THE ISLAMOPHOBIA INDUSTRY

HOW THE RIGHT MANUFACTURES FEAR OF MUSLIMS

NATHAN LEAN

FOREWORD BY
JOHN L. ESPOSITO

The Islamophobia Industry

"This concise, accessible and illuminating book meets one of the most urgent needs of our time. Lean has provided a compelling counter-narrative that reveals the vested interests and highly organized networks of those who preach the virulent Islamophobia that is not only endangering world peace but is also corroding the tolerance and egalitarian ethos that should characterize Western society. This book should be required reading."
— Karen Armstrong

"Islamophobia is not only about ignorance and fear. Some people purposefully nurture it and use it as a political strategy. Nathan Lean's *The Islamophobia Industry* shows what is happening behind the scenes. It is an essential book for anyone who wants to understand the rationale and objectives behind those who foster this new racism against Muslims."
— Tariq Ramadan, Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Oxford University and author of *The Quest for Meaning*

"The climate of fear and cultural mistrust is one of the grim aspects of present-day society—but it doesn't happen by accident. As this readable and well-researched book demonstrates, hatred sells; it can provide both money and power to those who profit from it. This book exposes the dirty secrets of those who try to manipulate public opinion against Muslims. It should be read by policymakers, concerned citizens, and everyone who values truth and intercultural understanding."
— Mark Juergensmeyer, Professor of Global Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and author of *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence.*

"Nathan Lean has written a book of immense importance for our times. By lifting the veil on the multi-million-dollar Islamophobia Industry, Lean shines a light on the nefarious network of business, political, and religious organizations and individuals who employ rank bigotry to promote their interests. A must-read."
— Reza Aslan, author of *No God But God*

"In this provocative and engaging book, Nathan Lean meticulously untangles the dense web of fear merchants who have made Muslim-bashing a cottage industry. He reveals the connections between them and the motives that animate their machine of propaganda. Lean's is a battle against Islamophobia, one that he wages with a seamless and compelling narrative."
— Juan Cole, author of *Engaging the Muslim World*

"The spike in anti-Muslim sentiment didn't fall from the sky—it was manufactured by a shadowy network of bloggers, funders, pundits, preachers and politicians. In a tightly written, fast-paced narrative that feels like a thriller backed by the research of a doctoral thesis, Lean shows just how deep the rabbit hole goes. Essential reading for anyone who wants a window into the origins of contemporary Islamophobia."
— Eboo Patel, author of *Acts of Faith and Sacred Ground*

"So many of America's mistakes and bad acts over the past decade are due to Islamophobia, and Nathan Lean's new book traces the phenomenon's genesis and its culprits. Those who have been spawning this all-too-familiar demonization campaign have been hiding in the dark for too long. This book is so valuable because it drags them out into the light and thus performs a true service for the nation."
— Glenn Greenwald, columnist for Salon and author of *Liberty and Justice For Some*

"In the months after 9/11, Americans took pride in defending Muslim neighbors in their own communities. Political leaders boasted about liberating Muslims overseas. So why are the politics of fear more intense a decade after the murders at the twin towers? Lean pins the blame on an Islamophobia industry in a lucid and detailed examination of the dark side of our politics."
— Richard Wolffe, MSNBC political analyst and author of *Renegade: The Making of a President*

"Nathan Lean has written an eye-opener—the most comprehensive book to date on a new and dangerous cycle of minority persecution in American society. Lean's book exposes the key players, funders and enablers of Islamophobia in America and the destructive effect of their politics on our national fabric. It is worth every minute of reading."
— Nihad Awad, National Executive Director, Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)

"Lean's meticulous study is a convincing demonstration of the threat Islamophobia poses to a pluralistic society and democratic values. Rationalizing hatred of Muslims, well-funded ideologues also negatively impact civic discourse and push conservative politics into the orbit of right-wing extremism. This is an important resource for all who wish to understand the forces that manipulate our political process and discourse."
— Ingrid Mattson, Chair in Islamic Studies, Huron University College

"Absolutely indispensable ... Any journalist, pundit, policy-maker or intelligence analyst who doesn't read *The Islamophobia Industry* and take its message to heart is committing professional malpractice. Any citizen concerned about the future of this country and the world at large owes it to themselves to read this book, lest the processes Lean describes poison relations between the West and the Muslim world for generations to come."
— Mark LeVine, author of *Heavy Metal Islam*

"The Islamophobia Industry is a clarion call. It's a necessary and timely work that carefully dissects and exposes a cottage-industry of fear mongers who have deliberately manufactured hysteria and hate to divide Americans along religious and racial lines to promote their own self-profit and selfish, misguided politics."
— Wajahat Ali, award-winning playwright and lead author of *Fear Inc.: Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America*

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How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims

Nathan Lean

Foreword by John L. Esposito

First published 2012 by Pluto Press
345 Archway Road, London N6 5AA

www.plutobooks.com

Distributed in the United States of America exclusively by
Palgrave Macmillan, a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 0 7453 3254 3 Hardback
ISBN 978 0 7453 3253 6 Paperback
ISBN 978 1 8496 4746 5 PDF eBook
ISBN 978 1 8496 4748 9 Kindle eBook
ISBN 978 1 8496 4747 2 EPUB eBook

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data applied for

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental standards of the country of origin.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Designed and produced for Pluto Press by Chase Publishing Services Ltd
Typeset from disk by Stanford DTP Services, Northampton, England
Simultaneously printed digitally by CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham, UK and
Edwards Bros in the United States of America

For Naima: my muse, my love, and my life

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Acknowledgments

This book came about during a particularly important time in my life. One week after getting married, I penned the first chapter. Over the course of the next year, a time when most young couples would be basking in the newness of wedded bliss, I was often sitting at my desk staring blankly at the computer screen or lost in deep thought during dinner. For any other woman, such obsession would have spurred a quick exit. But my wife Naima has been my greatest ally. She has loved me beyond measure, encouraged me without ceasing, and inspired me in so many beautiful ways. Where most would leave their beloveds 'till the end, I shall place mine first—precisely where she belongs atop the list of those who have so profoundly shaped this book, and in some cases, my life.

My family, as always, was very supportive and encouraging. They endured my endless rants and shared in my excitement as the various pieces of this project came together. My father Larry, my mother Linda Rose, and my sister Katherine have each offered me, through their own lives, a vision of the type of person I hope to one day be. My grandmother too has a special place in my heart and constantly asked about my progress and expressed her support as only a grandmother can do. My parents-in-law, despite their distance, were also supportive of this endeavor and have a special place in my heart.

I am fortunate to have been surrounded by a wonderful community of friends and scholars at Georgetown University. Many of them offered valuable feedback and encouragement. John Esposito, whose scholarship I have long revered, generously contributed his time to this project. An academic giant and hero of mine, it was a privilege and pleasure to have him share with me. My professors John Voll and Yvonne Haddad, whom I have grown to so greatly admire, contributed many meaningful ideas and inspired me exponentially. At the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Zeina Seikaly connected dots where I did not even know they existed. Seth Luxenberg read early versions of chapters and offered interesting and useful feedback. Samantha Brotman generously helped me clarify ideas that I had tied into knots and Brenda Bickett provided a wealth of bibliographic sources that were helpful in my research. I am also indebted to Saurav Thapa at the Center for Muslim-

Christian Understanding for tolerating my incessant email requests and graciously facilitating my conversations and interactions with faculty members who contributed to this project.

As a graduate student in North Carolina, I was taken under the wing of my professor and mentor Derek Maher and guided along a path that led to many new and exciting opportunities. It was then that I discovered my love for writing. Patiently untangling my mixed metaphors and wrestling through meanings I had buried in verbosity, he made me a better student and scholar. More than that, though, his steadfast friendship is a dear treasure of mine.

Reza Aslan gave generously of his time, even amidst the birth of his beautiful twin boys. He believed in this project from its nascence and propelled me down a path of writing that he has come to know quite well. Having his support is an honor. My colleagues at Aslan Media graced me with their patience as I took time off from my duties as assistant editor to finalize the manuscript.

My agent Linda Langton navigated the often-rocky waters of the publishing world with skill and confidence and had faith in my ability as a writer early on.

At Pluto Press, Roger Van Zwanenberg kindly reached out to me just as I began the writing process. Before I had even imagined that the book would be published, he happily corresponded with me and shared his ideas. He was, and is, a constant source of motivation and inspiration. My editor, David Shulman, helped me keep all of the moving parts together, balancing them with mastery and charm. He also offered me an invaluable critique of the various drafts and proposed ideas that improved my writing and my message. Robert Webb's eye for detail amazed me, as did the creativity of the talented design team that worked with Melanie Patrick. Alec Gregory and Jonathan Maunder were more than helpful, as was Jeanne Brady.

A special word of thanks is also due to Dan Pawlus, Caroline Davis, and Nancy Roberts, as well as the team at Palgrave Macmillan.

Lastly, I owe gratitude to my many Muslim friends here in the United States and throughout the world. In my travels and studies, our interactions have always been rewarding. They have treated me with grace and kindness and, in turn, I feel that is it my duty to combat the stereotypes to which they and others like them so easily fall victim. For they know, if anyone knows, that, as the Prophet Muhammad once said, "The wounds of words hurt worse than the wounds of swords."

Washington, DC
2012

Foreword

John L. Esposito

Islamophobia did not suddenly come into being after the events of 9/11. Like anti-Semitism and xenophobia, it has long and deep historical roots. Its contemporary resurgence has been triggered by the significant influx of Muslims to the West in the late twentieth century, the Iranian revolution, hijackings, hostage taking, and other acts of terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s, attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, and subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe.

WHAT ARE THE ROOTS OF THIS MODERN EPIDEMIC?

Most Americans' first encounter with an unknown Islam occurred with the Iranian Revolution of 1978 and the taking of hostages in the American embassy, which resulted in an explosion of interest and coverage of the religion of Islam as well as of the Middle East and the Muslim world that has increased exponentially over the years.

Today, Islam and the Middle East often dominate the negative headlines. Despite the fact that Islam is the second largest religion in the world and the third largest religion in the United States—as well as the fact that American Muslims are an integral part of the American mosaic in the twenty-first century—the acts of terrorists over the last three decades have fed the growth of Islamophobia in this country.

THE POST-9/11 CLIMATE

The catastrophic events of 9/11 and continued attacks in Muslim countries, as well as in Madrid and London, have obscured many positive developments and have exacerbated the growth of Islamophobia almost exponentially. Islam and Muslims have become guilty until proven innocent, a reversal of the classic American legal maxim. Islam is often viewed as the cause rather than the context for radicalism, extremism, and terrorism. Islam as the culprit is a simple answer, easier than considering the core political

issues and grievances that resonate in much of the Muslim world (that is, the failures of many Muslim governments and societies, American foreign policy of intervention and dominance, Western support for authoritarian regimes, the invasion and occupation of Iraq, or support for Israel's wars in Gaza and Lebanon). It is not difficult to find material that emphasizes selective analyses of Islam and events in the Muslim world, material which is crisis-oriented and headline-driven, fueling stereotypes, fears, and discrimination. Islam's portrayal as a triple threat (political, civilizational, and demographic) has been magnified by a number of journalists and scholars who trivialize the complexity of political, social, and religious dynamics in the Muslim world.

The result has been to downplay the negative consequences of Western support for authoritarian regimes, and the blowback from American and European foreign policies in the Middle East, from the Palestinian–Israeli conflict to the invasion of Iraq. Anti-Americanism or anti-westernization (which has increased significantly among the mainstream in the Muslim world and globally as a result of these policies) is often equated simply with Muslim hatred of our western way of life.

Today, Islamophobia distorts the prism through which Muslims are viewed domestically. Anti-Muslim rhetoric and hate crimes proliferate. Legitimate concerns in the United States and Europe for domestic security have been offset by the abuse of anti-terrorism legislation, indiscriminate arrests, and imprisonments that compromise Muslims' civil liberties. Mainstream Islamic institutions (civil rights groups, political action committees, charities) are indiscriminately accused of raising money for extremism by individuals and sometimes governments without the hard evidence that would lead to successful prosecution.

Significant minorities of non-Muslim Americans show a great tolerance for policies that would profile Muslims, require special identity cards, and question the loyalty of all Muslim citizens. A 2006 *USA Today*-Gallup Poll found that substantial minorities of Americans admit to having negative feelings or prejudices against people of the Muslim faith, and favor using heightened security measures with Muslims as a way to help prevent terrorism. Fewer than half the respondents believed that US Muslims are loyal to the United States. Nearly one-quarter of Americans—22 percent—said they would not like to have a Muslim as a neighbor; 31 percent said they would feel nervous if they noticed a Muslim man on their flight, and 18 percent said they would feel nervous if they noticed a

Muslim woman on their flight. About 4 in 10 Americans favor more rigorous security measures for Muslims than those used for other US citizens: requiring Muslims who are US citizens to carry a special ID and undergo special, more intensive, security checks before boarding airplanes in the United States. When US respondents were asked, in the Gallup World Poll, what they admire about the Muslim world, the most common response was "nothing" (33 percent); the second most common was "I don't know" (22 percent). Despite major polling by Gallup and PEW that show that American Muslims are well integrated economically and politically, a January 2010 Gallup Center for Muslim Studies report found that more than 4 in 10 Americans (43 percent) admit to feeling at least "a little" prejudice toward Muslims—more than twice the number who say the same about Christians (18 percent), Jews (15 percent) and Buddhists (14 percent). Nine percent of Americans admitted feeling "a great deal" of prejudice towards Muslims, while 20 percent admitted feeling "some" prejudice. Surprisingly, Gallup data revealed a link between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, that contempt for Jews makes a person "about 32 times as likely to report the same level of prejudice toward Muslims."

The extent to which the religion of Islam and the mainstream Muslim majority have been conflated with the beliefs and actions of an extremist minority can be seen not only in major polls but also in opposition to mosque construction, in locations from Manhattan and Staten Island to Tennessee and California, which has become not just a local but a national political issue. In the 2008 US presidential elections and the 2010 Congressional elections, anti-mosque and anti-Sharia hysteria have shown that Islamophobia has gone mainstream.

Across the US, a major debate erupted over the building of an Islamic community center a few blocks from the site of the World Trade Center. A June 22, 2010 *New York Post* editorial said, "There's no denying the elephant in the room. Neither is there any rejoicing over the mosques … because where there are mosques, there are Muslims, and where there are Muslims, there are problems … ." The author warns of New York becoming "New Yorkistan," just as London has become "Londonstan," "degenerated" by a Muslim community "into a launching pad for terrorists."

Nathan Lean's *The Islamophobia Industry* could not be more timely or critical. This is an extraordinarily important and groundbreaking study. It exposes the multi-million-dollar cottage industry of fear mongers and the network of funders and

organizations that support and perpetuate bigotry, xenophobia, and racism, and produce a climate of fear that sustains a threatening social cancer.

Islamophobia, like anti-Semitism, will not be eradicated easily or soon. Islamophobia is not a problem for Muslims alone; it is *our* problem. Governments, policymakers, the media, educational institutions, and religious and corporate leaders have a critical role to play in transforming our societies and influencing our citizens and policies to contain the voices of hate and the exclusivist theologies (of militant religious and secular fundamentalists alike) if we are to promote global understanding and peace. As we know from the history of anti-Semitism and of racism in America, bigots and racists aren't born. As the lyrics from the musical *South Pacific* remind us: "You've got to be taught to hate and fear, you've got to be taught from year to year. It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear, you've got to be carefully taught."

John L. Esposito is a university professor and founding director of the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, at Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

Introduction

Ahmed Sharif, a 44-year-old taxi cab driver from Bangladesh knew the ins and outs of Manhattan like he knew his name. It was his job, after all, to deliver clients, most of who were unfamiliar with the daunting passageways of the concrete jungle, to their destination. Fifteen years on the job had brought his way countless street names and neighborhoods that would puzzle even the most experienced public chauffeur. It also brought thousands of casual acquaintances—five-minute friends—that slumped down on the blue leathery cushion of his front seat and chatted about the Mets' terrible losing streak or cursed the almost incessant construction projects while admiring the decorations dangling from his rear-view mirror.

On August 24, 2010, during the first fare of Sharif's evening shift, a plump, baby-faced youngster with blond hair parted perfectly down the left side ambled along towards the intersection of Second Avenue and East 24th Street. It was just before 6 p.m. and the usually busy crossroads, a junction of artsy coffee houses, high-rise studios, and specialty schools, was teeming with kids like Michael Enright who, upon finishing their classes, hoped to escape the city buzz in time for an evening spent at a quieter location. Throwing out his hand, Enright signaled for a ride to freedom; pulling up to the curb just opposite the Jay Dee Bakery, Ahmed Sharif answered the call. Enright hopped in the back.

Forty-second and 2nd Avenue was his destination, a 14-block chug that would likely have cost him the same as two *venti* lattes from the Starbucks on the street corner at the end of his 8-minute trip. Even if Enright had offered the cabby a coffee, Sharif would have declined. It was Ramadan and the father of four who lived in Jamaica, Queens, was a practicing Muslim, fasting from sunrise to sunset during the holy month. He had just two hours to go before he could eat or drink.

"Salaam aleikum," Enright said, extending an Arabic greeting that translates to "Peace upon you." Sharif thought nothing of the remark. It was unusual that a 21-year-old white kid, obviously not of Arab descent, would choose such a salutation as a conversation starter. More than anything, it swept the Bangladeshi driver under

the rug with all of the other brown-skinned, bearded men who were thought to be Arabs; his native language was Bengali and his English was just fine.

"How's your Ramadan going?" Enright then asked him. "Fine," he replied, aware at that point that the film studies student's earlier greeting was an acknowledgment that he was a Muslim, more than anything.

Ramadan was funny to Enright, absurd even, and he told Sharif so openly. Whatever civility there was in the initial moments of their conversation quickly turned into a one-way diatribe. At a stoplight, Sharif sat quietly. For him, their exchange was over. While he hated to hear his young client verbally thrash the religion of Islam—his religion—he felt it was best not to get into a shouting match. And, in a city that was so sharply divided over a proposed Islamic cultural center, or as some had come to call it, the "Ground Zero Mosque," there was no shortage of anti-Muslim sentiment. It was unfortunately common.

"So I stopped talking to him," Sharif later recalled. "He stopped talking too." They were three blocks from Enright's stop when the silence finally broke. "Consider this a checkpoint!" the art student shouted. "This is a checkpoint, motherfucker and I have to bring you down." Stunned, Sharif stopped the car. "He was talking like he was a soldier," he said. Enright *was* a soldier, but his duties on that Tuesday evening had little to do with his time spent with the Taskforce Leatherneck battalion in the Helmand province of Afghanistan. Even so, he viewed his mission in much the same way. It was his job to protect humanity.

Reaching into his pocket, Enright pulled out his Leatherman, an assortment of folding knives and other sharp blades typically used by Boy Scouts. Flipping it open, he threw his arm across the seat divider and, blade out, pulled its silvery sharp edge across Sharif's throat. A thick ooze of blood seeped downward into his lap. Turning around in horror, the driver met Enright's merciless shank again, this time in direct slashes to his face, arms, and thumbs. "I beg of you," Sharif cried. "Don't kill me. I worked so hard. I have a family."[1]

The cab was slowly moving though that did not stop Enright from barging through the backdoor in a mad dash for cover. He was eventually found, as was an empty bottle of Scotch. "That man just tried to rob me," he shouted at police officers. "He wanted to rob me and I was using self-defense. What did I do wrong?" he screamed. "I just came back from Afghanistan. I want my mother."[2]

His arms behind his back in handcuffs, Enright flailed about in a state of rage. "Salaam aleikum," he told the cops, the same Arabic greeting that inaugurated his bloody journey. "Do you like salami and bacon?" he asked another officer just before explaining that the police were to blame for allowing Muslims "to blow up buildings in this country."[3]

Happily, Sharif recovered from the attack. But the event, which left him stricken with fear of another such attack, led him to move his family from Manhattan to Buffalo. Some reports suggested that Enright's crime—later classified as a hate crime—was the result of his intoxication. He had battled alcoholism for some time and told investigators that the pint-sized bottle of Johnny Walker did not drink itself. Whatever the status of his inebriation, though, whiskey was not his only intoxicant. Along with the empty glass bottle, police discovered a small black personal diary filled with pages of "pretty strong anti-Muslim sentiment." Sources say that Enright's journal equated Muslims with "killers, ungrateful for the help they were being offered, filthy murderers without a conscience."[4]

* * *

The political and social climate of 2010 was ripe for expressions of hate. Nine years after September 11, 2001, a time when many would have expected anti-Muslim sentiment to be in decline, it was not. In fact, it was higher than ever—even higher than the days and weeks following that horrible fall tragedy. Pew Research Center polls from 2001 show that 59 percent of Americans had a favorable opinion of Muslims just two months after the collapse of the Twin Towers.[5] In March of that year, before hijacker-pilot Mohammad Atta and his repulsive terrorist comrades ever entered the collective psyche of the republic's populous, 45 percent of Americans suggested that their views of Muslims were generally positive.[6]

Things soon began to turn south, though, despite the fact that violence perpetrated by Muslims was at notably low levels. In 2002, an annual report released by the FBI showed that hate crimes against Muslims had increased by an eye-popping 1600 percent; 28 incidents were reported in 2000 and 481 were reported two years later.[7] In 2004, a mere one in four Americans expressed a positive opinion of Islam. Forty-six percent, according to a Pew Research poll, believed that Islam was more likely than other religions to encourage violence.[8]

Pew was not the only organization to notice an upward trend. The following year, ABC News released a report showing that 43 percent of Americans still believed that Muslims had little respect for people of other faiths. By 2005, nearly six in ten Americans thought that Islam was a religion prone to violence; half of respondents held Muslims in low regard.[9] In five years, the numbers had completely flipped—the same percentage of Americans that once viewed Islam in a positive light now held the exact opposite opinion.

The year 2006 came and went with little change in Americans' personal discomfort with Muslims. A *Washington Post* poll showed that as the war in Iraq grinded on into its fourth year, half of Americans had a negative view of Islam.[10] As the 2008 American presidential election came to pass, the candidate who anchored his campaign in bringing about an end to the war was swallowed up by the growing anti-Muslim fervor. The Democratic Party's nominee, Barack Obama, a lanky politician from the "Windy City" with an unfamiliar name and a background that traced through Indonesia and the Kenyan homeland of his Muslim father, became an easy target for those who sought to advance an anti-Muslim narrative. That the 47-year-old nominee, a man who would become the nation's first African-American commander-in-chief, was labeled a Muslim by his opponents (who intended the inaccurate description as a slur) only aggravated anguish among some quarters of an already-paranoid electorate. So sensitive was the political climate that candidate Obama, a Christian, took great care to avoid any circumstances that would possibly be construed as an affiliation with Islam. In Dearborn, Michigan campaign staffers moved two Muslim women wearing the veil from a photo op with the future president. Surely any trip to a mosque would have triggered a ferocious hue and cry from his opponents. As John Esposito, professor of Islamic studies at Georgetown University, has noted, the campaign's hypersensitivity on the issue echoed denials of alleged Communist sympathizers during the Cold War: "'I am not nor have I ever been a Muslim."' Embedded within the soon-to-be president's statement, whether intentional or not, was the supposition that being a Muslim was a bad thing.[11] The surge of Islamophobia reached the shores of Europe that same year. Pew Research released a study showing that favorable opinions of Muslims were few and far between on the continent. Fully half of Spanish and German respondents reported harboring negative views of the religious group while 46 percent of Polish and 38 percent of French citizens felt the same.

* * *

The arch of prejudice and anti-Other discrimination is a long one. Societies in Europe and North America have, over the course of their histories, grappled with populations that they felt were not truly a part of the essential national fabric in an ugly way. At the root of much or all of this intolerance is xenophobia, the fear or intense dislike of foreigners.

For the most part, the term "foreigners" is used to describe a group of people not deemed to be a part of the group that is deploying the word. They are considered to be outsiders that come from other countries and whose values and cultures are different. The predominant sentiment among many right-wing Americans regarding Muslims, for instance, is that they are not welcome in "our" country. Such ferocity and dogged nationalism is predicated on the assumption that Muslims are immigrants and that the religion of Islam is not a fluid or borderless belief system, but rather originates from afar and has, with the relocation of populations from Morocco to Bahrain, invaded the United States.

Many Muslims in the United States and Europe do originate from elsewhere. Statistics show that. In 2005, more people from Muslim-majority countries became permanent US residents—nearly 96,000—than in any year in the previous two decades.[12] Today, Pew Research reports that more than 64.5 percent of Muslims in the United States are first-generation immigrants.[13] In France, as of mid-2010, Muslims were expected to account for more than two-thirds of all new immigrants, and in the United Kingdom, more than one-quarter.[14] These numbers are alarming to some who, like Michael Enright, view them in a necessarily negative and threatening way. Their fears of immigrant populations are channeled into explicit racism. Daniel Pipes, a conservative American political commentator who is considered by many to be the grandfather of Islamophobia in the US, exemplified this intersection of anti-immigrant racism and Islamophobia quite clearly in an article he wrote for the *National Review* in 1990:

> Western European societies are unprepared for the massive immigration of brown-skinned peoples cooking strange foods and not exactly maintaining Germanic standards of hygiene … All immigrants bring exotic customs and attitudes, but Muslim customs are more troublesome than most. Also, they appear most resistant to assimiliation.[15]

Seven years after 9/11, it was little surprise when the Runnymede Trust listed racial hostility to immigration as one of its "Seven Features of Islamophobia."

Many people have been critical of Islam and Muslims for the reasons Pipes described. They believe that immigrants are unable or unwilling to adapt to the cultures of the countries to which they move. This is premised on the inaccurate idea that the United States has belonged historically to one main group of people with a core value system. Yet the United States has no state religion, class system, or overarching set of moral tenets; thus it is impossible to conceive that Muslims or any other group could refuse such a thing. Still, capitalist economic values that overlap with social ideals breed suspicions that ethnic, racial, and religious minorities want to take advantage of freedoms and opportunities for prosperity that are thought to be uniquely American or European.

Fears of the foreign also rest on geographical suppositions that have become increasingly blurred and irrelevant altogether. American and European Muslims, born in the United States and countries like France and Britain, are, to Islamophobes, just as foreign as immigrants. Even if they may be naturalized or natural-born citizens, they are cast into the larger pot of strangeness that designates their differing religious beliefs as valid reasons to make them outcasts. American and European Muslims are seen as only Muslims, foreigners whose religious identity is their primary identity, and as a result they are represented as being inferior to non-Muslim Americans and Europeans.

Cleaving identities in this way—that is, forcing one aspect of a person's whole self apart from its other aspects—is of an expressly political nature. By turning majority populations against minority ones and exaggerating differences, some world leaders have been able to advance atrocious agendas.

In the 1947 anti-racist documentary "Don't Be a Sucker," a 15-minute flick produced by the Department of War that examines the divisive rhetorical atmosphere that fueled the rise of Nazi Germany, a rabble-rouser stands atop a soapbox on an American street corner decrying the "the truth about Negros [*sic*] and foreigners." He attacks immigrants, Jews, Catholics, Freemasons, and blacks. Men in the crowd nod their heads in agreement until they belong to the group included in the trash talking. A polished, soft-spoken man from Hungary explains to a young fellow watching the tirade that the very same thing had happened before in pre-World War II Germany. Only this time, the groups under attack had changed.

"The Nazis," he said, "knew that they were not strong enough to conquer a unified country. So they split Germany into small groups. They used prejudice as a practical weapon to cripple the nation. We human beings are not born with prejudices. Always they are made for us. Made by someone who wants something."

Adolf Hitler wanted something. He wanted power. And he understood that populations in Germany would remain subservient and ignorant under a perpetual state of fear. By 1933, the Great Depression had driven nearly 6 million Germans into unemployment. Men wandered aimlessly through the streets wondering how they would provide for their families on the petty government handouts, which, lasting just six months, seemed only to add insult to injury. The delirium, many believed, would never end, and for a battered and worn 224,000, the only thing they thought could end their unsustainable grief was suicide. The misery was virtually universal and Germany was at a bitter dead end.

When Hitler took the reins of power as chancellor, he had before him a population of near-skeletons and a Nazi movement that had grown tremendously. He used his position and influence to launch a fear campaign that resulted in the Holocaust. Hitler blamed Jews for the woes that had befallen Germany. Jews, he said, were the reason for Germany's loss during the Great War. According to Hitler, the Treaty of Versailles and the hyperinflation of 1923 were also Jewish-led initiatives designed to cripple Germany. "The Jewish youth lies in wait for hours on end, spying on the unsuspicious German girl he plans to seduce," he wrote in *Mein Kampf*. "He wants to contaminate her blood and remove her from the bosom of her own people. The Jew hates the white race and wants to lower its cultural level so that the Jews might dominate."

On buses, in restaurants, on trains and park benches, Jews had to sit on seats designated for them. Jewish schoolchildren were tormented and German youngsters were taught to hate their fellow classmates. With the passing of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, Jews lost their rights to be German citizens; they could not marry non-Jews, and were refused even basic medical services from doctors and pharmacists. Anti-Semitism as scientific racism had reached new heights. The systematic annihilation of 6 million Jews by the Nazi regime during World War II was, according to Hitler, the "final solution of the Jewish question."

* * *

The second decade of the twenty-first century was well-primed for prejudice and discrimination. The financial crisis of the late 2000s, or, as some had called it, the "Great Recession," was considered by many economists and analysts to be the greatest economic downfall since the Great Depression in the 1930s. The housing bubble had grown so large that it burst, causing the value of securities tied to the US real estate pricing to plummet. The American government bailed out banks that were drowning in their own debt. The automobile industry had tanked, the stock market had fallen, and predatory lenders had swindled fortunes away from unsuspecting citizens. The International Monetary Fund reported that from 2007 to 2009, American and European banks had lost more than $1 trillion from toxic assets and bad loans. And, by October of 2009, the US unemployment rate had risen to 10.1 percent.

Economic instability gave way to social tensions, just as it had years before, creating groundwork for the rise of nationalism and anti-Other sentiment. Muslims became receptacles for societal anxiety, and the right wing, knowing full well the power of fear, used the uncertain times to their advantage. With controversy over plans for the Park51 Islamic community center, they gave birth to the latest frightening meme in a long litany of scare words in service of forging sharp societal divisions. The "Ground Zero Mosque" joined "Eurabia," "death panels," "creeping Sharia," "stealth jihad," and "terror babies" as terms that slipped effortlessly into public political discourse and fostered fear without much concerted effort on the part of the right. It was not the location of the proposed structure that worried its opponents. Plans for Islamic centers and mosques at several other locations across the country including Tennessee, California, Kentucky, Wyoming, and Ohio also met equally fierce resistance. The fear of Sharia, or Islamic law, that broke out in widespread episodes of public panic marked a new height in the conspiratorial delusions of a growing group that, in Chicken Little fashion, was bent on crying that the sky was falling due to Muslims. According to one radical Christian pastor in Florida, burning copies of the Quran was the only sensible way to respond to a faith group that some even argued had infiltrated the Internet search engine Google by replacing the letter "e" with the Islamic crescent. For them, Muslims were taking over the world one search-string at a time.

In 2010, ABC News and the *Washington Post* reported that the percentage of Americans with a favorable view of Islam was at its lowest point since October of 2001. Just 37 percent of Americans

admitted to having a favorable view of the Muslim faith.[16] A *Time* magazine survey conducted that year showed further evidence of growing prejudice. Twenty-eight percent of voters, the statistics revealed, did not believe that Muslims should be eligible to sit on the Supreme Court and one-third felt that adherents of the faith should be prohibited from running for president. Nearly 25 percent of the population at the time believed that the occupier of the Oval Office, Barack Obama, was himself a Muslim.[17]

In 2011, the death of Osama bin Laden, the villainous mastermind of 9/11, had the potential to create a sea change in the public's image of Muslims. Strangely, it did not. Two months after news broke that US forces had killed the al-Qaeda leader, the Religion News Service announced that anti-Muslim sentiment had grown.[18] Additionally, CNN reported that half of Americans would be uncomfortable with a woman wearing the burqa, a mosque being built in their neighborhood, or a Muslim man praying in an airport. Forty-one percent said they would feel uncomfortable if an elementary school teacher in their community was a Muslim.[19]

It could not have been the extensive presence of Muslim terrorists that led to the catharsis of fear. There simply were not many. Nor had terrorist attacks become an epidemic. A study conducted by the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security in February of 2011 found that since 9/11, eleven Muslim Americans had successfully executed terrorist attacks in the United States. In the span of more than nine years, they had killed 33 people. By comparison, the country had witnessed approximately 150,000 murders in the same amount of time.[20] In a world with more than one billion Muslims, the majority of whom are often thought to harbor violent aspirations, the number of actual attacks was strikingly small. As Charles Kurzman, a professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, notes in *The Missing Martyrs*, it was indicative of a downward global trend in the number of overall terrorist recruits: "Global Islamist terrorists have managed to recruit fewer than 1 in 15,000 Muslims over the past quarter century and fewer than 1 in 100,000 Muslims since 9/11."[21]

* * *

What then, is the cause of such a steady and persistent rise in anti-Muslim sentiment? Why is it that ten years after September 11, 2001, fear, mistrust, and hatred of Muslims were at their highest levels ever?

As it turns out, the decade-long spasm of Islamophobia that rattled through the American public is the product of a tight-knit and interconnected confederation of right-wing fear merchants. They have labored since the day the planes hit the towers to convince their compatriots that Muslims are gaining a dangerous influence in the west. Bigoted bloggers, racist politicians, fundamentalist religious leaders, Fox News pundits, and religious Zionists, theirs is an industry of hate: the Islamophobia industry. James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, said that "The intensity [of Islamophobia] has not abated and remains a vein that's very near the surface, ready to be tapped at any moment."[22] Juan Cole, author of *Engaging the Muslim World* and a professor of modern Middle Eastern and South Asian history at the University of Michigan, agreed. Americans, he said, "have been given the message to respond this way by the American political elite, mass media and by select special interests."[23]

Unlike most industries, where products are manufactured under a corporate umbrella, the Islamophobia industry is different. It is more dynamic and flexible, with various moving parts that are not attached to one single branch. Still, its purveyors prowl the same terrain and are connected in many significant ways. Beyond legitimizing the work of one another, which is a key feature of how they operate, the Islamophobia industry has harnessed the power of the Internet to expand their small networks into national and international organizations. Often, one small group that spouts anti-Muslim hate speech grows over time and eventually spawns several spin-offs that function under the same or similar leadership. Stop Islamization of America (SIOA), an Islamophobic activist group started by blogger Pamela Geller, is one such example. This faction of agitators formed as an offshoot of their parent organization Stop Islamization of Europe (SIOE). The two groups stirred anti-Muslim sentiment on their respective continents and united in June of 2010 for their claim-to-fame rally in New York City against plans for the Park51 Islamic community center. Hoping to take their fear factory one step further, SIOA and SIOE announced a merger in 2011, founding Stop the Islamization of Nations (SION).

In some cases, financial ties bind the industry. Employer-to-employee relationships, exemplified in the link between the American blogger Robert Spencer and his boss, David Horowitz, create an environment where one is expected to participate actively in Islamophobic discourses in order to receive a monthly paycheck, one that in the case of Spencer is quite lucrative. Spencer pens

daily blog posts for Jihad Watch, an arm of the David Horowitz Freedom Center, and writes regularly for *FrontPage Magazine*, an online political journal also operated by Horowitz. Together they form what Horowitz calls a "small but evidently effective family."[24]

Anyone who contributes to an industry through the purchase of its products does so because they have some need for the product. Those who fund the Islamophobia industry are no different. Behind individuals like David Horowitz and Robert Spencer are far more nebulous and ideological figures that see the promotion of anti-Muslim sentiment as a necessary method for gaining the upper hand in a cosmic war playing out thousands of miles away in the West Bank. Hardline supporters of Israel's quest to extend its reach into Palestinian territories are often major backers of the pseudo-intellectual pugilism that the Islamophobia industry deploys. For them, emphasizing what they view as the threat of Islam and Muslims creates an atmosphere of less resistance for their policies against the Palestinians. Their money—and lots of it—has subsidized massive propaganda campaigns against Islam and bankrolled the work of anti-Muslim naysayers. It is little coincidence, then, that the characters who verbally bloody the noses of Muslims are the same ones who so ardently and fervently support Israel's settlement policies. Regardless of their religious or political beliefs, their wallets benefit from such discourses.

Ideological motives run deeper than right-wing Zionism. Parts of the evangelical Christian community also root their faith narratives in a religious showdown with Muslims. In pulpits across the country, charismatic preachers inject the fear of a competing world religion into their congregations. While the initial thrust of the Christian right's anti-Muslim (and anti-Other) fervor came from people like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and John Hagee, a new breed of pro-Israel, Bible-wielding "freedom fighters" has emerged from their ranks. Adjusting the delivery of their message to the blue jeans-wearing, praise band-loving Sunday crowd, they have attracted a swarm of young followers who not only share their belief in the absolute truth of Christianity but also are enthusiastic about taking the sermon out the church doors and into the streets. For them, this is about more than belief. Action is required.

In a strange three-way-alliance, conservative Christian groups have linked with pro-Israeli camps and factions of the Tea Party.[25] The "teavangelicals," as they have been dubbed, are an emotional and vocal crew and have been on the frontlines of the Sharia scare that continues to grip the nation and world. Insisting that Islamic

law is taking over America, that Christianity is the only way, and that the Palestinians must relinquish their land to the Jews, they have planted chapters of local activists in all 50 states, lobbying elected officials to implement legislation that would block the supposedly emerging Muslim menace.

The hue and cry of their campaign attracted so much attention that prominent individuals like the former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich bought into the panic, making it a central part of his campaign platform for the Republican presidential nomination in 2012. Gingrich's adoption of anti-Muslim overtures revealed what many already knew but, in walking the tightrope of political correctness, would not say: Islamophobia was largely a fixture of the political right. Several polls showed that was the case. A 2010 *Newsweek* poll found that 52 percent of Republicans believed that Barack Obama sympathized with Muslim fundamentalists and wanted to impose Sharia law.[26] Nearly two years later, that sentiment had not changed much for GOP voters in Alabama and Mississippi. The 2012 election cycle was gearing up and with it came the familiar stereotypes, false claims, and viral emails that alleged Obama was Muslim. Public Policy polling reported in March of 2012 that 52 percent of Mississippi Republicans believed that the president was a Muslim; 36 percent were not sure and a staggering 12 percent took him at his word that he was a Christian. Next door in Alabama, Obama fared only slightly better. Forty-five percent of GOP voters said Obama was a Muslim, 41 percent were not sure, and 14 percent believed that he was a Christian. Views of religion ran hand-in-hand with views on race. One in four respondents said that the interracial marriage of Obama's parents should have been illegal.[27]

In a similar vein, the Brookings Institution reported in 2011 that two-thirds of Republicans, Americans who identify with the Tea Party movement, and Americans who most trust Fox News agree that the values of Islam are at odds with American values.[28] A majority of Democrats, on the other hand, disagreed.

Fused as it was to the divide of partisan politics, the GOP had found that the wedge issue offered a beneficial base into which they could tap and leverage an edge over their Democratic foes whom they painted as soft on terrorism. As long as anti-Muslim sentiment was thought to bring out voters, it would continue to be beaten into a never-ending cycle of fear mongering.

The net impact of negative beliefs about Muslims was dangerous. The Islamophobia industry had whipped up a fear so toxic that it

spilled out into its only logical conclusion: violence. The environment that produced Michael Enright and the long string of assaults and hate crimes against Muslims was the same environment that, later in 2011, produced a far more bloody tragedy.

In Oslo, Norway, a white thirty-something nationalist who was obsessed with what he viewed as the growing influence of Islam went on a killing spree, slaughtering 77 and injuring countless others. Among the dead were government leaders and youth Labor Party activists who he believed had contributed to lax immigration policies and the "Islamization" of Europe. Just before his gory spree began, he sent an email to his friends and supporters that included an attachment of his 1,500-page manifesto. Within its pages were hundreds of references to the peddlers of hate who comprise the Islamophobia industry. Their writings, it turned out, had inspired his worldview and engendered within his sick mind a fear so great his only response was a lethal mixture of fuel and fertilizer, and a life-ending spray of expanding dum-dum bullets.

* * *

This book examines the dark world of monster making. It peers into the lives of a fear industry bent on scaring the public about Islam. It shows that the recent spike in anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States and Europe is not the result of a naturally evolving climate of skepticism but a product that has been carefully and methodically nurtured over the past decade and is only now in the second decade of the twenty-first century reaching its desired peak.

Discussions on Islamophobia in recent years both within the academy and public discourses have thoroughly parsed the neologism in hopes of arriving at some suitable definition. Though it is important in any such discussion to lay out explicitly the cognitive frameworks that shape the debate, it is easy to become trapped in unnecessary etymological roundabouts. Whether classified as a social anxiety or a psychological trauma brought on by a certain set of experiences, Islamophobia is, in its most simple terms, the fear of Islam and Muslims. It is that fear that then leads to hatred, hostility, and discrimination—characteristics that the Runnymede Trust cited to define Islamophobia in a 1997 report.[29]

Someone who begins to exhibit these ugly characteristics does not do so without some prompting. And however disheartening it is to observe a pattern of social misbehaviors directed at any religious, ethnic, or racial minority, it cannot be forgotten that

they are the manifestation of a greater metastasizing cancer. It is fear that wreaks havoc on the otherwise reasonable human anima and propels it in a specious direction. George Falconer, the English professor protagonist played by Colin Firth in the 2009 film *A Single Man* sums up this experience:

> Fear, after all, is our real enemy. Fear is taking over our world. Fear is being used as a tool of manipulation in our society. It's how politicians peddle policy and how Madison Avenue sells us things that we don't need. Think about it. Fear that we're going to be attacked, fear that there are communists lurking around every corner, fear that some little Caribbean country that doesn't believe in our way of life poses a threat to us. Fear that black culture may take over the world. Fear of Elvis Presley's hips. Well, maybe that one is a real fear. Fear that our bad breath might ruin our friendships … Fear of growing old and being alone.

Even the Second Epistle of Timothy has something to say about the unnatural and unreasonable nature of trepidation: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."[30]

Few writers or scholars would be so bold as to argue that public fear and anxiety of Muslims is an entirely fabricated phenomenon. I hasten not to break their ranks and wade into the waters of what is certainly an untenable position. As I note in Chapter 1, world events most always tint our perceptive lenses and color our views of humanity. Violence on the part of Muslims is no exception and thus to some small degree, it must have felt quite natural and right after September 11, 2001 to ask uncomfortable questions about Islam. Likewise, as strange as the Red Scare now appears to those whose only knowledge of the Cold War comes from history books and documentaries, the stand-off between the Soviet Union and the United States, and the tensions and worries that ran rampant during that time, were real to many.

But this is about something else. This is about a concerted effort on the part of a small cabal of xenophobes to manufacture fear for personal gain. This is about the advancement of apocalyptic worldviews at the expense and even harm of a portion of the population. This is about a quest to paralyze the rational impulses of the human mind and inject into it a numbing dose of horror so intensely addictive that the fearful cannot help but beg for more.

This is a story beneath the surface, one that is often muffled by the daily beats of the very people discussed in these pages. It is my attempt to correct what I see as an unfair and imbalanced representation of Islam and Muslims by calling attention to the small band of hucksters who benefit from the pain of others. To paraphrase a line from Zachary Lockman, professor of Islamic Studies and History at New York University, I expect that those who view the world in ways that are diametrically opposed to my own will take great issue with what follows. I delight in their protestations. For were they to find my narrative pleasing, I would feel as if I had done a great injustice.[31]

1
Monsters Among Us: A History of Sowing Fear in America

A Kalashnikov assault rifle rested against one of the parched shale rock formations that twisted through the remote mountains of Afghanistan. The brittle, chalky sediment, forming what appeared to be a cave-like structure, provided a contrasting backdrop for the lanky, dark figure that sat cross-legged, staring into the camera. His beard, once shiny and black, was now unkempt and splotched with white. It crept downward into the large camouflage jacket that draped his broad shoulders, shielding him from the biting autumn winds.

