structure is maternity the only social power open to women" (ibid.,126). Essentialist ideals of woman as the good mother, she says, entail a moral association that allows for the conception that women's sexuality and reproductive potential are meant to serve the household or the husband. Wadud suggests that more work is needed to explore "how to achieve fulfillment of family needs without patriarchy" (ibid.). It will require rethinking the principles and the patriarchal bias in primary sources and underlying notions of family in *sharia* (152)—namely, the ideas of man above woman, of man as woman's maintainer and provider, and of these roles as taken from divine sources. She believes that other possibilities exist, and are necessary and appropriate, and that the Qur'an can be read with egalitarian social, political, economic, as well as domestic arrangements in mind (153). Wadud's statements reflect a prominent debate among Muslim feminists about the inclusion of women as equal participants in the political sphere among Muslims. She contends that calls for inclusion are conditioned by a less explicit expectation for women to accept male-defined concepts of Muslim identity or Islamic feminine virtue.

Abdul's description of his future wife as a treasure exemplifies this objectification of women. While he rearticulates Arab cultural authenticity through Islam, he positions females as a symbol that essentializes womanhood in ways similar to Orientalist discourses. His perspective resembles patriarchal discourses that respond to the negative depictions of Muslim masculinity

through a "defensive anxiety about manhood among Muslim men that insists on subordinating women" (Fischer and Abedi 1990 in Moallem 2005, 24). While Orientalist essentialism devalues Muslim womanhood, Abdul's statement does the reverse—it celebrates Muslim womanhood. Asma, however, reveals alternative possibilities for conceptualizing womanhood beyond the icons of victim or good wife/mother, and beyond patriarchal, classical definitions of what women should do or be. For Asma, it is not enough to look only at what people say; when looking at what people do, she says, one sees that male authority often remains in practice. As the stories reveal, Muslim First is not always coherent or unified; Tawfiq and Abdul reify dominant male-centered concepts about womanhood, and Asma calls for imagining womanhood beyond these (Wadud 2006, 21, 37, 42). In this sense, Muslim identity emerges through utterances in progress, and in talking back to texts and to each other.[16]

Muslim First also emerges through discussions about women's engagements with sexism in U.S. public spaces and with dominant U.S. discourses on Islam. Lama, a Palestinian woman college student, tells me,

> There was a guy at work who used to go around and grab all the girls and try to touch everything. I told the store manager. The other girls, he would do the same thing to them, but they didn't care, or they didn't care to do anything about it. It was total harassment. And I was like, "This is not what I'm about. This is derogatory." I filled out a report and all the other girls didn't support me. But I'm not gonna let some guy do this to me. So that was one of the things that happened to me that made me stronger, that told me, this is your identity. This is who you are, and it all happened when I was around seventeen or eighteen, when I started finding my Muslim identity. I filled out the report and he got fired. Amazing. You can't touch me!

Wearing *hijab* provides young women with a sense of autonomy in public spaces. As Hiba puts it, "It allows you to hold yourself up as a woman with respect. I don't get cat calls." Nour tells me, "People do not judge me for my body but for my mind."

Ibtisam writes in a poem, "Muslim Women Unveiled," "My body's not for your eyes to hold, you must speak to my mind, not my feminine mold."

For these women, being Muslim provides a sense of power in relationship to sexism in public spaces. In these quotations, young adults articulate a religious identity, through the practice of wearing the *hijab*, through their experiences with sexism at work, and on the streets. Their concept of

womanhood entails a relationship to the divine and an affirmation of Muslim concepts of veiling. They articulate a sense of womanhood that does not privilege normative Western feminism as the ideal mechanism of women's agency and autonomy (Deeb 2006; Mahmood 2005). Coupled with the contestations about marriage and womanhood we have seen, their statements represent a perspective on gender that conflicts with dominant concepts about women and gender in Muslim spaces, dominant U.S. Orientalist concepts about Muslim women, and dominant U.S. concepts about gender that lead to a commoditization of women's bodies. These stances intervene into multiple patriarchal discourses: they insist on egalitarianism among Muslims not only in interpretation but also in practice, and they refuse to be objects of U.S. patriarchy. Moreover, they unsettle dominant U.S. frameworks that reduce discussions about gender among Muslims to discussions about an abstract, ahistorical culture or religion. As we have seen, concepts and practices about womanhood among Muslims are, to a certain extent, issues of religion and are indeed constituted by individuals' relationships to God and the divine, but they are much more than that. They are shaped by intergenerational relations and shifting historical circumstances. They take place in relationship to dominant U.S. sentiment about gender and Muslim women, and Muslims themselves do not have one particular perspective about them. Moreover, they speak, subtly, to how sexuality is imagined within all of these debates as these debates generally focus on male-female relations, thus taking for granted that all relations function within a heterosexual family.

Contending with Racial Politics: Neoliberal
Multiculturalism and Racial Justice

Young adults also craft the concept of Muslim First, Arab Second out of discussions about race. A common perspective among the young adults with whom I worked was, "Arab culture is based on racism, while Islam is based on racial equality." As with gender, they rely on a range of societal conceptions about race that are heavily informed by their engagements with U.S. histories and are located at the nexus of ideals and practice. Nada, a Palestinian college student, tells me,

> Arabs, especially because they own stores in poor Black, Asian, or Latino neighborhoods, think that whites are so nice and then they blame certain races for social problems. But in Muslim circles, we learn about the Qur'an, and that even though Allah creates you from different tribes and clans to know each other, we're color blind. The only perfect person is Allah. We're

all human, and our skin has nothing to do with the treatment we deserve. A lot of sheiks are preaching, when a lot of the people are immigrants, that in Islam we don't see color and we shouldn't treat a Black person differently than a white person.

Khaldoun, referring to the mosques during Ramadan, says, "You have people of all origins—Indopaks and Arabs of all origins, you have Sri Lankans, Bosnians, and all these people, and they're all coming together because they're all in this local community." Hussein explains,

> The mosque I attend is predominantly Arab. Last Ramadan, a Black man, so dark, *Ma Sha Allah,* was leading the prayer every night in front of five hundred people and everyone would go after the prayer and kiss him and hug him, and I just said, "Just if only those people, who talk about Islam and make it so bad, if they were here to see it, they would see, it's nothing about color." We have Chinese Muslims in our mosque and after the prayer we hug and kiss each other in a loving way, just because we say, *"La Ilahi Il Allah"* [There is no deity except God]; that bond means so much. I mean, I've hugged and kissed in a loving way, Filipinos, Blacks, Chinese, whites, you name it. They're all in the *masjid* [mosque] together and there's never anything between us.

Referring to the same verse Nada refers to, he stated,

> There is no color in Islam. . . . In the mosques, they repeat it a hundred million times to get the point across: "We have created you in tribes or clans so you can get to know one another; but the better ones of you are the ones who fear Allah the most." It doesn't depend on color or anything. And the more I'm reading this *aya* [verse] the more I'm trying to get this Arab mentality away.