Appearances like this were rare. For more than 20 years, he had lurked behind the rough terrain of his landlocked, south-central Asian lair. Occasionally, however, he appeared before the world in prerecorded messages, emerging from the secret alcoves of the Tora Bora cave complex to deliver gloomy warnings of apocalyptic destruction with a prescience normally displayed by soothsayers and prophets. October 7, 2001 was one such occasion.

His charcoal eyes peered out from shadowy depressions that laid above his sharp cheekbones, exposing the malice that brewed inside him. Swatting the trail of his yellowish turban, dancing in the wind before him, his weighty hands came to rest on a microphone in his lap. Picking it up, he spoke with a strange softness that was inconsistent with his grim message. "America has been filled with terror from north to south and from east to west, praise and blessings go to God," he said.[1] "I swear by God Almighty Who raised the heavens without effort that neither America nor anyone who lives there will enjoy safety until safety becomes a reality for us."[2] From the wilderness of a secluded village 8,000 miles away from the smoldering subterranean bowels of Ground Zero, Osama bin Laden became America's most sought-after monster.

* * *

By the time the second plane hit the south tower at 9:03 a.m., an overwhelming plume of smoke hovered above the streets of

midtown Manhattan, dwarfing frantic onlookers in a bestial display of fury. If not for the sudden swarm of news crews reporting the crash of a passenger jet, one could easily have imagined that the carnage resulted from the work of a fire-breathing, leviathan-like creature, sent from the borders of our imaginations to wreak temporary havoc on our nervous systems. Such gore was the stuff of motion pictures, not reality. "If you were watching this in a movie theater, you would think this was totally unreal," said Lyn Brown of WNYW News, reporting the events as they unfolded.[3] "This is some horror film or some disaster film that, unfortunately for us, is not a film. It's the real thing," Brown's co-anchor, Jim Ryan, replied.[4]

The attacks stunned Americans, who, in a desperate search for the meaning of such butchery, could only describe the senseless violence as barbaric; there was nothing human about transforming a packed commercial airplane into a precision-guided, 150-ton missile aimed at New York City skyscrapers. "This is an enemy who hides in the shadows and has no regard for human life," President George W. Bush said on September 12, 2001, one day after the attacks.[5] Tallie Shahak of the *Jerusalem Post* asked, "What is it that makes that particular chain of awful terrorist attacks such an immense monster?"[6]

If anything is monstrous, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 were monstrous. For those directly affected by the tragedy, the 19 hijackers were true monsters; as well as those indirectly affected but nonetheless horrified. Given the magnitude of destruction and horror, the epithet only seems appropriate.

In the days and weeks that followed, many writers and politicians suggested that the perpetrators of the massacre had abdicated their human status. "[The] World Must Stand Together To Defeat These Monsters," a September 13, 2001 headline in *The Express* newspaper read.[7] "We Must Kill the Monster of Terrorism," Allison Little, a reporter at the paper, wrote five days later.[8] Even the usually cautious Saudi diplomat, Ghazi Algosaibi, the country's veteran ambassador to Great Britain, commented on the suspected mastermind, Osama bin Laden, saying, "I have no doubt he is a terrorist because I have been listening to what he says and I honestly think of him as a human monster."[9] Soon, however, that "human monster" was morphed into a Lernaean Hydra—a serpent-like water beast in ancient Greek mythology, known for its multiple heads and poisonous breath. "Slaying the Hydra: Eliminating Bin Laden Cuts Off One Al-Qaeda Head But Not All," read a November 2001 *Wall Street Journal* headline.[10] The nine heads of the legendary

ophidian were few in comparison to those of the Saudi terrorist ringleader: "Monster Grows A Thousand Heads," *The Courier Mail* wrote in September of 2006, tracing the tentacles of al-Qaeda to the 2004 Madrid train bombing and the 2005 London subway attacks.[11] Bin Laden's extended global reach was also noted by the Combat Studies Institute in a report titled "Combating a Modern Hydra: Al Qaeda and the Global War on Terrorism." The monograph highlighted Al-Qaeda's "flexibility, resiliency, and adaptability" to American military tactics. Like the fifth-century water monster that grew two heads for every one that was cut off, bin Laden's terrorist network replicated, making them increasingly difficult to conquer.[12]

* * *

Whether a Hollywood leviathan, a swamp-dwelling hydra, or a terror-plotting cave dweller, monsters have long haunted the peripheries of human, civilized space. The unifying characteristic of monsters, no matter their build or their circuit, is their foreignness. They are of another domain—one where chaos and danger triumph over order and security, where uncharted waters bleed into a dark horizon line that promises impending doom.

The Lenox Globe, a hollow copper sphere that dates back to the early 1500s, used the phrase *hic sunt dracones*, Latin for "here be dragons," to delineate unexplored, and thus seemingly monster-ridden, territories.[13] Haunting the waters off the eastern coast of China, called East India on the globe, the creatures "feasted upon the dead and picked their bones," wrote B.F. Da Costa.[14]

The enormous size of the monsters on the map undoubtedly added to the terrors of the deep but it was not simply their presence in the dark, mysterious waters that drove fear into the hearts of seafarers. As Richard Kearney notes in *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters*, monsters defy borders: "Monsters are liminal creatures who can go where we can't go," he writes. "They can travel with undiplomatic immunity to those undiscovered countries from whose bourne no human travelers—only monsters—return. Transgressing the conventional frontiers separating good from evil, human from inhuman, monsters scare the hell out of us and remind us that we don't know who we are."[15] They also remind us that we are vulnerable and that at any moment, the miscreants, lying in wait just beyond our field of view, will appear and drag us into the obscurity of their wicked world. Societal order will succumb to the chaos of the dark beyond.

If there is one good thing about monsters, it is their ability to unite the threatened. Though they promise to unleash great fury, their menacing presence often produces a cathartic response—one that reaffirms a sense of security and decency among the fearful. "This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace," President Bush said on the evening of the September 11th attacks. "America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time."[16]

The frightening reality for many was that humans—albeit brainwashed, twisted souls—committed the unthinkable acts. Labeling bin Laden and his al-Qaeda cohorts as "monsters" (though they were hardly creatures of the imagination) relieved humankind of the responsibility for such flagitious displays of violence. Unbelievable human evils were projected onto a larger-than-life behemoth, giving a face to an omnipresent sense of incipient disaster. Strangely enough, in the wake of the horror, Americans developed an insatiable appetite for monster stories. Theologian Timothy Beal has remarked on the renewed appeal for fictional thrillers noting a widespread enthusiasm for Universal's "Classic Monster Collection," adaptations of the famed Dracula story, and a slew of multi-million dollar box-office thrillers such as *Blood and Gold*, *Thirteen Ghosts*, *From Hell*, and in a more playful mood, *Monsters Inc.*, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, and *The Lord of the Rings*.[17]

Beal suggests that because monsters are "undead," they keep coming back; September 11, 2001 was a jarring reminder of that. One of the ways in which many Americans coped with the post-9/11 world was to watch their worst fears play out before their eyes—to confront reality from the safety of a living room recliner or movie theater where the horror could easily be stopped by pressing the pause button or heading for the exits. For those who chose to endure the frightening scenes, however, there was a great sense of relief: the enemy would be conquered and for a brief moment, until the credits rolled and the house lights came up, order would be restored. "The typical Hollywood monster movie serves as a vehicle for a public rite of exorcism in which our looming sense of unease is projected in the form of a monster and then blown away," Beal writes. "Although there will be some collateral damage before the battle is over, in the end the monster will be vanquished and the nation will be safe once again."[18]

Fictional ghouls and goblins were not the only motion-picture monsters. There were also portrayals of more realistic nemeses. They

represented, as most monsters do, the fears of a specific era and in the turbulent aftermath of 9/11, the Arab terrorist was considered to be among the most revolting and dangerous of creatures. Films like *Black Hawk Down*, *Syriana*, *Body of Lies*, and *The Kingdom*, all of which depicted Middle Eastern villains defeated by covert operatives of the American government, enjoyed great success and reminded viewers that eradicating the terrorist threat was only a matter of time; the United States, the good guys, would eventually triumph over the evil arch-enemy. There was no other possible narrative. Philosopher Stephen Asma point outs, "Hercules slays the Hydra, George slays the dragon, medicine slays the alien virus, the stake and crucifix slay the vampire."[19] As it had always been, so too would it be this time: the monsters would die.

Whether real or imagined, in box-office sensations or evening news stories, monsters are sustained by narratives of fear. In order to maintain their affective quality, monsters must continually remain emergent. Thus, tales of their forthcoming wrath are the breath that gives them life and awakens society to the threat of their never-ending, always-lurking presence. For monsters, narratives are, in a sense, nothing less than life support. Without them, they do not bear the purpose of their design.

As expressions of human experience, narratives give meaning to and make sense of the world that exists beyond the idealism of our imaginations—a world that is often rife with inexplicable tragedy and senseless acts of violence. The destructive actions of humankind demand some explanation, some logical assessment that places seemingly inhuman behaviors within a story that reaffirms human goodness and separates the sacred human from the savage beast.

H. Porter Abbot notes, however, that narratives are also rhetorical mechanisms for exploitation. They can be used to deliver false information and pull us back into the darkness where our rational fears are fed upon by individuals who seek to benefit from increased societal angst.[20] For some, narrating the steady march of an invading enemy, one bent on ravaging national freedoms, results in victorious elections and political capital; promising that ever-lurking threats will be crushed with the weight of a ready military wins multiple terms in office. For others, saber rattling is financially fruitful. There is much to gain from a society that is enthralled with monsters but there is more to gain from one that finds security in monster stories. America, in particular, has long been fascinated with monsters. And for good reason. Since the Stars and Stripes were first woven into existence, villainous bogeymen have lurked behind the parchment

of the nation's founding documents, occasionally creeping out to remind us of their presence. When they do, there is, as history has shown us, a cottage industry of radicals waiting to seize on the fear they instill.

* * *

Charlestown, Boston was the site of one such monster-scare in the late 1790s. The quaint Massachusetts town, which sat just north of Boston proper, was situated on a peninsula that split the Charles and Mystic rivers and was known for being the starting-point of Paul Revere's "Midnight Ride" in 1775. Twenty-three years later, the neighborhood broke out in panic over the allegedly subversive activities of a group called the Bavarian Illuminati. The Illuminati was an Enlightenment-era secret society formed by Adam Weishaupt, a German-born Freemason that hoped to topple monarchial governments and state religions in Europe and its colonies. Emphasizing principles of Enlightenment rationalism and anti-clericalism, the group gained steady influence in Masonic lodges throughout Germany.

John Robinson, a well-known Scottish physicist, mathematician, and ironically, the inventor of the siren, was among the first to sound the alarm about the Illuminati's allegedly conspiratorial plans to dismantle European powers. Robinson believed that the association was formed "for the express purpose of rooting out all the religious establishments, and overturning all the existing governments of Europe." The most active leaders of the ongoing French Revolution, he proposed, were now part of the secret society which had become "one great and wicked project fermenting all over Europe" and soon, he concluded, they would export their evil designs elsewhere, endangering Christianity.[21]

Robinson postulated that members of the group had plans to brew tea that caused abortions and were capable of producing a secret substance that "blinds or kills when spurted in the face."[22] He elaborated these claims in a book called *Proofs of Conspiracy Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies*—a text that eventually made its way to America. During the summer of 1798, G.W. Snyder, a Lutheran minister, wrote a letter of warning to George Washington that included a copy of Robinson's book. Snyder expressed concern that the Illuminati would infiltrate America through Masonic lodges. Washington

responded to Snyder in a letter dated September 25, 1798, saying, "I have heard much about the nefarious and dangerous plan and doctrines of the Illuminati."[23] He went on to suggest, however, that he did not believe the group was actively involved in Masonic lodges. Pressed by Robinson to explain his comments, Washington replied again in late October of that year, writing, "It was not my intention to doubt that the doctrines of the Illuminati and the principles of Jacobinism had not spread in the United States. On the contrary, no one is more satisfied of this fact than I am."[24] Though it is not known if members, or initiates, of the Illuminati ever came to America, their presence in Europe was felt, and warnings of their pending conquest imbued public discourse.

On November 29, 1798, Reverend Jedediah Morse, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Charlestown, delivered the second of three public sermons on the threat of the Illuminati. After reading Robinson's book, Morse became convinced that the United States was the victim of a sinister plot to spread religious infidelity, encourage the authority of reason, and promote Jeffersonian democracy. A revered Federalist whose popularity in Charlestown was largely the result of public disenchantment with the revolution in France, Morse stepped up to the pulpit of the white-washed meetinghouse and made it clear that America's beloved Christian values were in jeopardy:

> Secret and systematic means have been adopted and pursued, with zeal and activity, by wicked and artful men, in foreign countries, to undermine the foundations of this religion [Christianity] and to overthrow its Altars, and thus to deprive the world of its benign influence on society … These impious conspirators and philosophists have completely effected their purposes in a large portion of Europe, and boast of their means of accomplishing their plans in all parts of Christendom, glory in the certainty of their success, and set opposition at defiance.[25]

Morse was not the only New Englander warning the Americans about the threat of a foreign ideology. Timothy Dwight IV, a fellow Congregationalist minister and the eighth president of Yale College, also delivered grim premonitions of an eventual Illuminati irruption in a Fourth of July Message delivered in New Haven that same year. Dwight was the chairman of Connecticut's Federalist Party but was also known for his role as the leader of the evangelical New Divinity faction of Congregationalism—a group of Connecticut

elites that combined their conservative political views with efforts to spread Christianity throughout America. Dwight warned that a Jeffersonian victory would engender an atmosphere of moral depravity, and that a reign of terror—much like the year-long period of violence prompted by the Jacobins after the onset of the French Revolution—may eventually make its way to the United States:

> The sins of these enemies of Christ, and Christians, are of numbers and degrees which mock account and description. All that the malice and atheism of the Dragon, the cruelty and rapacity of the Beast, and the fraud and deceit of the false Prophet, can generate, or accomplish, swell the list. No personal or national interest of man has been uninvaded; no impious sentiment, or action, against God has been spared … Shall we, my brethren, become partakers of these sins? Shall we introduce them into our government, our schools, our families? Shall our sons become the disciples of Voltaire, and the dragoons of Marat; or our daughters the concubines of the Illuminati?[26]

A Jacobin plot to overthrow the United States was never proven. Even so, fear of such threats engendered feelings of persecution, particularly among New England Freemasons, and resulted largely from their perceptions of the world beyond the American frontier.

In France, the bloody triumph of reason over religion and the advent of a secular democracy built on values of individualism frightened many Americans. That such values came by way of tumultuous sieges, political purges, and executions transformed their fear into outright horror. The slaying of King Louis XVI in January of 1793 was a rude shock and, as Vernon Stauffer points out in *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati*, the murder of France's king appeared to Americans "a mere incident in a wild orgy of unbridled violence and bloodletting."[27] The turmoil was a gory reminder of the familiar scenes 17 years earlier, when the red glare of rockets lit up the skies of the eastern seaboard in a revolution that freed America from the grip of monarchism. For Federalists and Jeffersonians alike, the thought of reliving such a battle was too much to bear. As Richard Hofstadter notes in "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," the pulpits and pubs of New England rang with denunciations of the Illuminati and a Jacobin conquest, as though the country was already swarming with the foreign, bloodthirsty invaders.[28] Public horror found expression in the following lines taken from one broadside of the day:

When Mobs triumphant seize the reins,
And guide the Car of State,
Monarchs will feel the galling chains,
And meet the worst of fate:
For instance, view the Gallic shore,
A nation once polite,
See what confusion hovers o'er,
A Star that shone so bright.
Then from the sea, recoil with dread,
For LOUIS is no more,
The barb'rous mob cut off his head
And drank the spouting gore.[29]

* * *

Two hundred years later, the threat of the Illuminati resurfaced. During the 2008 American presidential election, it was rumored in some quarters that the Democratic nominee, Barack Obama, was a member of the Illuminati and along with nefarious co-conspirators in Chicago, was plotting to take over America upon his election. "One of the more frightening realities of the Obama Illuminati plan involves the merging of the United States, Mexico, and Canada into a North American Union," one report read.[30] "This union would adopt a new currency, currently being called the Amero, and would be interconnected with a new series of highways … The more you study the Obama Illuminati connection, the easier it is to see how he has a unique part to play in bringing about the New World Order which has been in development for the past number of decades."[31]

* * *

Back in the early 1800s, fears of a subversive Illuminati plot had hardly been allayed when tales of a Catholic takeover emerged. Self-appointed guardians of American democracy, suspicious of the growing number of Irish and German immigrants, began to speculate about a sinister scheme to uproot prevailing Protestant values and replace them with a domineering brand of Catholicism. With 30,000 Catholics scattered throughout a population of 4 million, there was little reason to fear a rising tide of domination. However by 1810, that number had risen to 75,000, and by 1840 more than 1 million Catholics had settled in the United States. Changes in the French government had forced new groups into

exile and many of them sought refuge in America, a new republic that extolled the values of religious liberty and freedom. Many of these new immigrants were Catholic priests, who organized churches and dioceses to accommodate the growing population of their co-religionists. By 1820, Catholic immigrants had established parishes in Charleston, Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Galveston. In addition, they expanded their religious teachings into classrooms, building Catholic preparatory schools and seminaries in some states.

This sudden burst of religious fervor among Catholic immigrants did not go unnoticed in Protestant circles. The American Revolution, which heightened a strong sense of national unity, also caused Americans to be more cognizant of immigrants. The majority of the Catholic priests and nuns were French, Belgian, or Irish, and many of them bore foreign names. European missionaries also funded the fledgling communities, further raising suspicions that a conspiracy was underway. One of the first to publicly opine on the topic was Samuel F.B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph and the son of Jedediah Morse, who 37 years earlier had exhorted New Englanders to heed his warnings of an Illuminati threat. In 1835, Morse published *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States*, a book that sought to prove that a Catholic plot existed. "A conspiracy exists," Morse wrote plainly. "Its plans are already in operation … we are attacked in a vulnerable quarter which cannot be defended by our ships, our ports, or our armies."[32] The crux of Morse's argument lay in the political dealings of Klemens Von Metternich, a German-Austrian politician and statesman known for pioneering the Congress of Vienna—a reactionary attempt to restore and preserve old monarchies against new republican and nationalistic ideas. "Austria is now acting in this country," wrote Morse. "She has devised a grand scheme. She has organized a great plan for doing something here … She has her Jesuit missionaries traveling through the land; she has supplied them with money, and has furnished a fountain for a regular supply." He then offered a more graphic illustration, warning his readers that "a serpent has already commenced his coil about our limbs, and the lethargy of his poison is creeping over us."[33]

Morse's musings crystallized opposition to the growing Catholic community. The idea of an aggressive conspiracy was deeply implanted in the minds of Protestants who feared that the mass influx of new immigrants would take over the country. The same year that Morse's book was released, another anti-Catholic text appeared on

the market and was widely circulated among American communities already trembling in fear. Lyman Beecher, a Presbyterian minister from New Haven published *Plea For the West*. The book was a plea for funding from missionaries and preachers to save the West from a rising tide of Catholicism. Emphasizing the anti-American nature of the religion, Beecher suggested that "A corps of men acting systematically and perseveringly for their own ends" may "inflame and divide the nation [America], break the bond of our union, and throw down our free institutions."[34] Beecher was a *tour de force* in circles of Protestantism. Devising "new measures" for evangelism, he viewed Catholicism as a threat to not only Christianity, but to America and the world, and his sermons on the topic even prompted his followers to engage in violence. In 1834, after delivering a speech about his new book, Protestants stormed a Boston Catholic Ursuline convent, burning it to the ground. The power of Beecher's message led to his involvement with the Second Great Awakening—a religious revival movement designed to remedy the evils of society before the second coming of Jesus Christ. For Beecher and others, Catholicism was surely one such evil.

By the early 1840s, anti-Catholic sentiment had reached its apogee as general suspicion and fear turned into an industry of Protestant resentment. The first anti-Catholic weekly, *The Protestant*, appeared in 1830 followed by the *Reformation Advocate*, the *Native American*, and *Priesthood Exposed*, all of which were dedicated to exposing the evils of popery. Brewing anti-papal sentiment also found its way to editorial columns of daily newspapers, including this article from the *Texas State Times* on September 15, 1855:

> It is a notorious fact that the Monarchs of Europe and the Pope of Rome are at this very moment plotting our destruction and threatening the extinction of our political, civil, and religious institutions. We have the best reasons for believing that corruption has found its way into our Executive Chamber, and that our Executive head is tainted with the infectious venom of Catholicism … the Pope has recently sent his ambassador of state to this country on a secret commission, the effect of which is an extraordinary boldness of the Catholic Church throughout the United States … These minions of the Pope are boldly insulting our Senators; reprimanding our Statesmen; propagating the adulterous union of Church and state; abusing the foul calumny of all governments but Catholic; and spewing out the bitterest execrations on all Protestantism.[35]

There was not, as history has shown, a conspiracy to infest the largely Protestant American government with "the infectious venom of Catholicism." Even so, fears of government infiltration were provoked by Catholic Emancipation in Britain and Ireland during the 1800s. Of the voices demanding the opportunity for Irish Catholics to become members of Parliament, Daniel O'Connell's was the loudest. An Irish political activist and later mayor of Dublin, O'Connell formed the Catholic Association in 1823—a pressure group that successfully lobbied the British government to include Catholic lawmakers. O'Connell's campaign did not end there. During the 1850s, he held a series of "monster meetings" throughout much of Ireland, hoping to gather enough public support to repeal the Act of Union which in 1801 had merged the parliaments of Britain and Ireland. The meetings were attended by more than 100,000 people and though they were ultimately unsuccessful, they caused great concern for the British government.[36]

The increase in Catholic political participation in Europe was frightening enough for some Protestant American leaders watching the scene unfold from afar. But by 1855, fears of a subversive Catholic plot to undermine the American government had grown so immense that in one corner of the United States, they spilled out into violence. On August 6, 1855, a day later referred to as "Bloody Monday," election riots broke out when rumors were started that Catholics had interfered with the voting process in a contest between the Democrats and the Know-Nothing movement, a nativist American political group that empowered popular fears and was borne out of hostility towards immigrants.

The Know-Nothings—so named because its members were instructed to answer any questions about their organization with "I don't know"—originated in New York in 1843 as the American Republican Party. Mainly comprised of Protestant white males, the group enjoyed widespread support as public approval of existing party structures dwindled. Like the modern-day Tea Party, the group put forth candidates that challenged establishment politicians; their message resounded among populations that were frustrated with the sour economy and fearful of a collapse of uniquely American values.

The Know-Nothings' particular brew of nativism was so potent, however, that in the streets of Louisville, Kentucky, a large mob gathered around a Catholic church and beat 22 German and Irish Catholic immigrants to death. The violence was fueled, in part, by George Prentice, the anti-Catholic editor of the *Louisville Journal*. An avid supporter of the Know-Nothing Party, Prentice fanned

the flames of fear two days prior to the bloodbath, writing in an editorial column that Irish and German citizens were the "most pestilent influence of the foreign swarms."[37] He later apologized for his remarks, which many considered to have catalyzed the massacre. Of the many sharp replies directed at the *Louisville Journal*, one writer, "A Kentucky Catholic," addressed Prentice's fear baiting:

> Is Mr. Prentice so thoroughly fanatical as to believe even a moiety of the charges he has brought against the Catholic Church? For myself, I cannot help thinking, that the monster he is combating is a mere figure of pasteboard and buckram, fashioned by himself, and painted in most diabolical colors, which he sets up for the double purpose of frightening Know-Nothing babydom out of its seven wits, and of showing these fear-stricken innocents and simpletons that they have nothing to apprehend while he is about. Let them but attend to the *supplies*, and he will carry on the war.[38]

By the late 1880s, anti-Catholic discourse was translated into other fledgling political movements, beginning with the establishment of the American Protective Association (APA) in 1887. At its peak, the APA had more than 3 million members, many of whom were Irish Protestants belonging also to the Orange Order—a fraternal organization in Northern Ireland that promoted Biblical supremacy and led violent anti-Catholic protests. Though not associated with any one political party, the APA sought to extend its influence across the political spectrum, taking on both Democratic and Republican statesmen who supported religious integration or adhered to the Catholic faith. In addition to restricting Catholic immigration, the goals of the group included removing Catholic teachers from public school systems, banning Catholics from public offices, and making English proficiency a prerequisite for obtaining American citizenship. The APA's chief doctrine held that "subjection to and support of any ecclesiastical power not created and controlled by American citizens, and which claims equal, if not greater, sovereignty than the Government of the United States of America, is irreconcilable with American citizenship."[39]

Fears of Catholic immigration extended beyond the political sphere and into popular culture during the late 1890s. Differences in Protestant and Catholic religious traditions, mainly the interpretation of the Eucharist, were even filtered through the lens of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. First published in 1897, Stoker's tale of the Transylvania-based, blood-sucking Count was replete with

Catholic allegory and widely read among Protestants who, unlike Catholics, believe that bread and wine are the *symbolic* blood and flesh of Jesus (Catholics believe in transubstantiation—that bread and wine are transformed into the *actual* blood and flesh of Jesus). Count Dracula was presented as the figurative anti-Christ invader who promised eternal life through the ingestion not of sacramental, symbolic wine representing the blood of Christ, but of actual human blood. Sanctity aside, there is a certain monstrous element to the words "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life."[40] Throughout history, the livelihoods of various monsters have depended on such consumption. Blood was, after all, the vampire's source of life and sustained other deviant creatures including the Greek Empuse, the Roman Strix, and even the modern-day "El Chupacabra."* Flesh, on the other hand, sustained such monsters as Grendel, the Greek Minotaur, and werewolves, the latter of which some 18th Century Catholics believed to be the bestial reincarnations of excommunicated parishioners.

* * *

The myth of an impending Catholic war extended well into the twentieth century. Just as the threat of the Bavarian Illuminati crept back into mainstream politics during the 2008 election season, the Catholic scare was also revived during a contentious period in American politics. In 1960, John F. Kennedy squared off against Richard Nixon in an election to determine the 34th president of the United States. Kennedy, an Irish Catholic from Massachusetts (where panic over the Bavarian Illuminati broke out in the late 1890s), came under attack for his religious beliefs. For some, the possibility of the first Catholic president was a sure indication that the country was headed in the direction of papal rule. Norman Vincent Peale, the nation's most prominent Protestant minister and the head of an organization called the National Conference of Citizens for Religious Freedom, questioned whether a Catholic president could effectively disassociate himself from the Church of Rome. "Faced with the election of a Catholic," Peale said, "Our culture is at stake. It is inconceivable that a Roman Catholic

* The "El Chupacabra" is an elusive red-eyed, spiky-haired creature that has haunted the southern United States, killing its prey and drinking their blood. In February 2006, rumors of the creature surfaced causing some parents in Texas to keep their children inside lest they became the monster's next meal.

president would not be under extreme pressure by the hierarchy of his church to accede its policies with respects to foreign interests."[41]

* * *

> "Oh little Sputnik, flying high with made-in-Moscow beep. You tell the world it's a Commie sky and Uncle Sam's asleep. You say on fairway and on rough the Kremlin knows it all. We hope our golfer knows enough to get us on the ball."[42]

When the Democratic governor of Michigan, G. Mennen Williams, wrote this poem in October 1954, growing suspicion of the Soviet Union had swelled into a tense political climate marked by a towering sense of national defeat and humiliation. With the launch of Sputnik, the first earth-orbiting artificial satellite, the Soviets had dealt America a devastating blow in the space race—a competition between the two world powers for supremacy of the uncharted expanses of the cosmos. Stunned by the accomplishment of such a feat, Americans cast their anxieties onto President Eisenhower, blaming him for letting the Soviets get the best of Americans. The fact that he took to the golf course just days after the inauguration of the space age didn't help his image. "[Eisenhower is] a smiling incompetent … a 'do-nothing,' golf-playing president mismanaging events," said NASA historian Roger Launius.[43] Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson summed up a national feeling of bewilderment and urgency: "In the Open West, you learn to live closely with the sky. It is part of your life. But now, somehow, in some new way, the sky seemed almost alien. The Soviets could one day be dropping bombs on us from space like kids dropping rocks onto cars from freeway overpasses."[44] The rocket-propelled titanium sphere, about the size of a beach ball, was a potent symbol for a larger, ideological monster that had fomented the global political landscape for more than ten years: Communism.

* * *

When Joseph McCarthy was elected to the US Senate in 1946, the venomous threat of Communism began to manifest itself in a number of deadly ways. The democratic Czechoslovakian government was ousted and the Chinese Civil War had wreaked havoc across Asia, sending shockwaves across the Pacific Ocean; the Soviet influence was spreading. Compounded by the detonation of the Russian's first

atomic bomb and the North Korean bloodbath, the global political landscape appeared bleak.

With few exceptions, dramatic world events had always occurred at a distance; monsters existed "over there," beyond America's borders, though their presence was felt throughout the country. With the dawn of the Cold War, however, a strong feeling of persecution festered in many corners of the nation. For the fearful, Communism was not only an attack on American values, it was a personal assault against them. This atmosphere of mounting fear and panic provided McCarthy with an opportunity to revive conspiracy theories that had long imbued American narratives. Pointing to recent events as evidence of a looming apocalyptic firestorm, he hoped to achieve political stardom by exposing what he believed were inside threats and thus saving the American people from great disaster.

Unlike earlier historical plots, whose instigators were largely foreign agents, McCarthy proposed that Communism had crept its way into the American political system and that the gravest threats facing the citizenry were "major statesmen seated at the very centers of American power."[45] As it was not illegal to be a Communist, the crux of McCarthy's allegations lay in his claims of subversion. For him, a shrewd, clandestine operation was underway to dismantle the American political system from within. On February 9, 1950, speaking in Wheeling, West Virginia, McCarthy offered his first warnings of a Communist takeover:

> Today we can almost physically hear the mutterings and rumblings of an invigorated god of war. You can see it, feel it, and hear it all the way from the Indochina hills, from the shores of Formosa, right over into the very heart of Europe itself … Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of communism have selected this as the time, and ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down—they are truly down.[46]

Once McCarthy had set an ominous tone that situated the Cold War in terms of a Messianic religious battle for the survival of Christianity, he delivered the details of a conspiracy that was sure to rock the nation:

> The reason why we find ourselves in a position of impotency is not because our only powerful potential enemy has sent men to invade our shore but rather because of the traitorous actions of

> those who have been treated so well by this nation. It has not been the less fortunate, or members of minority groups who have been traitorous to this Nation, but rather those who have had all the benefits that the wealthiest nation on earth has had to offer—the finest homes, the finest college education and the finest jobs in government we can give. This is glaringly true in the State Department. There, the bright young men who are born with silver spoons in their mouths are the ones who have been most traitorous. I have here in my hand a list of 205—a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department.[47]

Hysteria soon erupted among the American public; alleged Communists had to be rooted out lest they spread their dangerous credo. Despite objections from many politicians, McCarthy launched what was later called a "witch hunt," scouring political and social landscapes for suspected Communists. Using tactics of severe intimidation and the threat of prison sentences, the Wisconsin senator plowed onward, revealing the names of hundreds of supposedly covert Communist operatives despite the fact that he had little or no evidence on which to base his claims. Careers and reputations were irreversibly damaged. Hundreds of suspected Communists were imprisoned and more than 10,000 Americans lost their jobs. In the end, however, there were no convictions for subversive plots to destroy America. "It is now evident that the present Administration has fully embraced, for political advantage, McCarthyism," Harry Truman said in 1953, after he had left office:

> I am not referring to the Senator from Wisconsin. He is only important in that his name has taken on the dictionary meaning of the word. It is the corruption of truth, the abandonment of the due process law. It is the use of the big lie and the unfounded accusation against any citizen in the name of Americanism or security. It is the rise to power of the demagogue who lives on untruth; it is the spreading of fear and the destruction of faith in every level of society.[48]

Public anxiety over the Cold War was, given the circumstances of the time, expected and even understandable. Who would not be made nervous by a political system whose followers had so suddenly gained traction across the world? But the sheer paranoia provoked

by McCarthy and exacerbated by other government officials over domestic traces of the movement was beyond reason. In their view, Communism was not only a foreign political ideology, it was, as FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover called it, a "many-faced monster, endeavoring to gain [the] allegiance of American citizens."[49] Niall Scott, author of *Monsters and the Monstrous*, points out that the figuring of Communism as a hideous, venomous creature, capable of "injecting poison into the bloodstream" of nations on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean was common in verbal, textual, and even visual rhetoric during the first half of the twentieth century.[50] Among the many examples, the most prominent were depictions of the "Bolshevik Monster." German visual media during World War I represented members of the left-wing, Marxist Russian faction as wild beasts, ravaging the landscape of Europe in a fierce hunt for women and children to devour. Writers compared the Socialist group to Jack the Ripper while some artists portrayed its followers as red-furred, club-yielding gorillas, carrying an innocent, terrified victim off to meet her certainly bloody fate.[51]

In the US, film became the medium of choice for those hoping to advance fears of a Communist invasion and aliens were used to convey the threat of the unwelcome Soviets. In 1953, the same year that Herbert Hoover railed against McCarthyism, *Invaders from Mars* hit the box office, telling the story of a young boy, Jimmy, who awakens in the middle of the night to find a flying saucer in his backyard. Eventually, his friends and family are captured by aliens that invade his town, and just as he is about to be gobbled up, he realizes it was a dream. That flick was followed three years later by *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, a story about a California doctor whose patients accuse their loved ones of being aliens disguised as humans and, in 1958, *I Married a Monster From Outer Space* was released.

* * *

By 1961, concerns over the Soviet Union's nuclear buildup had escalated. The arms race was enough to cause an outbreak of panic, but the possibility that Communists had infiltrated American political and social life added an extra layer of fear. In an effort to allay public concerns of a nuclear attack, the federal government developed the Community Fallout Shelter Program—a civil defense measure intended to prevent exposure to radiation through the construction of underground concrete hideouts. In July of that

year, President Kennedy noted the importance of such protective sanctuaries, saying, "In the event of attack, the lives of those families which are not hit in the nuclear blast and fire can still be saved if they can take shelter and if that shelter is available. We owe that kind of insurance to our families and to our country."[52] Soon, fallout shelters began to appear throughout the US as families prepared for the wafts of radioactivity that would surely follow a barrage of Soviet missiles.

Other measures were also taken. Throughout the nation, sirens were mounted on telephone poles and stoplights in an effort to warn citizens of a nuclear attack. A "Grey Warning"—a two-and-a-half minute sequence of piercing bursts divided by equal periods of silence—indicated approaching nuclear fallout; the screeching tones made it clear that Americans should seek cover in nearby fallout shelters. A "Black Warning"—three short bursts of sound followed by three longer bursts, much like the SOS Morse Code signal—indicated that danger was imminent. If not already locked away beneath the earth in the concrete caves, it may be too late. Civil defense drills throughout the 1950s and 1960s also included "duck and cover" exercises in public schools, much like contemporary tornado drills today. Upon hearing a warning tone that blasted from the speakers of a schoolyard siren, students took cover under their desks or in the hallways, covering their heads while crouched in a fetal position. The technique offered no protection from a nuclear fallout—the considerable radius of heat, shock waves, and radiation from a strike would likely kill the students before they ever had a chance to dive for cover.

More than 8,000 miles away from the schoolyards that were flanked by sirens and the backyards that housed fallout shelters, a military conflict was erupting that gripped the nation's attention and reinforced fears of Communism's bloody spread. American troops were mired down in an increasingly brutal struggle against North Vietnamese Communist militants. Despite increasing unpopularity of the war, the US government viewed its involvement in Vietnam through the lens of containment: stopping the Communist takeover of South Vietnam. By 1962, the number of US troops in the region had tripled and in his State of the Union address that year, President Kennedy said, "Few generations in all of history have been granted the role of being the great defender of freedom in its maximum hour of danger. This is our good fortune."[53] But as history unfolded, many began to realize that it was not America's good fortune. In fact, Vietnam was becoming a national nightmare. In 1968,

the Communist forces launched the staggering Tet Offensive, a surprise ambush of a hundred major cities in South Vietnam that caught the US forces off guard. The size and ferocity of the sudden offensive proved that the Communist forces were more able than many Americans realized. By that time, the Vietnam War was the longest war in America's history and public outcry was growing. Lyndon Johnson was becoming increasingly unpopular and Americans viewed his refusal to send additional troops to Vietnam as an admission of defeat. Deciding not to run for re-election, Richard Nixon assumed the presidency and began the withdrawal process. The Vietnam War officially ended in 1974 and military confrontations between Communist and Democratic nations began to taper off. In January 1979, China and the United States established diplomatic relations, and in June, the second round of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) led to an agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States to curtail the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

By the late 1980s, it appeared that the "Communist monster" was in its waning years and would ultimately be defeated. In February 1989, the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan, where the *mujahideen* forces, funded and armed by the United States in an attempt to cripple the USSR, battered the Soviet Army to the point of its retreat. (Later, after it emerged that the Afghan fighters were linked to the events of September 11, 2001, many Americans referred to them as "Frankenstein monsters"—creations of the US government that ultimately turned on their creator in a catastrophic way.) In November 1989, the Berlin Wall fell—a historic occasion marking the decline of the Soviet Union. Citizens on both sides of the structure poured out into the streets, cooperating to tear it down. "The wall was a monster; victims, suffering, blockades … [it was] obscene, ugly, hateful," one observer recalled as concrete blocks crumbled at the helm of citizens eager to beat down what they viewed as a bestial divide.[54] One month later, in December, Nicolae Ceauşescu, the brutal dictator of Communist Romania, and his wife, Elena, were executed following the Romanian Revolution, where a week-long series of violent riots led to the overthrow of the country's government. The "Red Vampire of Romania," as he was called, was depicted in American media as a "ten-headed monster [who] penetrated everywhere, cities and villages in the mountains or at the seaside, young and old people, no matter their sex, nationality or religion, forgiving nothing, avoiding nothing."[55] Some reports even suggested that he was a "creature of hell" who

fed on the blood of helpless, screaming babies. Ceauşescu fell to the ground much like the Berlin Wall, his lifeless corpse riddled with rounds from a Romanian firing squad ordered to put down the uncontrollable creature. With the last of the popular uprisings against Communism in the eastern bloc, it appeared that America's bogeyman was silenced. But before a monsterless vacuum could emerge in the post-Communist world, another foreign, ideological menace had already formed ten years earlier, waiting to fill the gap.

* * *

"In the aftermath of 9/11, we said, 'My God, it began with us.'"[56] Bruce Laingan, former *chargé d'affaires* of the United States Embassy in Tehran recalled the horror of November 4, 1979, when members of the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line held him and 51 other United States citizens hostage in a crisis that lasted 444 days and struck terror in the heart of a blindsided nation.

For the duration of the crisis, evening news reports showing frightening images of the tense scene filtered in to Americans through their television sets. Newspaper headlines kept concerned citizens abreast of the latest developments and as the nightmare unfolded, it became clear that a new, violent, foreign threat had emerged—the radical Muslim monster had awakened and like the ideological fiends that had roamed the American landscape before, this new enemy was eager to expunge the values of liberty and justice, and impose its dangerous credo on the helpless and unwilling. It was also, as monsters before it had been, born out of a political revolution: the overthrow of the Iranian monarchy in 1979 by the supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini, a dark-eyed, stone-faced figure whose strict interpretation of Islam led to a rigid, anti-Western uprising. "America is the great Satan, the wounded snake," Khomeini said. "Brothers and sisters must know that America and Israel are enemies to the fundamentals of Islam."[57]

The revolution brought increased attention to an area of the world that, during the Cold War, made few headlines. By the time the Soviet flag was lowered over the Kremlin for the last time, Americans were already inundated with an array of grim stories coming out of the Middle East. Just nine months after Khomeini took the helm of the Iranian regime, war broke out between Iran and Iraq. The United States sided with Iraq, hoping to suppress that country's Shia minority that gained traction and spread their influence following the Iranian Revolution. War between the

countries lasted for eight years, eventually ending in a stalemate; but over the course of the conflict, a number of other events took place that reinforced the perceived monstrous nature of Muslim militants and their inherent incompatibility with the West. In 1982, 25 Americans were kidnapped (along with 16 French, 12 British, 7 Swiss, and 7 German citizens) by a Lebanese group with ties to Hezbollah. The Islamic Jihad, as the group was called, tortured and killed many of the captured including William Buckley, the former CIA bureau chief and decorated war veteran. A photograph depicting Buckley's corpse appeared in a Beirut newspaper in 1985. His bones were discovered six years later in a plastic bag deposited on a side road next to the Beirut airport. In April 1983, the US Embassy in Beirut was bombed in what was the deadliest attack on a US diplomatic mission up to that time. More than 60 people were killed, mostly Embassy staff members, US Marines, and sailors; the CIA's Middle East Bureau was demolished. Six months later, in October of that year, two truck bombs blew apart the US Marine Barracks in Beirut, killing 241 soldiers and sailors. In June 1985, two Hezbollah militants hijacked a TWA flight en route from Rome to Athens, holding the 145 passengers hostage for 17 days. Three years later, in December 1988, four months after the Iraq–Iran War ended, Pan Am Flight 103 was blown up over Lockerbie, Scotland by Libyan terrorists. All 259 people on board were killed.

The 1990s brought about continued military engagement in the Middle East as well as continued acts of violence towards Americans. The United States entered the Gulf War in 1991, coming to the aid of Kuwait, which had been invaded by Iraq. In 1993, the World Trade Center was bombed by al-Qaeda operatives. When the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building exploded in 1995, the United States was so deeply entrenched in the Middle East that many believed that Muslim militants were responsible for the carnage—the largest terrorist attack on American soil at that time. "The betting here is on Middle East terrorists," said CBS News' Jim Stewart just hours after the blast.[58] "The fact that it was such a powerful bomb in Oklahoma City immediately drew investigators to consider deadly parallels that all have roots in the Middle East," ABC's John McWethy noted. "It has every single earmark of the Islamic car-bombers of the Middle East," wrote Georgie Anne Geyer of the *Chicago Tribune*.[59] The fact that such a gross display of violence was perpetrated by a white, southern American male was incomprehensible to many.

As the new millennium approached, relations between Muslim-majority countries and the United States were proving to be

especially contentious. With more than 20 years of conflict between them, there was little indication that things would improve. Some believed the situation would only get worse. Perhaps they were right. On August 28, 2001, Mohammed Atta, an Egyptian terrorist who, in addition to training in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, had received his pilot's license from a Florida-based flight school, purchased two tickets for American Airlines Flight 11 from Boston to Los Angeles.

* * *

Bin Laden tuned in to the radio shortly after 5:00 p.m. to hear American news stations broadcast the event. "They were overjoyed when the first plane hit the building," he later said in a video obtained by American troops. "So I said to them, 'Be patient.' At the end of the newscast, they reported that [another] plane just hit the World Trade Center. Allah be praised."[60]

Days after the attacks, federal authorities found Atta's luggage inside a car parked at Logan International Airport. In his bag was a handwritten note—instructions from Bin Laden for the last night of Atta's life and a checklist for his deadly plans:

> Make an oath to die and renew your intentions … pray the morning prayer in a group and ponder the great rewards of the prayer … when the taxi takes you to the airport, remember God while in the car … when you ride [in] the airplane, and before you enter it, you make a prayer and supplications. Remember that this is a battle for God … afterwards we will all meet in the highest heavens.[61]

Alongside the note was a navy-blue suit, first believed to be a pilot's outfit. Later, it was revealed that the sapphire blue necktie and the crisp white shirt were part of Atta's "paradise wedding suit," left behind in Boston in a baggage delay. A bottle of cologne rested beside the garments and tucked away at the foot of the bag, which had been locked, was a leather-bound copy of the Quran, painted in gold.[62]

* * *

More than nine years since that fateful morning, one that for many Americans, crystallized a suspected link between Islam and violence,

unfavorable views of Islam are increasing steadily. Two years after 19 of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims attacked the World Trade Center and Pentagon, an ABC News poll found that 34 percent of Americans believed that Islam encourages violence.[63] Five years later, in 2008, despite the rarity of religiously inspired attacks, that number rose sharply to 48 percent. Today, the pattern of skepticism continues.[64] A *Washington Post*-ABC News poll released in September 2010 suggested that half of Americans harbor negative views of Islam, the highest number recorded since the al-Qaeda attacks in 2001.[65]

Correspondingly, in the midst of escalating anti-Muslim sentiment, reported hate crimes against Muslims appear to be on the rise. From 2000 to 2001, hate crimes in the United States against people of Middle Eastern descent increased by more than 324 percent, with 354 attacks in 2000 and 1,501 reported attacks in 2001.[66] The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) noted that hate crimes against Muslims in the United States rose by more than 50 percent from 2003 to 2004.[67] And by 2009, not much had changed. Pew Research released a report saying that "Eight years after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Americans see Muslims as facing more discrimination inside the U.S. than any other major religious group."[68] Ibrahim Hooper, a spokesman for CAIR, said in the fall of 2010, "I have been working on behalf of other Muslims for more than 30 years and I have never seen it like this, not even after the 9/11 attacks. Hate rhetoric often leads to hate crimes, and I think that's what we're seeing now."[69]

Despite efforts on the part of President George W. Bush, President Obama, various members of Congress, and American Muslim organizations to distinguish between violent acts of individual Muslims and the quintessential nature of their Muslim faith, such endeavors have often been overpowered by a counter-narrative that exploits realistic fears and represents Islam as a violent threat to not only American values but the future of America itself.

The Islamic bogeyman represents the newest chapter in America's long history of monster stories. Given the vast displays of violence committed by Muslim extremists, such an emergence only seemed inevitable. Like the threat of the Bavarian Illuminati in the late 1790s, the alleged infiltration of Catholics in the 1850s, and fears of a Communist takeover throughout the 1900s, actual world events have provoked the outbreak of fears in certain quarters of the country and the fear of Islam is no exception. But also like the monsters of the nation's past, the Islamic threat has been seized

upon by a cadre of individuals—an industry of Islamophobia—that use lurid imagery, emotive language, charged stereotypes, and repetition, to exacerbate fears of a larger-than-life, ever-lurking Muslim presence. This industry is largely, though not exclusively, comprised of ideologically driven, right-wing activists, many of whom identify themselves as evangelical Christians and have found a chorus of like-minded enthusiasts within the Tea Party movement and various political and social fringe groups. Despite their peripheral location within American society, their outcries over a suspected Muslim takeover have gained traction within more mainstream, moderate communities.

* * *

In the summer of 2010, a rising tide of anti-Muslim sentiment and violence swept through the United States, generated by a controversy that surrounded the construction of a Muslim community center in lower Manhattan. Two blocks away from the site of the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, Park51, as the development would be called, reawakened the suppressed emotions of a nation deeply wounded by the tragedy. Opponents of the project cited its location as their primary point of contention. For them, building a "monster mosque" so close to Ground Zero was offensive because it was Muslims, though deviant from the mainstream in their beliefs, who were responsible for the massacre there nine years before. And, because the developers of Park51 were Muslims too, there must have been a link—the Quran found in Mohammad Atta's bag contained the same verses that would be preached to Muslims attending worship in the building's mosque, they believed. The center was also, according to some, an omen that warned of a larger Muslim takeover. By infiltrating lower Manhattan, they claimed, Muslims would use the mosque as a command center for terrorism and dispatch extremists all across the heartland of the United States, uprooting governments state by state until Sharia law replaced the Constitution. The conspiratorial theories of historical monster conquests reemerged in this latest episode. But unlike the earlier scares which were born in church pulpits, on front porches, and in government offices, this uprising was nurtured on the Internet where, with the single click of a mouse, it went viral, spreading to every corner of the country overnight.

2
A Web of Deception: Fomenting Hate Online

Though the firestorm of controversy had not yet engulfed lower Manhattan, Pamela Geller knew that it was looming. After all, it was part of her plan. Just before eleven o'clock in the evening on May 6, 2010, she polished the last lines of a blog entry—one so strident in falsehoods and saturated in anti-Muslim sentiment that it would soon become the propellant for a reckless media frenzy and national uprising. Her piece, unsubtly titled "Monster Mosque Pushes Ahead in Shadow of World Trade Center Islamic Death and Destruction," was a fuming declaration of disapproval for a proposed Muslim community center set to be built two blocks north of the fallen Twin Towers.

Hardly controversial at the time of its inception, plans for Park51, as the project would be called, had been quietly underway for more than a year. The proposed site—an abandoned Burlington Coat Factory that housed a makeshift mosque—blended into the stone-faced, palazzo style buildings that stretched the length of Park Place. Many in the southern Tribeca neighborhood scurried by it on their way to Dakota Roadhouse, unaware that the dilapidated structure was actually a sanctuary.

Approved by the Lower Manhattan Community Board, Park51's proponents included the mayor's office, local business owners, and families of 9/11 victims. "It's quite a bold step buying a piece of land adjacent to Ground Zero," said Alice Hoagland of Los Gatos, California, whose son, Mark Bingham, died aboard the hijacked plane that crashed in a Pennsylvania field. "But it's a noble effort," she added. Lynn Rasic, a spokeswoman for the National September 11 Memorial and Museum lauded the project. "The idea of a cultural center that strengthens ties between Muslims and people of all faiths and backgrounds is positive," she said.[1] Even conservative political commentator Laura Ingraham liked the idea. "I can't find many people who have a problem with it," she acknowledged, with a nod of endorsement.[2]

In the five months that followed initial reports of the community center's development, Park51 drifted off into the land of non-news. The spring of 2010 ushered in a host of headlines that that were far more gripping than plans for a YMCA-like facility in New York City. In January, an earthquake of unparalleled proportion erupted in Haiti, killing more than 230,000 people and leaving an estimated 1 million without homes. By February, much of the news media had shifted its attention to the Winter Olympics where the United States finished third, picking up nine gold medals. And when March arrived, political debate over health care reform grabbed the spotlight as Congress passed the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act. Raucous exchanges over patients' rights and payment options began to wane in April when the Deepwater Horizon, an exploratory oil rig 50 miles off the Louisiana coast, burst into flames gushing more than 185 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico—the largest petroleum spill in history.

With no major media outlets spotlighting the progress of Park51, it appeared that plans for the $140 million, 13-storey complex would proceed without interruption. Yet with the click of a mouse, the story came hurling back into a splash of headlines with a potent mixture of zeal and ire. "This is Islamic domination and expansionism," wrote Pamela Geller, whose outbursts reverberated in the echo chambers of the Internet. "What better way to mark your territory than to plant a giant mosque on the still-barren land of the World Trade Center … How Disgusting," she retorted after learning that the Lower Manhattan Community Board had voted 29-1 in favor of allowing the project to move forward.[3]

Geller, a 52-year-old self-described "human rights activist," grew up in a conservative Jewish home in the Five Towns enclave of Long Island.[4] The third of four girls, she helped out with her father Rueben's textile mill, tagging along with him as he ordered zippers, cut patterns for jackets and pants, and sewed samples for customers. Eventually, Geller learned to speak Spanish fluently by listening to her father converse with Hispanic customers in his Brooklyn shop. "I miss him like hell," she pined. "He liked me best. I learned everything I know from him. He was unafraid and so am I."[5]

After graduating from Lynbrook High School, Geller enrolled in Hofstra University but left without a degree. She eventually joined the *New York Daily News* in the late 1980s as a financial analyst, though she preferred writing to crunching numbers. There was little glory in a life lived behind the scenes; she craved the spotlight where her fearless expressions and blunt opinions could thrive. The *New*

York Observer provided that platform for five years where, as an associate publisher, Geller penned acerbic columns, editorials, and even delved into advertising.[6]

Like many Americans, Geller saw her life as divided into two worlds: the one she lived in before September 11, 2001 and the one she inhabited after. Recalling the morning when hijacked airplanes struck the Twin Towers, she lamented, "I felt guilty that I didn't know who attacked this country. I spent years studying the matter before I started blogging."[7] For Geller, cyberspace provided a way to free herself from the rigid boundaries imposed by print journalism and express her vitriolic views without restraint.

In February 2005, she launched *Atlas Shrugs*, an online journal named after a novel penned by the arch-conservative Russian émigrée Ayn Rand. Making plain her opinions on a variety of issues—though most especially Islam—her enthusiasm to conquer "Muslim madness" was the only thing more prominent than her flamboyant style or New York accent. "Here I am in my chador, my burka," she joked to the camera in one of her many video blogs protesting Islamic "world domination." Wearing a brown bikini and a fresh suntan, she frolicked in the surf off the coast of Israel before delivering a more somber message to her viewers: "There is a serious reality check desperately needed in America and I'm here to give it to you, but I'm just not ginormous [sic] enough. What can I say? And on that note, I'm going to go swimming in the ocean, and visit my mama, and fight for the free world."[8] In another risqué video blog posted to YouTube, Geller, sunbathing and "strutting her stuff" while on vacation in Florida, sent Christmas greetings to American soldiers stationed overseas. "I want to thank the troops for sacrificing everything so that I can be here in my bathing suit, opening up my incredibly big mouth and saying exactly what I want," she said. Picking up a fashion magazine she found in a hotel lobby that highlighted the latest trends in *hijabs*, or Muslim headscarves, Geller called the depictions "moronic" and warned her listeners that the women in the magazines would be beheaded in Muslim-majority countries for appearing in advertisements next to male models wearing Christian crosses. "But I'm not going to go on an Islamic tangent," she vowed, changing the subject to the upcoming US presidential election. "I am going to endorse any candidate who can beat the anti-Christ on the Democratic ticket. First of all, the choice is a Muslim," she said, referring to Barack Obama whose Christian faith had become a target for right-wingers suspicious of his multi-cultural background: "Yeah, he's a Muslim.

[He] went to a madrassa, was schooled in Indonesia, the father was a Muslim, the grandfather was a Muslim, the stepfather was a Muslim, and he's not being honest … anyway, on that note I just want to thank the wonderful American troops. I love you." Her smile glowed in concert with her sunburned chest. In four minutes, Geller had managed to turn her Christmas greeting into a full-blown assault on Muslims, her "thank you" to the troops coming only as an afterthought.[9]

Geller has denied that she is hostile towards Muslims, though her emotionally charged rhetoric and willingness to inveigh against any issue related to Islam, no matter its insignificance, has led some to call her a "hate monger." Her critics point to her record. In February 2005, she called for a boycott of Nike, after the company apologized to Muslims for issuing a line of tennis shoes with embroidered flames that resembled the word "Allah," written in Arabic script. "What cowardice and asshatery," Geller fumed, after the shoes were recalled. "They should change their logo to *Just do it unless it offends Islam, then run away like a little girlie*. I saw Muhammad in my French toast at IHOP; have they started burning them down yet?"[10] Months later, she ridiculed the North Seattle Family Center's efforts to organize a private monthly swimming program for Muslim women.[11] Because Islam encourages modest attire in public, swimming in community pools or the ocean is off-limits for many. Efforts to provide an alternative opportunity were well-received in the community. Soon, several other public pools throughout Seattle joined in, organizing private swim times for various faith groups. "Seattle is still a new community for Muslims," said Aziz Junejo, the host of a weekly cable-news program and frequenter of the private swim sessions. "It's just been probably ten years and we've grown exponentially." Manal Fares, a mother of three who also attends the sessions, added, "I've been in Seattle for 15 years and now I'm able to swim with my Muslim sisters."[12] For Geller, this accommodation, much like the tennis-shoe recall, was not only nonsensical but part of a "seditious pattern" of concessions to Muslim demands. "The Muslim Sister Swim is open exclusively to Muslims, no infidel women need apply," Geller blasted on her blog. "Let's see, that's the third state to succumb to dhimmitude," she continued, using a neologism that denotes an attitude of surrender to Muslims.[13]

If tennis shoes and private swimming sessions could rile Geller and set off a buzz of Web activity among those in search of a sensational story, the tale of a towering "monster mosque" built

over "hallowed ground" was sure to create a flood of traffic to her website, providing just the boost she needed to become an overnight celebrity. After penning an initial entry on Park51, Geller visited social networking sites, hoping to foster interest in her commentary. Blogging was Geller's business and like any contemporary salesperson seeking potential customers, social networks proved to be a powerful medium. Captive audiences broadcast their opinions on an unlimited number of topics, building "friendships" and joining groups with the like-minded. Surely Geller could build an energetic base of supporters that would "tweet" her blog postings, "like" her *Atlas Shrugs* page, and update their "statuses" with comments about the "monster mosque."

Within an hour of unveiling her write-up, she posted links to it on Facebook and Twitter, incubating the still-nascent controversy among potential readers who needed a melodramatic break from their late-night study sessions or idle Web surfing. "Just when it can't get any worse, it does," one user commented. "An unbelievable outrage!!!" piped another. "People STILL do not get it: Islam is not a religion of peace: it is a religion of oppression, control, and murder!" Soon, cyberspace was buzzing with talk of Muslim madness.

As her readership increased, Geller was hailed as "brilliant" and "prophetic" by her fans. Though *Atlas Shrugs* had always attracted a steady flow of regular subscribers, her self-appointed position as leader of the Park51 opponents crystallized support for her cause. Now, New Yorkers and other Americans had a fearless champion to rally behind. The tight-fitting superwoman costume Geller donned on her website and Facebook page made it clear that she was a force to be reckoned with. Her fight to defend the free world from the rise of Islamic domination was not one that she or her followers would back down from.

In April 2010, *Atlas Shrugs* averaged 180,000 monthly visitors but by May, as word of the dangerous "monster mosque" got out, that number quickly climbed to more than 200,000.[14] For her part, Geller rejected the idea that she was behind the sudden public interest in Park51, calling such propositions nonsensical and condescending to the American people. She was quick to add, however, that no one was talking about Park51 before her first post on the topic earlier that month. More astonishing though than the increase in readership were the statistics that revealed what her audiences came in search of. A report of the top Web queries driving traffic to *Atlas Shrugs* revealed that 90 percent of Geller's

viewers arrived at her blog after entering the name "Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf" in search engines.[15]

* * *

The Kuwaiti-born Rauf, 62, was the Imam of Masjid al-Farah, a mosque in New York City's Tribeca district where he had served since 1983. A child of multiple worlds, Rauf moved to the US in the 1960s where, as a teenager, he witnessed the turbulent civil rights era—a period marked by racial discrimination, popular rebellion, and violence. In the midst of civil unrest, his father, Muhammad Abdul Rauf, an illustrious scholar and religious leader, sought to promote a more peaceful atmosphere grounded in ethnic diversity and tolerance. Reaching out to minority groups in neighborhoods surrounding West 72nd Street, he opened the Islamic Center of New York in 1965 which served Arabs and African-American converts. For young Feisal, who was 17 at the time, his father's efforts foreshadowed his own vision for peace—one that was also borne out of a national tragedy. In the wake of September 11, 2001, the soft-spoken Rauf condemned violence in the name of Islam: "The attacks changed me."[16] Joining forces with the FBI and the US State Department, he was lauded as one of the world's most eloquent and erudite Muslim leaders, delivering briefings to policymakers, speaking before domestic and foreign governments, and calling on Muslims worldwide to practice respect, forgiveness, and tolerance.

In 2009, Rauf, along with his wife Daisy Khan, announced plans for Park51, a project they envisaged as the ultimate expression of promoting peace. Their effort, according to Rauf, would send the "opposite statement" of what happened on September 11th. "We want to push back against the extremists," he said.[17] The community center would be a family-oriented complex complete with a 500-seat auditorium, movie theater, performing arts center, swimming pool, exercise facility, child care area, restaurants, and, to the aversion of many New Yorkers and other Americans, a mosque. Part of Park51's mission was to "encourage dialogue, harmony, and respect among all people regardless of race, faith, gender, or cultural background."[18] Though Rauf had served as a Muslim cleric for nearly all of his adult life, it was his role as the imam of the mosque inside Park51 that spun him into the eye of the storm, making the demure yet charismatic religious leader the target of rumors, speculation, and slanderous attacks. If Park51 was indeed

a "monster mosque," Rauf would undoubtedly be portrayed as its resident bogeyman.

Thus far, Geller's criticism of the community center had been directed at elusive, faceless enemies. She railed against "the Muslim community" and "Islam," but did not link the dangers of Park51 to any "Muslim" in particular. In order to heighten a sense of fear among her followers and show them that the threat she warned of was real, Geller needed to provide her base with a clear target. A foreign name, a Middle Eastern accent, and piercing dark eyes resembling those of Ayatollah Khomeini made Feisal Abdul Rauf the perfect match. In a matter of days, the man whose vision for a peaceful dialogue between faith groups was cast as the conspiring mastermind of a community center that was allegedly a secret headquarters for terrorism.

Thrusting Rauf to the forefront of the now-booming debate, she urged her readers to watch a video of the imam being interviewed about Park51. In the clip, Tim Brown, a New York City fireman who responded to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, questioned Rauf about the funding for the community center. "We are concerned that this is a Trojan horse being rolled into our most sacred ground," Brown said. "Where do the millions and millions of dollars in cash that bought this property come from?"[19] Rauf abstained from divulging the names of the "thousands of people who live and work in the financial district [of New York City]," rousing Geller, who jumped on his comments, calling them "pure deceit." Evidence did not matter. For Geller, the imam's inability to recall the names of the Park51 donors that moment was evidence enough. For her, it was proof that he was hiding something. "Why isn't he building an Islamic center dedicated to expunging the Koran, hadiths etc., of their prescribed violent teachings?" she hissed. "Who is with us? We are formulating a concrete action plan. We will rally, we will hold our elected officials accountable, we will not let this stand. Where did the funding for this monster come from?" her language becoming more urgent with each line of her post.[20]

If Geller's readers believed that funding for Rauf's community center was suspicious, she urged them not to take her word for it, directing them instead to other bloggers whose postings, she suggested, offered compelling proof. "Check out Pamela H's excellent sum up on the mosque here," Geller wrote, providing a link to the personal blog of Pamela Hall, a New York activist who made headlines in 2007 as the spokesperson for Stop the Madrassa, a group that accused an Arabic-language school in Brooklyn of

imposing a radical Islamist agenda in its classrooms.[21] Geller called Hall's blog, *No Mosques at Ground Zero*, a "comprehensive, exhausting indictment" against Park51.[22] Upon entering the site, viewers were greeted with a barrage of orange and yellow fireballs pouring out of the World Trade Center, a smoky mix of debris disappearing into bellows of gray and black ash clouds. The site featured an array of harrowing images alongside less frightening, though intended as equally disturbing, photographs of Muslims praying at a public gathering in Manhattan. "We must never forget what Islam did on 9-11," read the first line of the post. Scattered throughout the montage of gory snapshots were comments such as "The unavoidable truth is 9-11 was an attack by ISLAM on America." In the event that her readers were not frightened by memories of the falling towers, Hall warned them of another massacre. "We have a right to protect ourselves and our families and our future from more Nidal Hasans," she said, referring to a US Army psychiatrist at Fort Hood who went on a shooting spree, killing 13 and wounding 30.

Like Geller, Hall also speculated about the origins of Park51's funding, proposing that Feisal Rauf was a puppet of the Saudi government. They would use him, she imagined, as a way to gain access to primetime real estate in lower Manhattan—an area where they would construct a towering mosque, one that resembled the Holy Mosque in Mecca. "Is it [Park51's funding] the Saudi Wahabbi money that Rudy [Giuliani] turned down in 2001?" she asked. "If so, something is going real right for the Sufis. Perhaps they're the perfect front for a bigger purpose. The Saudis will work with them to achieve the larger goal, a mosque, a LARGE mosque at Ground Zero."[23] If Hall's predictions were right, Park Street would soon become the new Mecca; towering minarets and marble columns would greet Manhattan onlookers, the call to prayer drowning out the screeching brakes of the New York City buses.

Geller balanced the lurid imagery and emotive language of Hall's *No Mosques at Ground Zero* with another blog—one with an academic tone. She pointed her readers to the musings of Youssef M. Ibrahim, the managing director of the Strategic Energy Investment Group (SEIG). Writing for the Hudson Institute, Ibrahim was a regular columnist who, like many of his colleagues, frequently discussed topics related to Islam. Undoubtedly, Park51 was one such topic and Ibrahim shared candidly his opinions on the center and Feisal Abdul Rauf. He indicated that hundreds of mosques all across the United States doubled as cultural centers, thus Park51

was not unlike any other Muslim house of worship. But these facilities, he noted, were not 13-storey towers with swimming pools, movie theaters, and programs designed to promote and strengthen interfaith dialogue. According to Ibrahim, the mosques were clandestine command centers whose leaders distributed anti-Western literature—"Islamist propaganda in fact." Their aim, he propounded, was much like that of the Brooklyn Arabic-language school that Pamela Hall's group vociferously protested against—to indoctrinate Muslims with radical beliefs using languages not easily understood by the average English-speaking American: "They [the cultural centers] house Imams of unknown origin and education, many of whom do not speak a word of English but preach in Arabic and Urdu—radical messages, it often turns out."[24] Thus, despite the eloquence with which Feisal Abdul Rauf expressed his vision for Park51, why should Americans believe that his sermons inside the prayer area would necessarily be English homilies of peace? And like Pamela Hall, Ibrahim reminded his readers that those responsible for the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were followers of the same radical Yemeni cleric that advised Nidal Hassan prior to his rampage at Fort Hood. His message was clear: unless Americans wanted to relive the bloodletting of those massacres, they had better uncover the truth—as he saw it—about the mysterious imam. Any competing claim of reality was, as Pamela Geller called it, hate speech.

It was not a surprise that Geller directed her readers to Ibrahim's blog post. The two had a history that dated back to 2006. As a writer for the *New York Sun*, Ibrahim first caught Geller's attention after publishing an article titled "With Terrorists, Let Israel Succeed Where America Has Failed." The piece was a plea of sorts, encouraging an onslaught of Israeli military forces against "rotting Arab dictators" who are the "gnawing evils of the Middle East." Beseeching the US government to support an Israeli offensive designed to overthrow fundamentalist leaders in Syria and Palestine, Ibrahim wrote that the "first order of business is for Israel to widen and deepen military operations in Gaza."[25] Geller, whose anti-Muslim postings were interspersed with pro-Israel rants—591 of them under the category "Israel: The Struggle for Good Vs. Evil"—praised Ibrahim as a "truth teller," saying that he was exactly the type of Muslim that Americans needed in order to root out extremists.[26]

Eventually, Geller joined Ibrahim at the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank that described its mission as "attempting to encourage civil discourse on important issues of our time."[27] As

contributing bloggers, they joined a recognized group of politicians, intellectuals, and activists, who shared their pro-Israeli, anti-Muslim sentiment. Their colleagues included Martin Kramer, a scholar of Middle Eastern studies who once suggested that high fertility rates in Muslim-majority countries posed the greatest danger to the West;[28] Dutch politician Geert Wilders, who, after calling the Quran a "fascist book," backtracked by saying, "I don't hate Muslims, I hate Islam;"[29] and former US Ambassador to the UN John Bolton, who chided politicians for wanting "to increase religious tolerance and understanding whether [we] like it or not."[30]

* * *

The role of the Internet in fomenting hatred and prejudice cannot be overstated. Unlike fear campaigns of the past that relied on more traditional means of communication, the blogosphere has allowed ordinary folks with a bone to pick to disseminate their message far and wide. All that is required is a laptop and an Internet connection.

Coffee-shop gatherings and living-room meetings are, for those seeking to organize populist uprisings, a thing of the past. These rendezvous were once the starting-point, the breeding ground, for marches and demonstrations against a common enemy. Shopkeepers, bureaucrats, small business owners, and even the unemployed can now transcend the traditional class divisions between them and use the Web as a way to attract a larger following and spread ideas that previously existed only within local populations to the state, national, and even international level.

In the cybersphere everyone fits in; there are no sore thumbs. The anonymity it offers (you can sit at home in your pajamas and rake in a fortune writing online hate columns) is just as appealing to some as is the impression of a shared community where each blogger or author or commenter feels ownership of the collective narrative that takes shape. In the strata of Facebook and Twitter, people can "like" what you post or "re-tweet" it to others. Photos are shared and swapped. YouTube videos are uploaded and rake in thousands of views. Commentaries are left and followers are attracted. The more active someone is in the social media world, the more popular they become, developing an identity, one that is meaningful and provides a sense of importance and belonging. Psychologists, dentists, and bankers by day become right-wing political activists by night. The dreary receptionist at the insurance agency leaves her work and becomes Mama Muslim Fighter or Anti-Islam Irene.

The anti-Muslim online networks of the right focus, for the most part, on one major character. An individual like Pamela Geller, for instance, is the ruler of a fiefdom. Hardly a democracy, she sets the tone, controls the conversation, and gives thrust to the amplified rhetoric that festers beneath the stories and rumors and accusations she sets into motion. The Islamophobes that partake in her madness have, thanks to the blogosphere's physical remoteness, the ability and even the incentive to say things online that they would think twice about saying at an organized political meeting or caucus. The rhetorical escalation that the Internet facilitates is also a result of the interconnectedness of those who, situated miles or even continents apart, seek to manufacture the same type of hate.

People such as Robert Spencer, Daniel Pipes, or Martin Kramer, all online Islamophobes, spread each others' postings and write-ups to their own audiences. It is not uncommon to see, for instance, one hate rant reprinted on several websites and cross-posted throughout the social media world. And a rumor, like that which suggested that Barack Obama was the secret Muslim lovechild of Malcolm X, begins in the email box of a racist-turned-blogger and picks up steam as it spreads from the tiny corner of an unknown town to the distant borders of European states. With each new click of the mouse, the story grows not only in terms of its reach but also in terms of its content. What begins as a paranoid race rant quickly turns into a full-blown story about the alleged takeover of the United States by socialist-loving Muslims who are thought to detest apple pie, baseball, freedom, and every other thing that is quintessentially American.

* * *

By the second week of May, plans for a "Stop the 911 Mosque" protest rally took shape. "We chose June 6 as the rally date," Pamela Geller exclaimed proudly, "because it's D-Day. In 1944, Americans acted against the evil of Nazism. Now it is time for Americans to stand up against the evil of Islamic jihad terrorism and Islamic supremacism."[31] Urging viewers to RSVP via Facebook, Geller posted more than a dozen advertisements for the event on her blog over the next three days. She hoped to steer her Web traffic to the south-east corner of Ground Zero, where protesters would gather, ironically enough, at the intersection of Liberty and Church streets. But Geller was unsure that her online fan base would provide the sizeable crowd she hoped for. "We need all of New York," she said.

Weeks before the event, in a clairvoyant-like boost of support, Andrea Peyser, a writer for the *New York Post*, plucked Pamela Geller out of the stratospheres of cyberspace and catapulted her into the pages of the sixth largest newspaper in the United States. An equally flamboyant New Yorker whose candid columns and blistering language brought her an equal mix of fans and foes, Peyser quoted Geller in a May 13, 2010 column titled "Mosque Madness at Ground Zero," advertising the date of the planned demonstration.[32] With more than 525,000 copies of the *Post* distributed throughout New York City, word of the protest spread quickly, reaching audiences unfamiliar with the *Atlas Shrugs* website. "Andrea Peyser has a dead on balls column in today's *New York Post*," Geller gloated, just hours after the paper hit newsstands.[33] "Read the whole thing," she wrote, returning the favor by providing a link to the online version of Peyser's piece. As June 6th approached, Geller's readership had skyrocketed, soaring to more than 888,000 monthly visitors and more than 1 million page views.

* * *

There he sat, on a park bench in Liberty Square, visibly stricken with a grief so ponderous his motionless body, amazingly upright, became the final resting place for the ashen remains of his brethren, slowly descending through the dense Manhattan air. They called him "the survivor" and by the time the First Responders of Fire Engine 54 arrived at the scene, his silent gaze of solitude portended the grave outcome of that September morning.

His briefcase was open, though whatever was inside had been long been lost in the thick debris slowly collecting at his feet. Approaching him in the simmering ruins, the rescuers, aghast to see this everyman of New York City's financial district immersed in what could only be a nightmare, yelled out to him in an offer of assistance. But as the sunlight peered through the splintering remains of towers that were once inviting symbols of America's prosperity, his forehead shimmered, revealing a bronze man, a statue, battered and bruised, but offering a poignant message of hope for a nation soon to be overcome by despair.

Nine years passed since that ill-fated Tuesday. As life crept back to normal in lower Manhattan, the now-famous statue blended into the mix of businessmen rummaging through their belongings while taking a lunch break. Yet amidst the raucous throng of Park51 protestors that swallowed up the corner of Liberty and

Church streets, his quiet demeanor appeared out of place. As noon approached, a sea of red, white, and blue could be seen blocks away. Outside of the Plaza Nail Salon, some protesters waved American flags. Others held up caricatures of Muhammad, his head depicted as a lit grenade. "Islam hates gays," one man shouted, only to be outmatched by the shrill voice of a nearby woman who shrieked, "Islam hates women." Underneath the green foliage that blanketed Liberty Park like a canopy, "the survivor," or "Double Check," as his designer so named him, was still sitting quietly. Before long though, he was holding a placard and an American flag, protesting the "Ground Zero Mosque" in the name of his fallen compatriots. "Mayor Bloomberg: Your disrespect for NYC firefighters who lost their lives is appalling. No Ground Zero Mega-Mosque!" his sign read.

* * *

The June 6th "Stop the 911 Mosque" protest, it turned out, was not entirely the work of Pamela Geller. Rather, it was the effort of a budding group called Stop Islamization of America (SIOA), a Web-based organization that described its mission as promoting human rights, freedom of speech, and religious liberty. The group, a right-wing cadre of Internet activists who blended strong anti-Muslim sentiment with staunch support of Israel, modeled themselves after their European counterpart, Stop Islamization of Europe (SIOE).

Founded in 2007, SIOE was the brainchild of Stephen Gash, an English nationalist and anti-Muslim activist, and Anders Gravers, whose Danish group "Stop Islamization of Denmark" inspired efforts for a broader European movement. For more than three years, SIOE campaigned against mosques throughout Britain and Denmark; on September 11, 2009, eight years after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the group attracted national and international media attention. Staging a demonstration against plans for a mosque in Harrow, England, SIOE activists clashed with brick-wielding counter-protesters. In a storm of fury, the rectangular blocks, along with glass bottles and firecrackers, were hurled airborne. Eventually, police intervened, arresting ten.

For Geller, the protests were thrilling. They proved that the wounds of September 11th were still raw, and that the narrative of a singular, virulent Islam, eagerly waiting to extinguish Americans and Europeans with its dangerous credo, was not only well received but

capable of generating a gladiator-like uprising of activists resolute in their quest to stop it lest it contaminate the land of the free. While she had followed SIOE for years, this latest episode of controversy inspired her to reach out to them.

In February 2010, Geller and Gravers met. Both attended the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington, DC where Geller, along with the founder of the controversial blog *Jihad Watch*, Robert Spencer, announced plans for their new corporate venture—the American Freedom Defense Initiative.[34] Though their relationship began years earlier, FDI was Spencer and Geller's first joint business effort. They met at a conference on Islam, America's Truth Forum, in 2006. It was a day-long symposium led by conservative authors, activists, and businesspeople that warned of the US's pending takeover by Muslim radicals. Prior to Spencer's remarks before a gathered audience, Geller, live-blogging the hourly conference proceedings, wrote:

> *Jihad Watch* is the most comprehensive, informative website on Islam. [Spencer's] latest work, *The Truth about Muhammad*, is the definitive book on the subject—a must read now. And yet for all of his profound thinking and meticulous research, I gotta tell you, I found him to be the most engaging, charming, sharp, concise, funny man.[35]

With a mutual fondness flowering between them, Geller and Spencer regularly exchanged praises, often quoting the other's writings as authoritative evidence for their own claims. "Fearless, intelligent, and beautiful, Pamela Geller wears her Supergirl costume well," Spencer wrote in a comment that Geller proudly displayed on a sidebar of her site.[36]

The purpose of launching the American Freedom Defense Initiative, as Geller and Spencer described it, was to act against treason being committed by national, state, and local governments, the mainstream media, and others in their capitulation to global jihad and Islamic supremacism. It also aimed to thwart "rapidly moving attempts to impose socialism and Marxism upon the American people."[37] To accomplish this, the duo suggested that they would tap into their Web readership to nurture a willing coalition of devotees; their website stated:

> [FDI will] act through the existing *Atlas Shrugs* and *Jihad Watch* websites (which had a combined 22 million page views in the

> last twelve months) to raise awareness of pertinent issues, using our base (*Jihad Watch* 30,000 page views per day, *Atlas* 25,000 page views per day, combined page views 2 million per month) to build a movement.[38]

The first step in building that movement, Geller and Spencer believed, was to incorporate. By establishing FDI as a non-profit corporation, the duo could receive public and private grants and offer potential donors the luxury of tax deductions. In order to expand beyond the borders of the blogosphere and take their fight to the streets of America, they would need such funding. New Hampshire, Spencer's home state, appeared to them the appropriate location for the charter, with his Bedford mailing address serving as the organization's official address. Under New Hampshire law, state non-profit corporations were required to have at least five independent trustees that comprised a board of directors. Thus, Geller and Spencer would need three other signatories. The CPAC conference, a breeding ground of like-minded right-wing activists, provided the perfect opportunity to find them.

John Joseph Jay was in the crowd of youngish, frustrated Republicans, reveling in the fiery language of Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck. A self-described "super Zionist" and "prickly old fart" from Milton-Freewater, Oregon, Jay's blog *Summer Patriot, Winter Soldier* was rife with salacity and anger. His interests, as he described on the site, were "naked ladies, older naked ladies as I age, and as I age, thinking about older naked ladies."[39] In one particularly controversial post, Jay said, "If we are to excise the ruling class, it will be with violence. Buy guns, buy ammo, be jealous of your liberties, and, understand, you are going to have to kill folks, your uncles, your sons and daughters, to preserve those liberties."[40] Later, he wrote, "All of Islam is at war with us, and all of Islam is/are [a] combatant[s]. There are no innocents in Islam and there is no innocence in Islam."[41] Jay had followed Geller's *Atlas Shrugs* for many years and described it as "the best blog in America."[42] Surely this support could translate into a signature on Geller's FDI corporate charter. With little convincing needed, Jay signed the document, becoming a voting member of the FDI's board. He listed Geller's New York post-office box as his contact address.[43]

Also in the crowd was Richard Davis, a Navy veteran from West Chester, Pennsylvania, whose blog *Sheepdogs* offered a smorgasbord of conservative commentary on current events. Named after the personality type that describes people willing to face risk in order

to help others, the "Sheepdogs" of Chester County were a coterie of Tea Party enthusiasts who railed against minorities. "Do yourself a favor and get a job. Get an education you nitwits," one member of the group screamed at a gathering of African Americans. Others held up signs showing Barack Obama bowing to Arab leaders. "Submission Accomplished," it read.[44] Amidst the flag-draped backdrop of the group's site, Davis described Pamela Geller as "a longtime friend and supporter" and a "truth-teller extraordinaire."[45] "I think of her like Roger Daltrey," Davis told the *New York Times* in October 2010, referring to the lead singer who made The Who's eccentric music popular. "He had a good look, a strong personality, and that's how I think of her. She's the front man for so many of us who feel the same way."[46] Davis agreed to be a signatory. Like Jay, he too listed Geller's post-office box as his contact address.

Geller and Spencer eventually ran into Anders Gravers. They realized the impact his presence in their group would have. Unlike Jay and Davis, whose staid websites offered no added value but whose signatures helped nonetheless, Gravers' anti-Muslim demonstrations across Europe were already on Geller's radar. Gravers joined FDI as a voting board member and signed the charter, making the group official. Having long solicited Spencer and Geller as part of his efforts to expand SIOA, Gravers viewed this as the perfect opportunity for reciprocity. "Stephen [Gash] and I have discussed for quite some time the fact that SIOA has not developed in the direction we wanted," he said.[47] "There are groups enough who just write about the danger of Islam, but very few groups that actually do something to try to stop the Islamisation of the Western civilization. SIOA was meant to be a group that should take action, staging demonstrations, happenings and events against the Islamisation of the U.S."[48] Gravers asked Geller and Spencer to serve as his American counterparts, taking the helm of SIOA. They accepted and in an April 2, 2010 announcement on the group's website, Gravers wrote:

> The leaders of SIOA are Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer. After working for a long time to persuade them to take this on, [we've] gotten a yes from both Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer to become the leaders of SIOA. We think they are the right people to bring SIOA to the forefront in the fight against the Islamisation of the U.S.[49]

Two days later, with Gravers's signature in hand, Spencer filed the Corporate Articles of Agreement for the establishment of FDI with New Hampshire's Secretary of State.

Shortly thereafter, Geller penned a proposal and partial manuscript for a book, suitably titled, *Stop Islamization of America*. According to the book proposal, Robert Spencer was an uncredited ghost author. "This book is a how-to guide to fight the creeping sharia in our schools, towns, culture, government, and economy," Geller wrote. "It will elucidate the stealth infiltration of Islamic supremacism into every aspect of American life and show Americans how to fight back."[50] Like SIOA and the FDI, their book would be powered by the Internet. "Online Blasts and advertising can be coordinated at the websites AtlasShrugs.com and JihadWatch.org, which together have around 150,000 daily visitors. Banner ads for the book can run on each. We will also alert our Facebook fans about the launch of *Stop Islamization of America* and will direct people to the book's landing page," they wrote.[51] At the time their proposal hit the desk of their literary agent, the duo's first publication, *The Post American Presidency*, entered its second printing. With a six-figure advance and thousands of dollars in fees for their appearances, Geller and Spencer had created a cottage industry of Islamophobic blogging.

* * *

"And I want to introduce my partner in Stop Islamization of America, Robert Spencer." Pamela Geller's words echoed throughout the four blocks that were closed off for the "Stop the 911 Mosque" protest. The crowd, whose enthusiasm had simmered at that point, offered Spencer a modest applause, some yelling "We love you Robert."[52] But their affection for the stubby, self-proclaimed "scholar" was markedly pale in comparison to their gushing approval of Geller.

Donning a suit and a baseball cap, he walked up to the podium and adjusted the microphone before launching into his prepared remarks, much like a professor eager to deliver his carefully honed message. "Are you tired of being lied to?" he asked. "Are you tired of being smeared? Every New York politician and every mainstream media source on this story has said this is a story about tolerance against bigotry and who do you think they're calling the bigots?" Hoping to reclaim the waning audience, Spencer quickly retorted, "The Americans who are standing up for American values against the most radically intolerant and hateful agenda on the planet."

Suddenly, the corner of Liberty and Church streets bellowed out in accord, the once-dwindling sea of American flags awakened.[53]

Robert Spencer's interest in Islam began in the early 1980s. Raised in a Catholic home, he first learned of his Turkish origins from his grandparents who arrived in the United States shortly after World War I. For Spencer, stories about life beyond the frontiers of his New England home were as captivating as any childhood fairytale or mystery novel. "They spoke in a uniformly positive fashion about life over there," Spencer recalled. "[They] made me become quite fascinated with it such that I took the first opportunity I could when I went to college to read the Koran and to begin studying Islamic theology and history."[54]

Enrolling in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Spencer studied early Christian history, eventually going on to graduate school and earning a master's degree in religion. His enthusiasm for Islam, however, appeared peripheral; it was not matched with coursework or formal training, though his supporters commonly refer to him as a "leading scholar" in the field. Graduating in 1986, Spencer balanced a number of research-related jobs for Catholic religious publications; however, when pressed for specifics regarding his post-university life, he offered little detail. Surely, for a self-proclaimed expert who has written "eleven monographs and well over three hundred articles about jihad and Islamic terrorism," the 16 years between graduate school and the publication of his first book would be rife with noteworthy ventures geared towards building his credibility as a scholar of Islam.

As it turned out, Spencer moved to the Bronx shortly after graduate school and taught religion at a private Catholic high school. On the side, he wrote for religious magazines including *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, *Crisis*, *Chronicles*, and *This Rock*, the latter of which described itself as the "definitive magazine of Catholic apologetics and evangelization." His articles ranged from essays on Gnosticism to lengthy reviews on the papacy where he peppered his writing with anecdotes that revealed his personal convictions. "I became an infallibilist, a Catholic with faith in the pope as the Vicar of Christ and successor of St. Peter," he blurted minutes after referring to pontiffs whose salacious scandals rocked the Catholic Church as "papal black sheep or, perhaps, the papal wolves." "Most of [them]," he continued, "were dissolute scoundrels who were too busy drinking and whoring to occupy themselves with doctrine."[55]

Like Geller, Spencer found that his penchant for sensationalism was restrained by the standards of print media, especially Church-

sanctioned publications, so he began to seek other opportunities for his brassy musings. Hoping to establish himself as a public intellectual, he needed a niche. Erudition in early Christian history would not land primetime television interviews, nor would it make him a celebrity. A catalyst—a sensational event that captured America's attention and warranted the opinions of "experts"—was the only real possibility for Spencer at the time. With the terrorist attacks of September 11th, his interest in Islam came roaring back with full force, giving him an opportunity to exploit the open wounds of a grieving nation and to represent himself as a supportive fellow American who could shed some intellectual light on prevailing questions about a misunderstood faith.

"After 9/11 I was asked to write my first book, *Islam Unveiled*, in order to correct some of the misapprehensions about Islam that were widespread at that time," Spencer wrote.[56] The fact that he had no background in Islamic studies or related fields did not matter to Encounter Books—his conservative political views aligned with the company's reputation for promoting American exceptionalism and a Judeo-Christian heritage. They would use his publication history with Catholic periodicals to tout his authority in the field of religion, giving him an opportunity to move beyond obscure magazines and build a career that capitalized on fears of another terrorist attack. Many Americans were unfamiliar with the history, traditions, and language of Islam, and this was Spencer's chance to reach them.

His strategy was simple. First, he convinced his readers that their fears, sparked by September 11th, were well-founded. Next, he heightened those fears by warning of future attacks, suggesting that the events of that baneful day were part of a larger plan to terrorize Americans, vitiate the Constitution, and establish an Islamic empire. There was some hope in the midst of all the bad news. It could be found, of course, in the pages of Spencer's books, where he offered refuge to his readers by confirming their fears, answering their questions, and reminding them that it was not too late to act: Muslims could still be stopped. Spattered in between the subheadings of *Islam Unveiled*, were Arabic phrases that screamed of foreignness. Terms like "jihad," "Shari'a," "dhimmi," and "kafir" became his code words for terrorism and made up a grab-bag of menacing expressions he used to prove his sophistication and advance the threat of a foreign enemy. If readers were interested in "unveiling" the lurking threat of Islam, surely they would flock to bookstores to discover "the truth" about the founder of "the world's most intolerant religion" three years later.

But before Spencer could fully devote himself to a career writing about Islam, he felt an obligation to revisit the community of readers that first embraced his post-university cogitations. In September 2003, he partnered with Daniel Ali, an Iraqi ex-Muslim convert to Christianity, to write his second book, *Inside Islam: A Guide for Catholics*. Though Spencer had written about the Catholic faith and openly discussed his religious background, he maintained that shifting his focus from Christianity to Islam was not driven by a personal religious agenda. After all, an aversion towards one faith that resulted from deep-seated beliefs about the preeminence of another would not align with scholarly traditions of objectivity. "I have no religious agenda," Spencer stated plainly, asserting that his interpretation of jihad stemmed solely from impartial analysis and years of research.[57] Yet in a 2003 interview with the *Zenith Daily Dispatch* where he discussed *Inside Islam*, Spencer delivered a stunning admission:

> Islam increasingly poses a challenge to the Church and every Christian. By most accounts Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. Even if he or she never meets a Muslim, much less proclaims the Gospel to one, it is every Christian's duty to become informed about Islam since that faith is the Church's chief and most energetic present-day rival for souls.[58]

When asked about the future of Muslim-Christian relations, Spencer replied, "Many believe that the Holy Father, by his kissing of the Koran, and Vatican II have taught that all religions worship the one true God to a greater or lesser degree, and that Muslims are included in the plan of salvation and thus should not be evangelized. This is in fact not the case."[59] In that candid moment, Spencer exposed the ideological underpinnings of his sudden interest in Islam. For him, much like the militants he criticized, this was a battle for souls—a zero-sum war for a seat at the table of heaven—and as one of God's chosen warriors, it was his duty to expose the false gospel of Islam.