All three Muslim young adults point out underlying middle-class migrant assimilation politics that require distancing from U.S. racial Others to achieve assimilation and Americanization. Young adults such as Nadia, Khaldoun, and Hussein invoke instead a perspective that circulated in Muslim spaces in the Bay Area and that deployed a particular *aya* in the Qur'an that people interpret this way: "There is no color in Islam." This *aya* critiques the U.S. racial structures that immigrant parents' discourses affirm, through a logic of racial neoliberal multiculturalism that peaked in the 1990s and that "retreats from race." Neoliberal multiculturalism, which began to take

shape under the first Clinton administration, "condemns racism and makes racism appear to be disappearing" (Melamed 2006). Neoliberal multiculturalism "recognizes racial inequality as a problem, and it secures a liberal symbolic framework for race reform centered in abstract equality. . . . Antiracism becomes a nationally recognized social value and, for the first time, gets absorbed into U.S. governmentality" (Melamed 2006, 20). To a certain extent the dominant Muslim institutions in which Nada and Tawfiq were involved recognize racial politics through a similar logic that identifies the structural racism in which they contend recent immigrant communities engage. Yet they idealize Muslim spaces as ones where race disappears. Not everyone, however, accepted that the ideal of colorblindness was indeed a reality in Muslim spaces. Several interlocutors refer to the racial politics within many Bay Area mosques as a "perceived colorblindness" that ignores racial hierarchies among Muslims. They took an active role in calling for a commitment to taking racial inequalities seriously. Tawfiq tells me,

> Because Arabic is the language of the Qur'an, and because the prophet was Arabic, Arabs are seen as the most excellent people. It's ingrained in their minds, in the other Muslims' minds. Whenever I'm with a Muslim group I feel like there are more eyes on me, especially if I'm the only Arab there. It's affected me. Arabs have been given a high position and it always made me feel a little higher, which I hated so much. I feel like I should be respected a little more, *Astaghfirullah al azeem* [I seek the forgiveness of God], but it's going away now. I'm humbling myself more.

Maya, a Palestinian woman who recently graduated from college and is active in Arab and Muslim social service organizations, tells me,

> It becomes better to be Arab in Muslim circles and people look up to you if you're an Arab, thinking that you must know Islam more because you speak Arabic and therefore you must be a better Muslim than I am. Arabs are very arrogant about their ethnic background, especially because of the language. They're uptight. It's really appalling. But it's the dream of every Muslim to marry an Arabic-speaking person, but Arab men in particular use that a lot in discriminating against the rest of Muslims, especially the African Americans, and if left on their own, if not checked by Pakistanis and Indians, they would completely roll over the rest of Muslims.

Tawfiq and Maya's quotes reflect a tension between two differing politics of race among Muslims—or between neoliberal multiculturalism and

antiracism/racial justice. Hatem, an antiracist/racial-justice activist, summarizes this distinction:

> I still feel like race is one of those areas that is taboo in the Muslim community. People mention the *aya* [there is no color in Islam]. They may have the theology but not know what it really means to articulate being antiracist. Even though they have a good analysis that does not mean they have been able to overcome race. People are still socializing away from African Americans in particular and there is value for white converts over African American converts and there are structural differences in resource distribution. For example, the resources mobilized for an African American mosque are limited compared to the immigrant or even to white converts—even though 20 percent of Muslims in the U.S. are African Americans in terms of numbers. You don't see them represented in imagery or leadership. Some students have been able to overcome or at least to work through this because they have been placed in a diverse campus environment where their consciousness is being tested through the fire in organizing situations.

Several interlocutors bring similar concepts that fuse religion with U.S. racial discourses as a strategy to open up possibilities of gaining leverage over their parents, particularly in matters concerning interracial marriage. Since migrant parents tend to place more pressure on their daughters to marry someone who is Arab, struggles over interracial marriage were more common among women. Basem refers to himself as "Muslim first, but Arabic speaking." Like most Muslim First youth, he believes a woman's religion is more important than what he referred to as her race or ethnicity. He tells me, "I want to love her for her Islam. Marrying a Syrian, or Iraqi, is not important to me." Asma, who works closely with young adults, explains that young Muslim women upheld an idealized notion of marrying a devout Muslim that took precedence over other aspects of who they were (race, ethnicity, etc.):

> Youth want to marry practicing Muslims like themselves. A lot of the girls want to marry scholars, Muslim scholars, and the guys want to marry a *mujahidah* [freedom fighter]—it's amazing. They don't want to marry an ordinary Muslim. Once, a young woman had a list of all the qualifications she was looking for and it was like the ideal Muslim male, who doesn't watch TV, doesn't listen to music, like someone she's cloned! It's totally unrealistic, but a lot of these girls want to marry these types of individuals.

Women disproportionately told me stories about relying on the Qur'an to convince parents to support marriage across racial lines. Rima told me a story:

> These sisters married the Black Muslims . . . one of them opened the Qur'an in her father's face and was like, "Look, it says here, as long as he's a good Muslim." She put her father on the spot. "If you're a Muslim, you have to deal with this." But after they married, the parents sent the younger daughter back home because they were afraid she was going to marry a Black Muslim.

Rania, of Jordanian descent, was engaged to an Indonesian Muslim. She says, "My parents were silent because of their guilty consciences. They must have thought, 'Allah is going to come one day. This guy is a good man, how could you say no? It's in one of the *hadiths* [the words and the deeds of the Prophet Mohammed].'" According to Jamila, a community leader,

> This generation is really not racist, but they're being made racist by their parents who are trying to get them to marry within their own. Race gets played out within marriage, and race issues are debated through Qur'an, between parents and youth. Kids are really smart, they know Islam. Parents can't say "no" to interracial marriage. Parents can't get away with it. It's when parents know that the kids don't know Islam, that's when they make up things to sell their point of view. Like, they'll say, "Islam says so and so." Or "No, it doesn't say so." But usually kids are smart enough to be able to challenge their parents. All they have to do is go to any scholar and ask his point of view.

From their position as predominantly middle-class college students who have access to college education in the United States and to Islamic education classes, these young people mobilize particular *aya* from the Qur'an to defend a politics of race and gender. Women in particular gain power from neoliberal multiculturalist concepts of race in Islam to unseat the racial constructs against what many of their immigrant parents refer to as "the Blacks and the Chinese."

Islamophobia as a Discourse of Empire

Earlier, we saw how local and global events—Muslim migration patterns in light of a booming IT industry in the Bay Area, alongside a range of U.S.

imperial interventions in Muslim countries—contributed to the emergence of a distinctly Muslim identity in the Bay Area in the 1980s and 1990s. Here, I take up second-generation Arab American young adults' engagements with Islamophobic discourses about Muslims that were prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s in the context of U.S. expansion in Muslim-majority countries. Taken together, my interlocutors' stories can be read as an archive of how Islamophobia works and of the significance of Islamophobia to the articulation of Muslim First, Arab Second. As my interlocutors' stories show, Islamophobia works as a form of imperial racism and as a mechanism that fuels many young adults' commitment to a distinctly Muslim identity and, for some, a commitment to become social justice activists. Hatem Bazian, who worked as a mentor to Muslim students at the University of California at Berkeley, told me that students' daily confrontations with views that associate Muslims with terrorism catalyzed their involvement in social justice activism. In Hatem's words,

> In the classroom, the Muslim student is transformed into a terrorist. There is a political strategy of creating political support for U.S. foreign policy. It comes straight from teachers. Every day, students ask me, "What should I tell my teachers?" Teachers say racist things in class like, "Muslims are more inclined to engage in terrorism, because when they die they go to paradise and terrorism doesn't have pain for Muslims as it does in other cultures." Or "Muslim men aren't afraid to die because when they die they believe they will be given seventy-five virgins in heaven." That's in a classroom discussion!