* * *

Turning to the blogosphere in 2003, Spencer hoped to deliver his message to a larger audience. He founded *Jihad Watch*, an online diary that he believed would "bring to the public attention the role of jihad theology in the modern world."[60] *Jihad Watch* was initially funded and continually supported by the David Horowitz Freedom

Center, named after the conservative policy advocate who once claimed that university-based Muslim Student Associations were radical groups founded by members of the Muslim Brotherhood, the godfathers of al-Qaeda and Hamas, to sneak jihad into the heart of American higher education.

Registered as a non-profit educational organization, Spencer classified *Jihad Watch* under "international studies" taxonomy and, in his second posting on the site, he announced *Dhimmi Watch*, the counterpart of *Jihad Watch* that sought to bat down favorable interpretations of Islamic history or scripture by suggesting that any such readings lacked a true understanding of Islam's wicked nature and were capitulatory in nature.[61] "Here is a sampling," Spencer wrote. "[Some say that] Jews and Christians are specifically protected in the Quran as Peoples of the Book. Nary a word here, of course, of the subservience and humiliation that is codified in all schools of Islamic law as the price of this 'protection.'"[62] In another example, Spencer commented, "[People say that] some groups in the Middle East today disagree with U.S. foreign policies [and] this is a political rather than a purely religious issue. Actually it has everything to do with religion—with Islamic radicals who consider that no government is legitimate unless it obeys Islamic law."[63] For every interpretation of a scripture or an event that cast Islam in a positive light, Spencer offered a deft response making it clear that such construals were fallacious and misguided. He believed that a moderate, tolerant Islam—one that denounced violence and preached tolerance—did not exist: "There is no traditional, mainstream sect of Islam or school of Islamic jurisprudence that does not teach warfare against and the subjugation of unbelievers."[64] To substantiate such a broad claim, Spencer scoured daily headlines from news organizations in every corner of the world, compiling the most gruesome and sensational news stories in his daily blog postings. He was non-discriminatory in his approach—any news story would suffice as long as Muslims were involved in suspicious or violent acts; a simple neighborhood spat for most was a jihadist conquest for Spencer. His posts included topics like "Iranian Chocolate Thief to Have his Hand Chopped Off," "Islamic Court: It's OK to Beat Your Wife As Long As You Leave No Marks," "Saudi Arabia: Man Divorces His Wife After She Jokingly Slaps Him," and "Preschool Jihad." The sidebars of Spencer's site proudly displayed his endorsements, many of them coming from his co-bloggers. Daniel Pipes, of *Campus Watch*, called him "a top American analyst of Islam," while Pamela

Geller said, "Robert Spencer is the leading voice of scholarship and reason in a world gone mad."[65]

In the seven years after he launched *Jihad Watch*, Spencer published five more books on Islam. Many celebrated scholars of Islam rejected his writings, including Carl Ernst, a distinguished professor of Islamic studies at Spencer's alma mater.* "The publications of Spencer belong to the class of Islamophobic extremism that is promoted and supported by right-wing organizations, who are perpetuating a type of bigotry similar to anti-Semitism and racial prejudice," Ernst wrote. "They are to be viewed with great suspicion by anyone who wishes to find reliable and scholarly information on the subject of Islam."[66] Still, Spencer's books became instant bestsellers, and his blog provided a faithful and reliable base of readers. By October 2010, he had posted more than 31,000 entries, enjoyed more than 30,000 views each day, and was listed second in Google search results for "jihad." His venture was profitable as well, landing him an annual salary of more than $140,000.

* * *

"It's jihad, stupid," screamed one man, his eyes popping in sync with beads of sweat that rolled down his face. His quivering fists gripped a white piece of foam board, the word "Sharia" splattered across it in bold red letters that dripped like blood. "New Yorkers are sick of jihad and we will fight back," another man snapped, his white poster also hemorrhaging the six-letter word for "Islamic law." A legion of jihad and Sharia-sprawled signboards emerged at the "Stop the 911 Mosque" protest. The once-esoteric terms were suddenly ripped out of their context and hurled back at Muslims as evidence of their violent intentions.

Just feet away from the steel rail that divided the swarming crowd from the podium, a woman stood holding a banner that read, "Imam Feisal's Cordoba House mosque will demand Sharia law." As Robert Spencer began to speak, the swaying streamer could have easily doubled as his teleprompter. "Imam Fesial Abdul Rauf is on record in favor of bringing Islamic law, Sharia, to the United States," he said, jabbing the air in front of him:

* Ironically, Spencer once called Ernst a "scholar of Islam," citing his book *Following Muhammad* as a source for his own text *The Truth About Muhammad*. Years later, after Ernst labeled Spencer an "Islamophobe," Spencer abandoned his praise, referring to Ernst as an "academic propagandist."

> Sharia denies the freedom of speech. Under Sharia, if you are a Muslim and you leave Islam, you are liable to be killed. Under Sharia, there is discrimination institutionalized against women and against non-Muslims. That is anti-American, that is anti-freedom, that is anti-human and we will not let that stand. We are here to stand for America.[67]

His voice diminished in the convulsion of applause. "Make no mistake," he continued, coming back to the microphone for an encore performance. "They say it will be different but they will be reading the same Quran and teaching the same Islamic law that led those 19 hijackers to destroy the World Trade Center and murder 3,000 Americans."[68]

Jihad Watch waded into the debate over Park51 the day after Pamela Geller's "monster mosque" commentary sent cyberspace into a spin. At the time, Robert Spencer was attending the 2010 Vienna Forum warning the audience of growing "assertiveness and belligerence of Islamic communities in the West." The forum was sponsored by the Hudson Institute (the same conservative think tank that hosted the writings of Geller and Youssef Ibrahim) and was a working vacation for many of the scheduled speakers, who in between panels with titles such as "Integration or Separation?" "Living with Islam," and "What Must Be Done," enjoyed light *hors d'oeuvres* against a backdrop of rolling green hills and Austrian architecture. In Spencer's absence, his colleague Marisol Seibold filled in, offering her opinions on the "Ground Zero Mosque" in a scholarly tone (Seibold once encouraged her *Jihad Watch* fan base to participate in "Everybody Draw Muhammad Day"). "There are two problems here," she wrote, seeking to counter Feisal Abdul Rauf's claim that Park51 would preach tolerance. "Islam was the motivation behind those attacks and it is Islam that has a problem with tolerance as made clear by its own texts and teachings," she continued, cherry-picking two Quranic verses as evidence without providing any context for their meaning.[69]

Three days later, Spencer returned from Austria and after showcasing a variety of photographs from Vienna, weighed in on the Park51 controversy. "The placement of mosques throughout Islamic history has been an expression of conquest and superiority over non-Muslims," he wrote. "The possibility of deception cannot here be ruled out, given that Abdul Rauf has a history of making smooth statements that appear to endorse American principles and values, when on closer examination he is upholding Sharia

law."[70] Over the next three weeks, Spencer posted more than 30 entries about Park51 on his blog, the majority of which focused on Feisal Abdul Rauf and what Spencer called "stealth jihad," the title of his 2008 book. According to Spencer, terrorists would not subvert America with guns, bombs, or even hijacked airplanes, but by infiltrating society as doctors, lawyers, bankers, journalists, and seemingly average Americans. Their aim was to implement "creeping Sharia" with hopes of uprooting democracy, silencing Lady Liberty, and dominating the United States with Islamic law. "It is a jihad," Spencer wrote, "but one whose leaders work within American communities and organizations, and quite often have won the respect and gratitude of their non-Muslim colleagues and peers."[71] Undoubtedly, Spencer believed Feisal Abdul Rauf was one such "stealth jihadist"—his peaceful demeanor was but a masquerade and if his plot was not quickly foiled, the Land of the Free would soon become the Islamic States of America. "My, what a surprise. The 13-story Imam is linked to a terror group," one *Jihad Watch* subscriber with the pseudonym "Alarmed Pig Farmer," wrote. "That fits like hand in glove," another commented. "I will pass this around."[72] In June, Spencer's blog had more than 361,000 monthly visitors, but by July, after the "Stop the 911 Mosque" protest, that number soared to more than 1.3 million.

* * *

Newt Gingrich delivered the keynote address at the American Enterprise Institute's "America at Risk" forum in July 2010. By two o'clock, a sizeable crowd had gathered at the Wohlstetter Conference Center, many of them lobbyists, activists, policymakers, and journalists. Gingrich calmly stepped up to the podium and welcomed the audience; his stoic greeting did not foretell the grave danger he would soon warn them of. "America is at risk," he said plainly, allowing a few moments for his alert to settle in before discussing the threat posed by radical Islam. "America is at risk," he said again, this time his tone more urgent than the last. The phrase became a common refrain, reminding the crowd at various intervals that danger was not a looming possibility but a present reality. Heads nodded in accord, reporters hurriedly jotted his words, the sounds of their pens barreling across the pages of their notebooks in time to catch the next nugget of wisdom. "This is a struggle with radical Islamists in both their militant and in their stealth form," he said:

> The militant form believes in using military power in one form or another. The stealth form believes in using cultural, intellectual and political power but their end goal is exactly the same. The fight against Sharia and the madrassas in mosques which teach hatred and fanaticism is the heart of the enemy movement from which the terrorists spring forth.[73]

Gingrich had, it turned out, taken Spencer's bait. With the former Speaker of the House now repeating the phrase "stealth jihad," it would gain great traction amongst the right wingers who warned of a clash of civilizations.

3
Media Mayhem: Broadcasting Anti-Muslim Madness

As is the case with any industry, advertising is paramount to the success of a product. One need not look further than the Super Bowl to understand the advertising industry's sheer obsession with reaching a massive number of people; each year, the highest bidders are offered short slots to disseminate catchy clips of their goods, be they Coca-Cola, Nike shoes, or other high-rolling, multimillion-dollar enterprises.

The Islamophobia industry also goes to great lengths to sell its message to the public. The difference, though, is that in many cases the very networks that spread their product are themselves participants in the ruse to whip up public fear of Muslims. This is not a relationship of buyer and seller, where various characters that peddle panic purchase slots on major television networks to plug their merchandise. Rather, it is a relationship of *mutual* benefit, where ideologies and political proclivities converge to advance the same agenda.

Fox News, the American television station that brands itself as "fair and balanced," is the epitome of this relationship. It has been, for the better part of the last decade, at the heart of the public scaremongering about Islam, and has recently become the home for a slew of right-wing activists who regularly inhabit its airwaves to distort the truth to push stereotypes about Muslims. Little surprise then, it was, that a Brookings Institute poll on American values conducted in September 2011 found that approximately two-thirds of Republicans, Americans who identify with the Tea Party movement, and Americans who most trusted Fox agreed that the values of Islam are at odds with the values of the United States. Additionally, nearly six in ten Republicans who say they trust Fox also say that they believe that American Muslims are trying to establish Islamic law in America. In contrast, the attitudes of Republicans who view other news networks fall in line with the general population.[1]

In December 2009, Fox News host Laura Ingraham interviewed Daisy Khan, the wife of Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf who was leading the initial push for the Park51 community center. At that time, there was little controversy over plans for the proposed building—so little that Ingraham even admitted that she liked what Khan and her husband were doing. "I can't find many people who really have a problem with it," she admitted on air. "I know your group takes a moderate approach to Americanizing people, assimilating people, which I applaud. I think that's fantastic."[2]

Soon, though, it would not be fantastic. At least not to Laura Ingraham who, in an about-face move, suddenly latched herself onto the anger and rage being ginned up by Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer. "I say the terrorists have won with the way this has gone down," she sneered during an interview with ABC News in August 2010. "Six hundred feet from where thousands of our fellow Americans were incinerated in the name of political Islam, and we're supposed to be—we're supposed to be considered intolerant if we're not cheering this?"[3]

Little more than eight months had passed. That summer, though, had been dominated by the rise of a radical bunch of bloggers who had fashioned a controversy where one did not exist. Pamela Geller's snarling write-up about the "Ground Zero Mosque" in early May 2010 was picked up by Andrea Peyser of the *New York Post*, a conservative newspaper owned by the man at the top of Fox News, Rupert Murdoch. Peyser's regurgitation of Geller's outrage reached hundreds of thousands of people, turning what was once a conspiracy theory of some unknown right-wing Internet prowlers into a major new story.

Fox News' Sean Hannity had read Peyser's piece. He was familiar with Pamela Geller too, and on May 13, 2010, just days after the story made national news, he invited Geller on his show to talk about it. "There is a giant mosque being planned to be built in an area right adjacent to Ground Zero," he said. Of course, the Park51 community center's 13 storeys were relatively small compared to the towering skyscrapers that hovered over the streets in midtown Manhattan. But the word "giant" had a certain frightening ring that Hannity and Geller sought to sell. "Andrea Peyser wrote about it in the *New York Post* today," he said. "Atlas Shrugs's Pamela Geller, a blogger and columnist, is hosting a 'No 9/11 Mosque' rally at Ground Zero on June 6 to protest the construction and she now joins us on our newsmaker line."[4]

Media Matters reports that from May 13, 2010 until August 12, 2012—a period of 91 days—Fox News shows hosted at least 47 different guests to discuss the project, 75 percent of whom opposed it.[5] Nexis transcripts of Fox newscasts during that 13-week period were reviewed showing that just nine out of the 47 guests who appeared during that time favored the center. In some cases, guests expressed their personal opposition to the center but rejected the idea that it could be somehow prevented. Juan Williams, a former reporter for National Public Radio (NPR), was one of them. Appearing on Hannity's show, he said, "I happen to agree with you about the idea that they shouldn't build the mosque," he told the Fox host. "But that doesn't mean that we, as Americans, can say to him [Rauf] 'No, you can't build here.' That's wrong."[6] Williams stated his opinion plainly. It was something he did regularly—and something that two months later would cost him his job.

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On October 18, 2010, Williams was a guest at Fox News again. This time, instead of appearing on Sean Hannity's show, he chatted with Bill O'Reilly. The conversation settled on Park51. As an analyst for NPR, it was familiar turf for Williams. He had navigated the prickliness of political issues before, careful not to reveal his personal opinions. But Fox News and Bill O'Reilly clearly had an agenda and after having ignited a small blaze of controversy earlier in the year by saying "Muslims attacked us on 9/11," it was clear that O'Reilly was looking for someone to back him up.

"Political correctness can lead to some kind of paralysis where you don't address reality," Williams said. "I mean, look, Bill, I'm not a bigot. You know the kind of books I've written about the civil rights movement in this country. But when I get on the plane, I got to tell you, if I see people who are in Muslim garb and I think, you know, they are identifying themselves first and foremost as Muslims, I get worried. I get nervous."[7]

The remark did not seem to faze O'Reilly. In fact, it fit precisely into the narrative he was spinning: Muslims are people to be feared, especially Muslims in airplanes. Over at NPR, however, news of the comments was unsettling. As a political analyst, it was not Williams' responsibility to offer his opinions on such issues. In fact, he was not being paid to offer his opinions at all. And to blatantly level a broad-brush blow at the Muslim community because he felt suspicious of them was not within the keeping of

NPR's journalistic standards. Williams was terminated from his position soon thereafter. Despite his initial shock over his firing, there was some good news for him. The stereotypical remarks were worth a cool $2 million—the amount of money that Fox News offered Williams for an extended three-year contract with their network.[8] "In one arrogant move the NPR exposed itself for the leftist thought police they really are," read one user's comment on the radio network's website.[9] Maybe that was so—but Fox News had, by offering Williams an expanded role, encouraged and even financed Islamophobia.

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Some have argued that Fox News' viewers may not develop their negative views of Islam as a result of the station's programming, but rather they flock to those shows that reinforce and confirm an already existing, deeply anti-Muslim bias. Even so, Fox News has propagated a climate that is conducive to such feelings—were objective viewers with no opinion of Islam or Muslims likely to tune in to an episode of Hannity or O'Reilly, they would likely not leave with an impression that was "fair and balanced." The numbers were proof of that.

In February 2011, the *Think Progress* website released a study that detailed the specific ways that Fox News manipulates language to insinuate, or in many cases, state explicitly, that Muslims and Islam should be feared. Using three months' worth of material gathered from various television programs from November 2010 to January 2011, a graph was compiled to show that the network disproportionately deployed terms that reflected a negative view of Muslims, more so than Fox News' competitors. For example, Fox used the term "Sharia" 58 times over a three-month period, whereas CNN used the term 21 times, and MSNBC 19 times. Similarly, Fox hosts brought up the phrases "radical Islam" or "extremist Islam" 107 times in three months, while CNN used the term 78 times and MSNBC only 24 times. Still, Fox used the word "jihad" 65 times, while CNN used it 57 and MSNBC used it 13 times.[10]

That Fox News consistently ranked atop the list of networks that deployed these terms was not the real problem. The way in which they *used* the terms, however, was. They were often part of stories that made a larger point about allegedly nefarious Muslims who had either participated in some act of violence or were thought to be working their way into the political fabric of the United States.

In August 2006, for example, Fox News guest Mike Gallagher suggested an "all Muslims checkpoint line" at American airports.[11] After the Fort Hood shooting in November 2009, for example, Fox host Brian Kilmeade suggested "special screenings" for Muslim US soldiers.[12] In 2010, Bill O'Reilly, host of the *O'Reilly Factor*, said bluntly that "There's no question that there is a Muslim problem in the world."[13] And Glenn Beck, on an August 10, 2010 episode of *The Glenn Beck Show*, said, "Stop with the government Muslim outreach programs, okay? I'm tired of it. I don't care about the rest of the world. I don't care."[14] So eager was the network to jump on any story that cast Muslims in a strange or negative light, that the network embarrassed itself in March 2011 after it posted an article on its website claiming that an Islamic council in Pakistan had banned the sale of padded bras.[15] As it turned out, the piece was tracked back to its original source, *The Onion*, revealing that it was a satirical article, one of many that the comedic website routinely posted to poke fun at societal oddities.

Of course, these examples are but a select few from a multitude of anti-Muslim comments on Fox News programs. They are also products of a conservative fear factory run by Fox News' president, Roger Ailes. The man behind much of the station's conspiratorial fear-mongering, 71-year-old Ailes allows his own personal phobias to steer the agenda of Fox's telecasts.

Ailes, a long-time adviser and strategist for the Republican Party, once told President Ronald Reagan to ditch facts and figures during his reelection campaign against Democratic contender Walter Mondale. In an article for *Rolling Stone*, Tim Dickinson relates how Ailes advised the president: "You don't get elected on details. You get elected on themes." At Fox, he took his own advice, knowing full well the gripping power of emotion, especially fear. So encumbered with fright was Ailes that he traveled to work each day with a private security detail. He bought up the land surrounding his $1.6 million estate in order to broaden the security perimeter. He is sure that he is on the top of al-Qaeda's hit list. "You know, they're coming to get me," he told one friend. "I'm fully prepared and I've taken care of it."

It was unlikely that al-Qaeda had set its sights on Ailes, but there was no convincing him otherwise. On one occasion, as Ailes was sitting in his Fox News office monitoring the activity in the hallways on television monitors he had set up, a dark-skinned man in what appeared to be "Muslim garb" walked by. Ailes freaked and put the entire building on lockdown. "What the hell!" he shouted,

apparently convinced that terrorists had finally tracked him down. "This guy could be bombing me," he said. It turned out that the man was a janitor. "Roger tore up the whole floor," one source close to Ailes later recalled. "He has a personal paranoia about people who are Muslim—which is consistent with the ideology of his network."

Tim Dickinson of *Rolling Stone* magazine notes that Ailes is a master propagandist, so tuned in to the demographic makeup of his Fox audiences that he is able to calculate how and where and when to plant a story in the news stream to maximize its impact:

> The typical viewer of *Hannity*, to take the most stark example, is a pro-business (86 percent), Christian conservative (78 percent), Tea Party-backer (75 percent) with no college degree (66 percent), who is over age 50 (65 percent), supports the NRA (73 percent), doesn't back gay rights (78 percent) and thinks government "does too much" (84 percent).

Targeting the show's content to each group had proven to be a successful strategy. According to one insider, Ailes meets with Fox anchors prior to their broadcasts and feeds them talking points and message strategies. What appears to viewers as a casual conversation is actually a scripted dialogue. During the 2008 president election, Dickinson notes, "References to Obama's middle name [Hussein] were soon being bandied about on *Fox & Friends*, the morning happy-talk show that Ailes uses as one of his primary vehicles to inject his venom into the media bloodstream."[16] It was on that very program that suspicions about Barack Obama being a Muslim and trained in a *madrassa* were first raised.

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Fox News has no monopoly on the manufacturing and marketing of fear. However adept the network's power players are at creating a stir, and however obvious and misguided their political agenda may be, many news stations have contributed to the persistency of paranoia about Muslims and Islam.

In *Covering Islam*, Edward Said writes that, on April 19, 1995, his office telephone rang more than usual. That afternoon, 25 calls from major news networks, newspapers, and reporters inundated his landline, inquiring about the attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. As smoke continued to rise upward from the heap of carnage on Northwest Fifth Street, an

eager media pounced on the story in a mad dash to relay facts to horrified viewers who, since the bombing of the World Trade Center two years earlier, had grown suspicious of foreign perpetrators. The questions posed to Said on the morning of the blast in Oklahoma sought to reveal evidence of just that: the involvement of a rag-tag cadre of non-Americans who, guided by interpretations of their religion, Islam, had taken the lives of 168 and injured nearly 700. As someone from the Middle East, someone whose identity as a Palestinian growing up in the Holy Land had shaped his life's work, Edward Said was believed to have knowledge of the ways in which terrorists operated. And, according to the pervasive narrative at that moment, this was a Muslim-led attack, one whose masterminds came from that very area. "All of them [acted] on the assumption that since I was from and had written about the Middle East that I must know something more than most people," wrote Said. "The entire factitious connection between Arabs, Muslims, and terrorism was never more forcefully made evident to me; the sense of guilty involvement which, despite myself, I was made to feel struck me as precisely the feeling I was meant to have."[17]

The inquiries directed at Said did not come out of nowhere. They were the product of "experts" relied upon by news channels covering the details of the event as it unfolded. Among the first on the scene was CBS News, who tasked Steven Emerson, a go-to man for all-things-terrorism, with providing an analysis about the nature of the crime. Standing in front of a charred portion of the building, Emerson reported that, "This was done with the attempt to inflict as many casualties as possible. That is a Middle Eastern trait. Oklahoma City, I can tell you, is probably considered one of the largest centers of Islamic radical activity outside the Middle East."[18] That simple remark led other journalistic enterprises to offer more of the same, opening the floodgates as it were, for the identification of an elusive culprit. Jim Stewart, a CBS News national security correspondent, terrorism specialist, and former US Army second lieutenant, echoed Emerson, saying shortly thereafter that "The betting here is on Middle East terrorists."[19] At ABC News, the chief national security correspondent, John McWethy, agreed: "The fact that it was such a powerful bomb in Oklahoma City immediately drew investigators to consider deadly parallels that all have roots in the Middle East."[20]

With these initial reports, a narrative was set into place that quickly grew. In the days that followed, several other "experts" conjectured about the seemingly "Middle Eastern" nature of the

attack. Daniel Pipes, presenting himself as an authority on Islam and terrorism, told *USA Today* that "People need to understand that this is just the beginning. The fundamentalists are on the upsurge and they make it clear that they are targeting us. They are absolutely obsessed with us."[21] While Pipes' comment did not mention Muslim or Middle Eastern terrorists specifically, his remarks about fundamentalism implied their collective guilt because of the way in which he, and the news agency to which he spoke, framed the discussion. Brought in to survey the situation as someone steeped in the study of Islam, the inference was clear.

Vincent Cannistraro, a former CIA agent and counterterrorism analyst under the Reagan administration, told the *Washington Times* that "Right now it looks professional, and it's got the marks of a Middle Eastern group."[22] On the same day, Neal Livingstone, a self-proclaimed terrorism expert who founded the Institute on Terrorism and Subnational Conflict, told the *London Daily Mail* that "Since the end of the Cold War, the biggest threat to the U.S. has come from the Middle East. I'm afraid what happened in Oklahoma has proved that."[23]

That afternoon, it appeared certain that the suspects involved in the bombing were from the Middle East and news headlines readily pointed to that part of the world:

- *Newsday* suggested that officials had ignored "a sizable community of Islamic fundamentalist militants in Oklahoma City."
- The *New York Post* reported that "Knowing that the car bomb indicates Middle Eastern terrorists at work, it's safe to assume that their goal is to promote free-floating fear and a measure of anarchy, thereby disrupting American life."
- The *Chicago Tribune* proposed that "It has every single earmark of the Islamic [*sic*] car-bombers of the Middle East."
- The *New York Times* offered that "Whatever we are doing to destroy Mideast terrorism, the chief terrorist threat against Americans, has not been working."[24]

Of course, we now know that the man behind the attacks in Oklahoma City bore no "Middle Eastern trait." He was not a Muslim and contrary to the foreignness depicted by the news networks, Timothy McVeigh was a white, New York-born fundamentalist who had previously served in the US Army and harbored deep contempt for the US government. How, then, did the media get it so wrong?

Perhaps the words of Jonathan Z. Smith, a historian of religions and professor at the University of Chicago, are appropriate here: "If there is one story line that runs through the various figures and stratagems briefly passed in review, it is that this has been by no means an innocent endeavor."[25]

Indeed, this was no exception. Representations in the news media of a link between Islam and violence were largely deployed by individuals whose careers operated on the necessity of such beliefs—individuals whose "expertise" was not an objective evaluation of the situation at hand, but rather an extension of narratives that preconfigured Muslims and Middle Easterners in a violent way. As Timothy Mitchell writes, "Expert knowledge works to format social relations, never simply to report or picture them."[26]

To begin with, Steven Emerson's early remark, one that spun the news world into a frenzy of speculation and generalization, must be placed within the context of his work. As the director of the for-profit SAE Productions, founded just months before the attack in Oklahoma City, Emerson's group was paid more than $3 million by his other business venture, the non-profit Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT), to research links between Muslim terrorists operating abroad and attacks by members of their alleged cells in the United States.[27] It was his documentary, *Jihad in America*, which sold the general public on that fear (thus enticing donations to his non-profit group), shortly after the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993. Emerson followed up on his film with the release of two best-selling books, *Jihad Incorporated: A Guide to Militant Islam in the U.S.* and *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us*.[28] These realities, certainly not discussed by Emerson or the news media, shed some light on the reason for his alarmism.

In addition to Emerson, Daniel Pipes was also deeply entrenched in the business of selling fear, having aligned himself in the late 1980s and early 1990s with such right-leaning groups as the Foreign Policy Research Institute and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Pipes's think tank, The Middle East Forum, founded in 1994, describes its mission as protecting "U.S. interests in the Middle East include fighting radical Islam, working for Palestinian acceptance of Israel, robustly asserting U.S. interests vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia, and developing strategies to deal with Iraq and contain Iran."[29] This resulted in ideologically skewed representations of Muslims, Islam, Arabs, and the Middle East, not the least of which were on display in a 1990 article he penned for *Commentary* magazine:

> There can be either an Israel or a Palestine, but not both. To think that two states can stably and peacefully coexist in the small territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is to be either naïve or duplicitous. If the last seventy years teach anything, it is that there can be only one state west of the Jordan River. Therefore, to those who ask why the Palestinians must be deprived of a state, the answer is simple: grant them one and you set in motion a chain of events that will lead either to its extinction or the extinction of Israel.[30]

Neil Livingstone, whose proclamations were widely cited following the attacks, was also inclined to cite a "Middle Eastern" perpetrator, for reasons tied to his work at the Institute on Terrorism and Subnational Conflict, which relied on such links for research funding, as well as his personal platform that was based almost entirely on terrorism consultation. Even when presented with evidence that it was McVeigh who committed the atrocious acts, Livingstone sought out connections to Middle Eastern organizations. In May, nearly one month after McVeigh had been arrested, Livingstone said in an interview with the *Boston Globe* that:

> There is a remarkable similarity between the methods used by Islamic terrorists in the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, the attack on the World Trade Center, and the bombing in Oklahoma. The truckload of explosives is almost a signature or calling card, and it is the weapon of choice among these groups. Very typically, these terrorists have found homegrown radicals to use as dupes in the actual bombings. They have supplied the money and the technical expertise and highly skilled operatives to guide a project and then get out of town before they can be apprehended.[31]

After McVeigh confessed to the crimes, erasing from public perceptions any possibility of guilt on the part of Muslims, Livingstone discussed domestic right-wing terrorists on *Meet the Press*, saying, "We didn't think they were that severe a threat until these events. We don't see these people as terrorists, but there are some troublemakers."[32] Strangely, 17 years later, in a 2011 report by the Center for Public Integrity, Livingstone suggested that McVeigh worked in conjunction with Muslim terrorists to carry out the attacks.

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Most of the discussions about the role of the media in manufacturing and promoting Islamophobia tend to approach the topic from one side: the concerted effort of news networks like Fox and an ideological band of "experts" to deploy consistently negative and stereotypical images of Muslims and of Islam. But it is also useful to consider the ways in which the media, under the influence of the Islamophobia industry, can take their campaign to the next level and actually seek to eradicate *positive* images of Muslims as well. Narratives of grounded, normal, Muslim families that blend seamlessly and gracefully into the social and political landscapes of America contrast greatly with the dark, scary image that right-wingers hope to advance.

The show *All-American Muslim* on the TLC network premiered in November 2011 with a record 1.7 million viewers. The reality program followed the lives of five Muslim families living in Deerborn, Michigan, showing how they go about their daily lives and the role that their faith plays in the choices they make. The initial episode, "How to Marry a Muslim," garnered the television channel's highest Sunday night rating in more than a year in the women aged 18–34 category.[33] The *New York Times*, *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, and *Time* magazine all praised the show. The *Hollywood Reporter* called it "fascinating," saying that "Watching their lives will teach us a lot about the culture of Americans who practice Islam and how they're both similar and unique from us."[34]

Shortly after its premiere, one small but influential actor in the Islamophobia industry drummed up hysteria about the program, that led to a national frenzy. The Florida Family Association (FFA), an outfit of the religious right run by David Caton, claimed that by showing Muslims in a positive light, the *real* Muslims—that is, the bad ones—were being whitewashed. *All-American Muslim*, he said, is "propaganda clearly designed to counter legitimate and present-day concerns about many Muslims who are advancing Islamic fundamentalism and Sharia law."[35] In an email he sent out to FFA members, he wrote, "The show profiles only Muslims that appear to be ordinary folks while excluding many Islamic believers whose agenda poses a clear and present danger to liberties and traditional values that the majority of Americans cherish."[36] Caton urged his base to write to companies that provided advertising for the network and demand that they revoke their support.

Before long, Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer joined the growing chorus of people demanding that advertisers back out of sponsorship. "Every company is free to choose where they put their ad dollars," Geller wrote. "64 companies have now pulled their ads. And rightly so. It is not that the show is about Muslims. It is that the show was predicated on a lie and the relentless propaganda of Islamic supremacists."[37] She posted contact information on her blog for Lowes Home Improvement, a hardware chain that was among the first to quash its funds. Robert Spencer also weighed in on the controversy. The problem, as he saw it, was not that Muslims were being portrayed as everyday Americans. Rather, the presentation did not include the violent Muslims too—it did not pin on the masses the burden of collective guilt.[38]

All in all, 65 advertisers pulled their funds from the program. It did not matter in the end, as TLC reported that advertising was still strong.[39] Still, it showed the power of the Islamophobia industry. That a small, largely unknown Christian right-wing group in Florida had managed to capture the national spotlight and create such a wrangle was telling. The Florida Family Association was just one of many evangelical Christian groups that found in the pages of the Bible good reason to victimize and scapegoat Muslims.

4
We Come Bearing Crosses: The Christian Right's Battle for Eternity

"All these people will die and burn in hell," thundered Bill Keller, a Florida-based Internet evangelist, railing against supporters of the Park51 Cultural Center. Holding a red leather Bible in one hand, he rocked backed and forth, his arms flailing up and down in sync with the words of his brazen message. "Islam is not and has never been a religion of peace," he scoffed. "How could you build bridges with people who ask their Muslim brothers to fly a plane into the twin towers and killed thousands of innocent people?"[1]

Preaching to a crowd of 50 gathered in a dowdy, yellowish ballroom of the New York Marriott Downtown Hotel, the 53-year-old dyed-blond firebrand announced the launch of his "9-11 Christian Center," an antidote in his view to the "victory mosque" and "great Muslim military accomplishment" set to be built just blocks away.[2] Scurrilous rhetoric was part and parcel to Keller's crusade against Islam and he articulated what he saw as battle lines between the forces of good and evil in stump speeches that overflowed with *ad hominem* attacks. "[Muslims] can go to their mosque and preach the lies of Islam and I'll come here to preach the truth of the Gospel," he told the dwindling crowd.[3] As the national controversy over Park51 reached its crest, Keller crawled out from the sidelines to capture the spotlight and revive a career that relied on such embroilments.

The eldest son of a Methodist family from Dayton, Ohio, Keller became an evangelical Christian at the tender age of 12 and hoped to become a seminary pastor. The boom of personal computers in 1978, however, sidetracked his dreams of evangelism. Lured by the prospects of wealth and realizing his knack for sales, Keller dropped out of Ohio State University and built a multimillion-dollar telemarketing operation that pushed laptops and office supplies.[4] But his unrestrained desire for money eventuated in a troublesome run-in with the government. "Worldly greed held me like a vise," he recalled.[5] Busted for securities and mail fraud in 1990, Keller was sentenced to two years at the Federal Prison Camp near Saufley

Field in Pensacola, Florida.[6] While there, his conservative social and religious views were nurtured and intensified by teachings of the fundamentalist preacher Jerry Falwell, whose Moral Majority brought the language and passions of the Christian Right into mainstream American politics.

Behind bars, the budding preacher enrolled in Liberty University, founded by Falwell in 1971, taking distance-learning courses that eventually earned him a bachelor's degree in Biblical Studies. "It was like the seminary I should've gone into 10 years earlier," he said.[7] "I'll never be able to express the deep gratitude in my heart for Jerry Falwell and a school that believed in me."[8]

After his release, Keller spent a brief time as a traveling evangelist and embarked on a preaching tour that brought him into the sanctuaries of mega-churches and the backrooms of small, rural chapels.[9] It was in this arena that he honed his showmanship and whetted his appetite for grandeur, drawing on the influence of Falwell, whose blending of spirituality, education, politics, and media had formed an explosive Christian empire. But Keller found the traditionalism of pulpit preaching restrictive. In the business of saving souls, he sought a larger audience—one not limited by geography, radio transmission, or satellite footprint.

In 1999, he turned back to his computer roots, launching *LivePrayer.com*, a 24/7 Internet stream of volunteer evangelists who receive online prayer requests and deliver daily devotionals. Operating out of the backroom of Ace Motors, a shabby dirt-road car shop in Pensacola, Florida, Keller's headquarters is hardly the extravagant operation one would expect from a site that claims tens of thousands of hits per day.[10] His office, surrounded by used parts from rusty Ford Thunderbirds and Dodge Darts, doubles as the recording studio; a video camera on a tripod sits in front of a rickety wooden door and is zoomed in on the site's logo, drawn in felt pen on two pieces of taped printer paper.[11]

"We answer as many as 40,000 e-mails a day and have the privilege of leading many people to Christ," Keller said.[12] The ex-convict-turned-pastor's personal devotionals reached more than 2.5 million subscribers, making him the world's largest Internet evangelist. Amassing a congregation greater than any mega-church or Sunday morning television show could attract, Keller dispatched his apocalyptic messages each morning in emails that addressed the enemy *du jour*. On most mornings, that enemy—thought to be the nemesis of Christianity—was one of the usual suspects: homosexuals, abortionists, or liberals. But on September 11, 2001,

19 Muslim hijackers offered Keller a new enemy. He seized upon the tragedy and that evening, before he slept, had cast the day's events in uniquely religious language.

"It is 10PM on Tuesday night, the 11th of September, as I write this devotional," Keller wrote. "In my spiritual gut, I believe that this was a VERY big day in the overall end [of] times events." Tragic as they were, Keller saw the terrorist attacks as a sign from God. Orchestrated in heaven and played out before an earthly audience, their purpose was to unite the Christian body against Islam: "The enemy is out to kill, steal, and destroy. God has called you for a time such as this."[13]

Over the course of the following days and weeks, Keller penned dozens of devotionals about Islam. In one particularly telling dispatch, he echoed the religious rhetoric of Osama bin Laden, writing that "The battle lines will soon become drawn on lines of faith. The U.S., which is seen worldwide as representing Christianity, along with Israel, [is] against Islam … Ultimately, this will change from being a war on terrorism to a Holy War."[14] He eventually proclaimed God intended 9/11 as a conversion catalyst whereby 2,000 people, according to his estimates, would flock to Christianity in the aftermath.[15]

The narrative he constructed of Islam—a "false religion" and "cult" that was "dreamed up" by a "murderer" and a "pedophile" and followed by 1 billion disillusioned, "hell bound" souls—was deployed at a particularly critical time. Not only were Americans desperate for answers about Islam—a religion that was largely disconnected from public discourse until 9/11—but many also turned to the Internet for their answers. A Pew Internet and American Life Project poll released in December 2001 showed that 28 million Americans used the Internet to get religious and spiritual information while 41 percent of Internet users said they sent or received online prayer requests or devotionals after September 11. Importantly, the poll noted that 23 percent of Internet users, dubbed by Pew as "religion surfers," turned to online sources for information about Islam.[16] By 2003, 69 percent of American evangelicals reported using the Internet for online religious activities while 44 percent of Americans overall believed that Islam was more likely than other religions "to encourage violence among its believers."[17]

With fertile ground in which to plant the seeds of his growing enterprise and an electronic mailing list that was valued at more than $850,000, Bill Keller Ministries expanded its evangelistic activities beyond the confines of the Web and in March 2003,

launched *Live Prayer with Bill Keller*, a late night television show that boasted 250,000 viewers and became the second-highest rated program in its timeslot, behind Conan O'Brien.[18] In the wee early hours of the morning, distressed viewers would call in to Keller, who offered them spiritual advice. He also offered regular biting appraisals of Islam and Muslims, the most severe of which came in May 2007, when he called the religion a "1400-year-old lie from the pits of Hell," adding that the Prophet Muhammad was a "murdering pedophile."[19] That comment sparked outrage among Muslim and Christian organizations alike and led to the cancellation of the program.

Keller was familiar with hardship. He had experienced ordeals more trying than being ousted from a nationally broadcasted television show. Still, the sudden divorce from hundreds of thousands of nightly viewers stung and he loathed the possibility of retreating to a life of Internet stardom. Fortunately, the 2008 presidential election provided him with an opportunity to capitalize on hot-button issues. Keller first set his sights on Republican candidate Mitt Romney, whose Mormon faith was viewed with suspicion by the evangelical community. Writing that "A vote for Mitt Romney is a vote for Satan," Keller flooded his mailing list with sharp invectives against the former Massachusetts governor and even launched an anti-Romney website, www.votingforsatan.com. "Romney is an unashamed and proud member of the Mormon cult founded by a murdering polygamist pedophile named Joseph Smith nearly 200 years ago," Keller wrote:

> The teachings of the Mormon cult are doctrinally and theologically in complete opposition to the Absolute Truth of God's Word. There is no common ground. If Mormonism is true, then the Christian faith is a complete lie. There has never been any question from the moment Smith's cult began that it was a work of Satan and those who follow their false teachings will die and spend eternity in hell.[20]

Keller's comments landed him spots on a handful on news networks and in the pages of the nation's most prominent newspapers. But they also caught the attention of the IRS who launched an investigation of Bill Keller Ministries for playing partisan politics by violating non-profit tax regulations that prohibited his organization from endorsing or opposing candidates for public office.[21]

Keller was unshaken by the federal scrutiny and continued to exploit the heated political climate. When questions about Democratic nominee Barack Obama's eligibility to serve as president became flashpoints, Keller indulged himself in speculation and proposed that the candidate's diverse background foretold of an Oval Office conspiracy. "Is this man, Barack Obama, the fulfillment of Islamic prophecy?" Keller asked in a *Live Prayer* video. Quoting a verse from the Quran, he said, "Allah's Apostle said, 'The Hour will not be established until the sun rises from the West: and when the people see it, then whoever will be living on earth will have faith." Keller then described the alleged importance of symbols in the Asian and Middle Eastern cultures as the video faded in on Obama's "Hope" campaign logo. "Is it just a coincidence that Barack Hussein Obama's campaign symbol is the sun rising over the ultimate symbol of the West, the flag of the United States of America?"[22]

By May 2008, Bill Keller Ministries had accumulated nearly $2.5 million in assets according to an independent auditor's report, with $1.4 million coming from private donations, including his "Gold for Souls" program—a campaign that solicits gold jewelry donations from followers in return for God's blessings and a tax deduction. Still, Keller maintains that his ministry is not a get-rich-quick scheme and that he typically makes a meager $30–35,000 a year. The fulfillment of leading lost souls to Christ, he notes, is well worth the effort.

Plans for the "911 Christian Center" eventually dwindled due to a lack of funding. Panicked, Keller wrote an email to his followers and begged for wire transfers of more than $34,000 to offset debts. But the money never materialized. As public revulsion over the Park51 Community Center ebbed back into a sea of less newsworthy headlines, so too did Keller's paroxysms.

* * *

The religious Right, despite the premium they place on the teachings of Jesus Christ, have been, over the course of the past 20 years or more, behind much of the prejudice that is directed at a slew of minority groups. Muslims, as a result of their religious beliefs, have come to occupy a permanent place amidst the lineup of targets at which fundamentalist Christians typically fire. As the American psychologist and former Harvard University professor Gordon Allport has pointed out, these feelings of antipathy are the consequence of built-in systems of bigotry that operate within the

religious narratives and faith tenets of major world religions. Thus, while it is surprising to see some people of faith proclaiming the great value of "love thy neighbor" on the one hand, while bashing the neighbor's religion using demeaning language on the other, exclusive claims to salvation and the connection between religious values and political agendas foster such an uncomfortable schism.[23]

Revelation is what leads many of the Christian Right—and many religious fanatics in general—to believe that they are in exclusive possession of the final truth. It is, according to them, a truth that was delivered by God and is theirs to share with others, but also to protect. The entire destiny of man, therefore, is in their hands—that includes members of their Christian faith community and others. For those who interpret revelatory passages quite rigidly, this poses a problem, particularly upon the recognition that other faith narratives also have such claims. As the rhetoric of Bill Keller has demonstrated, the idea that Muslims may also be in possession of God's revelation and truth, is not only unacceptable, it is an offense so blasphemous that it must be stopped. Whatever economic problems exist, however tense the political or social climate is, those with anxieties about the changing nature of the world often find great comfort in feeling that their salvation remains a steadfast promise. Thus, to consider that others may also have access to such an exclusive and promised gift destroys for them the notion of their special relationship with God.[24]

The link between religious values and political agendas is also a goad to bigotry. The Christian Right is so labeled not only because they fall along the right-wing, or conservative, side of the religious spectrum, but perhaps more so because their religious beliefs overlap with their rightist political preferences. The Christian Coalition and the Moral Majority are two such groups that saw their heyday in the 1990s but are now non-operational. It is within this dimension that issues of immigration, same-sex marriage, race, and contraception gain ascendancy and spark. The fact that Muslims would be included in this mix is unsurprising. Their population growth in American societies and their increasing visibility in schools, workplaces, and government institutions means, for the anti-Muslim Christian right, that they are gaining influence in a society thought to be a bastion for biblical values. Additionally, the issue of Israel figures into this merger of the political and the religious. Many within the Christian Right believe that God has an unconditional and eternal covenant with the state of Israel and as a result, Christians are obliged to protect its interests as well its

enemies. The Christian Right, therefore, holds Palestinians in low regard, and heated, anti-Muslim rhetoric that echoes out from the pulpit is often refracted through the lens of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. End-of-times prophecy that meshes with fervent support of Israel has led some in the Christian Right, including Pastor John Hagee, to insist that military confrontation with Iran (seen as a threat to Israel) is foretold in the Bible as a prerequisite for the Second Coming.

* * *

Ergun Caner was once in training to become a holy war soldier, or so he told his audiences. Formerly the dean of Liberty University's theological seminary, the forty-something barrel-chested man with a goatee and shaved head rose to the top of conservative evangelical celebrity shortly after 9/11, portraying himself as a jihadist-turned-Christian who fled the tactics of terrorism to embrace the salvation of Jesus Christ.[25] Speaking to a crowd at the California Christian Apologetics Conference in Fremont, California on September 22, 2006, Caner leaned against the pulpit, rested his glasses on his head, and peered out into the rapt audience. "I hated you," he said softly:

> That may be harsh, but my madrassa, my training center, was in Beirut. Before I came to America, we came as missionaries to you … Ayatollah Khomeini had said, 'Do not stop until America is an Islamic nation,' and we came. I knew nothing about you, had never been in a church, had never been outside the mosque. But I did know this, I hated you and I thought you hated me.[26]

Caner's testimony became a keystone for his roadshows across the southern United States. As Americans inquired about the allegedly radical nature of Islam, who better to turn to for advice than a self-described former militant who was raised to express his abhorrence for the West through bombs? For Caner's audiences, his insider perspective not only revealed details of the foreign ideology plotting against them, but his poignant conversion story also reassured them of the supremacy of their own faith. If this was indeed a holy war—if God was directly engaged on behalf of one side against the other—being wrong would have eternal consequences.

One of the first churches to turn to Caner for consultation on Islam was Prestonwood Baptist Church, a 28,000-member congregation in Plano, Texas, that comprised a sizeable chunk of the Southern

Baptist Convention (SBC), the second largest Christian body in the United States after the Catholic Church.[27] In November 2001, Caner accepted an invitation to share his story. "You've heard it on just about every talk show that Allah, Jehovah, they're basically the same God," he said. "You're talking about divine nicknames. Please listen to me on this. No orthodox Muslim in the world would ever say that Jehovah and Allah are the same God. No Muslim in the world. And I hope no honest, authentic, and intelligent Christian would ever make that statement as well."[28]

Caner exerted a profound influence on the evangelical community. In the midst of post-9/11 Islamic ignorance and hysteria, no outspoken critic of Islam was more effective in the "education" of conservative Christians.[29] His sway was even greater than that of more well-known pastors like Franklin Graham, John Hagee, and Rod Parsley who, despite their outlandish statements, were largely peripheral voices. Caner's sermons teetered and tottered between frat-house jests and childhood anecdotes, and his polished performances drew massive audiences of youngish churchgoers who were attracted to his brand of shock humor. Peter Montgomery recalls Caner's cheeky rhetoric:

> Speaking to one largely white audience, Caner joked about worship in black churches, where he said they pass the plate 12 times, women wear hats the size of satellite dishes and men wear blue suits that match their shoes and a handkerchief that matches their car. One black Baptist preacher asked for an apology.
>
> At a conference in Seattle a few years ago, Caner joked about the Mexican students at Liberty this way: "The Mexican students and I get along real well. They're my boys. I always joke with 'em, I say 'Man, if I ever adopt, I want to adopt a Mexican because I need work done on my roof. [laughter] And, and uh, I got a big lawn."[30]

Caner's aversion to political correctness filled the pews of contemporary mega-churches as well as the lecture halls of Liberty University. He represented a shift from traditional schools of evangelism to a voguish, contemporary Christian conservatism that embraced popular culture and was relevant to a new generation of believers. Shortly after his appointment as dean of the school's seminary in 2005, student enrollment tripled. His popularity also allowed him to tap into a burgeoning media enterprise of books,

videos, podcasts, websites, and at-home study guides, all designed to educate the public about the alleged Islamic threat from an "insider's perspective."

Caner's book, *Unveiling Islam*, fit comfortably in line with an emerging pedigree of exposés that "unveiled" the religion (a reference to the *hijab*, or headscarf, worn by some Muslim women) to reveal a parlous ideology. His portrait, void of actors, time, and the various political and social dynamics that animated sixth-century Arabia, exploited stereotypes by positioning highly sensationalistic and violent passages of the Quran next to comparatively virtuous and pacific Biblical verses. The result was a one-sided representation where Christianity always came out on top. Winning the Gold Medallion Book Award and selling nearly 200,000 copies, *Unveiling Islam* became an authoritative reference for many conservative preachers including Jerry Vines, the former president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of the nation's then third largest Southern Baptist Church. Vines found himself engulfed in controversy when, speaking before the SBC's annual conference in June 2002, he said:

> Today, people are saying all religions are the same. They would have us believe Islam is just as good as Christianity. But I'm here to tell you, ladies and gentleman, that Islam is not as good as Christianity. Christianity was founded by the virgin-born Lord, Jesus Christ. Islam was founded by Muhammad, a demon-possessed pedophile who had 12 wives and his last one was a 9-year-old-girl. Allah is not Jehovah. Jehovah is not going to turn you into a terrorist that'll try to bomb people and take the lives of thousands and thousands of people.[31]

The comments, it turned out, were prompted by Caner's book. When asked about the connection, he hardly demurred, noting that despite the harsh language, the assessment was ultimately correct:* "The comments in question cannot be considered bigotry when they come from Islamic writings … A so-called Christian who bombs an abortion clinic or shoots an abortionist and says God told him to do

* In a revised version of the text, Caner appeared to address Vines's statement head on, noting that "To identify Muhammad with a neurological disease or demon possessed does little to advance the Gospel witness. Still, it is interesting to note that, according to 'Amr ibn Sharhabil, Muhammad himself told his wife Khadija that he feared he was possessed by demons and wondered whether others might consider him possessed."

it does that act against the Bible. But the Muslim who commits acts of violence in jihad does so with the approval of Muhammad."[32]

Following *Unveiling Islam*, Caner released an onslaught of other revelatory books, among them *More Than a Prophet: An Insider's Response to Muslim Beliefs About Jesus and Christianity*, and *Out of the Crescent Shadows: Leading Muslim Women Into the Light of Christ*, as well as a selection of popular DVDs with such titles as *When Worldviews Collide* and *Where Is Islam Taking the World?*. The sudden abundance of anti-Islamic writing, the large majority of it directed at Christian audiences, led televangelist John Ankerberg to call Caner "one of the world's foremost scholars on Islam" and circulate his material through the Ankerberg Theological Research Institute (ATRI), a Christian media empire comprised of a weekly half-hour television show that reached an estimated 147 million viewers, a radio program broadcast on 130 stations nationwide, and a website that boasted more than 3 million unique visitors per year from nearly 200 countries.

Caner frequently appeared alongside Ankerberg to deliver gloomy warnings about the rise of Islam noting in one particular episode of *The John Ankerberg Show* that "68,000 people are becoming Muslims every 24 hours" and that "by the year 2050, there will be 2.2 billion Muslims on planet earth."[33] But this was about more than a demographic trend. An increase in the number of Muslims worldwide was, for them, an indication of a larger sinister plot. Ankerberg noted that "Muslims have a goal to proselytize every American family by 2013 at least once"—a feat he said would be accomplished through $10-per-person donations funded by the government of Saudi Arabia. "That's on the table right now, and it's happening right now while we're talking," he warned.[34] Caner added that the goal of Muslim proselytization was, "a commitment of 3 billion dollars" and that "we already see them buying newspaper ads and such." The result, he suggested, would be the implementation of Islamic law and America would soon become the scene of violent bloodbaths. "The country that is probably the most shining example of Sharia law is Sudan, where you are seeing the wholesale slaughter of tribes because they will not convert to Islam—they are Christian sub-tribes or they are Muslims who have converted to Christianity and so there's just wholesale slaughter," Caner warned.[35] Repeated requests for verification of these claims were met with silence, leading skeptics to propose that they were conjured up as part of a plot to scare Christians about

Islam. The statistics, though, were not the only imaginary part of Caner's "Jihad to Jesus" narrative.

During the summer of 2010, his story began to unravel when bloggers discovered major discrepancies in his accounts of his Muslim background. While Caner's testimony made for great post-9/11 storytelling (and sold hundreds of thousands of books), it was not true.[36] Though he claimed to have been born in Istanbul, Turkey, the son of a devout Muslim who trained him to become a hardened anti-American jihadist, official court documents show that he was born in Sweden, immigrating to Ohio in 1969 before he was three years old.[37] Even so, Caner repeatedly told his audiences, including a group of US Marines whom he trained about Islam, that he "knew nothing about America until [he] came here when [he] was 14 years old." Thanking the room full of soldiers for liberating "my people" in Iraq, Caner lauded the values of American liberty, suggesting that he had lived for many years under "Islamic fascism." Glowering into the camera, he paused from his animated, riveting story just long enough to build suspense amongst the silent crowd. "I want you to look very carefully at my face," he said, sternly. "This is the face of a declared enemy. I wasn't just a Muslim. My training in the madrassa was three generations deep with the *jihadin* [*sic*]. Welcome to my world."[38]

Caner regularly peppered his speeches with what he claimed were Arabic phrases. On one occasion, he said that "We are taught in Islam that Allah is creator and he is judge. And we have a verse in the Quran that says '*Allah a'loosh ar turoos*,' Allah has no son. Allah and Jehovah are not the same. Not by Muslim standards and certainly not by the word of God."[39] Yet what came from his mouth was mere gibberish and attracted the attention of several native Arabic speakers who pointed out his scheme. Mohammed Khan of *FaxExMuslims.com* partnered with James White, the director of Alpha and Omega Ministries to create a series of online videos in which they combed through Caner's statements and revealed numerous instances where he Arabicized non-Arabic words by simply adding "ayn" or "in" at the end. At other times, he simply mouthed made up expressions by combining unintelligible sounds.[40]

Ergun Michael Caner (he changed his middle name to "Mehmet" shortly after 9/11) grew up looking and acting like every other kid his age in 1970s Columbus, Ohio. Raised by divorced parents, his early years in the heartland were spent in limbo as court systems

worked out the details of a bitter custody battle.* While his father, Acar, insisted on raising young Ergun and his brother as Muslims, his mother objected, and the Ohio court system eventually intervened, granting Acar five weeks of visitation rights per year, including every other weekend and major Islamic holidays. The remainder of the time, the Caner brothers were in the custody of their Swedish, Lutheran mother, Monica.[41] "My mother was one of many wives of my father," he told listeners of an *Issues Etc.* radio broadcast.[42] While Caner's father did have two wives in his lifetime, he was never married to more than one at a time. After divorcing Caner's mother, Acar remarried another woman—an important detail that Caner intentionally omits from his story.

Far from the madrassas of the Middle East, Caner attended Gahanna Lincoln High School from 1981 through 1984 where he excelled at soccer and participated in extra-curricular activities that included children's theater, French club, freshman choir, and intramurals.[43] Though he attributes his knowledge of English and western culture to what he learned from television "that passed the conscriptions of the sensors in Turkey," his yearbook photos depict a typical, shaggy-haired western youth whose charisma won him speaking roles in such plays as "Father of the Bride" and "Homecoming."[44] "As for my accent, speak to my wife and those who have me speak at evening events," he wrote on his website.[45] "I work very hard to speak understandably, and with clear diction. The problem is, English is neither my first nor my second language. Sometimes it is really a struggle."[46] Rolling his r's and speaking at times with a thick Middle Eastern burr—an inflection he turns on quite easily when discussing Islam—Caner's tale of an anti-American jihadist, destined by his faith to wreak havoc on the land of the free until he was saved by Christ at the eleventh hour, had all the trappings of a box-office thriller. His dramatic testimony sowed seeds of suspicion and suggested that all Muslims—even seemingly western, English-speaking, Ohio-dwelling youths—were militants.

Following an investigation in June 2010, Liberty University announced that Caner was being removed as dean because of "factual statements that are self-contradictory" concerning "dates,

* Affidavits show that Caner was in the United States from 1969 until at least the middle of 1975, the year he turned 9. In 1978, Caner's mother was awarded full custody, during which time he was prevented from leaving Columbus. While a three-year gap exists from 1975–78, it is unlikely that Caner traveled abroad during that time and even more unlikely that he was trained as a terrorist, as he was just 12 years old at the time.

names of places, and residence."[47] While he remained a faculty member for nearly another year, he left Liberty in June 2011 to become provost and vice-president of academic affairs of Arlington Baptist College in Arlington, Texas. "I have the utmost confidence in Dr. Ergun Caner," wrote President D.L. Moody. "I believe that he has the abilities, wisdom and passion to enhance the work and ministry of Arlington Baptist College as we prepare a Generation of Giants for Jesus Christ. He shares the values that I have for biblical authority, evangelistic fervor, and godly example."[48]

* * *

A yellow Gadsden flag proclaimed "Don't Tread on Me." Revolutionary War-era costumes, red-and-white-striped hats, and pictures of the Founding Fathers provided a colorful backdrop for earnest recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance and passages from the Constitution. A banner with the phrase "God Bless the USA" pulsed up and down in sync with the crowd's fervent chants. The event had the atmosphere and spirit of an Independence Day picnic. Many had even brought lawn chairs and their pets.

But this was not a picnic. It was a protest. The Southern California chapter of the Islamic Circle of North America Relief USA had organized a dinner to raise money for its many humanitarian projects, among them women's housing, hunger prevention, family counseling, and medical aid. As event-goers walked towards the building, the motley crowd of Tea Partiers gathered outside hurled an array of stinging verbal attacks, the most venomous of which were directed at children and women. "Go home, go home," they shouted, not referring to the attendees' physical residences but rather the foreign countries from which they were believed to have been born. "Muhammad was a child molester. Muhammad was a pervert," one man shouted. Another woman approached the building with a megaphone shrieking, "Why don't you go beat up your wife like you do every night? Why don't you have sex with a nine-year old. Marry her." Outside the Yorba Linda Community Center in Orange County, a vitriolic display of nativism eclipsed the patriotic façade, beloved anthems bellowing out in concert with a vulgar repertoire of anti-Muslim epithets.

Republican politicians affiliated with the Tea Party attended the protest, inciting the mob with xenophobic rants. Deborah Pauly, a Villa Park City Council member, straddled the podium and pointed angrily at the building that housed the charity dinner, shouting,

"What's going over there right now—that is pure, unadulterated evil. I know quite a few Marines who will be very happy to help these terrorists to an early meeting in paradise."[49] Representative Ed Royce of California's 40th District attacked "multiculturalism," saying that too many children have been taught that every idea is right and as a result, America's hopes for prospering as a society would ultimately be "paralyzed."[50] Piercing through the thunderous applause that echoed throughout the parking lot off of Casa Loma Avenue were shrill blasts from a chorus of *shofars*, rams' horns traditionally used in Jewish prayer services or to announce the commencement of the High Holy Days. "It's also used in battle to announce to the enemy that God's army is coming," said Dena Newman, Central California state leader for Shofar Call International, a Christian Zionist group that trains, mobilizes and dispatches horn blowers to public events throughout the country.

Religious influence in American politics has waxed and waned since the founding of the republic. While Tea Partiers often harken back to the days of Jefferson and Madison to find inspiration for their political battles, the notion of "God's army" waging war on an enemy typically yields to more secular skirmishes: fights over limited government, lower taxes, and fiscal responsibility. These platforms are usually not advanced by an underlying religious fervor and the anti-government rhetoric of the Tea Party is not typically imbued with religious language. Movement leaders are more likely to criticize wasteful government spending than launch invectives against gay marriage or abortion.

Yet despite the aversions of some Tea Partiers to engage in a culture war, religious undercurrents have managed to seep through their secular narrative and have come to take a prominent place in the movement's political discourse. Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell, for example, noted at the 2010 Faith and Freedom Conference that "limited government," "traditional values," and "fiscal responsibility"—all platforms of the Tea Party—were ordained by God, the ultimate source of individual rights.[51] Newt Gingrich shared that view, saying that "God gives you sovereignty. The government doesn't define rights."[52]

In fact, the worldview of many Tea Party members has even evolved into an understanding that government is not merely a threat to individual freedoms, but rather a satanic presence that seeks to usurp those freedoms by increasing the national debt, pushing for higher taxes, and growing the federal government. Thus, to advance its agenda, the Tea Party need not look further than their

bedroom nightstands, where the Bible would offer divine guidance on political issues. Ralph Reed, a golden boy of the conservative movement and former executive director of the Christian Coalition, hailed the power of the Judeo-Christian tradition in countering the government's power. Reed, whose goal is to harness grassroots Republican energy by merging the fiscally conservative Tea Party with the socially conservative Christian Right, views a strong Christian moral code as being synonymous with democracy: "Democracy doesn't really work at all unless there is a citizenry animated by a moral code that derives from their faith in God."[53]

The Tea Party's conviction that America has been robbed of its economic potential by sinister cosmopolitan elites spurred a campaign to "take back" their country. Evangelicals share this strong sense of dispossession, loathing what they see as America's moral decline. The government, they believe, has strayed from Christian principles and embraced secular policies that will lead to a world where competing powers seize America's prominent place on the global stage and spread a foreign ideology. "I believe God loves America," said Reed's predecessor and televangelist, Pat Robertson:

> I believe He remembers the sacrifice of past generations and how they've stood up and how this country has been a beacon of freedom around the world, and He doesn't want this country to go into chaos. It's heading that way, but is the Tea Party His answer? It would be. It's almost like the humor of God that He's going to bring a bunch of housewives in to change the government. Isn't that great?[54]

If Robertson was right, if God's plan was to send the Tea Party to rescue America, polls suggested that a receptive audience would be waiting. The Public Religion Research Institute reported in 2010 that 55 percent of people who identify with the Tea Party believe that America "has always been and currently is" a uniquely Christian nation; nearly half of the movement considers themselves part of the Christian Right.[55] A two-part study conducted by David Campbell, associate professor of political science at Notre Dame, and Robert Putnam, professor of public policy at Harvard, sharpens this overlap into relief.[56] Interviewing a representative sample of 3,000 Americans in 2006, Campbell and Putnam predicted who would become a Tea Party supporter long before the party ever existed. Their research into national political attitudes revealed certain trends that were confirmed in subsequent interviews with the

same individuals in 2011. The results cast serious doubts on the Tea Party's "origin story," suggesting that the movement is not comprised of nonpartisan political neophytes from diverse backgrounds but, instead, deeply partisan, overwhelmingly white Republicans who have low regard for black people and immigrants. Importantly, Campbell and Putnam note that rank-and-file Tea Partiers are disproportionately social conservatives who "seek 'deeply religious' elected officials, approve of religious leaders' engaging in politics, and want religion brought into political debates."[57]

This intersection of conservative Christians and Tea Partiers gave rise to a cadre of politicians, religious leaders, and activists who united to guarantee their individual and collective security on earth and in heaven. The "teavangelicals," as they were called, were an impassioned coterie.[58] America's changing political, social, and economic landscapes roused among them an unbridled quest to emancipate the country from the shackles of a flagging economy and defend it from terrorist threats. This national anxiety engendered an identity crisis that led to the vilification of groups believed to be obstructing America's God-given promise. Muslims in particular were seen as the antithesis to a nation supposedly grounded in Christian principles, and the "teavangelicals" besieged this voguish bogeyman, igniting a ferocious hue and cry over the alleged infiltration of the republic.

The first manifestation of an emerging Muslim advance, they believed, was a prayer rally scheduled for September 25, 2009 in Washington, DC. Billed as a "Day of Islamic Unity," the event aimed to "illustrate the wonderful diversity of Islam" and "inspire a new generation of Muslims to work for the greater good of all people regardless of race, religion, or national origin."[59] For the radical alliance of the Christian Right and the Tea Party, though, the occasion was evidence of a sinister plot to "descend" on the nation's capital and exert Islamic influence on American political structures. Reports indicated that 50,000 Muslims would attend the one-day prayer event—a number that alarmed opponents and energized efforts to establish a prayer blockade. They believed that if the Muslims' appeals to God could be disrupted, America would be spared from ensuing chaos. Pamela Geller's organization Stop Islamization of America (SIOA) encouraged its members to confront the attendees with "some component of donkey, dog, and woman" asserting that "Islamic prayer is nullified if a dog, a woman, or a donkey are present."[60] Prominent evangelist Lou Engle sounded what he called a "massive spiritual alarm," summoning evangelical

Christians "in the midst of the rising tide of Islamic influence in America" to "bring about a great day of salvation for Muslims." By rallying prayer warriors whom he called the "Church of America," Engle believed that he could outmatch the Muslims gathered for worship in Washington and that God, showing favoritism to Christians, would intercede at the event and shed light on the "dark powers." He predicted that "Muslims would be moved by the Holy Spirit, convicted by the testimony of Christ, and [would] even be visited by Jesus in dreams."[61]

Tea Party groups joined the chorus of proselytization, including the Family Research Council (FRC), a right-wing, evangelical think tank labeled a "hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The president of the 455,000-member organization, Tony Perkins, insisted that Muslims should "affirm loyalty to the U.S. and our constitutional liberties" and invited members to pray "that the conversion of Muslims to Christianity would not only continue, but accelerate."[62] Perkins was critical of what he viewed as the latest attack in a long series of assaults on Christianity. This was, for him, a war and Islam was the enemy *du jour*. On a conference call the night before the scheduled Muslim prayer rally at the Capitol, Perkins asked fellow evangelical leaders, "Are they [Muslims] praying for the wellbeing of our nation?" The answer, he and others believed, was undoubtedly no. After all, the well-being of the United States depended on the supremacy of the Judeo-Christian tradition—an alliance that, by its dualistic nature, excluded the religion of Islam. Could it be, he wondered, that the Muslims gathered for prayer on the national mall would secretly be plotting an attack on Christian Americans? "There's been a lot of silence in the Islamic community when America and Americans have been attacked by acts of terror from the Muslim community," he told the callers. "We would hope that we would hear from the Muslim community that these acts of terror are not going to be tolerated, and denounce them." But even by his own admission—even if Muslims were gathered to pray for the well-being of the United States and had vociferously denounced terrorism—that was not good enough. In his view, there was only one thing that could ultimately bring about a brighter America: the conversion of Muslims to Christianity. "That's the only thing that's going to stop radical Islam is the love of Jesus Christ and the Gospel that sets people free," Perkins said.[63]

While many powerful religious right-wing groups—including Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition and Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority—eventually ran out of steam, Perkins's $12 million-a-year

operation proved to be more durable and became one of the most influential and longest lasting organizations of its kind, crusading against minority groups, most especially homosexuals, abortion rights activists, and immigrants. It was the latter group that came to the fore in 2007 as political discourse turned to the potential field of candidates for the 2008 presidential election. The Democratic Party's rock-star politician, a young black Chicagoan with a foreign name and diverse background, was a stark contrast to the southern, white Republican who then occupied the White House. Questions about Barack Obama's birthplace, his childhood time overseas, and his Muslim father fueled rumors that the candidate himself was a Muslim Trojan horse. Perkins and the FRC were among those who raised such speculations, using race and religion as wedge issues to encourage evangelical opposition and grow the Republican coalition. In an email alert sent out to FRC subscribers in February 2007, Perkins wrote, "Joining an already glutted field of hopefuls, Sen. Barack Hussein Obama (D-Ill.) announced his candidacy for the 2008 Democratic nomination yesterday." Writing Obama's full name—a tactic employed by several right-wing politicians and pundits—Perkins hoped to emphasize his "foreignness" and link him to the brutal Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, who Americans had come to know and despise over the course of the past two decades. Later, when asked specifically about Obama's religion, Perkins speculated that the Democratic candidate was a Muslim and that his plans for the United States included the implementation of an Islamic state. "He claims to be a Christian but yet claims America is not a Christian nation," he said. "He seems to be advancing the idea of the Islamic religion. You know, that's up to him. The White House has to deal with that problem. It's not up to me."[64]

Perkins's opposition to Obama and his intense dislike of Muslims appeared to reveal more than merely divergent views on politics and religion. As Michelle Goldberg, author of *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism*, notes, "Racism, too, has been a crucial ingredient in American right-wing movements, and it obviously remains strong in many places."[65] While the evangelical community has gone to great lengths to diversify its congregations in recent years, racial prejudice still occupies a prominent place in the beliefs and institutions of many in the Christian Right. In 2004, a study conducted by the American Mosaic Project at the University of Minnesota found that when it comes to race and religion, white conservative Protestants are more likely than other Americans to be less tolerant of diversity. According to the findings, 48.3 percent

of white, conservative Christians say they would disapprove if their child wanted to marry a black person.[66] A Pew Research Poll from February 2011 revealed that 44 years after *Loving* vs. *Virginia* declared anti-miscegenation statues unconstitutional, thereby ending all race-based legal restrictions on marriage in the United States, 16 percent of evangelicals still oppose interracial marriage, calling it a "bad thing for our society."[67] In a similar vein, theologian Ronald Sider notes that white evangelicals are the *most* likely people to object to neighbors of another race.[68] Bob Jones University, one of the nation's leading conservative evangelical schools, even banned interracial dating until the year 2000—36 years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended segregation.

Despite the fact that Perkins has extolled publicly his appreciation for people of all backgrounds, his associations with racist organizations tell another story. During the 1996 Senate campaign of Woody Jenkins, a Louisiana state lawmaker and director of the Council for National Policy (CNP), a secretive right-wing group of religious and political activists, Perkins, who was serving as Jenkins's campaign manager, attempted to consolidate Louisiana's Republican base by purchasing the mailing list of former Ku Klux Klan ringmaster David Duke. The $82,000 buyout was eventually exposed by the FEC and the Jenkins campaign was fined.[69] Perkins' mingling with the white supremacist Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC) also reveals the seamy underside of his political associations. A spinoff of the KKK, the CCC opposes "the massive immigration of non-European and non-Western peoples into the United States," saying that it "threatens to transform our nation into a non-European majority in our lifetime." They "also oppose all efforts to mix the races of mankind."[70] Standing in front of a confederate flag inside Bonanno's Restaurant in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on May 17, 1997, Perkins addressed the white nationalist group on legislative issues affecting the southern state. Six years later, in May 2001, he accepted an invitation to speak to them a second time but denied espousing racist views.

The spheres of Islamophobia and racism overlap greatly. In the last 60 years, in particular, racist language has shifted away from overtly biological prejudices to include a strong cultural component. While derogatory views of blacks, for example, have come to occupy a taboo and even disdainful corner of public social discourse, prejudices against groups with differing belief systems—not necessarily genes—is acceptable. Ramón Grosfoguel, author of *Colonial Subjects: Puerto Ricans in a Global Perspective*, writes that

"'Biological racist discourses' have now been replaced by what is called the 'new racism' or 'cultural racist' discourses."[71] This new racism, he notes, divides the world between "superior" cultures and "inferior" cultures, the latter of which are marginalized not only because of their ethnic background, but also because of their traditions, beliefs, and cultural practices, often described by racists as "uncivilized," "backwards," "primitive," or "barbarian." The Values Voter Summit, an annual conservative political conference sponsored by the FRC provided a bastion against "threats from within and without" and revived the Christian Right as a viable electoral player, ready to nominate evangelical Republicans and reconfigure America's moral landscape. Verbal attacks on Islam became the conference speakers' battle cry, drawing cheers from passionate audiences.

At the 2010 Summit, held just days after the ninth anniversary of September 11th, former FRC president and Republican presidential candidate Gary Bauer triggered lurking anti-Muslim sentiment within the crowd. "We believe that all men are created equal and are endowed by their creator—and by the way, folks, *that's not Allah*—with certain unalienable rights," he roared as the room of white, middle-aged evangelicals erupted in agreement. Bauer mockingly told the audience that President Obama should have given his speech on religious tolerance following the Park51 controversy in Mecca, rather than Washington—a line that drew the crowd to their feet again. The 65-year-old fundamentalist made it clear that his invectives were not limited to radicals. His rhetoric targeted what he saw as a crude "Islamic culture [that] keeps hundreds of millions of people on the verge of violence and mayhem 24 hours a day."[72] Their "violence" and "mayhem," characteristics believed to be an inherent part of their religion, had to be tamed by a mighty Christian influence.

Bauer's comments struck a chord with conference goers. National outcry over Park51 and the rising Sharia scare placed Islam at the top of their attack list. This powered a steady flow of anti-Muslim rhetoric from speakers and attendees who steered their religious homilies towards communal opposition to the Christian "enemy." When Bryan Fischer, director of issues analysis for the American Family Association (AFA), stepped up to the podium at the 2011 Conference, the tenor of the Value Voters gathering was pronounced in a puritanical new register. "The threat is not radical Islam, but Islam itself. This is not Islamophobia, this is Islamorealism," he bellowed to a crowd which greeted his attacks with raucous

applauses. "While there might be moderate Muslims, there is no such thing as moderate Islam."

Like many "teavangelicals," the germ of Fischer's anti-Muslim sentiment was rooted in the desire to establish a homogenous culture characterized by conservative political and religious values and ruled by social elites. It was also a symptom of underlying racial prejudices, some of which had surfaced in alarming tirades against, among other groups, blacks and Native Americans. In February 2011, Fischer wrote on AFA's blog, *Rightly Conservative*, that white European settlers of the New World had the moral authority, bestowed upon them by their belief in Christianity, to subjugate the natives of North America and seize their land. He touted Pocahantas—a seventeenth-century American Indian who, according to legend, convinced her father not to kill English settler John Smith, and who eventually embraced the Christian religion, married a white settler, and bore him a son—as the model that all indigenous people should have followed: "It's arresting to think of how different the history of the American settlement and expansion could have been if the other indigenous peoples had followed Pocahontas' example." Fischer lamented:

> She not only recognized the superiority of the God whom the colonists worshipped over the gods of her native people, she recognized the superiority (not the perfection) of their culture and adopted its patterns and language as her own. In other words, she both converted and assimilated … Had the other indigenous people followed her example, their assimilation into what became America could have been seamless and bloodless. Sadly, it was not to be.[73]

Fischer's post was one of many vituperations directed at Native Americans. In a brash follow-up to the essay he had penned just one week earlier, Fischer asserted that Native Americans were "morally disqualified" to retain their homeland as a result of their failure to convert to Christianity. And, just as God had warned the Israelites not to "lapse into the abominable practices of the native people 'lest the land vomit you out as it vomited out the nation that was before you,'" Native Americans represented that abomination and were therefore rightfully expelled from their land. "The native American tribes ultimately resisted the appeal of Christian Europeans to leave behind their superstition and occult practices for the light of Christianity and civilization. They in the end resisted

every attempt to 'Christianize the Savages of the Wilderness,' to use George Washington's phrase," wrote Fischer. These "savages," he contended, are today still "mired in poverty and alcoholism" as they have rejected "assimilation into Christian culture," instead choosing to maintain their own religious traditions.[74]

So baleful were these customs to Fischer's vision for a predominantly white American Christian civilization, he warned his followers that President Barack Obama, whose ethnicity and religion he also preyed upon, "wants to give the entire land mass of the United States of America back to the Indians. He wants Indian tribes to be our new overlords."[75] The scenario made sense—Fischer had long suggested that Obama was not a Christian. His burden of proof rested squarely on Obama's admission that as a young father, he grappled with explaining to his daughter the complex question of what happens after death. His hesitancy to explain the afterlife in uniquely religious terms—the belief in Jesus resulting in an eternal heavenly reward—could only mean that he harbored other religious views. Uncertainty had no place in Fischer's worldview and was, as he wrote, an easy answer—one that even "a Muslim could give since a Muslim can't know he's going to paradise unless he blows up some infidels."[76]

Still, for Fischer, not only was Obama not a Christian, he was not authentically black. Compared to Herman Cain, a 65-year-old Atlanta businessman and Tea Party favorite whose candidacy for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination was built largely on an anti-Muslim platform, Obama paled in comparison. "[Obama] can't talk enough about how white he is and how white his heritage is," Fischer said:[77]

> And you compare that to, say, Herman Cain—you know, Herman Cain was just joking around about being the real Black man in the presidential race and President Obama kind of helping reinforce what Herman Cain has said in jest. President Obama is half-white, and half-black; Herman Cain is all black; he's authentically black; he is the real black man in the race.[78]

Fischer and his colleagues on the right embraced Cain. He toed the conservative evangelical line and thus represented for them one of the "good," "well-behaved" blacks. He was outspoken on controversial social issues like gay marriage and abortion, and delivered political manifestos that were infused with Christian nationalism. He was also quick to berate Obama, often representing the president as

anti-Christian, and therefore, anti-American. Outlining what he saw as Obama's failure to refer to the United States as a Judeo-Christian nation, Cain charged the president with intentionally omitting God's name from his speeches. He added that "When he first became president and he went to Turkey to give a speech and declared that we were not a Christian nation, well I got [*sic*] news for the president. We are a Judeo-Christian nation and a lot of people want to keep it that way."[79]

Though Cain fit cozily within Fischer's far-right clique, affinity for the black presidential candidate did not translate into an open embrace of African Americans. In fact, just days after exalting Cain as an "authentic" member of the race, Fischer blasted American welfare programs for destroying "the African-American family by telling young black women that husbands and fathers are unnecessary and obsolete. Welfare has subsidized illegitimacy by offering financial rewards to women who have more children out of wedlock."[80] As a result of these policies, Fischer noted, greater American society was suffering. "It's no wonder we are now awash in the disastrous social consequences of people who rut like rabbits," he wrote in a post that was quickly removed from the AFA website.[81]

Fischer's eliminationist rhetoric towards Muslims appeared to be a derivative of his racially tinged language towards blacks and Native Americans. He had demonstrated a pattern of projecting messages that vilified groups whose values ran counter to the idea of a homogenous Christian culture. His calls for the expulsion of all Muslims living in the United States evidenced a puritanical belief that society was infected with inferior elements. Just as Fischer lamented the "savage" and "morally disqualified" Native Americans and the "illegitimate," welfare-ridden black communities, his stereotypes of Muslims eventually moved from proclamations of cultural subservience to the belief that they were biologically subordinate due to, as he called it, practices of "massive inbreeding" that resulted in "irreversible damage to the Muslim gene pool."[82] By this account, episodes of Muslim violence could be explained in religious and physiological terms. As such, Islam was but one contributing factor to manifestations of terrorism and at the end of the day, religious traditions notwithstanding, violence was seen as part of Muslims' genetic makeup. "This kind of inbreeding results in an enormous cost in intellectual capacity, intellectual quotient among the Islamic people," Fischer bemoaned. "Bottom line: Islam is not simply a benign and morally equivalent alternative to the Judeo-Christian tradition."[83]

Long on grisly examples and short on evidence, Fischer then offered a lopsided comparison of the two religious traditions:

> Sawing the head off your wife makes you a good Muslim, but it makes you a bad Christian. Running your daughter down with your SUV makes you a good Muslim, but it makes you a bad Christian. Shooting a roomful of your fellow soldiers after shouting 'Allahu Akhbar' makes you a good Muslim, but to do the same thing in the name of Jesus makes you a bad Christian. Flying planes into buildings, killing thousands of innocents, makes you a good Muslim, but it makes you a bad Christian.[84]

Macabre descriptions of Muslims were the modus operandi of Fischer and his AFA associates, whose net assets in 2010 totaled nearly $37 million. Through $18 million a year in private donations, their Christian agenda was disseminated to the public and, with no regard for factuality, they blazoned fantastical depictions of "good Muslims" whose violent rages fit precisely into the religious schema they had carved out.

* * *

When Bryan Fischer and Tony Perkins sat down in May 2011 to discuss the death of Osama bin Laden, their apparent fascination with the details of the terrorist ringleader's demise and their insistence on viewing the photographs of his bloodied corpse evinced more than mere satisfaction that the world's most wanted criminal had met the fate he brought to 3,000 Americans. This was, by their view, also a religious victory—a signal to Muslims around the world that the Christian forces of America would not only defeat the Muslim extremists militarily, but triumph spiritually over the religion of Islam. The conversation, a televised roundtable hosted by the American Family Association, couched the discussion of bin Laden's death in uniquely religious language.

Joining Fischer and Perkins for the conversation was Brigitte Gabriel, a flamboyant Lebanese-born Christian and founder of ACT! for America, a group that courts evangelicals, hardline defenders of Israel, and Tea Party Republicans to, as the *New York Times* noted, "present a portrait of Islam so thoroughly bent on destruction and domination that it is unrecognizable to those who study or practice the religion."[85]

Like Ergun Caner, Gabriel used her life story to sell her extreme views. Growing up in southern Lebanon in the 1970s, the 47-year-old crusader tells a harrowing tale of life as a Lebanese Christian in a war-torn country. She first noticed "radical Islam's war of world domination" four years before the Iranian hostage crisis, when as a 10-year-old girl, "rockets exploded in [her] bedroom on a November night." Describing herself as a "Christian infidel" caught in the midst of a bloody civil conflict, Gabriel's family spent seven years hiding out in a bomb shelter situated beside the rubble remains of what once was her home. That experience, she noted, "a religious war declared by the Muslims against the Christians," followed her to the United States where the same Muslim radicals who terrorized the country of her birth were now thought to be plotting to take over her adopted home.[86]

Gabriel's story, however, is tendentious if not outright deceitful. The Manichean narrative she sells to her unwitting audiences brushes over a religious and political scene that was anything but black and white. At no time during Gabriel's life was Lebanon a Christian or Muslim-majority country. It has been for many decades a mixed society, comprised of myriad ethnic and sectarian populations. And while she tells of living life on the run, ducking for cover amidst a barrage of Muslim-led attacks, her former neighbors note that hers was a life lived like all others—difficult given "the situation" of Israeli occupation but not the horror story she recounts.[87] One neighbor explained, "She always loved the Israeli occupation of Marjayoun and over time just came to dislike Arabs of all types, even though as a Lebanese she is totally Arab." Another one disagreed, saying that, "Brigitte never really thought of herself as an Arab at all; rather she fantasized that she was 'Phoenician' and pointed out to her Arab neighbors that 'Phoenicians were in Lebanon long before the Arabs invaded and it belongs to us!'"[88]

Gabriel points out with seeming satisfaction that it was Hezbollah who, in 1975, declared jihad against "infidel" Christians, yet her account manipulates the most basic historical facts: Hezbollah was not founded until 1982 and even then it was Israel's invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon that prompted the group's formation, not religious infighting between Lebanese groups. At that time, Gabriel was living in Israel where she worked as an anchor for Middle East Television, a station founded by Christian Broadcast Network's Pat Robertson, who pioneered slanted depictions of the conflict in order to spread his conservative Pentecostal faith in the region.[89] This association may explain the lack of subtlety in

Gabriel's skewed representation. Such details often undercut the stark dichotomy necessitated by propaganda.

Decked out in pearls, ruby-red lipstick, and a teased-up hairdo, Gabriel quickly jumped on the gloom-and-doom bandwagon and embraced the platitudes of the "teavangelicals." With Perkins and Fischer, she fused her intense dislike of Islam with her aversion to the Obama administration, proposing that Osama bin Laden's burial ceremony, performed by government officials aboard the USS Carl Vinson, was part of an Islamic incursion. "You know, it's ironic because our president said he was not a Muslim and that he does not represent Islam, you know. It looks like our president was talking from both sides of his mouth." She continued in this vein, offering a series of unfounded remarks designed to frighten her listeners by stressing Islam's purported closeness to the shores of America:

> We have a lot of *mullahs* in the United States military, Muslims who are *mullahs*, Muslim soldiers, and from what I understand, that particular ship, actually, has a very close working relationship with Saudi Arabia. A few Muslim military personnel from that ship were sent to the *hajj*, to the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina and Saudi Arabia, paid for by our tax dollars as a part of the contract and the networking that they have with Saudi Arabia so that ship is whipped by *dhimmitude* from the top down so it's not surprising that they would have a Muslim *mullah* on the ship.[90]

But it was not just the threat of radicals that Gabriel forewarned. She emphasized the inseparability of Islam and violence, and lambasted what she viewed as "politically correct" attempts to rebrand an unsettling truth.[91] In a June 2007 interview with *The Australian Jewish News*, Gabriel unloaded a sampling of prejudicial remarks that typify her stump speeches and interviews, saying that practicing Muslims—those "who believe the word of the Koran to be the word of Allah, who abide by Islam, who go to the mosque and pray every Friday [and] who pray five times a day"—are actually radical Muslims. "Every practicing Muslim is a radical Muslim if he upholds the tenets of the Koran, if he goes to the Mosques, because they are being fed nothing other than the Koran," she noted.[92] Just as Perkins had expressed that Native Americans were religiously and culturally inferior to the colonizers, Gabriel also appeared to espouse similar beliefs about the high place of Christians within a value hierarchy:

> When you hear about all the contributions of Islam to the world, algebra and all that, did you know that the people, the inventors who contributed that to the world, were not Muslims, but non-Muslims who were conquered by Islam as Islam swept through Europe and Spain and the rest of the Middle East? And those inventions were from brains that were not Muslim brains. And that's the history of Islam, all over.[93]

For her, this purported lack of lack of intellectual capacity and the poor conditions of educational systems in Muslim-majority countries meant that Muslim women "do not have much to contribute to society other than making children and cooking at home and taking care of the home."[94]

Gabriel's extreme views were hardly inconsequential. They extended beyond the realm of sensationalistic talk shows and buzzing headlines and were planted in more than 573 ACT! for America chapters all across the country. "We are the largest grassroots movement for national security," Gabriel said proudly.[95] While the organization's façade projects a secular image, the Christian faith and the religious battles that are often cast by evangelicals as part of its narrative provided the operational platform for pushing anti-Muslim messages. Tending the membership base of 170,000 activists was Guy Rodgers, the group's executive director who helped nurture Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition from its nascence to become one of the most powerful political movements of the religious Right.

Rodgers believed that Christians had a divine mandate to control the moral direction of the country. This involved placing them in key positions of political power while also limiting the influence of people and groups who held different beliefs. At an event in New York City in 1992, the Nebraska-born religious activist spoke to a fledgling chapter of the Christian Coalition, exhorting them on the "biblical basis for political involvement." As journalist Joe Conason, who attended the meeting, recalls, Rodgers hearkened back to the "good old days" when New York City was the scene of tent revivals and Christian gatherings, their enemies—alcohol and gambling—much less lethal than the current one: "militant homosexuals." "Is there something wrong with Christians ruling?" Rodgers asked the crowd, rhetorically. "Who is best qualified to exercise authority in civil government? Unbelievers?" Responding to those who, in opposition to the Coalition's campaigns suggested that Rodgers' goal was to implement a Christian theocracy, he

underscored the importance of his task as an order from heaven. He was simply an earthly actor, fulfilling the political desires of God. "No. I'm not trying to establish anything. Jesus Christ already did that. I'm just living it out," he said.[96]

Living out that divine decree involved forming "the largest voter file in America," comprised of anti-gay and anti-abortion voters. With that data, Rodgers and his disciples would "not only know who they are but what precinct they vote in."[97] This was a holy war for Rodgers, one that required killing the enemy in a metaphorical sense. He expressed that image to his supporters, saying "That right there [the voter data] is the ammo for Uzis. One of the problems we've [had] as Christians is we've pointed Uzis at the opposition, but when we've pulled the trigger, there've been no bullets."[98]

Using similarly violent language, Ralph Reed, the Coalition's executive director, explained that the efficiency of their campaign to establish networks of support throughout the country resulted from their stealth-like tactics. While many within the religious Right, including Brigitte Gabriel and Guy Rodgers, have decried the threat of "stealth jihad," an alleged attempt on the part of Muslims to sneak their way into the nation's power chambers and exert Islamic influence, the *modus operandi* of the Christian Coalition's quest to place evangelicals within the upper structures of American politics was covert as well. Advancing the battle imagery, Reed explained, "We've learned how to move under the radar in the cover of the night with shrubbery strapped to our helmets. It's like being a good submarine captain: You come up, fire three missiles and then dive."[99] The Coalition's Pennsylvania manual advised members to never mention the name "Christian Coalition" within Republican circles. Instead, a prominent "Republican Party Liaison" would be recruited into each Coalition chapter and establish strong ties with GOP committees. Subsequently, religious influence would be transmitted to these committees through that person.[100] In addition, the organization planned to spread their political message into specific congregations where churchgoers who were pre-identified as part of the evangelical Right would be targeted with political messages and promotional materials.