Nearly all the students with whom I worked recalled an incident that they or one of their friends or family members encountered in which signifiers such as their names, physical features, or mode of dress led others to perceive them as "Muslim" and therefore as foreigners and potential threats to "America." Nuha, a college student active in a Muslim student organization, explained, "We get everything from a spit in the face at the Emeryville Shopping Center . . . to the statement . . . 'Go back home'. . . which was made to someone in the City Hall of Berkeley. 'Go back home' is standard operating procedure."

Maysoun, a Palestinian woman, recalled an incident that took place when she was in high school during the first Gulf War: "I was at a private school and my teacher was from Texas and I had my hand up and he was like, 'Put your other hand up.' And he was like, 'That's how all of you need to come, with your hands up.'" Mazen, a college student, remembered an encounter he

had in high school with a student in the cafeteria: "It was after the Oklahoma bombing. Even though the individuals criminally charged for the Oklahoma bombing were neither Arab nor Muslim, the junior class president came up to me and said, 'Women and children, too?'"

In the incidents above, Islamophobia operates as a form of imperial racism. My interlocutors are implicated in the long-standing European and U.S. discourse that conflates Islam with violence and terrorism as a justification for war (Alsultany 2012; Ono 2005, xxxii; Moallem 2005; Rana 2007; Volpp 2003a; Naber 2006). Here, imperial racism works through the framework of two interconnected logics: cultural racism and nation-based racism. "Cultural racism," like Orientalism, "is a process of 'othering' that constructs perceived cultural (e.g., Arab), religious (e.g., Muslim), or civilizational (e.g., Arab and/or Muslim) differences as natural and insurmountable (Balibar 1991, 17-28; Goldberg 1993; Moallem 2005). I build upon Minoo Moallem's analysis of contexts in which religion may be considered "as a key determinant in the discourse of racial inferiority" (Moallem 2005, 10) and Balibar's argument that "race," when coded as culture, can be constituted by a process that makes no reference to claims of biological superiority but instead associates difference and inferiority with spiritual inheritance (Balibar 1991, 25). In such instances, "culture can also function like a nature, and it can in particular function as a way of locking individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy, into a determination that is immutable and intangible in origin" (22). As in European histories of antisemitism, histories of Islamophobia have deployed biological features in the racialization process, but "within the framework of cultural racism" (ibid.).[17] In other words, bodily stigmata become signifiers of a spiritual inheritance as opposed to a biological heredity (ibid.). I use the term "cultural racism" in cases where violence or harassment was justified on the basis that persons perceived to be Muslim were seen as inherently connected to a backward, inferior, and potentially threatening Islamic culture or civilization. I use the term "nation-based racism" in ways that draw upon Kent Ono's theory of the racialization of the category "potential terrorists" and David Theo Goldberg's argument (1993) that Western discourses racialize to refer to the construction of particular immigrants as different from and inferior to whites, based on the concept that "they" are foreign and therefore embody a potential for criminality and/or immorality and must be "evicted, eliminated, or controlled" (Ono 2005).

The interplay between culture-based racism and nation-based racism explains the process by which my interlocutors in the stories above are perceived not only as a moral, cultural, and civilizational threat to the United States but also as a security threat. The mapping of cultural racism onto

nation-based racism has been critical in generating support for the idea that going to war "over there" and enacting racism and immigrant exclusion "over here" are essential to the project of protecting national security. Throughout histories of U.S. imperialist actions in Muslim-majority nations, cultural and nation-based racism have operated transnationally to justify U.S. imperial ambitions and the simultaneous targeting of persons perceived in the diaspora to be Arab, Middle Eastern, or Muslim (Moallem 2005, 8; Young 2001, 25-44).

Gender permeates interlocutors' confrontations with Islamophobia. Women disproportionately share stories in which others perceive them as foreign or as victims of misogynistic Muslim men because they wear the *hijab*. My interlocutors' confrontations with dominant U.S. discourses on the *hijab* are rooted in long-standing European and U.S. Islamophobic and Orientalist discourses. European Orientalist discourses have long portrayed the practice of veiling, which itself can vary from the loose draping of a scarf around one's head to the covering of one's whole self with the exception of hands, feet, and a small opening for the eyes, as a sign of Muslim backwardness. Whether depicting veiling as a marker of Muslim misogyny or as a sign of exotic, mysterious sexuality, European discourses have scripted Islam as a premodern, unchanging, and unsophisticated mode of being in the world, thereby scripting Muslims as savage, barbaric, and uncivilized peoples. European discourses on the veil have been charged with the significance of colonialism and war throughout different periods of European colonialism in Muslim-majority countries. During the period of British colonialism in Egypt, for instance, British government officials used arguments about the veil—as a symbol of Egyptian backwardness—to justify colonization (Ahmed 1992). Here, the Western association of veiling with repressed sexuality and backwards religion was written onto the practice of veiling, and those colonial arguments were marshaled against colonized nations and, at later times, internalized by colonized peoples. Leila Ahmed reveals how support for veiling in Egypt came to be interpreted as resistance to colonialism and opposition to veiling seemed to represent support for Western modernity. We have seen the persistence of European discourses on the veil in which the veil becomes entrapped within totalizing discourses of tradition versus modernity or oppression versus liberation in the French ban on the *hijab* in public establishments in 1994. Banu Gökariksel and Katharyne Mitchell have argued that in France, veiling became an indication of a person's ability to "advance" culturally as a citizen who chooses not only her own liberation from tyranny but also her participation in the modern, civilized nation (2005). The attempt to force

women to unveil, they argue, forces conformity within an idealized secular state, where religious expression is seemingly at odds with separation of church and state, as well as potentially detrimental to liberalism. Here, veiling took on hyperbolic meaning, indicating not only one's commitment to religion and inversely her inability to modernize, assimilate, or otherwise progress but also her (and by proxy, "her people's") belonging within the civilized world. Similar controversies and bans on veiling have developed in the United States, where representations of the veil have been the cornerstone of U.S. popular cultural distinctions between the West, Europe, and America and "Orientals," "the East," Arabs, or Muslims (McCloud 2000; Hatem 2011; Jarmakani 2008; Abu-Lughod 2002; Saliba 1994; Shaheen 2001; Street 2000). Veiling has been a crucial point of contention and debate in the fictive formulations of East and West, Islam and democracy, and Muslims and America. Accordingly, and sometimes begrudgingly, many Muslim feminists and their allies have spoken directly to the problematic of veiling. One strand of Muslim feminist critique contends that Muslim women do not seem to be terribly conflicted about veiling, and that many have already decided what veiling means to them. Muslim women, Abu-Lughod argues, don't prioritize veiling as an equality or rights issue, so perhaps neither ought the "West." What would be more beneficial, Abu-Lughod argues, would be addressing those concerns Muslim women self-articulate as impinging or pressing on their lives. In the everyday lives of young Muslim women activists, their *hijab* drew them into totalizing discourses about the veil, Muslims, and America. This small sampling from interviews with women who wear the *hijab* illustrates how the Orientalist symbol of the veiled woman takes on local form in the Bay Area:

Maya: Because I wear *hijab,* people are surprised to discover that I speak English. If you're wearing a scarf, people think you're an immigrant, and they think you have an accent. If you're wearing this, you're not an American, until you speak. Then you throw them off.

Tala: I was standing at the Muslim Student Association's table on my college campus. A student approached the table and asked me if women cover their faces from the bruises they get after their husbands beat them.

Randa: We were in the exhibit of modern art and everybody thought we were part of an exhibit! We were talking and then asked the people next to us, "Why are you staring at us?" and they were like, "You foreigners, go back to your country."

Hala: Some friends asked me if I could go to the mall with them. I said no and she said, "That's so unfair—your parents are forcing you to stay home!" My friend works in a police station. She set me up with a job interview there. When I went to visit her one day, she heard the boss say, "I would be afraid to give her a job because she would never speak up." I went, got the job, and said, "I don't want the job anymore." Now his image changed.

In the stories above, the *hijab* signifies a range of meanings. It renders women who wear the *hijab* not as agents but as extensions of violent, misogynist Muslim men. Muslim women are transformed into the "property," "the harmonious extension" (Shohat and Stam 1994) of the enemy of the nation within, or symbols that connect others to the "real actors" or "the violent Muslim men" but who do not stand on their own (and lack agency). In this sense, dominant U.S. discourses on the veil condemn Muslim women for veiling. They reify the logic of nation-based racism that constructs a binary through gender of us versus them and good, or moral, Americans versus bad Muslims. They reduce Muslim women's possibilities to unveiling or allying with foreignness, backwardness, or violence: Muslim women are either unveiled/with us, or veiled/with the foreign, backward, potentially violent, Muslim Others. Here, the veil serves as a boundary marker between "us" and "them" (Abu-Lughod 1986; Razack 2008; Jarmakani 2008).

Becoming an Activist

Everyday exposure to Islamophobia contributed to an affiliation with a distinctly Muslim identity among Muslim student activists. Some young adults were inspired to become actively engaged in countering dominant discourses in public spaces in everyday life. In January 2000, I attended a Muslim Student Association (MSA) meeting at the University of California in San Diego. MSA members developed a plan for *daawa* (invitation to Islam) that incorporated strategies for assisting non-Muslim students in overcoming negative assumptions about Islam. A discussion that took place at the meeting resembled those I often heard in the Bay Area. Rana, who prayed in public on her college campus, supported this plan. She said, "I know that when I pray on campus, they're looking at me with hate." Several young adults I worked with in the Bay Area told me that they are often "forced to become activists" in the classroom.

Tala: I felt forced by my circumstances to challenge the status quo, even at a minimal level, only to reflect that what is being talked about does not

reflect who I am, or my culture, civilization, religion, or history. I learned that if I do not confront, then I would be silenced.

Hatem: I see the students feeling comfortable wearing a head cover or Muslim beards. They care less that they might appear to be wearing the most bizarre outfit. The way they present themselves is a way that they force others to deal with them as Muslims.

For some women, this entailed redefining the negative meanings associated with the *hijab* and bringing new meanings to U.S. publics, a process that some women related to with ambivalence. Hannan, a twenty-year-old college student, felt burdened by the ways her teachers discussed Islam in the classroom and felt responsible for responding to Orientalist representations of backward, oppressed Muslim women. She told me, "Arab women are forced to represent the entire situation of Muslim women. The teacher has an anti-Muslim position, so even if I don't have the tools, it becomes the class versus me and I have to answer for Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and other places I don't even know much about." This reflects the way structures of gendered racism contribute to the constitution of Muslim identity. As youth define Muslim identity, they also constitute forms of sociability. In addition to alternative forms of dress, Muslim students adopt a specifically Muslim form of English. Many students greet each other with "*assalamu alaikum*" (Peace be upon you)*,* speak Arabic on their answering machines, and weave terms such as "*alhamdulillah*" (thank God), "*inshallah*" (God willing) and "*astagh-firullah al azeem*" (I ask for pardon from the Great One) into their every-day English language.

In addition to actively asserting Muslim identity in public, most of my interlocutors were involved in organized forms of political dissent, illustrating the significance of geopolitics to local articulations of Muslim identity. Many community leaders highlighted perspectives on the significance of social justice activism in their everyday lives in their speeches, which circulated in debates, discussions, and classes, and informed student activism.[18] The following quotations are from two community leaders who influenced my interlocutors and other Muslim student activists.

Hamza Yusuf, in a speech, remarked, "Islam is about compassion and about going out and speaking the truth. . . . We have to ask ourselves what are we doing with our lives?"

Hatem's words reflect a view that several community leaders upheld that tremendously influenced my young adult subjects:

Islam is about rendering divine manifestation in the world. Divine manifestation is how to be Godlike in conduct and how to manifest prophet-like qualities. Feeding people is one of the highest values. The prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said, "Feed people or spread salutation, feed people then get up and pray at night if you want." Meaning faith and belief is about serving people. Really, it is a sense of responsibility that you have to make a difference in people's lives and to leave the world in a better position or a better condition than how you entered it. . . . You have to move within the world with that eye—that you could make a difference even if that difference is not complete in this life but if you are able to bring about a tangential benefit while there is overwhelming calamity and harm, you are obligated to seek bringing about the tangential benefit. So, you actually, from a legal perspective, are obligated to make a difference. Asking questions like: Well, how is helping this homeless [person] going to make a difference in the whole homelessness . . . in the bigger issue . . . if it is within your ability, you are obligated to do that. And you need to measure it accordingly. That for me is a central issue.

These quotations reflect a tacit knowledge among student activists that emerged throughout much of their public discourse, a sense that being Muslim entails a responsibility to advocate for social justice and to take up political and ethical issues. Not all students who shared this sense of commitment were political activists or involved in public politics of dissent. Yet as we will see, the protests and activities of student activists provide a platform for exploring the politically constituted religious discourse that emerged in Muslim spaces in the Bay Area at the turn of the twenty-first century, and reflect the significance of global politics to local concepts of self, affiliation, community, and belonging.

The Global

In Muslim spaces, perspectives on global politics reflected a shared sense of membership in a transnational moral religious community, the *umma*; a belief that Muslims are under attack on a global scale; and a shared sense of coresponsibility to Muslims living under conditions of war and oppression. The Bosnian war significantly sparked the mobilization of this narrative among Muslims. Osama, a leader of a Muslim social justice organization in the Bay Area, tells me, "It was Bosnia that broke the hearts of Muslims and awakened the dead among Muslims worldwide. It brought Muslims to their knees." Indeed, many people told me that Bosnia was the culmination of decades of increasing anti-Muslim violence on a global scale.[19]

Henna, a cofounder of an organization that raises awareness about Islam in U.S. society, tells me,

> It wasn't one hundred people who died, it was three hundred thousand. There were rape camps and concentration camps. Bosnia made people realize that you can be Muslim and white in Europe and still be killed on the basis of your Islam. They're blonde, blue-eyed, they live in Europe, and they were still mutilated, slaughtered, and thrown into mass graves because they're Muslim. That's when it's not just about Arabs anymore. And you have Algeria, Asia, the Philippines—they're being persecuted because they're Muslim. It's going on all over the world.