The tactic appeared to work. Under the direction of Reed and Rodgers, the Christian Coalition reached into evangelical churches across America, invariably swelling rank-and-file Republicans into a sizeable, unified voting block. By the time the 1994 midterm elections rolled around, state chapters across the United States had distributed "Family Voter Guides" in more than 100,000 churches

(often in pews).[101] That year, thanks to a large evangelical turnout, the Republican Party took control of Congress for the first time in 40 years. They also made sweeping gains in state legislatures across the nation. *Time* magazine called Reed the "Right Hand of God" and credited the Coalition's fieldwork, directed by Rodgers, with securing the Republican victory. Rodgers stepped down from his position as field director after the election that year but found in ACT! for America another outlet from which to wield his Christian agenda and put his political prowess to use.

According to *POLITICO*, in 2004, Gabriel's group had three unpaid officers and less than $5,000 in assets. But in 2006, a fundraising boom led to an explosive increase in cash and the organization outgrew its nonprofit status. Gabriel was compelled to increase her staff and expand her reach.[102] She enlisted Rodgers to head up her organizing efforts, drawing largely on his experiences as field director for the Christian Coalition. Realizing the success of the Coalition's targeted "voter guide," Rodgers applied a similar strategy with ACT!. He crafted a systematic campaign to build local groups of activists who, fearful of another September 11th, vowed to help him block the inroads of Muslim influence in America.

When the anti-Sharia scare began to emerge in 2009, Gabriel's organization was at the pulse of the paranoia. ACT! had stretched its operation to all 50 states and ten foreign countries and was fueled by an annual budget of $1.6 million; that year Gabriel drew a $180,000 salary. The organization's growth, both financially and structurally, united Bible-Belt pockets of anti-Muslim sentiment with well-funded political goals. This resulted in successful initiatives throughout the South to persecute Muslims on the public stage and use fear to prevent their influence and involvement in local communities.

In Oklahoma, the group counts its organizing efforts as part of the initial success behind the state's drive to ban Sharia law. In an interview with OneWorldNow, a news division of Bryan Fischer's American Family Association, Gabrielle alarmed readers of the "huge pockets of terrorist organizations operating out of Oklahoma," and that the Sooner State's "large Muslim population" was a local example of a national push for the implementation of Islamic law.[103] Though the Muslim community accounts for less than 1 percent of Oklahoma's 4 million residents, Gabrielle's warning prompted Republican State Representative Rex Duncan to launch what he called "preemptive" measures to prevent Islamic law that he admitted did not even exist in the state. Local ACT! chapters

supported Duncan's efforts to steer the anti-Sharia bill through the state legislature and the organization poured $60,000 into nearly 600,000 robo-calls as well as a minute-long radio advertisement. Both recounted a New Jersey court case where a judge ruled in favor of a man who attempted to use religious tenets as justification for forced sexual relations with his wife. The verdict was later overturned, though ACT! refused to mention that in messages, as that would undermine the violent image they hoped to convey.

In Florida and Tennessee, statewide chapters of ACT! have grown substantially, thanks to individual websites, listserv emails, and social networking. In the Volunteer State, nine groups are active and have carried out a number of information sessions on Islam that provide their membership base with the necessary skills to "persuade the near enemy."[104] "The near enemy is the apologist for Islam, who, I have found, doesn't know anything about Islam," said Bill French, who led the workshop at the New Hope Community Church in Nashville. Unsurprisingly, French admits that he has no formal training in Islamic studies and does not speak Arabic.[105] Even so, he has managed to send forth flocks of devotees who, armed with his specific views of Islam, lobby against the construction of new mosques and in favor of laws that limit the participation of Muslims in society. Rodgers notes that in Florida, the organization's membership has doubled since 2009 to more than 19,000 members.[106] Such a substantial base of support has allowed the group to wage campaigns on multiple fronts. Their undertakings include a "textbook project" aimed to emphasize the history of "White Anglo-Saxon Protestants" in high school curricula, a movement to protest the appointment of a Muslim professor to Jacksonville's Human Rights Commission, and efforts to target politicians and community leaders who do not represent Islam and Christianity as being locked in a fierce battle.

* * *

Fresh off a circuit tour featuring the release of his anti-Muslim film, "America at Risk," Newt Gingrich took to the stage at the 2010 Values Voters Summit telling the audience that the United States government should impose a law banning the recognition of Sharia in federal courtrooms. This law, Gingrich noted, would insist that "no judge will remain in office that tried to use sharia law."[107] Despite the fact that there had been no such occurrence, the political machination fueled Republican opposition to the Park51

community center in New York. It also became a highly circulated right-wing meme that was designed to, among other things, push back against President Obama's nominee to the Supreme Court at that time, Elena Kagan, who was represented by her opponents as being sympathetic to Muslims. "Let me be quite clear," the 68-year-old former Speaker of the House of Representatives said in a July 2010 address to the American Enterprise Institute. "I could not disagree more with Dean Kagan in accepting the Saudi money to have professors of Sharia at Harvard."[108]

Gingrich was on the frontline of the Sharia scare. In fact, his adoption of paranoia-laced rhetoric transformed the issue from a peripheral talking point to a mainstream political platform that was eventually adopted by other Republican presidential candidates. So insidious was the encroachment of Islamic law, argued Gingrich, that its influence had crept into the American political, educational, and justice systems and required a strategy for removal similar to that of the anti-communist persecution in the 1940s and 1950s. "If you're not prepared to be loyal to the United States, you will not serve in my administration, period," he said, in a tone that was suggestive of Joseph McCarthy's 1950 witch hunt against allegedly Soviet-friendly government officials. "We did this—we did this in dealing with the Nazis and we did this in dealing with the communists. And it was controversial both times, and both times we discovered after a while, you know, there are some genuinely bad people who would like to infiltrate our country," he added.[109]

Gingrich's association with Christian conservatives was not surprising. His career has been an exercise in opportunism. Each political platform that gained traction among the electorate found him front and center, championing the cause as a poster child. Viewed by many "values voters" as morally challenged, Gingrich's three marriages and an illicit affair in the late 1990s created a barrier along the road to the White House. In 2009, he converted to Catholicism, the nation's fastest growing voting block, and hoped to rebrand himself as a changed, deeply religious man. As Max Blumenthal notes, "The religious-right elements that helped orchestrate Gingrich's downfall as Speaker of the House became the catalyst for his resurrection" and would "propel him into contention for the GOP presidential nomination in 2012."[110]

He also founded Renewing American Leadership (ReAL), an organization whose mission is to "preserve America's Judeo-Christian heritage by defending and promoting the four pillars of American civilization: faith, family, freedom, and free enterprise."

It is through this network that Gingrich's associations with the extreme fringes of the religious Right are more clearly revealed. Gingrich helped raise $150,000 for the group—run by his then-aide and former campaign spokesman Rick Tyler—which then donated $125,000 to American Family Action for its work in Iowa.[111]

In March 2011, Gingrich appeared again before the AFA, this time at an event in Iowa called "Rediscovering God"—a screening of a film featuring the former Speaker and his wife strolling through Washington pointing out the various intersections of God and politics. Praising the controversial, self-taught historian David Barton, whose for-profit evangelical outfit WallBuilders aims to break down the barriers between church and state, Gingrich said, "I never listen to David Barton without learning a whole lot of new things. It's amazing how much he knows and how consistently he applies that knowledge."[112] Named by *Time* magazine as one of the nation's 25 most influential evangelical Christians of 2005, Barton quickly became an historical and biblical encyclopedia for Gingrich and several other "teavangelical" politicians, including Michelle Bachman and Mike Huckabee, the latter of whom called him the "single best historian in America today" and added that people should be "forced at gunpoint" to listen to him.[113]

Barton worked closely with Gingrich to found ReAL, serving as a board member and religious advisor. This alliance with the 68-year-old former Speaker helped him reach the upper crust of Republican leadership circles and establish what Erik Eckholm of the *New York Times* called "a reputation as a guiding spirit of the religious right."[114] Fashioning himself as an expert on the idea that the United States is a Christian nation, Barton's résumé is rife with unconventional views that insert Jesus into partisan politics. Among other things, he proposes that Christ would oppose the capital gains tax and the minimum wage, that the separation of church and state is a perversion of the vision of the Founding Fathers, and that science always confirms the message of the Bible.[115] Additionally, he professes that the Tower of Babel narrative proves that God abhors socialism, that the Democratic Party has "bamboozled blacks," resulting in an array of social problems facing African Americans, and that members of the Muslim Brotherhood have infiltrated the country's homeland security apparatus.[116]

At the core of his unusual decrees lies an amassment of more than 100,000 historical documents that are furrowed away in WallBuilders' Aledo, Texas headquarters. Barton routinely quotes passages from the writings of George Washington and James

Madison, demonstrating his erudition in American history. In one incident, Barton repeated a declaration he said came from Madison to justify the belief that Christian law should govern the United States. "We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it," he remarked. "We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God." This passage was so peculiar that it attracted the attention of historians who, upon researching its origins proclaimed that it was fictional. Eventually, Barton confessed that many of his claims were bogus.[117] On numerous occasions he had stretched the truth or disregarded it completely to enliven his theocratic narrative. Still, his revisions of American history continued to manifest themselves in discourses of Christian supremacy.

Barton was an advocate of Seven Mountains Dominionism, an assimilationist theology that aims to bring about the return of Jesus by placing Christians in control of the seven forces that shape culture: business, government, media, arts and entertainment, family, education, and religion. "Those are the seven areas you have to have and if you can have those seven areas, you can shape and control whatever takes place in nations, continents, and even the world," he said in April 2011.[118]

Much like his mentee, Gingrich, Barton's views on Islam operate on the premise that Muslims desire more than the right to worship freely. Rather, they seek to gradually take over the religious landscape of America through the implementation of Sharia law, the tenets of which would come to govern the classrooms, courthouses, and congressional offices of the United States. Barton used his position on a panel of history experts to guide the Texas public textbook standards writing process in the direction of Christian nationalist revisionism. Yet it was the political sphere that became an irresistible and salient point of reference for Barton who speculated that the 2006 election of Democratic Congressman Keith Ellison was reason for public concern. "America and Americans are currently the target of attacks by members of the same Islamic faith that Ellison professes; and while Ellison may not hold the same specific beliefs as America's enemies, he nevertheless holds the same religion," he wrote.[119] After surveying numerous examples in American history where Christian leaders, represented as pious and stately, interacted with Muslims, represented as uninformed and inferior, Barton suggested that his readers educate themselves about Islam just as Thomas Jefferson (upon whose Quran Ellison took the oath of office) had done:

in order "to learn the beliefs of the enemies he was fighting."[120] Yet instead of recommending the Muslim holy text as a point of departure for such a study, Barton advocated two "excellent" books by Robert Spencer—*The Truth About Muhammad: Founder of the World's Most Intolerant Religion* and *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam*—as authoritative, informative examples.

Beyond the founding guidance and religious counsel of David Barton, the Seven Mountains Dominion theology was deeply woven into the core leadership of Gingrich's ReAL organization. After fleshing out the group's vision with Barton, Gingrich hired San Diego mega-church pastor, Jim Garlow, a prominent Christian Reconstructionist and Seven Mountains advocate, to serve as the network's chairman. Like Barton, Garlow viewed the implementation of a uniquely Christian kingdom as the only answer to a world ravaged by secular politicians and corrupted by multiculturalism. This mission brought him to the vanguard of the battle over California's Proposition 8 amendment, a legislative initiative to ban same-sex marriage in the state, and propelled him to the frontlines of a culture war against Muslims. These Satanic forces, he believed, were competing to gain control over the seven levers of worldly power and influence. Teaming up with Gingrich's religious charity provided an opportunity for Garlow to "save Western civilization and establish the kingdom of God, the rule of Christ Jesus, on the hearts of humanity across this nation and around this world."[121]

Garlow regularly peppered his sermons with statistics about the growth rate of Islam—numbers that were intended, by his portrayal, to be alarming evidence that the United States and its Aryan European counterparts were indeed under siege by an influx of outsiders. "We obviously know what's happened since September 11th, but the reality is that there are 1.4 billion Muslims in the world, there are 7 million in the United States, the fastest growing religion by far," he said during a sermon at Skyline Church in La Mesa, California. He then acknowledged emails he received from parents in the congregation who expressed their concerns over the teaching of the history of Islam in public schools. "One student after the service met me right over here [and] could tell me, exactly, the teaching of Islam and he knew it from his school," he bemoaned.[122] This was evidence to Garlow and Christian Reconstructionists that the seven mountains were in danger of being captured by Muslims. Rick Joyner, the founder of Morning Star Ministries, spelled this assertion out clearly in 2011, saying that "Infiltrating the [seven] centers of influence, the Muslim Brotherhood has especially used

that strategy … and for over half a century in our nation have gained tremendous influence."[123] Garlow noted, however, that this was hardly just a takeover of higher education; elementary schools were also under attack and the possibility of an Islamic mandate, through its entrenchment in western academia, posed a great threat to God's plan for a world where Christians ruled every societal aspect. Garlow suggested that games of make-believe used in classrooms to teach students about the religion of Islam constituted indoctrination and that rather than learning *about* the faith, 11- and 12-year-olds were being forced to adhere to its teachings. In his book, *A Christian Response to Islam*, Garlow wrote:

> In Byron, California, seventh-grade students are made to dress up as Muslims, read the Koran, and conduct a "holy war" or *jihad* using a dice game in a state-mandated curriculum, which does not offer the same privileges to the Christian faith. The New York City public schools administration now allows Muslim children to be excused from the classroom for their daily prayers. Christian children are forbidden to pray or conduct Bible studies in the same schools. In Massachusetts, the governor [now former] has expressed interest in introducing Muslim teaching into the state's school curriculum.[124]

Garlow viewed these episodes as concessions to Muslims and therefore an infringement on his Christian values. Public school systems, by introducing creative methods of educating youth about Islam, undermined his efforts to control this societal dimension with a "Christo-centered" message. Additionally, seventh-graders were, based on the Byron, California Union School District's curriculum, learning "facts" about Islam that were quite different from those that Garlow often deployed, namely, severe interpretations of Quranic scriptures and Islamic history that cast the religion in an entirely negative light. "Islam is not a religion in the way we think of it. It is a legal system, a form of government [and] a coercive tyranny (in virtually every Muslim nation). And we, as Americans, are ignorant, thinking that they are just like us, just a 'religion,' and that we all worship side-by-side, together, worshiping the same God. Not so!" he wrote in September 2001:

> Islam (according to the Koran) commands its followers to slaughter all infidels (non-Muslims). And that includes you and me! George W. Bush said, 'Islam is all about peace.' Surely he must have said

> that for purely political purposes. He could certainly not have meant that theologically, or historically. Theology (interpretation of the Koran) and history defy that statement.[125]

* * *

If Bush believed that Islam was a religion of peace, his top solider, charged in 2003 with the task of tracking down Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, did not. Lieutenant General William G. "Jerry" Boykin, the deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence, a highly decorated and twice-wounded war veteran, was on a mission for God. Though his boots were on the ground in the Middle East, the former Delta Force leader's mind was focused on an enemy much further south. "We're a Christian nation, because our foundation and our roots are Judeo-Christian," Boykin, dressed in a military uniform and polished jump boots, told a religious group in Oregon in June 2003. "And the enemy is a guy named Satan."

The physical battle to root out terrorists was important for Boykin but it was only one element of a larger conflict he viewed as civilizational. And while he took orders from the president and the Pentagon to enact various military policies related to the Bush administration's "War on Terror," his primary directives came in the form of spiritual messages sent from the heavens to unite the earthly troops. As such, Boykin was not simply the head of the military forces but rather the leader of God's army. "We in the army of God, in the house of God, kingdom of God have been raised for such a time as this," he said.[126]

Boykin regularly cast his mission and the overall war in starkly religious terms. At the First Baptist Church in Dayton Beach, Florida in June 2003, he described his confrontation with Mogadishu warlord Osman Atto. When Atto boasted that he would not be captured because, in his words, "Allah will protect me," Boykin prayed for victory, saying, "Lord, let us get that man." Just days later, Atto was captured—an event that confirmed for Boykin the supremacy of Christianity over Islam. In a prison where Atto was searched and confined, Boykin relayed that message to the militant leader. "Are you Osman Atto?" Boykin asked. "And he said 'yes.' And I said, 'Mr. Atto, you underestimated our God.'" Recalling the event later, Boykin noted that the success was a result of the fact that his God was greater than Atto's. "I knew that my God was real and his was an idol," he said.[127]

Though President Bush was a born-again Christian who, like Boykin, was naturally outspoken about his faith, the general's comments cast a negative light on the Pentagon and the White House. As Claire Badaracco notes in *Quoting God: How Media Shape Ideas About Religion and Culture*, Boykin's tendency to divide the world into good and evil—a strategy nearly identical to that of bin Laden and his terrorist cohorts—generated an image among the public that the war was not a national imperative to defend the security interests of the United States, but a spiritual battle designed to promote one faith, Christianity, over another, Islam.[128] Government officials including the president began to distance themselves from Boykin's religious rhetoric though no formal reprimands were enacted.

CNN discovered in October 2003 that the Pentagon deleted several passages that were originally included in Boykin's apology. In one of the comments, he explained that as a result of the controversy, he would no longer speak at religious events. In another, he expressed his belief that God put President Bush in the White House.[129] Katherine Yurica reports that Boykin actively recruited Christian crusaders while in uniform. Speaking in 23 different churches, mostly Pentecostal and Baptist, he claimed that the US military was enlisting a spiritual army geared towards fighting a higher battle. That appeared to be just the case when, in 2005, the *Washington Post* released a report showing that a private Colorado-based missionary group called "The Navigators" was assigned to the Air Force Academy to proselytize cadets. One year later, the paper reported on the circulation of an evangelical video that was filmed inside the Pentagon showing four generals and three colonels praising "The Christian Embassy," an organization that evangelizes among military leaders, politicians, and diplomats in Washington, DC.[130] Additionally, some US soldiers stationed in Iraq launched a campaign to convert Iraqis to Christianity, handing out Arabic-language Bibles, gold coins that asked, "Where will you spend eternity?" and comic books that depicted Muhammad and Muslims burning in Hell for not accepting Jesus Christ as their savior before they died.[131]

When Boykin retired in 2007, he found that he was less restricted by the confines of his position. Although he was no longer in charge of leading a military battle, he continued to demonstrate his beliefs about the responsibility of Christians to engage in spiritual warfare. Boykin joined the ranks of prominent Christian Reconstructionists and advocates of Seven Mountains Dominionism, including his

friend Rick Joyner and the Family Research Council's Tony Perkins. He also consolidated evangelical Christian support throughout the United States by forming his own religious organization. "Kingdom Warriors," as it was called, aimed "to help believers in Christ understand the concept of spiritual warfare," said Boykin.[132] Hosting rallies around the country, thousands of evangelical Christians flocked to conference centers and sports stadiums to hear Boykin and prominent leaders of the religious Right speak about the urgency of their spiritual quest.

Sharia law became Boykin's hobbyhorse and in addition to denouncing publicly its impingement on society, he forged an alliance with a group of pseudo-scholars and right-wing activists who presented themselves as experts and authored a national security assessment that was touted by its supporters as an authoritative study on the dominant threat facing American and European societies.

Billed as "Team B II," an homage to the cadre of policy wonks and experts commissioned in 1976 by then-Director of Central Intelligence George H.W. Bush to investigate the threat posed to America by the Soviet Union, Boykin's colleagues included the Center for Security Policy's Frank Gaffney, former Assistant US Attorney Andrew McCarthy, and the controversial fundamentalist Zionist lawyer and anti-Muslim activist, David Yerushalmi. The group relied on material put forth by Robert Spencer, proposing that Muslims in the United States were waging a "stealth jihad" to impose "creeping Sharia" law through peaceful means and that all major Muslim-American organizations in the US had ties to the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood. The far-reaching—and to critics draconian—approach recommended that the government prohibit Muslims who "espouse or support" Sharia from holding positions within federal or local governments or the armed forces. Additionally, it advocated that those who support Islamic law should be prohibited from entering the United States and even prosecuted.

The assessment was well received within conservative political circles. Representative Pete Hoekstra, a self-proclaimed member of the shadowy group of Congressional Christian fundamentalists called "The Family," appeared at the team's press conference to show his support. Also present were Arizona Republican Trent Franks, a devotee of evangelist James Dobson and a co-sponsor of a bill that sought to establish uniform recognition of America's Christian heritage, and presidential candidate and Tea Party favorite Michelle Bachman. Copies of the report were distributed to winners

of the 2010 mid-term elections, members of Congress, the governors and state attorney generals of all 50 states, as well as major city police chiefs and mayors.

* * *

Late in August 2011, Texas Governor Rick Perry, a darling of the Tea Party and Republican candidate for the 2012 presidential nomination, held a weekend retreat with evangelical leaders at a remote ranch in Texas. Perry, battling for the spot of front-runner with former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, sought to woo religious conservatives. Among the guests were Southern Baptist Convention leader Richard Land, Family Research Council president Tony Perkins, and Focus on the Family founder James Dobson. Also present was Jim Garlow, whose close relationship to Perry's competitor, Newt Gingrich, made his presence unlikely. The Texas governor and Garlow had met once before at a million-dollar prayer rally hosted by Perry and paid for by American Family Association. "My wife has stage 4 cancer, and Perry ended up talking with her quite a bit and praying for her and her healing," Garlow said. "We spent a fair amount of time backstage."[133]

Mingling with the luminaries, Perry spoke openly about his faith, his acceptance of Jesus Christ as a youth, and biblical teachings on the economy. Many of the radical preachers who were present underneath the tent in the town 70 miles west of Austin had reached evangelical near-stardom with remarks that were openly hostile towards Muslims. GOP presidential candidates had also gone to great lengths to please the anti-Muslim factions within their party: Michelle Bachman signed an anti-Sharia pledge, while Newt Gingrich marshaled campaigns to ban it entirely. Herman Caine claimed that Muslims living in the United States must take a special "loyalty oath." For Perry, seasoned at crafting political messages, the environment was ripe for capitalizing on the evangelical community's brewing anti-Muslim sentiment. He was, after all, cozying up with religious leaders who, in addition to providing financial support for some of his events including a massive public prayer rally, were fiercely advocating nothing less than a Christian conquest of Muslims. Jerry Boykin told an audience that "Rick Perry very humbly stood before a group of us and said, 'I'm doing this because it's what God wants us to do. It's not a political ploy.'"[134]

When it came to playing the Islam card, the Texas governor was surprisingly silent on the topic, cautious it seemed, to reveal

connections that would send the religious Right spinning into a fit of suspicion. As it turned out, two weeks before the event, *Salon* reporter Justin Elliot rattled the cages of Islamophobes, revealing in an online post that Perry had close ties to the Aga Khan, the religious leader of the Ismailis, a Shia sect that claims nearly 20 million adherents worldwide. In fact, the two were close friends. According to Elliot, their relationship dates back to the year 2000 when they first met in Paris. A number of dinners later, that friendship grew and eventuated in several partnerships including a 2008 agreement between the University of Texas and Aga Khan University in Pakistan to train high school teachers on Muslim history and cultural curricula. "I have supported this program from the very beginning, because we must bridge the gap of understanding between East and West if we ever hope to experience a future of peace and prosperity," Perry said at the signing ceremony.[135] Earlier, at an event hosted by the Aga Khan in 2002, Perry warmly introduced the 74-year-old imam, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, saying, "As your faith teaches love, charity and peace among men, certainly no one embodies those goals more than His Highness and Her Highness. In Christian doctrine, there is an important principle that you shall know a tree by its fruit. As practiced by His Highness and the Ismaili people, your faith is one that bears good fruit."[136]

As Elliot predicted, news of Perry's warm relationship with the Muslim community unleashed mass hysteria among the far Right, especially within the blogosphere. Within two days of posting the article, Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer had sounded the alarms of terror, suggesting that Perry had been "sucked into the propaganda vortex" of the Islamists and was "a fifth-column candidate," a "stealth-jihadist," who was secretly palling around with America's enemies for personal gain.[137] Spencer noted that the Muslim history and cultural curricula project "presents a fantasy benign Islam, with all the violent and oppressive bits cut out."[138] Geller added, "Ten years after the Japanese attacked us on December 7, 1941, the enemy was vanquished. Ten years after 9/11, it's almost as if we lost the war. They're writing the history books, they're whitewashing their evil deeds, and Perry and Co. are promoting it all."[139] Glenn Beck's resident end-of-times prophet called the friendship a "dangerous Muslim compromise," while former Colorado Representative Tom Tancredo called it Perry's "Muslim blind spot," writing "He extends his taxpayer-funded compassion not only to illegal aliens but also to Muslim groups seeking to whitewash the violent history of that religion."[140]

Soon after the story of Perry's friendship with the Aga Khan broke, URLs to the Muslim Histories and Cultural Program were jerked from the Web. The scrutiny, it seemed, had reached its boiling point and the Perry campaign, in hopes of preserving its image within the "teavangelical" community could not risk being associated with Islam. Before long, Perry's ties to radical figures within the evangelical community emerged. Robert Jeffress, a Dallas-based mega-church pastor and Perry supporter introduced the governor at an event, hailing his Christian vision for America while calling the Mormon religion of his rival, Mitt Romney, "a cult." Jeffress had a history of leveling similar attacks against Muslims, once telling his 10,000-member congregation that "The deep, dark, dirty secret of Islam [is that] it is a religion that promotes pedophilia—sex with children. This so-called prophet Muhammad raped a 9-year-old girl—had sex with her."

Despite the commotion, Jeffress stood by his comments. And Bill Keller stood with him. Reemerging after failed plans for his "911 Christian Center" had silenced him, he took advantage of the skirmish, leveling familiar charges at the founder of the Latter Day Saints, Joseph Smith, who he called "a pedophile, polygamist, and murderer. A person who believes in the teachings of the Mormon cult is no more Christian than a Muslim is," he blustered.

Mormons and Muslims, the religious right believed, were of the same religious circuit, one that would lead them both straight to hell. Despite the aversion of the evangelical community for people of other faiths, the children of Israel were, as the narrative went, woven intricately into the fabric of the Christian narrative. Whatever the differences that existed between the two faiths—Judaism and Christianity—the plight of Israelis was seen as the plight of Christians. Theirs was a relationship bound by rapture.

5
Of Politics and Prophecy: The Alliance of the Pro-Israel Right

The town of Ma'ale Adumim sits on a West Bank hill 7 kilometers east of Jerusalem. Surrounded on four sides by the Judean Desert, it was once a dusty outpost for Israeli Defense Forces but is now, with a population of nearly 40,000, the third-largest settlement in the Occupied Territories. Rows of olive trees line Highway 1, the main junction that connects the holy city to Tel Aviv, spilling out into a myriad of neighborhoods, shopping malls, and businesses.

Despites its modern appearance, the city's historical roots run deep. From the valleys of the ancient town emerge religious narratives that weave intricately into the fabric of Jewish and Christian traditions. The book of Joshua, from which Ma'ale Adumim derives its name, describes it as a former border between the tribes of Benjamin and Judah who, upon the fracture of Israel following the death of King Solomon, remained loyal to the House of David. It was also the site of the "Good Samaritan" story, a parable from the New Testament book of Luke.

Considered by many to be holy ground, the city that birthed these scenes is a political fault-line in the longstanding tug-of-war between Israel and Palestine. By international standards, it constitutes an illegal settlement and "irrevocably splits the northern part of the West Bank from the south, strangling 50,000 Palestinians residing in its environs."[1] It is also home to a growing number of Religious Zionists, an ultra-conservative movement that combines traditional Zionism and the Jewish religious faith to promote the belief that the Jewish people have the divinely mandated responsibility to bring about a redemptive Jewish state, ridding it of its foreign agents in preparation for the arrival of the end of days.

According to 2004 data from the Civil Administration in Israel, 86.4 percent of the settlement block is built on private Palestinian acreage.[2] Watching over the road between Jerusalem and the Allenby Bridge to Jordan, Ma'ale Adumim is an eastern guard protecting creeping communities of development that stretch outward into

the West Bank, making the emergence of a Palestinian state ever more difficult.

* * *

When David Yerushalmi learned that two jetliners had rammed the Twin Towers, he was living in Ma'ale Adumim where he worked for a conservative research institute that promoted free-market reform.[3] The 56-year-old Hasidic Jew's wiry gray beard, circular glasses, and reddened cheeks suggested the meekness of a Santa Claus-like figure, yet his was hardly a cheery mission of gift bearing. He was an American in the Holy Land, a right-wing nationalist at the rocky frontier of what he viewed as a fight for civilization.

The son of Ukrainian Jewish immigrants to the United States, Yerushalmi traded in his family birth name, Beychock, for one whose Hebrew translation, "from Jerusalem," better suited his conservative religio-political worldview. Though he was born in Florida, the Sunshine State's image of palm trees and easy living clashed with the tale of God's chosen people locked in a struggle for land at the site of the earth's final battle. "He wants to tell you that he supports the settler concept of the eternal inviolability of Jerusalem as a Jewish city and capital," wrote author Richard Silverstein. "He wants to tell you he believes in the whole nine yards of ultra-Orthodox extremism regarding God's sacred gift of all of the Land of Israel to the entire Jewish people in perpetuity."[4]

Israel, Yerushalmi huffed, should "cast off the yoke of liberal democracy" as the pluralistic values associated with it—multiculturalism and equal rights for all—clashed with his desire for a Jewish state tightly bound by a single religion and ethnicity. "If you truly embrace Arab citizenship and equality, then what do you do when the Arabs outnumber the Jews?" he once asked.[5]

For Religious Zionists, the land must be cleansed. If not, the return of the Messiah in an earthward journey to deliver salvation to His people will remain an imagined scenario, a prophecy unfulfilled by a God whose majesty rests in promises kept. Religious Zionists offer no concessions to those whose presence is thought to impede this divine plan. In preparation for the end of days, "foreign" inhabitants must to go. Non-Jews, even secular ones, are not welcome in the new sacred order.[6] Two-state solutions and peace deals do little to hasten the exit of what Yerushalmi has called the "vicious, murderous non-people of clans and tribes known as Palestinians." Such measures are, according to him, blasphemous

enterprises designed by "radical liberal Jews" who "in the main have turned their backs on the belief in G-d and His commandments as a book of laws for a particular and chosen people."[7]

One such commandment is found in the seventh chapter of the Hebrew Bible's fifth book, Deuteronomy:

> When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.[8]

* * *

The issue of Israel is closely linked to the issue of Islamophobia. But the pro-Israel Right includes more than just Religious Zionists and their ilk, whose mission to prepare themselves for a heavenly afterlife places non-Jews—in this case, Palestinian Muslims—in the crosshairs of a violent faith narrative. The Islamophobia Industry is comprised of an alliance of members from many shades of the pro-Israel Right. Despite the variances in the reasons for their antagonistic campaigns against Muslims, the fact is that they are all firmly planted in the same pro-Israel, anti-Muslim camp. For Religious Zionists, prophecy is the main driver of their Islamophobic fervor. For them, Palestinians are not just unbidden inhabitants; they are not just Arabs in Jewish lands. They are not just Muslims, even. They are non-Jews—outsiders cut from a different cloth—and God's commandments regarding them are quite clear. Christian Zionists share a similar view. They too couch much of their language regarding Islam and Muslims in a religious discourse that supports the return of the Jews to the Holy Land as a prelude to the second

coming of Christ. And still, there are those whose support of Israel on the one hand and animosity towards Muslims on the other comes from a place of political origin. The special relationship between the United States and Israel, for example, guides their hawkish worldview and whether a matter of nationalist-like pride or concerns over Middle East stability, Islam has come to embody in their minds a far-reaching, borderless threat and one that seeks to disrupt the securities of the current political landscape. Their different ideological motivations notwithstanding, those in the pro-Israel Right have come to see Israel as a state threatened by Islamic expansion. Within Israel, politicians seeking to advance their own nationalistic agendas have made a conscious effort to appeal to such paranoid scenarios. In the past, it was its anti-communist stance and bulwark opposition to the growth of Arab nationalism that garnered Israel strong western support. Today, it is Islam that has come to replace old fears as the contemporary *bête noir.*

* * *

While Americans reeled in shock from 9/11, unable to comprehend fully the events that had played out before their eyes, many Israeli circles were less surprised. "Israel has been fighting terrorism for more than one hundred years," wrote journalist Dov Goldstein in *Ma'ariv*, a Tel Aviv-based newspaper. "No country in the world has ever fought so long and so resolutely against terrorism … Israel didn't need the bloody events of 11 September. [Israel's] war on terrorism began long before the U.S. began mourning its victims of terror."[9]

Later that evening, as world leaders scrambled to issue public responses denouncing the violence, Benjamin Netanyahu spoke to reporters in Jerusalem, calling the attacks "very good." He then edited himself, saying, "Well, not very good, but it will generate immediate sympathy [and] strengthen the bond between our two peoples, because we've experienced terror over so many decades, but the United States has now experienced a massive hemorrhaging of terror."[10] In a moment of great disaster, edges of political divisions were sharpened, carving out a new space through which the Israeli politicians could forge their land-grabbing in the West Bank. Washington and Israel, Netanyahu proposed, were fighting the same war. The Palestinian adversaries of the Jewish state shared a religious and ethnic identity with the 19 hijackers. They were Arabs and Muslims. By this logic, they also shared a proclivity for terrorism.

A climate of moral panic in the aftermath of the crisis blurred the lines of battle along which distinctive conflicts were fought. The inauguration of the "War on Terror," with its loosely defined aims, brought unrelated fronts of political and religious contention under a single ideological banner. On the first anniversary of 9/11, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon professed bluntly:

> Bin Laden's suicide terror, the terrorism of Hamas, Tanzim, and Hezbollah, the terrorism engineered by the Palestinian Authority, Saddam Hussein's involvement in and support for Palestinian terrorism, and the terrorist networks directed by Iran are all inseparable components of that same axis of evil which threatens peace and stability everywhere in the world.[11]

The new anti-terrorist agenda did exactly what Netanyahu hoped it would. It allowed Israel to push forward with its brutal policies against the Palestinians.[12] Political scientist Neve Gordon notes that from 2001 to 2007, Israel killed more Palestinians per year than it had during the first 20 years of occupation. Additionally, since the onset of the second Intifada in October 2000, Israelis slaughtered twice as many Palestinians as they did in the previous 34 years.[13]

Writing from Israel, David Yerushalmi reasoned, "The fact that the average Moslem [*sic*] doesn't strap a bomb to his back doesn't lessen his support of such tactics." He suggested that over 70 percent of Palestinians support suicide bombings that target Jewish civilians and argued that the motive for such violence was a fomenting desire on the part of all Muslims to "seek the end of political man or nation states," not the least of which were Israel and the United States.[14] "Muslim civilization is at war with Judeo-Christian civilization," he once wrote.[15] Stopping them became his mission. He returned to New York the following year where he recounted his experiences on the frontlines of terror and marshaled a national campaign to eradicate the Muslim enemy in its new American ambit.

* * *

In 2006, Yerushalmi founded the Society of Americans for National Existence (SANE), an Arizona-based advocacy group that spearheaded efforts to criminalize the practice of Islamic law. The organization described itself as "dedicated to the rejection of democracy and party rule and a return to a constitutional republic [of

the Founding Fathers]" who were, Yerushalmi reminded his readers, "faithful Christians, mostly men, and almost entirely white." That same year, in an essay titled "On Race: A Tentative Discussion," he described "blacks as the most murderous of people."[16]

One of the first projects that SANE launched to block inroads of alleged Muslim advance was a campaign called "Mapping Sharia: Knowing the Enemy." The study sought to examine the behaviors and practices of mosque-goers and according to a press release by the group, "test the proposition that Shari'a amounts to a criminal conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. government."[17] It was backed by $364,000, a portion of which came from the Center for Security Policy, a conservative think tank founded by Frank Gaffney, a neoconservative anti-Muslim activist. Yerushalmi served as general counsel for Gaffney, as he did for Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer.[18]

The project's director, David Gaubatz, was, like Yerushalmi, no stranger to controversy, especially when it came to Muslims. He once referred to Barack Obama as "our Muslim leader" and called Islam a "terminal disease."[19] His 2009 book, *Muslim Mafia*, declared that the American government was the victim of an infiltration plot by the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR). Gaubatz saw the group's assistance to Muslim Americans who were interested in working on Capitol Hill as evidence of a sinister scheme. Four US Congressmen agreed. Arizona Representative John Shaedegg said Gaubatz's text was one that he would "encourage Americans to read." North Carolina Representative Sue Myrick's enthusiasm for the volume was not surprising, as she had written its preface. The two, along with Representatives Paul Broun of Georgia and Trent Franks of Arizona, called on the House sergeant-at-arms to investigate whether CAIR had placed Muslim interns in key government offices. Later, revelations emerged that Gaubatz's son Chris was himself guilty of infiltration, having posed as a Muslim intern at CAIR in order to steal more than 12,000 documents used in the book's research.[20]

While vocally exhorting the public to wake up to alleged episodes of Islamic subversion, it was Gaubatz and SANE who had a history of deploying deceptive tactics. Paid $350,000 for a two-year stint as director of the "Mapping Sharia" project, the former federal agent-turned-Muslim hunter set out with two other researchers on an 18-month journey, crisscrossing the country in search of their Sharia-wielding prey. Their travels brought them to the prayer rooms of more than a hundred mosques across the nation where, donning

"Sharia adherent" disguises—a beard of "approximately 1 inch" with "no mustache and no gold jewelry"—they entered the houses of worship alongside faithful Muslims and collected "data:" the length of the imam's beard, the percentage of worshippers wearing hats, the types of literature available to visitors, and notes about whether men sported their wristwatches on the left or right.[21]

As expected, the results confirmed their predictions. "We have the data to say there is a problem in U.S. mosques," Yerushalmi said.[22] He noted that when the figures came in, some 81 percent of mosques contained literature that advocated violence, with more than 85 percent recommending the radical material to their congregations.[23] The startlingly high number was immediately scooped up and circulated by the blogosphere. Robert Spencer wrote, "A new study has demonstrated that 80% of mosques right in this country are teaching jihad warfare and Islamic supremacism."[24] Pamela Geller, who upon the announcement of the project in 2007 gushed, "Thank G-d someone is doing this," was equally as excited about the results. "Finally," she wrote:

> The empirical evidence is deeply disturbing, but not surprising. An overwhelming number of American mosques teach, advance, [and] promote violent jihad as dictated by Islamic teaching. Is it any wonder that Muslim Brotherhood-tied groups like CAIR are pursuing legislation and policy to restrict law enforcement infiltration of mosques?[25]

Before the results of SANE's "Mapping Sharia" study had time to reach the public, Yerushalmi's appetite for alarmism led him to the vanguard of another pursuit. As a member of "Team B II," he was brought into the company of Christian Zionist General Jerry Boykin, the dyed-in-the-wool fundamentalist whose boot prints in the Middle East left deep impressions of an American-led religious dominion. Boykin and Yerushalmi joined pro-Israel security policy wonk Frank Gaffney to write "Sharia: A Threat to America," a frightening exegesis on "the preeminent totalitarian threat of our time."[26]

The Jewish right to Palestine percolated through the report's 177-pages. Dated quotes from Yasser Arafat, references to attacks by Hezbollah and Hamas against Israeli targets, and reminders of grim threats leveled by Muslim political leaders against the Jewish state were among the many images that riddled the jeremiad. Sacred land was under siege. At the National Press Club on May 23, 2011,

members of Team B II spelled out that narrative for the "Israel: You're Not Alone" coalition—an activist group that was launched to push back against public calls for a peace deal with Palestine that was based on a reinstitution of pre-1967 borders. How could Israel give up the land they conquered in the Six Day War—Promised Land that was delivered to them by God?

Frank Gaffney recalled that after the 1967 War, a group of military officers were asked whether Israel could safely relinquish any territory that it had obtained in the course of its defensive action. "They were the Joint Chiefs of Staff," he said sternly. "They found Israel could not survive without the territories of the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and Gaza that they had attained during that war. That stands as truth today as much as it did in 1967. We ignore it at our peril."

Holding up a copy of the Sharia report, Gaffney warned that a move towards the pre-1967 borders would be a dangerous gift to the enemy, one that he said would "lead to war—a war that will assault not just Israel as it has been so many times in the past but almost certainly engulf the region and perhaps many others, indeed perhaps globally." Jerry Boykin, injecting especially religious language into the discussion, reminded the mostly Jewish crowd that "Jews were Palestinians as well. It's not just Arabs so we need to call these people what we are really talking about which are Muslim Arabs. They can't hate Israel anymore than they already do."[27]

The threat was laid bare. Sharia law had to be stopped. David Yerushalmi began drafting templates for legislation that sought to obstruct its alleged influence in the United States. "American Laws for American Courts," as it was called, was introduced throughout the country and was powered at the state level by groups such as Brigitte Gabriel's ACT! for America who, under the direction of Christian Zionist Guy Rodgers, rallied local chapters behind the bills and steered them through state legislative corridors. The American Bar Association recognized Yerushalmi's "anti-Sharia initiative," acknowledging that many legislators who sponsored such measures used his model. The template appeared verbatim in three states—Alaska, South Carolina, and Texas—and the pattern was repeated in many other statehouses.[28] Twenty-three states presented anti-Sharia legislation of some type. "It's always helpful when you can say to your colleagues, 'This piece of legislation is practically identical to about 20 other states,'" said Republican Oklahoma State Representative Sally Kern.[29]

* * *

The Sunday morning edition of Raleigh, North Carolina's *News and Observer* wasn't a typical place for the distribution of propaganda. Normally, circulars with department-store coupons and advertisements for the latest grocery deals or laundry detergent were wedged between the fold of the town's periodical, nearly 200,000 of which were delivered on the traditional day of rest. But September 2008 was different. Two months before an historic presidential election—one that produced the nation's first African American Commander-in-Chief—the Tarheel State was one of several hotly contested political battlegrounds targeted with a jarring 77-minute DVD on "radical Islam's war against the West."[30]

Obsession, as the film was called, was placed amongst the comics and flyers of more than 70 newspapers across the country, some 28 million copies of the documentary reaching the living rooms of unsuspecting recipients. Images of delirious mobs burning American flags, tanks being blown up in the desert, and an endless montage of footage from Nazi Germany weaved in and out of a storyline narrated by "experts," a who's who list of known Muslim bashers and ideologues.

The one thing that linked the commentators besides their scunner for Muslims was their overflowing ardor for Israel, expressed inversely in astringent appraisals of Palestinians. Daniel Pipes, the 2006 recipient of the Guardian of Zion award, Walid Shoebat, an evangelical Christian whose claims of being a former "Islamic terrorist" were debunked, and Brigitte Gabriel, whose ACT! for America chapters nurtured nation-wide factions of anti-Sharia mania, were among the film's luminaries.[31]

The roots of these pro-Israeli energumens, however, ran deeper than the agitators appearing on screen. They stretched into the pockets of a shadowy organization that bankrolled the multi-million-dollar picture. The Clarion Fund, as it was called, derived its name from the clarion, a narrow medieval trumpet whose shrill pitch signaled the commencement of war. But unlike the trumpeters standing proudly atop the hillside bellowing out strident warning tones for nearby dwellers, these anti-Muslim alarmists operated beneath the radar, sounding a siren of doomsday's arrival while carefully covering their tracks.