Henna's view reflects U.S. and bay area progressive discourses that feature particular definitions of racism in making claims about oppression, assuming that only forms of racism that invoke assumptions about phenotype or biology qualify as oppression. Appealing to this sensibility, Henna asserts that a different framework is needed. For her, people in Bosnia were targeted because of their religion, not because they were assumed to belong to a racial group defined in biological terms. Bosnia, she implies, illustrates that anti-Muslim violence requires an analysis of religious, civilizational, and spiritually based violence and racism. More specifically, she points out the conflation of the categories "Arab" and "Muslim," a dominant conceptualization in U.S. popular discourses, which assumes that all Arabs are Muslim and all Muslims are Arabs. She asserts a different politics, one that articulates Muslims through a concept of community that transcends conventional racial or national boundaries. It involves Muslims from diverse countries who share a similar history of oppression that cannot be explained in terms of racial or national oppression. According to Osama and Henna, Bosnia revitalized a global communal consciousness and enabled a particular image of a Muslim community under attack on a global scale.[20]

Crucial to this critique—and a strand of this that many young adults took up—was the idea that while global violence against Muslims is growing, it is simultaneously obscured, ignored, or deemed acceptable. This perspective expands the conceptualization of global anti-Muslim violence toward a focus on the relationship between the dehumanization that occurs through racial discourses (Islamophobia, Orientalism, discourses about terrorism, Muslim violence, Muslim women's oppression) and "the likelihood of premature death" (Gilmore 2006). Muslim student activists expressed this critique of global anti-Muslim violence and racism in their actions of political dissent. One day in 1994 at the University of California–Davis, I witnessed an

instance in which the Bosnian genocide inspired a Muslim student activist to bring this discussion to a campus audience. As I walked onto campus that day, I noticed people gathering in front of the art building a few hundred feet away from me. People were walking exceptionally slowly and peering down with shock and confusion on their faces. As I neared the area, I saw that someone had placed a great deal of dirt on the ground. Surrounding the dirt was a "No Trespassing" sign and yellow "Do Not Cross" tape that students had had to knock down or break to get to their classes. Walking on the dirt was unavoidable, and as more people crossed the area and pushed away the dirt with their steps, a hidden collage began to emerge from under the soil. I overheard a group of students saying it was about Bosnia. Later that day, as I walked past the art building again, I saw the full collage: it was Bosnian rape survivors' faces along with their personal testimonies.

The artist was Khadija, a Pakistani woman actively engaged with the Muslim Student Association on campus. Several years later, I asked her about it. She called the piece "The Battle Ground" and she used the dirt as a metaphor for how Bosnian women's bodies had been treated. Khadija obtained the collage materials from news magazines and her personal experience with Bosnian rape survivors while she was working in refugee camps. She told me, "The treading on the dirt signified the rape of Bosnian women and we [students] were the rapists due to our apathetic attitudes. Students were clueless as to what the purpose of the project was until the next morning, when the dirt was completely cleared and they could see the collage in full."

Khadija's artwork reflected what many scholars and activists, Muslim and non-Muslim, have described since Bosnia. Her art asserts that while there were media reports of camps, mass killings, rape, the destruction of mosques, the more than two hundred thousand Muslim civilians systematically murdered, the more than twenty thousand missing and feared dead, and the two million who had become refugees, the world community remained indifferent. This appraisal took issue with the U.N.'s prohibiting its troops from interfering militarily against the Serbs and remaining neutral no matter how bad the situation became. It also contended that Serbs in Bosnia freely committed genocide against Muslims on the basis of their confidence that the United Nations, the United States, and the European Community would not take military action—that "they knew about it but chose to look away." The most severe forms of violence—the slaughter of eight thousand men and boys and mass rapes of Muslim women—took place after President Clinton issued an ultimatum through NATO, reinforcing the sense that "intervention" was only stopping the genocide in the abstract rather than in

reality.[21] Overall, Khadija's artwork was a response to the few Americans who were pressing for intervention while genocide proceeded unimpeded and often emboldened by U.S. inaction. In this analysis, the inaction reflected a systematic anti-Muslim stance by global powers, which had taken on local form in the silence among U.S. publics.

Ruthie Gilmore defines racism as the likely promotion of the premature death of those individuals and groups subjected to the debilitating terms and conditions of racist configurations and exclusions (2006). Here, accumulated racism in the media, everyday racisms, and global violence against Muslims render Muslims "targets of legitimated violence and ultimately unnoticed or overlooked death" (Goldberg 2009, 27). By the late 1990s, while crises such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Kashmir, and Chechnya remained central to Muslim student activism in the Bay Area, U.S.-led economic sanctions on Iraq and the Israeli occupation of Palestine revitalized communal consciousness that a global Muslim community is the target of a global war, a war legitimized through a racist discourse that devalues Muslim lives and renders the killing of Muslims acceptable.[22]

Iraq

In the Bay Area, activism over Iraq took the form of teach-ins, film showings, benefit concerts, tabling, public protests, and the publication of advertisements, articles, and letters to the editor in campus newspapers. Muslim student activists, in collaboration with a range of Muslim community-based organizations, played critical roles in the peace and justice movement that was working to end sanctions on Iraq. On April 27, 1999, which antiwar activists refer to as the National Day of Action to End Economic Sanctions Against Iraq, a coalition of fourteen organizations coordinated a public protest that included a funeral procession in which activists held coffins of more than five thousand children under the age of five to represent those who die each month as a result of the sanctions. The coalition included socialist organizations, student groups, civil rights groups, and Muslim peace and justice organizations. To this coalition, Muslim activists brought a collective narrative about Iraq that proliferated in Bay Area mosques, at Muslim student conferences, on e-mail lists and websites shared by Muslim activists, in the speeches of the imams presenting at public protests, and in the literature of Muslim social justice–oriented organizations. They contended that Iraqi people were suffering as a result of eight years of economic sanctions supported primarily by the United States. Mosques and Muslim leaders throughout the Bay Area, in a pattern that has also been documented

worldwide, played important roles in mobilizing this effort and galvanizing people to act (Werbner 2002a, 176).

Several events in 2000 at which leaders and students came together reflect the perspectives that Muslim activists circulated about Iraq. A Muslim community organization distributed a publication at a rally against U.S. sanctions on Iraq in April that provided statistics on the impact of the sanctions on Iraqi people and said, "The silent genocide of the Iraqi civilian population by the deadly United Nations sanctions is the grimmest tragedy affecting the Muslim world today."[23]

In May 2000, the University of California–Berkeley administration invited Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to be their commencement speaker. The ceremony took place in the open-air Greek Theatre. Muslim activists co-organized an action with hundreds of protesters to challenge Albright as a representative of the State Department's enforcement of U.S.-led sanctions on Iraq. They repeated over and over her statement on *60 Minutes,* in which she claimed that the price of killing a million Iraqi children is "worth it" ("Punishing Saddam," *60 Minutes*). Hundreds of activists entered the graduation ceremony and dispersed themselves throughout the theater to disrupt Albright's speech, charge her with genocide, and name her a war criminal in order to bring the matter to the awareness of the large audience who would attend the graduation. They chanted antiwar statements, dropped banners

Demonstration against the sanctions on Iraq, San Francisco.

from the bleachers, and resisted arrest to distract from Albright's speech. A Muslim organization contributed an aerial advertisement featuring a banner that read: "1.7 Million Dead. End the Sanctions Now!" After the ceremony, protesters who had entered the theater joined those who were outside for a rally in front of UC–Berkeley's Boalt Hall. Between public presentations, speakers turned to the audience for their participation in a series of chants. Adding to those chants, Muslim activists called out *"takbir"* and their counterparts responded, *"allahu akbar."*[24]

Muslim activists' perspectives on Iraq reflect a sense of belonging to a global community that is under attack in Iraq, among other places, as well as the distinct position of Muslims living in the United States and the Bay Area, specifically. Their response to Albright was indicative of the fact that they lived in the country responsible for the attacks, which mobilized them to address Iraq in a particular way. They expressed this not from a position of "Muslim outsiders" or "foreigners," or an "anti-local" position (Werbner 2002a), but as Muslims sharing in this struggle with a wide spectrum of Bay Area peace and justice activists in a diverse antisanctions movement based on a shared analysis that the sanctions were a form of genocide, that the U.S. role was unjust and racist, and that the U.S. media and government were hiding the war from the U.S. public (2002a).

They fused their general dissent with U.S. politics in Iraq with their perspective on their relationship to a global Muslim community and with their interpretation of their responsibility to ethics and morality as Muslims. Hamza Yousef, for example, calls for a deeper questioning of life that entails a coresponsibility and connection to others that cannot be captured by liberal progressive concepts of individual rights. This reflects what Kevin Dwyer found among Muslims in Morocco. There, he explains, Islamic resurgence is "a response to contemporary problems," including the desire to construct societies free from the ills of modern Western society: its materials, lack of social cohesion, lack of common purpose, absence of a sense of community" (Dwyer 1991, 41). Hamza Yousef evaluates capitalism and consumerism while grappling with questions about community and how Muslims might reimagine new forms of living beyond capitalism and oppression.

What Muslim students are engaged in cannot be reduced to an abstract sense of religious identity or an Islamic tradition understood in opposition to Western modernity. Race and global politics contribute to their concept of being Muslim, and they grapple with being Muslim while contemplating ways of imagining the world beyond contemporary U.S.-led geopolitics, war, and oppression (Majid 2000, 61). The Muslim student movement is not an isolated, separatist movement envisioned through a call to the past but is in

constant dialogue with other contemporary, local kinds of affiliations—Muslim and non-Muslim. It cannot be explained with theories of Islamic fundamentalism, migrant nostalgia, or conventional analyses of culture, ethnicity, or morality. Here, affiliating with a Muslim identity is just as much of a critique of capitalism, imperialism, militarism, racism, and war as it is a matter of ethics, morality, and religiosity.[25]

Palestine

Muslim student organizations participated in a range of Bay Area political events that scrutinized Israeli occupation of Palestine through a discourse framing Palestine solidarity as a unifying issue for Muslims globally. The global spread of technology, including satellite television and the internet—what one activist calls "the era of Al Jazeera and the internet"—has directly exposed Muslims from multiple racial/ethnic communities to events in Palestine on a daily basis, and has inspired an intensified attachment to the Palestinian cause and people, concretizing transnational links among a multiracial constituency of Muslim student activists.

In the Bay Area, Iranians, Pakistanis, Indians, Afghans, Malaysians, Filipinos, Africans, and African Americans united as "Muslim" with their "brothers and sisters in Palestine." Maha, a Muslim student activist of Palestinian descent, says, "What makes this *intifada* different from the *intifada* of the 1980s is that not just Arabs—but Muslims throughout the world, like Pakistanis—see the images of murdered children on TV." The internet enhanced such alliances among Arab students who identify as practicing Muslims within and beyond local and national borders.

The second Palestinian *intifada* began in October 2000. Massive political mobilizations in solidarity with Palestinians broke out on a global scale. A grave sense of urgency circulated within networks of Arab and Muslim activists as well as antiwar and racial-justice organizers in the Bay Area. Activists tended to turn to alternative media outlets, websites, and e-mail lists for news from Palestine. Political activists committed to Palestinian self-determination, particularly people with loved ones in Palestine, seemed more captivated by cell phones, satellite television, and the internet than ever before. Personal stories from Palestine circulated through local constellations of family and friends, religious, cultural, and political networks, and alternative television and internet outlets. Within the first six days of the uprising, people connected to Palestine in the Bay Area were hearing news from the ground such as the Israeli army killing of sixty-one and injuring of three thousand Palestinians. A collective sense of connection to Palestinians

Prayer in front of San Francisco City Hall.

living under a military invasion brought Arab and Muslim people together in a communal state of crisis.

A new development came out of this moment: the centrality of religion as an organizing framework for Palestine-solidarity activism in the Bay Area. Within the framework of global Muslim social justice, the movement for Palestine solidarity in the Bay Area became more expansive than it had been in the past. Bay Area Arab and Muslim political organizations, along with a range of antiwar activist networks, organized mass marches that coincided with similar events worldwide. These efforts rallied around the shared objective of urging "peace-loving people to protest the ongoing massacres and to demand that the United States government immediately stop providing the weapons to Israel which are used to massacre civilians."[26] One call for action included a march and rally on a Friday afternoon that was to begin in front of San Francisco's City Hall and end in front of the Israeli Consulate. A coalition of Muslim organizations added a call for a public Friday prayer before the march. Over five thousand Muslim worshippers—men, women, and children—were lined up in several hundred rows facing the *Kaba* (the most sacred site in Islam, located in Mecca) in *Sujud* (prostration for prayer) position, with their foreheads touching the ground, in the largest political mobilization of Muslims in San Francisco's history. This event marked an important shift in Bay Area activism related to the Arab region. The public

Prayer in front of San Francisco City Hall.

prayer signified an intensification of religious displays of political alliance and solidarity with Palestinians. Muslim student activists from various college campuses were among several constituents who organized and participated in the event.[27]

Overall, Muslim student activists were engaged in crafting a counternormative narrative on Iraq and Palestine. They were committed to rearticulating Islam in a manner different from U.S. Islamophobic discourses that mark Muslims as potential terrorists and inherently backwards, uncivilized, and violent. They linked Israeli policies against Palestinians to U.S. support for Israel. They also linked their critique to local U.S. and Bay Area racial justice issues through the deployment of rap music and by making connections to the criminalization of youth of color in Oakland. They engaged liberal U.S. discourses about life, liberty, and happiness as a strategy to humanize Muslims to a generalized American public. They simultaneously articulated social justice through distinctly Muslim concepts of resistance and struggle. The internet and satellite TV helped to inspire a transnational, coalitional concept of Islam that connected people from various Muslim-majority countries and connected Muslims to local subaltern communities.