Raphael Shore, a Jewish rabbi and Canadian-Israeli filmmaker with a history of connections to Religious Zionism and the Israeli settler movement, founded the organization in 2006 as a front for

neoconservative and pro-Israel pressure groups. But the Manhattan high rise that houses Shore's office complex is empty; Grace Corporate Park is a "virtual office" that offers the appearance of a ritzy Big Apple firm, complete with a business address and a New York City phone number for as little as $79 per month. According to Delaware incorporation papers, the address of Shore's workplace veneer also belongs to a movement known as Aish HaTorah, or "Fire of the Torah," a Jewish Israeli missionary association whose goal is to call "assimilated" Jews to ultra-Orthodox Judaism.[32] Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic* once described the group as being "just about the most fundamentalist movement in Judaism today. Its operatives flourish in the radical belt of Jewish settlements just south of Nablus, in the northern West Bank, and their outposts across the world propagandize on behalf of a particularly sterile, sexist and revanchist brand of Judaism.[33] The group turned heads when, in 2009, it erected a scale-model replica of the Second Temple, containing the same gold and silver as the original, on top of its International Outreach Center. The Romans destroyed the original temple two thousand years ago and today the Dome of the Rock, a mosque and Islam's third holiest site, stands on the Temple Mount. According to the Jewish tradition, the return of the Messiah will not take place until the sanctuary is rebuilt. This showy display, though not the real thing, appeared to "hasten the birth pangs of the messiah," wrote Richard Silverstein.[34] After the one-ton model was elevated by a crane and set atop its resting place, one woman said, "What we just witnessed is a little tiny dress rehearsal, just a taste, of what's to come. Hopefully, speedily in our days, a real temple will come down from above, just like that one did, standing right there where that gold shiny thing is [pointing to the Muslim Dome of the Rock]."[35]

Beneath the structure, in an office overlooking the Western Wall, sits Raphael Shore's actual workplace. He serves as the director of Aish HaTorah's international wing, heralding the group's transformation from an educational outfit to a fiercely political propaganda machine that pumps pro-Israeli and anti-Muslim sentiment into the American electorate.[36] His brother, Ephraim, labors alongside him as the director of Honest Reporting, a media agency that in addition to helping produce *Obsession*, monitors world news for perceived biases against Israel and campaigns against a two-state solution.[37] Ronn Torrosian, the spokesman for Aish HaTorah who once recommended the outright slaughtering of a thousand Arabs for every one Jew killed, maintained that

any suspected link between the two groups was merely illusory.[38] "Aish also tells about a woman meeting Paul McCartney. Does that mean we're connected to him?" he jibed.[39] Torrosian's counterpart, Clarion spokesman Gregory Ross, was listed as an international fundraiser for Aish HaTorah and in 2006, at the time of Clarion's founding, two of its three directors appeared as employees on Aish HaTorah's website.[40]

But just as the Clarion Fund is a vehicle for the dissemination of Aish HaTorah's right-wing ideology, Aish HaTorah is itself such a instrument, channeling the political objectives of the Israeli government (mainly the expansion of settlements further into Palestinian territory) through the Hasbara Fellowship, an activist organization started in 2001 by Aish HaTorah in conjunction with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The purpose of the program is to "educate and train university students to be effective pro-Israel activists on their campuses."[41] Participants mingle with high-level Israeli officials and attend workshops in Jerusalem where they "meet terror victims," learn how to "shape Israel's image," and respond to "anti-Semitism on campus." They are also encouraged to start "Palestinian Media Watch" chapters upon their return. Brigitte Gabriel, the director of ACT! for America, had a history with the group. Her picture was prominently featured on its websites and she had participated in lucrative speaking engagements on their behalf.[42]

A screening of *Obsession* at New York University in 2008 required attendees to register at Israeliactivism.com, the website of the Hasbara Fellowship. As it turned out, Raphael Shore was the Fellowship's director, though he downplayed the film's connections to Israel. "It isn't helpful," he said. "I don't want it to be only Jewish and Israel-related."[43]

But it was, largely.

In order for Israel to continue its forward advance in the disputed territories and pilfer more land without the disapprobation of the United States and the greater international community, it would have to successfully construct an image that equated Palestinians, all of them, with terrorists. Only by representing Jews as perpetual victims, first traumatized in Europe by Adolf Hitler's state-sponsored genocide during World War II and now in Israel by the unchecked violence of Palestinian Muslim militants, could it drum up support for its policies. The life of the Palestinian would appear less valuable than the life of the Israeli and more easily dispensable.

"There's a common perception that's been promoted by the media that is often referred to as 'moral equivalency,'" said Raphael Shore:

> That means that people are being asked to relate to victims on either side of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as equally tragic. While the loss of any life is very tragic, one needs to make a very distinct moral difference between victims of terror and victims of those who are trying to protect against terror. In other words, if the Palestinians were not engaged in an act of terror war that has resulted in about 18,000 terror attacks in the last 2.5 years, then Israel would not have had to respond in defense, and there would be no Palestinian casualties.[44]

A narrative of Jewish persecution lay at the heart of *Obsession*. A litany of images from the Holocaust poured out onto the screen, searing into the psyche of the film's viewers horrifying reminders of gas chambers, crematoriums, firing squads, and mass graves. Interspersed between black-and-white stills of the butcher of Europe prancing about as his deed of extermination took place was contemporary footage of Israeli women and children, dismembered and exsanguinated by Palestinian commandos. If the implications of this juxtaposition, which practically supplanted the Islamic crest over the Nazi swastika, were not clear, Alfons Heck, a former Nazi and Hitler Youth officer, elucidated the parallels. "We were the enlightened people and we fell for this," he said. "Why wouldn't the Muslims fall for this? What the Muslims do to their own children is worse than Hitler." Walid Shoebat, a self-described former Palestinian terrorist professed that the roadmap to racial purity, spelled out in the pages of the Nazi leader's *Mein Kampf*, was not unlike the goals of the Islamic concept of jihad. If ignored, warned historian Martin Gilbert, "millions" would be dealt the same fate as those whose bodies lined the abysmal crevices of human graves.[45]

Convincing the 28 million voters who received a copy of *Obsession* that radical Islam posed an immediate threat to society was only one part of Raphael Shore's equation. Showing them how to stop it, or better—*who* could stop—it, was another. They had to choose the right candidate, one whose views aligned closely with the pro-Israeli right and whose policies towards Israel would facilitate its continued land grab in the West Bank. In light of persistent rumors that Democrat Barack Obama was a closet Muslim and political realities that included his strong support for a two-state solution, Republican John McCain was the natural choice. His aversion to any peace deal between Palestinians and Israelis that called on the latter to relinquish land, and his willingness to paint the conflict between them with the same broad brushstroke that

colored the "War on Terror," fit cozily within the purview of the Israeli government. Two months before the 2008 Republican National Convention, McCain spoke to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Washington and promised to increase military aid to the Jewish state. That aid would "make certain that Israel maintains its qualitative military edge" against its regional enemies. Featured prominently on the front page of the Clarion Fund's website was an endorsement of the Arizona senator which read, "McCain's policies seek to confront radical Islamic extremism and terrorism and roll it back while [Barack] Obama's, although intending to do the same, could in fact make the situation facing the West even worse."[46]

The moving force behind the circulation of *Obsession* was the Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET), a right-wing lobby that regarded Israel as the "canary in the coalmine," watching out for the "radical Islamist" across the way who, "with each piece of land ceded simply whets his appetite for more in his quest for Islamic hegemony."[47] The group's founder, Sarah Stern, had close ties to several pro-Israeli nationalist organizations and politicians who vehemently opposed a two-state solution, including the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA). Working alongside a board of former Israeli diplomats and neoconservative activists, Stern organized a distribution apparatus that, in addition to weekend newspapers, placed copies of the film on the desks of powerful Washington policymakers. "EMET has made it their business to distribute the movie, *Obsession: Radical Islam's War against the West*, to every single congressional office," the group's website announced.[48]

Eventually, however, EMET's marketing machination imploded. Intense scrutiny by whistleblowers alerted the FEC to possible non-profit violations and the group stopped dispersing the film. But where they left off, others picked up, especially Christian Zionist movements whose efforts to champion Israeli expansionism had resulted in several collaborations with EMET. At the request of Christians United For Israel, a rapture-ready evangelical troupe founded by mega-church pastor (and later McCain endorser) John Hagee, the Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC) inserted copies of the film into a book titled *Standing With Israel* that was mailed to 20,000 American rabbis and leaders of the Jewish community.[49] Months later, the *Judeo-Christian View*, a nebulous publication of the Pro-Israel Christian Right whose hysteria over Islam came and went with the election season (their website, now defunct, advertises

"business loans for bad credit"), inundated American synagogues and churches with more than 325,000 copies of the shrink-wrapped hit-job. Ten million more copies were made available electronically.

But eleventh-hour politicking was needed to ensure a GOP presidential victory. And Tom Trento, a fifty-something anti-Muslim crusader whose crew cut, aviator shades, and muscle shirts gave him the appearance of a fearless right-wing superhero, was the man for the job. The epitome of the symbiotic relationship between the various networks that comprised the Islamophobia industry, Trento was an evangelical Christian, Tea Party leader, and defender *extraordinaire* of Israel. His ravenous enthusiasm for all things anti-Muslim placed him at the pulse of nearly every major initiative that proclaimed, as the grandfather of Islamophobia, Daniel Pipes, once did, "The Muslims are coming, the Muslims are coming!" He was a co-author of Team B II's *Sharia: The Threat to America* and headed up United West, a grassroots startup that bandied about broad warnings of the approaching "forces of darkness" said to be conspiring against the United States. The group was an expansion of Trento's first fear enterprise, the Florida Security Council, a band of conservative activists with a multipronged mission of combatting the "clear and present dangers" posed to the state of Florida by "militant, radical, supremest muslims [*sic*]" who had joined Latin American totalitarians to create a newer "insidious" threat.[50]

When it came to fighting terrorists, Trento believed that Jewish and Christian clergy were not getting the job done. They had "no guts," a "lack of courage," and were "weak-minded," he said. "If these men of God can't find their mouth on cultural issues that pertain primarily to America, does anyone in their right mind think these folks will stand up to Islamist jihadi warriors who have already reconciled themselves to martyrdom?"[51] Their efforts to distribute *Obsession* were good, but good was not enough. A colossal threat demanded a colossal response and with the creation of the Watch *Obsession* Citizens Education Program, Trento powered the film's marketing campaign to new heights, battling the Muslim menace by land and in the air.

High above the clouds in several cities across the United States, a banner with Osama bin Laden's face and the words "Watch *Obsession*" whipped through the wind behind a small turboprop. On a 48-foot-high billboard outside of Detroit, home to one of the nation's largest Muslim populations, a bright red message warned drivers along Interstate 75 of Sharia law's imminent threat. Those images were also sprawled across the sides of 18-wheelers barreling

down the highway, the larger-than-life bin Laden glaring down at passersby. "The response to the Osama bin Laden plane and truck is remarkable," Trento said. "People are literally stopping in their tracks, shocked by the image of America's number one enemy looking down on them from a plane banner, or the side of a truck."[52] Trento also distributed the *Obsession* DVD at the Democratic and Republican parties' nominating conventions. "I personally went to the DNC to offer 50,000 [DVDs] as a gift to go in the bags," he bragged. He even visited the hotels of Republican delegations to deliver the film: "In my personal opinion, the Republicans seem to get it much better than the Democrats—and they get that the problem is not a police problem, but a military problem."[53]

* * *

The Islamophobia industry was honeycombed with pro-Israeli magnates who served as financial suppliers, injecting eye-popping cash flows into the accounts of various fear campaigns. For the most part, their largesse was a silent operation, void of the public recognition that usually accompanies such high-dollar handouts. Guarded by the bureaucratic layers of front groups, contributions were passed from patron to propagandist with the artfulness one would expect to find at a table of Texas hold'em. Often, little or no trail was left.

The money behind *Obsession* was difficult to track. The Clarion Fund remained tight-lipped about their $17 million project and when pressed, coyly posited names of donors, only to note moments later that the names were aliases—the identities of the real funders were protected. Yet just before the release of the company's third film, *Iranium*, which hyped the nuclear threat of Iran, *Salon* reporter Justin Elliot obtained a document submitted to the IRS by the Clarion Fund that appeared to solve the mystery. Listed on the contribution ledger was the name of donor "Barry Seid," who in 2008 gave nearly $17 million to the company.

"Barry" Seid, however, did not exist. But "Barre" Seid, an aging Chicago businessman did; his surge protector empire generated a multimillion-dollar fortune, a sizeable portion of which was donated to various right wing causes. Seid's assistant flatly denied the possibility of any link. "Mr. Seid did not make any contributions to the Clarion Fund," she told Elliot. "Mr. Seid is a very private person and doesn't seek publicity of any kind."[54]

Indeed that was the case and Donors Capital Fund (DCF), a "donor advised fund" that distributes money to organizations based on the wishes of individual givers, appeared to offer that shroud of secrecy. According to the Center for American Progress, DCF funneled nearly $21 million into anti-Muslim causes from 2007 to 2009, among them the Middle East Forum, the Investigative Project on Terrorism, and the David Horowitz Freedom Center.[55] In 2008, the year *Obsession* was released, the DCF transferred a $17 million donation—enough to fund the entire film campaign—to the Clarion Fund, making the group the largest recipient of its munificence. "One of our clients made a recommendation for Clarion and so we did it," said Whitney Ball, president of DCF.[56] That recommendation, *Salon* noted, likely came from Seid who had previously donated to Clarion as well as pouring his fortune into several neoconservative causes and right-wing pro-Israeli charities. His patronage did not go unnoticed. In 2010, Seid was awarded an honorary degree from Israel's second largest university, "in recognition of his ongoing support for the enrichment of Jewish life and the advancement of the State of Israel."[57]

In addition to Seid, another moneyed entrepreneur of the Jewish Right wielded the influence of his sizeable pocketbook to finance distortions of Muslims. Aubrey Chernick, a little-known security software developer from Los Angeles, was behind several of the Islamophobia industry's most boisterous operations. In 2004, when computer giant IBM bought Chernick's company, his net worth skyrocketed to $750 million. That same year, he and his wife Joyce founded the Fairbrook Foundation, a charitable outfit the duo used to move money into groups that shared their ideological agenda. One of those groups was Robert Spencer's anti-Muslim website, *Jihad Watch*, the same site that alongside Pamela Geller's *Atlas Shrugs*, sparked uproar over the Park51 community center in Manhattan. In 2005, the Chernicks funneled nearly $200,000 to Spencer directly and *POLITICO* has reported that "the lion's share" of the almost $1 million that funded the site over the past three years came to Spencer through donations that the Fairbook Foundation made to *Jihad Watch*'s parent group, the David Horowitz Freedom Center.[58]

Spencer was not the only recipient of the Chernick duo's fortune. Other organizations that whipped up fears of "creeping Sharia" and Nazi-like bloodletting also benefited from their patronage. Between 2004 and 2009, the Fairbrook Foundation donated $125,000 to Brigitte Gabriel's ACT! for America, $67,000 to Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy, and $410,000 to Daniel Pipes's Middle

East Forum.[59] Aish HaTorah and Honest Reporting, the sister groups behind the production of the *Obsession* film, raked in a combined $100,000 in the same five-year period.[60]

Chernick's financial support for such groups was not without reason. In fact, there were 6.1 million of them—the exact amount of money his security firm, the National Center for Crisis and Continuity Coordination (NC4), received in 2007 from the Department of Homeland Security to enhance their communication techniques related to a variety of incidents including terrorism. Without the perceived presence of such an imminent threat, such measures—and such payouts—would not be necessary. Four years earlier, NC4's senior director, Richard Andrews, a member of President George W. Bush's Homeland Security Advisory Committee, testified before the 9/11 Commission urging the federal government to increase its cooperation with private firms whose expertise could strengthen national security. "NC4's basic premise is that the new times of the post-September 11 era necessitate the development of new teams to work together to achieve a new readiness for either terrorist or natural disasters," he said. "Central to achieving this vision is promoting public/private partnerships."[61]

Funding anti-Muslim propaganda in the United States was one thing. Funding the expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank was another. For the Chernicks, however, the two were intertwined. While many pro-Israeli groups enjoyed the couple's financial support, none were more revealing of their far Right worldview than the Central Fund of Israel and Ateret Cohenim. Through these New York-based non-profits, Aubrey and Joyce Chernick sent tens of thousands of dollars to the Yitzhar settlement in the northern West Bank.[62] Once described by the *New York Times* as "an extremist bastion on the hilltops commanding the Palestinian city of Nablus," the war-torn land has long been home to some of the fiercest confrontations between Palestinians and Israelis.[63] In January 2010, Rabbi Yitzhak Shapira, head of the Od Yosef Chai yeshiva, an orthodox educational institution situated some 20 kilometers from the Green Line, was arrested for setting fire to a local mosque.[64] As the building went up in flames, the phrases "We will burn you" and "Price Tag" were scrawled across the walls.[65] It was not his first encounter with controversy. Shapira once declared that non-Jews, even babies, were "uncompassionate by nature" and outlined for his students rules that must be followed when killing them.[66] He nearly took his own lesson to heart when, in 2006, Israeli police detained him for urging his young followers

to slaughter all Palestinians over the age of 13.[67] Eventually the government intervened. Repeated episodes of attacks launched by radical yeshiva students against Palestinian targets and Israeli defense forces prompted the Ministry of Education to close Dorshei Yehudcha high school.[68]

6
To Washington and Beyond: Islamophobia as Government Policy

Room 311 in the Cannon House office building is a stately space. Coffered, vaulted ceilings, reminiscent of ancient Greece and Rome, hang high above the dark green Victorian carpet. An occasional chandelier dangles from the highest arcs, casting a warm yellow light against the creamy walls, the upper portions of which are interrupted by several flat-screen television monitors—unsightly but necessary concessions in a battle between maintaining tradition and embracing modernity. Opposite the august mahogany rostrum, adorned with eagles and other symbols of American splendor, the Squadron of Evolution, a fleet of US Navy ships outfitted with fully rigged masts and steam engines, graces the canvas of a watercolor painting by Walter Lofthouse Dean titled "Peace."

Despite the visual reminders of American democracy's grand purpose, the room has a darker history. In late October 1967, the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) occupied the chamber for a series of testy hearings to determine "the extent to which and the manner in which" race riots, lootings, and arson attacks throughout the United States had been "planned, instigated, incited, or supported by Communist and other subversive organizations and individuals."[1] Violent clashes between racist police officers and inner-city blacks, the latter of whom were discontent with the effectiveness of civil rights legislation and the tyranny of white social elites, pulsated throughout major metropolises. In Detroit, an impassioned encounter between police and civilians left 43 dead and nearly five hundred injured. Acute racial tensions and sustained episodes of civil disorder led some in the American government to speculate that the radical positions adopted by African-American rioters and activists were aligned with the ambitions of the Communist enemy.[2] Martin Luther King Jr.'s vocal opposition to the Vietnam War was an easy target for white southern nationalists who found in his movement an opportunity to spread their segregationist policies by branding African-American rioters as tools of Moscow. South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond

called King a "troublemaker" and a "documented Communist."[3] Karl Prussian, an FBI counterspy, authored pamphlets that were distributed in the south on the Soviet "insurrection" at the hands of the "Communist civil rights movement."[4]

Representative William Tuck of Virginia oversaw the conduct of the initial HUAC inquiry. He acknowledged the "more than 100" riots that had occurred that year and suggested that while discrimination, lack of educational opportunities, and poverty may have played a minor role, there was something far more seditious at work. "Throughout history riots have been used for political purposes," he said. "They can be and have been, deliberately instigated to weaken and undermine existing governments and pave the way for the establishment of a new and different type of governmental system."[5] Social problems, he noted, need not be discussed. There was little time for such triviality.

Tuck's supervision of the hearings was a prickly issue. A southern segregationist, he ardently supported "massive resistance," a policy introduced by Virginia Senator Harry Byrd that sought to unite white congressmen and political leaders in a mass display of resistance to the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* vs. *Board of Education* ruling which desegregated public schools. To bypass racial integration, he helped draft the Stanley Plan, a series of 13 statutes that provided incentives for schools that defied the federal ruling and consequences for those that abided by it. He also came to the inquiry with the very answers he sought. Two months before the first session ever began, Tuck delivered a report to Congress that "clearly indicated that Communist and/or other subversive elements" had been active "to a significant degree" in earlier riots.[6] Still, the investigation proceeded.

Los Angeles District Attorney and former FBI agent Evelle Younger testified before the committee that 20 percent of the rioters were subversive instigators. "Those who make up the 20 percent who truly instigate a riot are racists, haters, political extremists, and agitators and the confirmed criminals," he said without a shred of evidence. When asked how to combat these groups, Younger replied, "First, we must insist that all Americans obey all our laws at all times, period. Not just the laws they like, but all laws, period."[7] Another witness, Herman D. Lerner, was asked plainly if he found evidence of subversion in the riots. "Yes," he answered, proceeding to offer a definition of "subversion" that was so far-reaching it seemed to include every single riot participant. "[There is] no question about the existence of subversion in recent

urban rioting because the acts of many of the rioters—individually and collectively—are themselves subversive."[8] Clarence Mitchell, the Washington director of the NAACP, rejected the witch-hunt, saying that in addition to pinning the violence of a few on an entire race, the HUAC had unfairly swept blacks up into the fear-induced frenzy over communists. The Red scare had suddenly acquired a darker hue. "It is my opinion that it is an insult to the millions of law-abiding colored people to align them with the terrible destruction and violence that we have witnessed in some of our cities," he said, adding that "Communists have never made any great headway in recruiting colored followers and they do not have any substantial following at this point."[9]

In 1969, the HUAC was renamed the Internal Security Committee and later, in 1975, abolished completely. But political redbaiting did not die with it. Room 311 of the Cannon House office building had been christened as the meeting place for congressional leaders who suspected that American citizens were turning against their homeland. Forty-four years after African Americans were dragged into a maelstrom of fears over communism, another political roundup took place.

* * *

Peter King plopped down in a brown leather chair behind the lectern. His black eyebrows, fixed at permanent inner angles, and his clinched jaw, foretold the seriousness of the business for which he came to tend. "Mr. King, Chairman," read the words on his nameplate. Flash bulbs popped from a sea of cameras positioned throughout the room as he rustled through his notes. From his perch, he stared out into the crowd fully aware that the spectacle he was about to preside over would create a stir.

The gavel slammed. "The Committee on Homeland Security will come to order," King announced in his usual gruff accent, a combination of New York tough guy and jowly sexagenarian. "Today's hearing will be the first in a series of hearings dealing with the critical issue of the radicalization of Muslim-Americans," he said.

If his tone appeared graver than usual, it was a result of the severity of his quest. Muslim Americans, he warned, had not been cooperating with law enforcement officials who were seeking to root out possible extremists. Could it be, he wondered, that their silence

signaled some sort of alliance with the sinister forces conspiring to pull off another 9/11?

"As we approach the 10-year anniversary of the September 11th attacks, we cannot allow the memories of that tragic day to fade away. We must remember that in the days immediately following the attack, we are all united in our dedication to fight back against Al Qaeda and its ideology," King declared. "Today, we must be fully aware that homegrown radicalization is part of Al Qaeda's strategy to continue attacking the United States. Al Qaeda is actively targeting the American Muslim Community for recruitment."

The hearing room was packed. Reporters, congressional leaders, youngish staffers, and religious groups competed for space in the tiny quarters. Outside the doorway, an eager group of onlookers formed a long line that fed into an overflow room. King's face appeared on the television screen, triggering whispers and guffaws from an audience that was outwardly enamored with the opportunity to observe such theatrics, a reenactment, it appeared, of the heyday once had by the likes of the infamous fear merchant Joseph McCarthy. Few congressional panels were able to draw such crowds.

Though this was clearly King's domain, he was simply playing the role of interlocutor—a discussant in search of evidence to justify his hunch that the land he loved was under siege from forces at work on the inside. Behind an oblong table just feet away from his congressional adjudicators sat five guests, summoned by the New York congressman to offer expertise and anecdotes that would render his suspicions legitimate. Among them were Representative Keith Ellison, a Muslim lawmaker from Minnesota, Melvin Bledsoe and Abdirizak Bihi, two businessmen whose sons had allegedly converted to Islam and soon after adopted violent tendencies, and Los Angeles County Sheriff Leroy D. Baca, invited by Democrats on the committee to offer a counter-argument.

The star witness in King's lineup, however, was Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser, a handsome, urbane forty-something physician from Arizona whose criticisms of his Muslim co-religionists made him popular in some conservative circles. "The course of Muslim radicalization in the United States over the past two years makes it exceedingly difficult for anyone to assert with a straight face that in America we Muslims do not have a radicalization problem," he said matter-of-factly."[10] Jasser's calm mannerisms and modern style made him a credible witness, more so than partisan agitators like Pamela Geller or Robert Spencer. He was a "good Muslim," one that openly and

forcefully denounced various tenets of his faith, proclaiming that the tendency of Islam to fuse religion and state made it difficult to combat radical ideologies so commonly espoused by its followers.[11] More importantly, he was a good conservative—a card-carrying Republican who proclaimed proudly his political allegiance and supported the causes of candidates who, in their haste to make Islam a central focus of their campaigns, held him up much like an athlete would hoist a trophy after a difficulty victory. So loved was Jasser by the GOP that in 2010 Minority Leader Mitch McConnell nominated him to the State Department's US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy.

Jasser's rise in the Islamophobia industry dates back to his involvement with the Clarion Fund, the right-wing Israeli settlement group behind the anti-Muslim film, *Obsession*. In 2008, Raphael Shore, the film's producer, followed up on its success by releasing *The Third Jihad*, a 72-minute documentary that, like *Obsession*, packed frightening imagery into a story that warned of an ongoing "cultural jihad" in America. Jasser, who served on Clarion's advisory board, narrated the film, telling viewers shortly after clips of children killed in the 2004 Beslan school hostage crisis, that like the bombers who took the lives of the nearly four hundred captives, he too was a Muslim. Unlike the terrorists, though, Jasser had "dedicated his life to fighting the threat of radical Islam," he reported as he paraded down the hallway of a medical clinic, stethoscope and clipboard in hand.[12]

Often referred to by his critics as "Glenn Beck's favorite Muslim," Jasser became a fixture of the Fox News network, regularly appearing alongside conservative commentators, offering credence to and commendation of their preoccupation with radical Islam. He vehemently opposed the Park51 community center, passionately defended Israel, and was prepared to skewer various policies of the Obama administration when given the green light. In 2010, he appeared in Newt Gingrich's anti-Muslim film *America At Risk: The War with No Name*, where he said that his conservative family values "don't matter" to the Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood, who hope to "advance Sharia, to advance political Islam and the collectivism of a Muslim political movement in America that's different from our Constitution and our Bill of Rights."[13]

It was Jasser who helped fuel rumors that eventually swelled into a chorus of right-wing refrain—that a document penned in the 1990s by a single obscure member of the Muslim Brotherhood proved that American Muslims were collectively engaged in a plot to upend the

laws of the United States and install an Islamic theocracy.[14] At King's hearing, the story was the same. Thanks to events in the Middle East, Jasser noted, referring to the brewing revolutions in the region, "The threat that the Muslim Brotherhood poses to security around the world has been brought to the forefront."[15] Even so, it appeared, by his testimony, to make little difference. The "cancer," as he called it, inserting his medical vocabulary into the narrative, had already spread to the country's most central organ. "We've surrendered the Constitution to the jihadists," he said regrettably.[16]

* * *

The so-called "War on Terror," launched by President George W. Bush in the immediate wake of September 11, 2001, incited Islamophobia to a large degree and posited in the minds of the American political right and the general population alike the idea that Muslim-majority countries, not the least of which was Iraq, were suspicious and dangerous even. "This nation [the United States] is at war with Islamic fascists," he said plainly in August 2006.[17] It was one of the few times since he remarked in 2001 that the United States was pursuing a "crusade" in the Middle East that Bush had used such overtly religious language. That event led to his aides encouraging more restraint. In fact, the president went to great lengths to remind the public that this was not a religious war. Still, as the waning summer months of 2006 bled into early fall, and public opinion began to turn against the Republican Party, the comment served to galvanize a new enthusiasm within the GOP ranks. Leading up to the 2008 election, this was particularly important and politicians like the conservative evangelical Mike Huckabee, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, and Arizona Senator (and eventual GOP nominee) John McCain all spoke about the ongoing war between Americans and "Islamic extremists," and in doing so, contributed to a growing lexicon that permanently harnessed Muslims and Islam to terrorism. Giuliani scoffed at the idea that his Democratic opponents "never mentioned the word 'Islamic terrorist,' 'Islamic extremist,' 'Islamic fascist,' 'terrorist,' or whatever combination of those words you want to use, [the] words never come up."[18] He added, "I can't imagine who you insult if you say 'Islamic terrorist.' You don't insult anyone who isn't Islamic [*sic*] who isn't a terrorist." McCain even attributed his run for the presidency to his concern for "radical Islamic extremism," an issue

he characterized as the transcendent challenge facing the United States in the twenty-first century.[19]

The American military's campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq meant that there would be a constant stream of bad news for Americans who, upon turning on the evening news each night, learned of the latest suicide bombing, mine explosion, or other attack that had taken the lives of soldiers. It also provoked questions about the link between the "War on Terror" abroad and possibility of terrorism on the domestic front. The fact that the United States was thought to be at war with "evildoers" abroad was one thing. But that their network extended beyond the frontlines of war zones and into the United States was another. The global behemoth menacing lovers of freedom and prosperity, so the narrative went, operated on an ideology, terrorism, that knew no borders. September 11th was a reminder that was replayed all too frequently.

Between Bush's recurring insistence that Islam is a "religion of peace," and the Islamophobic rhetoric that came to characterize much of his administration's policy makers and military leaders, was an embedded distinction: there were "good Muslims" and "bad Muslims" and, as Mahmoud Mamdani points out, until the roles were clarified, Americans were led to be skeptical of all Muslims:

> President Bush moved to distinguish between "good Muslims" and "bad Muslims" … "bad Muslims" were clearly responsible for terrorism. At the same time, the president seemed to assure Americans that "good Muslims" were anxious to clear their names and consciences of this horrible crime and would undoubtedly support "us" in a war against "them." But this could not hide the central message of such discourse: unless proved to be "good," every Muslim was presumed to be "bad" … Judgments of "good" and "bad" refer to Muslim political identities, not to cultural or religious ones.[20]

After eight years of the Bush administration's rhetorical propaganda and framing, his successor, Barack Obama, made a point to abandon language that could be constructed as divisive. Despite the move away from the Islamophobic terminology, the damage was done. The War on Terror, and the linkages that were manufactured between Muslims, all of them, and extremism remained within the body politic, so much so that Congress had commissioned a hearing to investigate the presence of potential "evildoers."

* * *

The world of Peter King may best be described as one straight from the pages of a mediocre techno-thriller. There are the usual bad guys, mostly foreign or with a thick accent, planning to carry out a violent plot against a helpless population. Then there is the protagonist hero, a strapping, modest, no-nonsense type whose vigilant efforts spoil the plan at the last minute and save the townsfolk from great peril. Sean Cross, an Irish-American congressman from Long Island, is one such example. "I wish I were James Bond, but I'm just a messenger," he says in King's 2003 *Vale Of Tears*, a work of fiction that reads more like an autobiography.

After a hundred people die in a string of explosions that rock Long Island and Brooklyn, Cross is compelled to trace down the perpetrators—Muslim Americans—and thwart other attacks that he believes are on the way. At a local mosque, he confronts worshippers and urges them to reveal what they know about the suspect's plans to detonate a dirty bomb in the city. But like the Muslims Peter King bemoans in his congressional hearings, the ones that preoccupy the imagination of his fictional stand-in also appear to be hiding something. "It was becoming more and more clear to Cross that brotherhood, love, and solidarity were going one way—toward the Muslims—with very little being returned," King wrote. Eventually cornering the Islamic center's founder, the legislator-turned-sleuth chastises him, saying, "The problem is that there is a disconnect about where the ultimate loyalty of some of your people lies. Besides condemning the terrorist attacks, your people must step forward and cooperate with the police and FBI. In other words, turn in your own people."[21]

That King had authored an imaginative account of a Muslim community in New York that harbored terrorists and shut out law enforcement revealed an obsession that was years in the making. He had watched the Pentagon burn from his office window in Washington on September 11, 2001. The experience transformed him. "He used to come to our weddings. He ate dinner in our homes," remembered Habeeb Ahmed, a medical technologist and chairman of the Islamic Center of Long Island in King's district. "Everything just changed suddenly after 9/11, and now he's holding hearings to say that people like us are radical extremists. I don't understand it."[22] Photographs of constituents' funerals and images of the smoky Brooklyn Bridge soon covered nearly every inch of wall space in King's Capitol Hill office. A baseball cap with the words

"USS New York, Never Forget" and other ornamental reminders of the tragedy lined his bookshelves. "If you ask me what I think about going to work every day, it's 9/11 and preventing another 9/11. There were too many people I knew," he said.[23]

King saw Muslim terrorists everywhere he looked. So engrossed with the topic was the 67-year-old Republican lawmaker, that he made it a subject of both entertainment and legislative procedure, his fascination with fighting Sharia-prone saboteurs spilling out onto the pages of a 320-page cliffhanger and a hearing report. "This is something that I am absolutely fixated on," he once remarked.[24]

There was great irony in King's rise to the post of chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security and his subsequent inquiries into domestic support for terrorist groups. It lay in a relationship he had nurtured over the course of 30 years with the Irish Republican Army (IRA), a relatively small but fierce band of militants whose three-decade long war against the British in Northern Ireland was so bloody the group became one of the West's most feared terrorist organizations at the time.

Between 1971 and 2005, some 1,800 people died at the hands of the IRA, a death toll that journalist Ed Moloney suggests would be the equivalent of 360,000 in the United States. "[The group] made the car-bomb into the modern terrorist weapon *du jour* and perfected the manufacture of fertilizer-based, home-made explosives of the sort now used routinely by jihadists around the world," he writes. Their attacks ranged from the near-assassination of Margaret Thatcher, when she was prime minister of the United Kingdom, to "Black Friday," a string of 22 timed explosions that ricocheted throughout the city of Belfast killing 9 and mutilating some 130 others. In one prominent and gruesome assault, IRA members secretly planted a 50-pound, radio-controlled bomb on the boat of Lord Louis Mountbatten, the cousin of the Queen of England. In August 1979, as he departed from the dock en route to a favorite tuna fishing spot off the west coast of Ireland, the bomb was detonated, blowing him and his 30-foot wooden fishing vessel to smithereens.

During visits to Ireland, King frequented the homes of well-known IRA leaders and participated in the group's various social events, including a visit to a drinking haunt hosted by a subgroup of terrorist veterans who had served time in jail. His association with the motley crew alarmed British intelligence officers who eventually tagged him as a person of interest. On one occasion, a Belfast judge threw King out of the courtroom during a murder trial, calling him an "IRA

collaborator." Similarly, the United States Secret Service listed him as a security threat in 1984 when Ronald Reagan traveled to the Congressman's Long Island turf to observe the Special Olympics.

King worked his real-life connections to the IRA into his literary musings. There, he aimed to dispel suspicions of his past through his characters, portraying his alter ego, Sean Cross, as an ever-vigilant politician who also faced questions about his support for the Irish paramilitary troops. One afternoon, Cross confronted Long Island mosque leaders about their lack of cooperation in hunting down terrorists. His hypocrisy, though, was all too obvious, prompting one man to snap, "With all respect, Congressman, I distinctly recall all the speeches you gave about the way the British were persecuting the Irish in Northern Ireland." Cross quickly retorted, "With all respect to you, Doctor, if the IRA had ever attacked Americans, I would have disowned them in a second—and I would have waited a long time before I started talking about what was going on in Northern Ireland."[25] This was a case of good terrorism versus bad terrorism. For Cross and King, there was a clear difference and it had much to do with whether or not they supported the particular cause at hand. King had defended his involvement with the IRA precisely on such terms. "I understand why people who are misinformed might see a parallel," he said. "The fact is, the I.R.A. never attacked the United States. And my loyalty is to the United States."[26]

In another passage, Cross conversed with Tom Barfield, a private investigator, who urged him not to worry about the perceived likeness of the groups. "The Muslim community is the most radical and terrorist of any immigrant group that's ever come to this country," Barfield said reassuringly. "To me there's no comparison between Al Qaeda and the IRA. The bottom line is that the IRA never worked against the United States. And most of the micks over here who supported the IRA considered themselves 100 percent pro-American, and believe me these Muslims don't. September 11 proved that."[27]

* * *

With his novel as a playbook of sorts for his congressional hearing, King acted out the very scenes he constructed for his readers. He had confided in law enforcement officials and investigators too. And like his protagonist, Cross, the information he received also indicated an imminent threat. It was something he regularly reminded his

detractors. "I talk to the police all the time," he said unemotionally. "I'm the only member of Congress who is both on the Homeland Security committee and the Intelligence committee, so I'm constantly getting briefings from the outside in and the inside out."[28] The radicalization of American Muslims, they told him, was worrisome.

Despite the fact that King's congressional hearings were premised on the testimony of FBI agents, police officers, and other law enforcement officials who had supposedly confirmed the uncooperative and even truculent nature of American Muslims, they were absent from his show trial. Rather than relying on his sources to provide to the public the same information they had passed along to him in private, King's panel heard instead from Muslim witnesses who, as the case of Zuhdi Jasser demonstrated, were hand-picked to confirm his suspicions. "I believe it will have more of an impact on the American people if they see people who are of the Muslim faith and Arab descent testifying," he said.[29] If invited, the FBI would say that they get cooperation from the Muslim community, King noted. And there was no place for evidence that undermined the conclusions he had already reached. "I know they don't," he huffed.[30]

But they did. And Craig Monteilh, a balding, middle-aged ex-convict who posed as a Muslim for 15 months in a southern California mosque, was proof of that.

Fresh out of prison in 2006 after serving time for forgery and writing bad checks, Monteilh was approached by the Orange County Joint Terrorism Task Force, who sent two FBI agents to meet with him at a Starbucks cafe outside of Costa Mesa. A Muslim congregation in the area, the Islamic Center of Irvine, was suspected of housing terrorist-friendly worshipers and the government needed a way inside.[31] "Islam is a threat to our national security," one agent told him.[32] The parishioners, the agents believed, would not turn in their own people and the only way to pick off the bad guys was to infiltrate their ranks and uncover their violent intentions from the inside. They asked for Monteilh's help.

Code named "Oracle," Monteilh had served on several other sting operations for the bureau and had impressed his government patrons. After reciting from memory the names of several Middle Eastern leaders without hesitation, the felon-turned-mole recalls that "They [the investigators] looked at each other and said, 'You've already passed. We're going to take what you already know, incorporate it with other things, and make you into a weapon of intel.' I said, 'Okay.'"

Monteilh was taken to a training facility where his identity was transformed. He brushed up on the Arabic language, learning verses from the Quran, and took refresher courses on Islam. He was also given a new name and ethnicity: Farouk Aziz, of French-Syrian descent. "The plan was to enter the ISOI [Islamic Center of Irvine], to begin very slowly, start with Western clothes, Italian suits, and in the process of my studies, shed off all Western [clothes] at the direction of Muslims … and to make this transformation as real as possible," he said.[33] The transformation was so real that his FBI handlers even gave him permission to have sex with Muslim women and record their pillow talk. "They said, if it would enhance the intelligence, go ahead and have sex. So I did," Monteilh said.[34]

Eventually, the 48-year-old Irvine resident and former fitness instructor donned a flowing white robe and *taqiyah*, a short rounded crochet cap worn by some observant Muslim men. Cameras were slipped into the buttons of his vest and a recording device was planted in his car keys. To the tune of nearly $200,000, his work, dubbed "Operation Flex," began. A regular at the local gym and at weekly prayer gatherings, Monteilh's conversations and interactions with unsuspecting Muslims were secretly passed on to his federal handlers. Soon, however, his rhetoric took a strange turn. "We started hearing that he was saying weird things," one student said. "He would walk up to one of my friends and say, 'It's good that you guys are getting ready for the jihad.'"[35] When Monteilh informed a youth group that he had access to weapons and that they should blow up a shopping mall, mild skepticism of the new convert turned into sheer panic. "They were convinced this man was a terrorist," said Hussam Ayloush, the executive director of the Los Angeles chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).[36] Leaders of the mosque responded. They took out a restraining order against Monteilh and, in an ironic twist, reported his violent ramblings to the very organization that had placed him there in the first place: the FBI.

* * *

One possible reason that law enforcement officials were not keen on discussing an alleged lack of cooperation from the American Muslim community at King's hearings was that, on the contrary, Muslims had been vital to foiling the plans of would-be terrorists. The case in Irvine, California was but one example. In May 2010, a bombing in New York City's Times Square was thwarted when a

Muslim immigrant working as a food vendor alerted nearby police to a suspicious car. Five months later, an attempted bombing of the Washington, DC metro system was interrupted when the Muslim community provided details that eventuated in the suspect's arrest. In December 2009, a sustained cooperative effort between the FBI and CAIR led to the capture of five American Muslim men in Pakistan suspected of trying to join radical, anti-American forces.

Further complicating King's claims (at one point he boasted to television pundit Sean Hannity that 85 percent of mosques were "ruled by extremists") was a study released by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University just three weeks before his initial hearing. It reported that in more than one-third—48 out of 121—of the violent terrorist attacks since September 11, 2001, it was American Muslims who first tipped off law enforcement officers to the plots.[37] Charles Kurzman, the author of the report, notes that each year in the United States, some 15,000 people are murdered. Muslim-led terrorism, it turns out, has accounted for just three dozen deaths since 9/11, a small fraction. "Fewer than 200 Muslim-Americans have engaged in terrorist plots over the past decade—that's out of a population of approximately two million. This constitutes a serious problem, but not nearly as grave as public concern would suggest," he said.[38]

While Peter King was hesitant to divulge names of law enforcement officials who had privately expressed concerns about American Muslims' cooperation, there were plenty of prominent national security experts, diplomats, police officers, and federal employees who told a different story. US Attorney General Eric Holder, for instance, said in December 2010 that "The cooperation of Muslim and Arab-American communities has been absolutely essential in identifying, and preventing, terrorist threats."[39] The director of the FBI, Robert Mueller, told the House Judiciary Committee in 2008 that "Many of our cases are a result of the cooperation from the Muslim community in the United States." One year later he noted that "The Muslim community has been tremendously supportive of the bureau since September 11th." (Curiously, Mueller testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2009 regarding Craig Monteilh's infiltration of the Islamic Center of Irvine, saying that "We do not focus on institutions, we focus on individuals. And I will say generally if there is evidence or information as to individual or individuals undertaking illegal activities in religious institutions, with appropriate high-level approval, we would undertake investigative activities, regardless of the religion.") Michael Leiter, director of

the National Counterterrorism Center, confirmed that "Many of our tips to uncover active terrorist plots in the United States have come from the Muslim community."[40]

Despite the fact that they had cooperated with law enforcement agencies, the American Muslim community had good reason to harbor ill will and mistrust towards them. The FBI's subversive scheme in California was just one example of a growing pattern of government stings that sent covert operatives into neighborhoods, apartment complexes, and houses of worship in search of information on growing Muslim enclaves.