A filmmaker interviewed several of the organizers before and after the rally and conference. In one of these interviews, a conference organizer explained, "The rally will take a public stance against oppression and imperialism and

the conference is to unite Muslims. It will be about our brothers and sisters everywhere—Palestine, Chechnya, Bosnia, and here. We'll have sisters in *hijab* [head covering] and brothers in *kufis* [short, rounded caps] holding signs" (Berkeley Ihsan Conference 2000).

Mazen, an Arab American student, told me something similar, that the purpose of their actions was to "expose Israel's use of aggression and both Republican and Democratic candidates' pro-Israeli bias. We also want to expose the U.S.'s excessive military aid to Israel and the media's pro-Israeli bias."

A graduate student and central leader of this movement told a journalist,

> Israel continues to occupy lands and there is no reconciliation between us. The peace process is fundamentally flawed. It doesn't give Palestinians self-determination or sovereignty over their land. The rally is to educate people about what is taking place and to express our views—that Israel is committing injustices. It is to begin telling people that Islam is one of the largest religions in the world and can no longer be unaccepted as a non-Western religion. (Berkeley Ihsan Conference 2000)

Another speaker explained what was a consistent theme throughout the day—that it is the duty of all Muslims to resist oppression. In general, the speakers grounded their call to resistance as a duty in Islam to the diverse Muslim populations around the world who were bearing the brunt of U.S. militarism and war. They also critiqued what they perceived as a relationship between the United States and corrupt regimes in Muslim-majority countries.

Local Muslim institutions were crucial to the success of the mobilization for Palestine that took place in front of City Hall, a mobilization that brought together secular forces with people affiliated with Bay Area mosques. Muslim activists who co-organized this mobilization told me that they had asked local mosques, such as the Jones Street mosque of San Francisco and Mesjid Al Islam in Oakland, to relocate their Friday prayer to San Francisco's civic center. The idea that mosques would close their doors that Friday was a political strategy that used Friday afternoon as a strategic organizing time, a time to bring people out into the civic center. Some of the largest Muslim institutions of the Bay Area, located in Santa Clara, also participated and mobilized their constituencies. When Muslim organizers successfully mobilized a large crowd who represented the majority of political participants in front of City Hall that day, secular forces recognized the Muslim community as a political force that they would need to contend with when it came to Palestine-related organizing. This shift comes in the context of the collapse

of the generally secular Palestinian movement post-Oslo and the context of the late 1990s and early twenty-first century. New coalitions between religious and secular forces, reflected in the events above, gave new shape to the Palestinian movement in the Bay Area. It was the first time mosques participated in significant ways and illustrated their capacity to mobilize their grassroots, a Muslim grassroots that is greater in size than an Arab or Palestinian constituency.

Racial Justice and Coalition Politics

In the 1990s, local and national Muslim organizations with diverse membership were established. Hatem summarizes this period as one in which "Muslim politics shifted to thinking beyond immediate needs or distinct needs of distinct Muslim racial/ethnic communities and towards civic engagement." In the Bay Area, some activists were heavily committed to maintaining multiracial alliances among Muslims, which specifically improved relationships between migrant Muslims and African American Muslims. While there are histories of connections in the Bay Area, such alliances have existed primarily on the leadership level. Since the early 1990s, Hatem had been researching relationships between African Americans and immigrant Muslims for a book he is writing on Muslim Americans in the Bay Area. He tells me that there was a stronger alliance between diverse immigrant Muslims than between immigrants and African Americans:

> Multiracial alliances have not yet reached the various levels of the community. In the Bay Area, there was the African American group, the Nation of Islam, that by 1976 moved to Orthodox Islam. However, relationships between primarily migrant Muslim communities and this group are very minimal. Pakistanis and Arabs have struck alliances way back. They view themselves from historical lands and both came into this country as Muslims. They came from an experience in the Indian subcontinent with political activism from Islam in an early period. The Indo-Pakistanis have a very strong commitment to Palestine. The first item they tackled in the foundational principles in the Pakistani state was in support of Palestine. They came of age and the independence of Pakistan was intertwined at the core, intertwined to Palestine. When Pakistan obtained independence and Kashmir was cut out of Pakistan into India, that was compared immediately to the 1948 War and the cutting of Palestine. That alliance was already there. But I think one of the most powerful periods will emerge if the immigrant communities can strike a real alliance with the African

American Muslim community and the resources of the immigrants are wedded into the resources for the African Americans.

Hatem had been working among several Muslim American leaders in the Bay Area on multiracial alliance building. He was part of a political current that was articulating a racial-justice politics among Muslims and striving to strengthen relations between immigrant and African American Muslims. He argues that these groupings are connected through their shared relationship to neoliberal economic structures that target poor African Americans locally and people living in countries targeted by U.S. war globally.

In my class on Islam and America, I examine the external imperial to the internal imperial. We can comprehend what is occurring with U.S. policies in the external imperial, if we take a look at Oakland, California. African Americans are the subject of empire internally, and the political, social, economic, security structure that is set up on them is reflective of the external imperial. The development zone has been given to a developer that has no connection to the community. The developer gets a tax break and all kinds of incentives from the city. Police are protecting that one developer, pushing the bad drug dealers, prostitutes away, moving the poor and low class away. So you concentrate poverty and drug dealing, and crime. As a result, you need more security, so you hire more police and the military infrastructure is increased and those police are often hired from outside the community so they live in the rich suburbs of Walnut Creek and Lafayette where they take the resources of the city to the external community. They get to keep up with the lifestyle of Walnut Creek and Lafayette and do not have to be accountable to Oakland. You bring corporations and set them up in the downtown area in the development zone where they are not paying taxes because they have a tax break, their returns are for their investors.

Hatem contends that the external empire works in similar ways:

You add it and multiply it and this is what the external imperial looks like. This is instrumental in thinking local and acting global—drawing the paradigm locally and then taking it to the globe. An empire thinks and articulates its machinery in an internal structure before it is exported and used in other territories and other places.

Hatem, along with both immigrant and African American student and community leaders, spearheaded a political event at the University of

California–Berkeley in 2000. This event entailed a political rally and a conference and was based upon a similar analysis as Hatem's above that centered upon connections between racial and imperialist forms of oppression within and outside of the United States. Yet event organizers framed the imperial "external" and "internal" in a way that could foster coalition building between African American Muslims and immigrant Muslims living in the United States. The event centered upon their shared struggles with U.S.-state policies within the United States. Organizers decided to raise awareness about U.S.-state violence against African American Muslims and U.S.-state violence against Muslim immigrant communities living in the United States. Their understanding of the U.S. state was that it increasingly criminalized Muslim immigrants through a logic that associated them with potential enemies of the U.S. nation within the war on terror. Event organizers were equally outraged about this problem as well as the persistent criminalization of African Americans in general and African American Muslims specifically. Event organizers named the event *Ihsan* (the Muslim responsibility to obtain perfection or excellence) and explained that its purpose was to bring awareness to "the U.S. government's injustices against its citizens."

As the *Ihsan* event began, a young man stood in front of a table set up by the Muslim Student Association and explained, "The rally today is about . . . U.S. domestic policy . . . the case of Amadou Diallo and police brutality, Proposition 21, the antiterrorism bill, and the FBI's harassment of Iman Jamil Al-Amin."[28] Unlike conventional Bay Area racial justice discourses, this event centered on anti-Muslim racism, specifically attacks against Muslim migrants and African American Muslims, and framed Muslim activism within a coalitional, multiracial parameter that brought together different communities who were similarly outraged over their experiences with racial violence. It interpreted these problems as the unjust criminalization of youth and people of color. Amadou Bailo Diallo, a 23-year-old Guinean immigrant, was shot and killed in the Bronx, New York, in February 1999 by four plainclothes police officers who fired a total of forty-one rounds. He was unarmed. His killing inspired outrage and massive uprisings that centered on racial profiling, police brutality, and contagious shooting. California Proposition 21, which increased a variety of criminal penalties for crimes committed by youth and incorporated many youth offenders into the adult criminal justice system, passed in 2000 and similarly inspired massive uprisings. Among other provisions, it requires an adult trial for youth fourteen or older who are charged with murder or particular sex offenses.

The event also highlighted the case of African American Imam Jamil Al-Amin, who was arrested in connection with the shootings of two Atlanta

sheriff's deputies. His case created great controversy since critics argued that the initial police reports suggested that he was innocent. Critics read the case as an example of the rise in national attacks against Muslims in the United States, particularly those with political activist histories. Imam Jamil Al-Amin was a member of the Black Panther Party and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) before he converted to Islam and became an imam who worked as an antidrug activist.

The first speaker explained how race played a role in the murder of Diallo and how similar practices are being sanctioned by Proposition 21. He said, "If someone walks a certain way, dresses a certain way, they could be rendered a violent gang member. We're not just protesting the murder of Amadou Diallo, we're protesting laws that allow abuse and sanction harassment against citizens! And then there is the antiterrorism bill." In 1995, President Clinton passed the Omnibus Counterterrorism Act of 1995, which many human rights and immigrant rights leaders refer to as an unconstitutional attack on the Bill of Rights. It grants sweeping powers to the executive branch and grants law enforcement much broader wiretapping authority with less judicial oversight and access to personal and financial records without a warrant. Since a majority of persons targeted by this bill are Muslims, a major conflict is that authorities deploy this act as a form of racial profiling (Saalakhan 1999).

These speakers' arguments are part of a political current that took shape in the 1990s that theorized anti-Muslim violence or targeting through the framework of race and racism (Omi and Winant 1994). In the 1990s, a new body of scholarly literature contended that because anti-Muslim policies within the United States had a great deal to do with U.S. imperialism outside the United States, they reflected forms of racism that are transnational in scope. Asian Americans have faced similar transnational forms of racism at times when the United States has been at war with Japan or China, for instance. In the context of anti-Muslim racism, targets of racism are not always linked to a particular country or nation of origin, but are associated with the arbitrary, deterritorialized category of the new empire: the terrorist (Rana 2007). At the *Ihsan* event, activists argued that the new racism against Muslim immigrants was bleeding into anti-Black racism, particularly in cases involving earlier forms of anti-Black racism by U.S. law enforcement that was directed specifically at African American Muslims. In this overlap, they found possibilities for new multiracial immigrant and African American Muslim alliances.

The global, transnational Muslim consciousness that was articulated through these young adults' political activism related to Iraq can be located

in the history of a general post–Gulf War consciousness that proliferated among Arab American and Muslim American young adults in the 1990s. In the 1990s, a new Arab American and Muslim American political consciousness was underway that responded to the intensification of U.S. militarism in the Arab and Muslim region with a sense that it is far more immediate to recognize that which unites us than that which separates us. In the Bay Area, the political organizing that took place contributed to the growth of this consciousness. The political organizing around the first Gulf War in the early 1990s was rooted in a transnational analysis that conceptualized imperialism as a political formation that had global and local implications and assumed that the global and local are interconnected, not mutually exclusive. For instance, interlocutors who were involved in Gulf War–related activism connected U.S. policy in Iraq to U.S. state violence against people of color in the United States. This analysis came forth within political work that connected Gulf War violence and police violence against Rodney King and the anti-immigration legislation of the 1990s.

* * *

This chapter has focused on young adults affiliated with the politics of Muslim First and a global Muslim consciousness. I have located Muslim First politics within the post-1980s context of the increased movement of people within and beyond the Arab and Muslim worlds and intensified migration of Muslims to the Bay Area. In addition, the expansion of U.S. empire in Muslim-majority countries, Islamophobia, and the rise of Muslim global political movements has shaped the articulation of Muslim First as a framework for organizing identity, community, and belonging. Among my interlocutors, Muslim First works as a mechanism for challenging the gender and racial hierarchies underpinning their immigrant parents' concepts of cultural identity in ways that cannot be explained through conventional immigration studies frameworks that focus on apparent tensions between immigrant traditions and second-generation assimilation. Muslim First restores a sense of rootedness in Arab and Muslim histories while it transcends what young adults perceive as the limitations of their immigrant parents' politics of Arab cultural authenticity. Muslim First provides my interlocutors with a framework for surviving various power struggles and envisioning a new world beyond the varied constraints they face. The limitations of Muslim First are beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather than evaluating whether or not Muslim social justice politics is progressive or conservative, oppressive or liberatory, "American" or "anti-American," I have taken interest in

the conceptual frameworks through which my interlocutors understand the terms of debate, the way they approach the question of being Arab, Muslim, and American, and the multiple transnational discourses and historical circumstances they draw upon.

Indeed, Muslim First emerges through an interplay among global politics, U.S. racial politics, and local Bay Area progressive racial justice and antiwar politics. Concepts and practices of gender permeate each of these domains and generate a range of perspectives about gender in Muslim spaces. The stories I analyze open up new possibilities for thinking beyond popular assumptions that divide Muslim Americans into two seemingly separate groups: good Muslim citizens who participate in the American melting pot versus bad Muslims who are actively involved in homeland politics (Alsultany 2007; Mamdani 2005). Similar binary frameworks that distinguish between the politics of "immigrant Muslims" and "American Muslims," "Muslims focused on domestic issues" and "Muslims focused on international issues," cannot explain the politics of Muslim First (Khan 2000). Here, Muslim First, as a transnational political discourse, emerges not in nostalgic, or simply traditionalist terms, but in an open-ended conversation with a range of discourses of social justice among Muslims and non-Muslims that are local and global in scope. In this respect, I draw upon Anouar Majid's critique that leftist intellectuals cannot accept and are not willing to learn about Islam beyond culturalist/civilizational analyses (2000, 31-32) and the general Eurocentric assumption that Muslims have to be secular to believe in the virtues of social justice and the inviolability of human dignity (2, 7, 21, 41; Mandaville 2007). As we have seen, in some moments, the politics of Muslim First reifies essentialist concepts of religious or cultural identity. Yet in other moments, my interlocutors transcend the politics of Arab cultural authenticity, U.S. Orientalism, Islamophobia, and rigid self-representations of Islam. My interlocutors' concepts of culture, religion, family, gender, and sexuality are mediated through their engagements with and understandings of race, immigration, and imperialism.

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