In Manhattan, the local police department collaborated with the CIA to dispatch "rakers," or spies, into minority communities and used "mosque crawlers" to record sermons and scout out evidence of wrongdoing. Sifting through census data, officers matched ethnically concentrated neighborhoods with patrolmen of the same background. "Pakistani-American officers infiltrated Pakistani neighborhoods, Palestinians focused on Palestinian neighborhoods. They hung out in hookah bars and cafes, quietly observing the community around them," one report read. Bookshops, foreign food stores, hair salons, and libraries all soon became beats for cops acting as human cameras zoomed in on the Muslim population. "I was told to act like a civilian—hang out in the neighborhood and gather information," said one Bangladeshi police officer.[41]

The NYPD also recommended increasing surveillance of thousands of Shiite Muslims based solely on their religion. A document leaked to the public showed fears within the government of Iranian terrorists. Analysts listed dozens of mosques from Connecticut to the suburbs of Philadelphia as possible targets.[42] In addition, the Associated Press discovered in early 2012 that the NYPD had taken their domestic spying program one step further, zeroing in on college campuses across the North-east where they trawled daily through the websites of Muslim student groups and tracked their activities on campuses. Students at Yale, Rutgers, and the University of Pennsylvania, along with 13 other universities, went about their daily lives under the watchful eyes of police officers. On one occasion in 2008, an undercover officer accompanied a group of 18 Muslim students from the City College of New York on a whitewater rafting trip, taking note of the names of the students who were leaders in the group. "In addition to the regularly scheduled events (Rafting), the group prayed at least four times a day, and much of the conversation was spent discussing Islam and was religious in nature," the report read.[43] The year before,

in 2007, the NYPD compiled a demographics report on Muslim communities in Newark, New Jersey, outlining in photos and in maps the neighborhoods, mosques, and food shops in the city.

"We're doing what we believe we have to do to protect the city," said NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelly.[44] Kelly and Peter King were buddies. It was something that King liked to remind nearly everyone—especially people who had a problem with his radicalization hearings. "I've known Ray Kelly a long time," he would say. "And I certainly wouldn't go ahead with these hearings if I thought Ray Kelly disagreed with me."[45]

Kelly also knew the star witness of Peter King's hearings, Zudhi Jasser. In fact, the two had collaborated together on *The Third Jihad*, the radical anti-Muslim sequel to *Obsession*, the movie that was produced by the Israeli settlement group Aish HaTorah. The film was used as part of an NYPD training series. It was screened for nearly 1,500 officers partaking in anti-terrorism classes and played on a continuous loop for between three and five months.[46] More shockingly, in between images of explosions and a militant flag flying atop the White House, Kelly appeared in a 20-second interview. He denied his involvement at first. And his deputy, Paul J. Browne, insisted that the clip came from a collection of stock recordings that the NYPD saved for public use. Kelly, he said, most certainly did not participate in a film that painted Muslims in such a horrible light. The NYPD, so they said, had always enjoyed a positive relationship with the Muslim community.

When the film's producer, Raphael Shore, coughed up evidence showing that Kelly had indeed sat down for a recorded conversation, Kelly and Brown fessed up. "He's right," Brown said, reluctantly acknowledging Shore's proof. "I recommended in February 2007 that Commissioner Kelly be interviewed."[47]

The NYPD had planned and implemented a sting operation in New York City to weed out Muslims who they suspected were disloyal Americans and possible terrorists. Those suspicions were not based on fact, but rather, a propaganda film that the man in charge of the operation, Commissioner Kelly, had participated in and dispersed to agents in the department—a film that was funded by a Religious Zionist group in Israel and narrated by the man at the center of Peter King's anti-Muslim congressional hearings. Self-fulfilling prophecies had not a greater example.

The influence of the Islamophobia industry ran deeper than the NYPD. It extended to federal law enforcement groups who also had a secret stash of horror flicks, scare novels, and other frightening

anti-Muslim material in their closets. While Valerie Caproni, general counsel for the FBI, noted that the bureau's agents did not troll mosques or neighborhoods as such operations infringed on civil liberties, she did not acknowledge the heaped mass of prejudicial curriculum that was used to train new agents. Not only had the bureau sent spies into local mosques on the basis of suspected Muslim radicalization, but they too in a self-fulfilling prophecy had produced training materials for young guns that spelled out the allegedly violent and backward nature of "mainstream Muslims."

At the FBI's training ground in Quantico, Virginia, recruits viewed slides that suggested the more "devout" a Muslim, the more he is likely to be "violent." An instructional presentation added that "Any war against non-believers is justified under Muslim law" and a "moderating process cannot happen if the Koran continues to be regarded as the unalterable word of Allah." One pamphlet, titled "Militancy Considerations," measured the piety of the three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, using a black-and-white graph to show how, as time progressed, followers of the Torah and Bible moved from "violent" to "nonviolent" while followers of the Quran, did not—their line remained flattened indicating that Muslims' "moderating process has not happened."[48] A PowerPoint presentation titled "Strategic Themes and Drivers in Islamic Law" described Muhammad as a "businessman" and a "cult leader" whose political ambitions often led to the "assassination and execution of critics" and "employed torture to extract information."[49] An orientation packet distributed by the Joint Terrorism Taskforces noted that Sunnism—the largest branch of Islam—had been "prolific in spawning numerous and varied fundamentalist extremist terrorist organizations" and its adherents "strive for Sunni Islamic domination of the world to prove a key Quranic assertion that no system of government or religion on earth can match the Quran's purity and effectiveness for paving the road to God." That information reached nearly 5,000 agents, all charged with stopping terrorism.[50]

Aside from training manuals, the library at Quantico was chock full of books by authors known for their anti-Muslim diatribes. Daniel Pipes' *Militant Islam Reaches America* and Robert Spencer's *Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad Still Threatens America and the West* were among the titles checked out by bureau agents. Spencer's *Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam* and *The Truth about Muhammad: Founder of the World's Most Intolerant Religion* were

also included in a recommended reading list that instructors passed around to their students.[51]

In July 2010, Spencer appeared before the Terrorism Task Force in Tidewater, Virginia to present what he called "two two-hour seminars on the belief-system of Islamic jihadists."[52] It was not the first time he had appeared before federal law enforcement officers. US Central Command, the Army's Asymmetrical Warfare Group, and other organizations under the purview of the intelligence community had also invited him to speak. Responding to a complaint filed by a civil rights group that protested the FBI's embrace of such an overtly controversial figure, the bureau responded, saying that "Seeking broad knowledge on a wide range of topics is essential in understanding today's terrorist environment."[53]

There were others. Standing in front of a small crowd of federal agents in a dull office room in New York City, William Gawthrop, a counterterrorism analyst with the FBI—one of the men responsible for the dispersion of the bureau's anti-Muslim training pamphlets—delivered another provocative message. The fight against al-Qaeda, he told them, was a "waste" compared to the threat posed by Islam itself. Going after the religion—the prophet, the sacred text, the leaders—was the answer. "If you remember Star Wars, that ventilation shaft that goes down into the depths of the Death Star, they shot a torpedo down there," he said. "That's a critical vulnerability." Gawthrop shined his laser pointer over his slideshow, zeroing in on the words "holy texts" and "Clerics."[54] Turning to the group of agents he said, "We should be focusing on these."

Immediately after September 11, 2001, the Justice Department had rounded up hundreds of illegal immigrants, more than 700, in fact—all of them Muslims. Jailed for two weeks while authorities traced leads, the large majority was sent back to their countries of origin. Three out of four were from New York or New Jersey, many were of Pakistani origin, and according to one report, 84 were subjected to highly restrictive, 23-hour "lockdown" and were shackled at the arms and legs by chains. The same report called attention to the "unduly harsh" imprisonment despite a lack of any evidence of terrorist ties and a "pattern of physical and verbal abuse." Some of the prisoners were picked up at traffic stops and others were reported to authorities as simply being Muslims with "erratic schedules."[55]

Craig Monteilh, the FBI's fake Muslim spy in southern California, said, "It is all about entrapment … I know the game, I know the dynamics of it. It's such a joke, a real joke. There is no real hunt. It's fixed … Because of this the Muslim community will never trust the FBI again."[56]

In March 2012, the head of the Newark, New Jersey FBI division said that it was the NYPD's program of monitoring Muslims that had caused the bureau great difficulty in gathering counterterrorism intelligence. "What we're seeing now with the uproar that is occurring in New Jersey is that we're starting to see cooperation pulled back. People are concerned that they're being followed. People are concerned that they can't trust law enforcement," said FBI Newark Special Agent in Charge Michael Ward, oblivious to the fact that his own agency was deeply involved in the very same practices.

* * *

On November 19 1967, just two weeks after the House Committee on Un-American Activities investigated black Americans and attempted to link urban race riots to communist infiltration, Representative William Tuck, the ageing Virginia congressman who oversaw the conduct of the hearings, appeared at his alma mater, The College of William and Mary. The Society of Alumni was having a celebration. Having graduated from the Law School in 1948, the environment was both dear and familiar to him. "It was a very quaint and picturesque place," he later remembered fondly.[57]

A crowd of nearly 3,000 had gathered as the Society was marking its 125th anniversary; the gala was a weekend festivity of football, parades, dinners, and awards ceremonies. Tuck, it turned out, was there for the latter. He had been chosen to receive the highest award bestowed upon a graduate, the college's Alumni Medallion. The large gold medal was a competitive accolade. It was traditionally awarded to prominent individuals and personalities in recognition of their outstanding professional accomplishments, leadership, and dedication to their community. While Tuck's rise to the governorship and his time in the House of Representatives were impressive accomplishments, ones understandably lauded by the college which claimed his attendance, his battle against communism during the hearings in Cannon Room 311 that year were, in the eyes of many during that time of Cold War and racial conflict, a most noble effort.

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In January 2008, Zuhdi Jasser headed to the FBI's Arizona Field Office on East Indianola Avenue in Phoenix. It was a happy occasion for him. At 1 p.m., the bureau was holding a press conference to

announce their choice for the Director's Community Leadership Service Award and he had been chosen. The prize was given to an individual who had made a significant contribution to fighting crime or terrorism or violence, and who had an exemplary impact on the community. It was a prelude of sorts, however. In April 2012, GOP Senator Mitch McConnell appointed Jasser to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, a watchdog panel that makes recommendations to Congress, the White House, and the State Department.

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At an ACT! for America luncheon on Capitol Hill, Brigitte Gabriel stepped up to the microphone to make an announcement. Peter King was in the audience, she said, and he couldn't stay long. The business of radical Muslim hunting offered few breaks but he had managed to slip away just long enough to mingle briefly with the right-wing luminaries in attendance before heading back to his office. "Congressman King is with us and he has to run back to Capitol Hill because he's got a prior appointment. You know how busy his schedule is but we are honored to have him here so we can present him with our 2010 National Security Award," Gabriel said.[58] King, grinning, inched closer to the podium and embraced her. He grasped the glass plaque, reading it as their hug lingered. The two were close. The ACT! for America founder had advised the congressman on terrorism-related issues for some time.[59] "I want you to know, as I've said before," started King, "how much I appreciate the work that ACT! for America does for our country because we are engaged in a brutal war against a brutal enemy, the enemy of Islamic terrorism … and Brigitte I just want you to know that as long as I have the support of good people such as you, we are going to win this war."[60]

Sadly, though, the fruits of their labor were ripening into a bitter and bloody display of violence across the pond in Europe.

7
Across the Pond: The Deadly Effects of Hate in Europe

Manifestos are curious documents. As platforms for ideological expression, they offer a glimpse inside the minds of their creators, who unpack for the public in prose-like fashion, the guiding principles and idiosyncrasies that shape their beliefs. Most are political declarations, grandiose visions for society's betterment spelled out in lofty overtures by political actors who hope to influence the disaffected. Others are more personal, diary-like musings penned by a celebrated few who hope to impart on the world a vestige of the cause they championed. And some are crude blueprints for a world that exists only in the minds of the deranged.

If there is one defining characteristic of the manifesto it is this: its authors are not run-of-the-mill townsfolk whose closeted aspirations for humankind pour out in the ink that blots the pages of their proclamation. They are the radicals, the leaders, the dogmatists. Whether good or bad, they do big things. For Karl Marx, it was *The Communist Manifesto*, for Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein's peace-seeking gesture, the *Russell-Einstein Manifesto*, was one such asseveration as was Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

Strange then it was that Anders Behring Breivik, an insecure and loveless 32-year-old bloke, hidden from the world by his seemingly sheltered existence in the Skøyen neighborhood of Oslo, would toil for nine long years to write his testimony, one 65 times longer than Marx's manifesto. At 1,500 pages, Breivik's "2083—A European Declaration of Independence" was a congested compilation of hate-filled ramblings that would form the playbook for an atrocity Norway had not seen the likes of since World War II.

Its title reflected the year that Europe would supposedly witness the final expulsion of Muslims and "cultural Marxists" who welcomed immigrants. In Breivik's tangled and twisted imagination, the program of purging would take 72 years. It was a process, though, that he would set in to action immediately. "The old saying, 'If you want something done, then do it yourself' is as relevant now

as it was then," he wrote. "I believe this will be my last entry. It is Fri July 22, 12:51."[1]

Just over one hour later, at 2:09 p.m., an email circulated throughout Scandinavia, reaching more than a thousand people. It contained an electronic copy of Breivik's tome-like document. "It is a gift to you … I ask you to distribute it to everyone you know," he told the recipients.[2] Loading into a white Volkswagen Crafter van, he drove to Regjeringskvartalet, the government quarter of downtown Oslo.

* * *

Home to more than a million inhabitants, the busy city that serves as the government and cultural hub of the Scandinavian country had long enjoyed a peaceful image. It hosts the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony each October, houses the Peace Research Institute, and was the site of the famous Oslo Accords, a treaty that attempted to resolve years of conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians by fostering mutual recognition, the renouncement of terrorism, and military withdrawals.

Summers in Oslo were pleasant and the penultimate weekend of July 2011 was no exception. White cumulus fractus clouds spanned the sky, dispersed across the endless blue expanse in such a way that they appeared almost hand placed, the best of a bunch carefully selected by a higher power and positioned alongside one another like art. It was warm, but not hot. Rarely did the humidity and temperature mingle with one another to produce an uncomfortable mixture; more often than not, the former yielded to the latter creating the perfect climate for outdoor activities such as camping trips, visits to family summer homes, and picnics.

Norwegians, like all Scandinavians, delighted in this time of the year. Hardly a buttoned-up, office-dwelling people, the entire country shut down for what many referred to as simply "holiday." Cabins in the woods, locked up during the harsh winter months, opened as families fled the cityscape in search of more rugged, earthy terrain to bide their time. Canoes, kayaks, and barbeque grills, all necessary features of the getaways, lined the edges of the lakes, another essential holiday ingredient; the ice that once covered their surfaces and caused them to blend with the rest of the snowy white land had long melted, though the shrieks of young children whose first dives into the natural swimming pools via cannon-balls

or back-flips from manmade diving boards evidenced the cool, if not even cold, nature of the water.

Friday afternoons eventually blurred into the week and weekend; long stints away from the desk made it difficult to remember exactly what day it was and the whole restful occasion was better spent not worrying about such matters of time anyway. But for the unfortunate few whose careers did not allow for such jaunts to the coastal oases, Fridays were, as they usually are, spent staring at wristwatches and wall clocks, idling by in half-hearted work mode while the ticking of the second hand towards 5 p.m. schlepps along at a snail-like pace. Though brief, the awaited two-day weekend allowed at least enough time to catch one of the city's many outdoor festivals. The fact that the sun remained in the sky through the summer nights, a beneficial phenomenon of the high northern latitudes, meant that late evenings out on the town often bled into the early, or even mid-morning, hours.

Just north-east of Karl Johans gate, the main boulevard in the city of Oslo, inside a brown-and-white glassy edifice that served as the headquarters for various ministries of the Norwegian government, weekday-weary workers looked out at the tree-filled square. A fountain bubbled at rhythmic intervals producing an artsy and hypnotizing display of hydrogen and oxygen. Norway's flag, strung high atop a pole in the middle of the plaza, flopped morosely downwards, saddened it seemed by the lack of wind; its blue Nordic cross, an off-centered intersection that marked the predominant Christian religion, was enveloped in the drapey overlay of the banner's blood-red backdrop.

A surveillance camera captured the white commercial van as it turned onto Grubeggata Street. Its warning lights flashing, the elongated vehicle with sliding rear doors stopped and started, at one point sitting still for several minutes. It was not an unusual occurrence. Delivery trucks, government transports, and police motorcades frequented the quiet street in similar fashion. A series of back-and-forths, failed parking attempts, and jarring turns passed and the driver eventually found a comfortable spot to stop, one squarely in front of the main government building.

Stepping out from the driver's side onto the black, gravel-pressed pavement, a man emerged dressed in police gear—a shielded mask and helmet, a bulletproof vest, and dark, lace-up combat boots. Pistol in hand, he walked towards Hammersborg torg, a site that could only have been, by the presence of this battle-ready cop filing swiftly through the streets in broad daylight, the scene of a terrible

altercation. Once there, however, his pace slowed. The area was as still as its surroundings on a Friday afternoon in late July and opening the door of a car he had parked there earlier in the day, Anders Breivik removed his police mask and drove towards Lake Tyrifjorden, the country's fifth largest, where he appeared like many others on the route: eager to spend the weekend at the summer spot some 25 miles north-west of Oslo.

* * *

The explosion powered through the building so forcefully that the shock wave blew out windows on every single level. The van, a charred, twisted version of its former self lay on its side; smoke poured out from its mechanical guts. A fire burned at the Department of Oil and Energy where it was parked. Still, the street just outside the prime minister's office was unusually quiet. In the moments between the initial detonation and the arrival of emergency crews whose whining sirens sounded in the distance, drawing closer with the pitched rise and fall, businesspeople and street-goers alike traipsed through the dusty debris unsure of what to make of it all. One man jogged by, jumping over shards of glass, bent tin, and splintered two-by-fours, on his way, it appeared, to the finish line of a race whose sponsors were unaware of what had just taken place. Others, standing amidst the rubble, took out their cell phones to snap pictures and make homemade recordings. A stench of fertilizer and fuel oil wafted through the hazy air. Eight were dead. Dozens more, battered and dismembered, were pulled from offices whose blinds hung cockeyed in the shattered windows.

An hour-and-a-half later, as emergency and security teams had settled into permanent encampments along the street where the blast occurred, Anders Breivik boarded the *MS* Thorbjørn, a tiny passenger ferry owned by the Worker's Youth League, a group affiliated with the country's Labour Party. Arriving at Utøya, a small island owned by the league that is the annual site of their summer camp, he walked off the vessel, still in full police regalia, and signaled for the campers and counselors to gather around him. A bombing had just occurred in Oslo, he told them, and he was there to ensure their safety. "We greeted him as he got off the ferry," reported one student who was leaving the island just as Breivik arrived. "We thought it was great how quickly the police had come to reassure us of our safety because we had heard of the bombing in Oslo."

One shot rang out; one was dead. Two more sharp pops; the death toll tripled. Soon, the crowd of youngsters that had huddled around the friendly Norwegian cop lay lifeless. Blood ran from golf-ball sized wounds formed by "dum-dum" expanding bullets, creating a sloshy grime with the grass and dirt. "Don't be shy," begged Breivik. "Come and play with me," he said before unloading another deadly round from the barrel of his .223 Ruger assault rifle.

The massacre was a slow and methodical event. Hardly a maniacal rampage of flying ammunition, Breivik carefully planned each shot. His young targets, he had decided, must die and an arbitrary spray of bullets flying through the air in every direction would not guarantee that. This was a time for precision. "This man came along and said he was from the police and told us he would help us and make sure that everyone was OK but that man, dressed as a policeman, was the shooter," one of the camp's organizers reported. "He had a machine gun, but it wasn't set to automatic fire, it was on single shot. He wasn't shooting like crazy or to make panic, he was shooting to kill people, with single bullets."[3]

Scuttling towards nearby canvas tents, some campers hoped to shield themselves from the bloodbath. Breivik followed behind them, walking insouciantly toward their pitched sleeping space. He had anticipated their bolt for cover. Pulling back the flaps of the doors, he stuck his execution weapon inside. A quick series of blasts. Silence. If any among the heap of corpses was thought to be alive, he thrust his steel-toed black military boot into their sides. An exhale or breath or a grimace and the salvo continued until there was silence.

Across the campground, several soon-to-be victims ran towards the lake; the water and branches and rocks, they prayed, would protect them from the hell on land. But Breivik ambled towards the embankment like an automaton, a humanoid, locked in an emotionless state; the carnage around him was only motivation to continue on with his program. Finding their hiding place, he drew his rifle to his chest, peered through its sight and much like a carnival goer shooting ducks at a prize booth, picked off his targets one by one, their blood forming a crimson slick in the dark blue water.

It was an unthinkable tragedy. Once the slaughter had finally been abated, 69 people on the heavily wooded island were dead and nearly 70 were injured. The casualties from the two attacks—the Utøya island camper hunt and the car bomb blast back on the

mainland—were upwards of 200; 77 had died and more than 150 were injured.[4]

* * *

"Singular" is the best word to describe the vision of Anders Behring Breivik. Though psychiatric evaluations in the weeks and months that followed his systematic killings suggested that schizophrenic tendencies may have led him to his violent binge, the question remained whether a man who had spent nine years planning his cold and logical plan and then carrying it out with utmost precision and patience was really the victim of an uncontrollable, delusional mind. He did not take his own life; he was unashamed of what he did and was not frightened by the penalty he knew he would pay.

Breivik saw himself as the modern-day leader of the Knights Templar, a Middle-Age Christian military order headquartered at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to protect Christians traveling across the Holy Land. Known for its battle skills, the group once slew Arab and Muslim forces who claimed rights to the city of Jerusalem. Breivik believed that he along with nine others had "refounded" the clan and in his manifesto, the cover of which shows the group's large red cross, he revealed that he gave himself the ranking of "Justiciar Knight."[5] "Our purpose," he wrote, "is to seize political and military control of Western European countries and implement a cultural conservative political agenda."[6]

The Nordic culture, he sensed, was on the brink of extinction. And he had to preserve it. "I am very proud of my Viking heritage," he crowed. "My name, Breivik, is a location name from northern Norway, and can be dated back to even before the Viking era."[7] He was a "pure" Norwegian, one whose ancestry was not marred with the irreparable stain of mixed ethnicity. So absorbed with racial virtue was Breivik, that he once had plastic surgery to make his features look more Aryan. "I remember we were at a party, and he told me he had had his nose and chin operated on by a plastic surgeon in America," a friend reported.[8] One Norwegian intelligence official even said that the 32-year-old assassin's looks were so starkly non-Semitic, Hitler would have used him as a poster child.

An equal opportunity hater, the blonde-haired, blue-eyed misanthrope scoffed at variation. He detested multiculturalism and abhorred the ambitions of globalism. His mother, a nurse who raised her son in a well-to-do neighborhood of west Oslo, was even too liberal for his tastes. He "did not approve" of his matriarchal

upbringing and blamed it for feminizing him. As author Henning Mankell writes, Breivik was "a cold-blooded Don Quixote tilting at people who live and breathe."[9]

Muslims, though, had a special place in Breivik's sick world. Through uncontrollable immigration and breeding, he warned, they would soon take over the continent—his continent—and render the white Aryan population a thing of the past. Making matters worse, Nordic genes were recessive according to him, and any racial mixing that would occur in the all-too-certain eventuality of a Muslim conquest would, if not prevented, be a matter of ethnic and cultural suicide.[10]

This was "Demographic jihad."[11] And, he noted, it was not the first time the future of white European civilization was on the brink of elimination. In 1683, at the Battle of Vienna, Christian forces clashed with the Ottoman Empire in a protracted and historic encounter. The Ottomans were defeated, thus ensuring that Europe would not become a part of the Muslim empire. The date in the title of Breivik's manifesto—2083—would be the 400th anniversary of that occasion. He was recreating history—waging a war to protect Norway from what he imagined to be, once again, the creeping, evil influence of Islam.[12]

His obsession with tracking the statistics of that influence was seen in the charts and graphs that lined the pages of his manifesto. Kosovo, Lebanon, Kashmir, and even Turkey, he professed, were all witnessing booms in the population of Muslims and the same process was at work in Oslo and elsewhere in Europe. "Show me a country where Muslims have lived at peace with non-Muslims without waging Jihad against the Kaffir (dhimmitude, systematic slaughter, or demographic warfare)? Can you please give me ONE single example where Muslims have been successfully assimilated?" Breivik demanded. "How many thousands of Europeans must die, how many hundreds of thousands of European women must be raped, millions robbed and bullied before you realise that multiculturalism and Islam cannot work?"[13]

The great irony in all of this was that Breivik's bloodbath was not directed at Muslims, but rather, young Norwegian activists taking part in a Labour Party camp. Still, there was a link. The country's Labour Party, he had determined, through its liberal policies and inclinations towards multiculturalism, impeded his quest for a racially unified Nordic land by allowing Muslim immigration. The nightmare he unleashed, therefore, was payback for a party he blamed with committing treason. "I am a military commander in

the Norwegian resistance movement and Knights Templar Norway," he told a judge. "I object to [the court] because you received your mandate from organizations that support hate ideology [and] because it supports multiculturalism. I acknowledge the acts but I do not plead guilty."[14] Some observers described him as cold and inhuman. "I wish he looked like a monster, but he doesn't," one victim's relative said. "It would be so much easier if he did."[15]

* * *

"You can ignore jihad, but you cannot ignore the consequences of ignoring jihad." The words of Pamela Geller in the immediate aftermath of the Oslo attacks were accompanied by a video on her website depicting a pro-Hamas rally in the streets of Norway's capital city in 2009.[16] The recent catastrophe, it appeared to her, was the work of the usual suspects. "If I hear another television or radio reporter refer to muhammad [sic] as 'the *Prophet* Muhammad' I think I am going to puke. He is not your prophet, assclowns," she snarled, taking her appraisal of the "Muslimness" of the attacks to the next ugly level.[17]

When news of the butchery in Norway reached the United States, the far right could not resist the urge to place blame on Muslims. Such a barbaric crime, they believed, did not fit into the cognitive mapping of non-Muslim Europeans and Americans. Though word of the perpetrator's ethnic and religious background had not yet been made public, there was no shortage of speculation. Evidence was not a prerequisite for such endeavors. The scope of the two attacks was enough for some to wager a public bet, a gamble, that their suspicions about an inextricable link between Muslims and terrorism were true.

"Two deadly attacks in Norway, in what appears to be the work, once again, of Muslim extremists," Laura Ingraham, a Fox News host filling in for Bill O'Reilly, said in an intro to her story on the massacre.[18] At the *Washington Post*, conservative blogger Jennifer Rubin (who once drew fire for re-tweeting an article that called for Palestinian genocide) discussed a "specific jihadist connection." Drumming up the possibility of an al-Qaeda linkage, she opined that "This is a sobering reminder for those who think it's too expensive to wage a war against jihadists."[19]

Similarly, the Rupert Murdoch-owned *Wall Street Journal* dwelled on a possible Muslim connection, suggesting that the Danish cartoon controversy over a published caricature of the Prophet

Muhammad had sparked a full-blown terrorist campaign against Denmark. Norway, the op-ed surmised, was also on the hit list of jihadi warriors who despise the country's "commitment of freedom of speech and conscience," and was "paying a terrible price" for those ideals.[20] Even the *New York Times*, hardly a platform for the harangues of Islamophobes, reported that "There was ample reason for concern that terrorists might be responsible. In 2004 and again in 2008, the No. 2 leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahri, who took over after the death of Osama bin Laden, threatened Norway because of its support of the American-led NATO military operation in Afghanistan."[21]

Much has been made about the various ways in which Muslims have been linked, fairly and unfairly, to terrorism, particularly in the epistemological terrain of the post-September 11th world. But the case of the Oslo attacks demonstrates an instance where the word "terrorism" became virtually meaningless. Despite the insatiable desire of some right-wingers to use it synonymously with "Muslims" or "Islam," characters like the blond-haired, blue-eyed white Christian male, Anders Breivik, deflated that possibility; the same was true for his American counterpart and predecessor, Timothy McVeigh, of Oklahoma City villainy. These men, and several others like them, showed that non-Muslims were capable of committing atrocities that were often attributed exclusively to Muslims.

For the far right, it was a horrifying thought. How could they distinguish themselves from a group with which they were now—based on the actions of a fringe few—capable of being associated? One way was by distancing themselves from the word "terrorist." After all, it was really just a term they used to describe violence that stemmed from severe interpretations of Islam. "Muslims killed us on 9/11," Fox News host Bill O'Reilly once screeched.[22] His colleague, Brian Kilmeade, later came to his defense saying bluntly, "All terrorists are Muslims."[23] Terrorism, it seemed, was not the toxic ingredient. It was simply a means for expressing it. There was, based on the logic of O'Reilly and Kilmeade, something unique about Islam, however, that was at the root of such bestial displays of violence.

When it came to the Oslo tragedy, O'Reilly was so irate that some news pundits and analysts had pointed to Breivik's Christian faith that he, in a maneuver to shed the idea that the butcher of Norway was one of his coreligionists, verbally excommunicated him. "Breivik is not a Christian," he said. "That's impossible. No one believing in Jesus commits mass murder. The man might have

called himself a Christian on the net, but he is certainly not of that faith."[24] Host Laura Ingraham proclaimed on an episode of *Fox and Friends* that "The idea that [Breivik] in any way represents Christians is ridiculous and absurd." According to her, he did not represent "any mainstream or even fringe settlement in the Christian community."[25] Soon, mainstream media outlets that first reported that the attack was the work of Muslim terrorists began to walk back their claims. But not entirely.

Jennifer Rubin amended her initial slur, but not until a hue and cry over her eagerness to point to a Muslim menace had forced her hand. "Early suspicion that the attacks might have been linked to a jihadist bombing plot in Oslo last year or the recent Norwegian prosecution of an Iraqi terrorist did not bear up," she wrote. Still, her admission only went so far. Even when Muslims were not to blame, they were guilty of something—even if that something was nothing more than a suspected lurking presence: "There are many more jihadists than blond Norwegians out to kill Americans, and we should keep our eye on the systemic and far more potent threats that stem from an ideological war with the West."[26]

The *New York Times* reverse-engineered its initial assessment in a similar way: "Terrorism specialists said that even if the authorities ultimately ruled out Islamic terrorism as the cause of Friday's assaults, other kinds of groups or individuals were mimicking Al-Qaeda's brutality and multiple attacks." Bryan Fishman, a counterterrorism researcher at the New America Foundation in Washington, told the paper that "If it does turn out to be someone with more political motivations, it shows these groups are learning from what they see from Al-Qaeda."[27] There was ample reason initially, the piece read, for concern that terrorists might be involved. In other words, when it was learned that no Muslims participated in the bombing and the shooting, that, by definition, meant that no terrorists were involved. Conversely, when it was first believed that Muslims had participated, it was suggested that the attacks in Norway were, in fact, acts of terrorism. "No one seems to be wondering whether or not he is a convert," blogger and pseudo-scholar Robert Spencer bemoaned, laboring, it appeared, to find some link to Muslims.[28] Blogger Pamela Geller, who along with Spencer manufactured the public fit that broke out over the Park51 community center, mocked her critics. "But remember, jihad is not the problem," she wrote sarcastically. "New York's 911, London's 7/7, Madrid's 3/11, Bali, Mumbai, Beslan, Moscow … is not the problem. 'Islamophobia' is

the problem. Repeat after me as you bury the dead, 'Islamophobia' is the problem, Islamophobia is the problem," she lampooned.[29]

* * *

When the ILA Prison, a plain five-story brick building in Bærum that looked more like a dormitory than a women's penitentiary, was finished being built in 1940, Nazi Germany's invasion of Norway was well under way. The edges and lines of the squared, institutional structure met at perfect angles and the fence, a chain-link barrier that surrounded it on all sides, was uniform and straight; not one flaw disrupted the sameness of the site. It was just as Europe should be; a model, almost, for the imagined homogeneity of the continent. At least in the mind of Hitler, who, upon the inauguration of his extermination campaign in Norway, converted the structure into a concentration camp.

Appropriately enough, Anders Breivik was holed up inside a modern-day version of the facility, dressed not in traditional prison attire but a red Lacoste jumpsuit he insisted upon wearing; he was obsessed with maintaining control over every aspect of his image, including the pictures of him that were made public. In November 2011, a team of psychiatrists came to visit him in his cell at the Ila prison and later declared that he lived in a "delusional universe" and was a paranoid schizophrenic who had lost touch with reality.[30] The Forensic Commission agreed and ruled that it was Breivik's poor mental condition that was to blame for his gruesome deed. The assessment seemed logical at the time. Sane individuals, it was believed, did not succumb to sadism and wickedness and despite the logical and disciplined way in which Breivik carried out his plan, the only possible way to comprehend it was to divorce it from human dimensions. "He just came out of nowhere," one police officer said. "This seems like a madman's work."[31]

But Breivik did not come out of nowhere. His manifesto made that clear. It offered a window into the motives and inspirations that led him to his binge and elucidated the embodiment of a hate ideology that was fast becoming institutionalized.

Certainly, only he was to blame for carrying out his murderous scheme; it was he who purchased the materials, drew the battle map, planted the car bomb and shot down young campers. That cannot be forgotten in what follows. His world, though, was one that was animated by the diseased daydreams of the far right—the Tea Partiers, the evangelical Christians, the uber-conservative

Religious Zionists, and the peddlers of Islamophobia. Their words grew and transmuted his fear; they egged on his obsessions and blessed his suspicions. They also lined the pages of his manifesto. Breivik digested their anti-Muslim screeds in large chunks, at times copying and pasting their writings into his own treatise by whole paragraphs. They were his burden of proof, his evidence to the world that the "Islamization" of Europe was not a figment of his imagination, but an incontestable fact. Clearly he believed that they were fellow travelers on the same journey towards a more Muslim-less world.

"About Islam I recommend essentially everything written by Robert Spencer," Breivik gushed.[32] So in love was he with the American blogger's writing that he even proclaimed him worthy of receiving a Nobel Peace Prize. Coming from anyone else, the endorsement would have likely floated along the sidebars of Spencer's blog or festooned the back flap of his books as a ringing approval of his commitment to armchair counter-jihad.[33] Coming from someone who had just caused—singlehandedly—the worst bloodletting in Norway since World War II, the mention was hardly welcomed. "If I was indeed an inspiration for [Breivik's] work, I feel the way the Beatles must have felt when they learned that Charles Manson had committed murder after being inspired by messages he thought he heard in their song lyrics," Spencer wrote. "There were no such messages. Nor is there, for any sane person, any inspiration for harming anyone in my work, which has been consistently dedicated to defending human rights for all people."[34]

Charles Manson, however, did not articulate in actions a worldview espoused by the Beatles. On the contrary, he, in a state of sheer and utter delusion, convinced his equally delusional followers of hidden messages in the *White Album* that were simply not there. Spencer, on the other hand, had spelled out what he viewed as the impending threat of radical Islam for nearly ten years. He regularly deployed extreme imagery, frightening warnings, and laid at the feet of his followers a violent and imbalanced portrait of a world religion so intensely bent on destruction that something had to be done to stop it. What was the purpose of all of this fear mongering? What was to be done? If Muslims were as he portrayed them, and secular policies of multiculturalism were to blame for their supposed influence on society, what was the answer?

Though Spencer sought to distance himself from the Norwegian killer, he could not. References to Spencer's work appeared 162 times in Breivik's manifesto—an average of one mention every nine

pages.[35] It was a damning indictment. Of all the pseudo-scholars and Muslim bashers Breivik drummed up to substantiate his narrative, none was more central than Spencer. He was the principal source among many. And, by his own logic—which suggested that violent verses of the Quran were to blame for their extreme interpretations by radical Muslims—he was guilty. His writings were, after all, the sacred stimuli for Breivik's violence. Not only did Breivik swallow up the narrative Spencer and his ilk had worked so hard to advance, he took it to its logical conclusion.

Writer Hussein Ibish provides an instructive (and corrective) analogy to Spencer's bizarre reference to Charles Manson. He suggests that the vicious rhetoric of the anti-Semites in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who preached fear and hatred of Jews similarly denied and disavowed any influence or responsibility for the Holocaust. "Were they directly culpable for the genocide of the Jews?" he asks. "No. But do they have a responsibility for the logical consequences of their words taken to extremes by homicidal madmen? Yes." Taking the comparison to the next rational and relevant level, radical and extreme Muslim preachers who sermonize about the evils of the West and conjure up for their congregations images of the "infidels" and "apostates" and "hypocrites" but stop just short of commanding their faithful followers to don suicide vests and catapult the loathed Americans and Europeans to an eternity spent in Hell deserve no exoneration for the expected consequences of their message.[36]

While Robert Spencer's writing provided the impelling theme for Breivik's theater of violence, he was hardly the sole inspiration. As is usually the case with the Islamophobia industry, where there is one fear merchant, there are several. They are a tight-knit bunch prowling a common terrain and linked by a common prey. It was not surprising then, that Pamela Geller's writings were featured in twelve different sections of Breivik's manifesto.[37] Though she was not deemed worthy of a Nobel Prize like her colleague Spencer, she was, in Breivik's opinion, a "decent human being."[38] And, he noted proudly, he had followed her blog *Atlas Shrugs* for the better part of a year.

She mocked her critics in the initial moments after the attack by sarcastically suggesting that Islamophobia was to blame. But Geller could barely contain herself upon learning that the jab of irony had, in a damning twist of fate, turned on her. Islamophobia, it appeared, was to blame and her role in promoting it was undeniable. Quickly, she engaged the gears of damage control, offering a response that

was identical to the one coughed up by Spencer just hours earlier. "It's like equating Charles Manson, who heard in the lyrics of Helter Skelter a calling for the Manson murders," she barked. "It's like blaming the Beatles. It's patently ridiculous."[39] The sameness of Spencer and Geller's comebacks cannot be overlooked. It was unlikely that they had arrived at a matching analogy out of mere coincidence. More plausibly, Spencer's initial response to what he called "the blame game" was quickly swallowed up by Geller who, knowing that she too would soon be indicted in the media's seizure of the topic, fumbled for a clever way to shield herself.

However loudly she squawked about the "abject loser" whose "subhuman" and "sick-to-death" status led him to a crime committed "wholly own his own," Geller could barely disguise her merriment at Breivik's macabre scene. She called the youth camp on Utøya Island, the turf where the shootings took place, an "anti-Semitic indoctrination center" where children with a "clearly pro-Islamic agenda" play war games. "I saw at least one article that had photos of previous summers with the little dearies and their handlers assembling Israel-bashing displays," she sneered.[40] Even in the midst of tragedy, Geller was unable to resist the urge to indulge in a bit of unadulterated racism. Especially since the youth—who appeared in a group picture on her website—were allegedly anti-Semites and "more Middle Eastern or mixed than purely Norwegian." They were the types that were not supposed to be there according to the man that gunned them down. Geller rationalized, "Breivik was targeting the future leaders of the party responsible for flooding Norway with Muslims who refuse to assimilate, who commit major violence against Norwegian natives, including violent gang rapes, with impunity, and who live on the dole … all done without the consent of the Norwegians."[41] If not a defense of Breivik, her statement was astonishingly close to one.

Alarmingly, Geller appeared fully aware that her proximity to such dangerous creatures could implicate her in their violent plots. As the media began to connect the dots and report on her influence, she scurried to her blog and deleted any statements that could be construed as incriminating. Four years earlier, in June 2007, she had posted an eerily prescient entry titled "Email from Norway." The author, whose identity Geller withheld, had communicated his worries to her privately, lamenting what he viewed as an increase in the number of Norwegian Muslims. Citing a series of unsubstantiated demographic trends (such as "the nation's capital is already 50% Muslim"), the writer proposed that a Muslim-led attack on

Israel would spark all Muslims, worldwide, into a frenzy whereby they would attack everyone around them. "We are entering a new golden age for my people, and those of a handful other countries, but only through struggle. Never fear, Pamela. God is with you too in this coming time," the Oslo man wrote.[42] Geller praised his "matter-of-factness."

Absent from the version of the email that appeared on her blog in July 2011, however, was the following line, included in the original exchange: "We are stockpiling and caching weapons, ammunition and equipment. This is going to happen fast."

Buried as they were in the middle of the note sent to Geller, the 15 words were a signpost for destruction. One reader commented that the Norwegian authorities could prosecute the author under hate speech laws. "Yes," Geller replied. "Which is why I ran it anonymously."[43] If the comment did come from Breivik, Geller's guilt ran deeper than the ideological footstool she provided. Still, regardless of the mystery maniac's identity, she knew that the fear of Muslims in Europe, a fear that she willingly helped foster, had provoked in at least one individual a paranoia so intense, that armed violence was his only rational solution.

Anders Breivik's path from a Saturday-night stay-at-homer to a scheming assassin intersected with the cerebrations of other Islamophobic activists. The colorful and intrepid crusader Brigitte Gabriel was one of them. Video of a 2004 interview with the ACT! for America founder was cited in Chapter 6 of Breivik's manifesto, which spelled out his belief that Lebanon's Christian community—the community from which Gabriel claimed origin—was nearing extinction. Harrowing tales of her experiences during the country's civil war, a staple of her speaking engagements, saturated the nearly 45-minute clip proving to Breivik that Muslim populations "choose war rather than dialogue."[44]

Breivik was also influenced by *Obsession*, the anti-Muslim film produced by the extreme Israeli settlement group, Aish HaTorah. He cited seven of the movie's 17 "experts" and provided links to all ten parts of the video documentary on YouTube.[45] His enthusiasm was not unexpected, especially considering that the horror flick was the work of ultra-conservative Religious Zionists. Breivik shared their love of Israel just as he shared their hatred of Islam and their detestation of liberal Jews. "Please learn the difference between a nation-wrecking multiculturalist Jew and a conservative Jew … Never target a Jew because he is a Jew, but rather because he is a category A or B traitor," he wrote. "Let us fight together with

Israel, with our Zionist brothers against all anti-Zionists, against all cultural Marxists/multiculturalists."[46]

When Center for Security Policy founder Frank Gaffney, who Breivik mentioned seven times in his battle guide, was asked about how it felt for Gaffney's writing to be used for violent ends, he served up one of his usual conspiracies. The manifesto, he began, may have not been the work of Breivik after all. Just perhaps, he continued, the document was a hoax planted by Muslims who hoped to implement Islamic law. "It cries out for a thorough investigation as to whether it was in fact an authentic piece of his own creation, whether it's a false flag operation, whether it actually was meant to do anything other than to contribute to Sharia's efforts to suppress criticism and awareness of its agenda," he said. Could the Muslim Brotherhood have been behind the alleged skullduggery? "Absolutely," Gaffney replied.[47]

* * *

Breivik may have drawn on the writings of a well-connected cadre of American Islamophobes, but his home continent also provided a fertile ground for the cultivation of his destructive sensibility. Europe was teeming with anti-Muslim sentiment and the sharp intersection of religion and politics had carved deep wounds into the social fabric of a diverse, but increasingly divided, society.

Islamophobia in Europe was not like Islamophobia in the United States or elsewhere. It was of a different flavor, though equally as pungent. In several countries throughout the continent, fear of Islam and Muslims had led to the widespread institutionalization of racist government policies. Anti-Muslim sentiment was not just a feeling among certain segments of the population. It was a state-sponsored praxis that aimed to blot out multicultural narratives that had taken shape with the arrival of immigrant populations and to reinstate the heyday of white Christian Europe.

In Switzerland, minarets, the towers at mosques from which the Muslim call to prayer is made, were banned in 2009. Despite the fact that the Swiss constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and despite the fact that the lush European ski capital had long enjoyed a reputation for religious tolerance, political players on the far right saw the towers as threats to Swiss values. Posters showing black missile-like structures rising up out of the country's flag and a woman shrouded by a *niqab*, a black full-length covering that shows only the eyes, were splattered throughout the city as part of

a campaign to whip up fear about Islam and push forward with an agenda to outlaw the future towers.[48] Ironically, only four minarets existed in Switzerland, none of which were used to perform the call to prayer. Still, to the Swiss, the Muslims' mark in the sky, clearly out of place with the surrounding European architecture, cried out in silence a powerful and chilling reminder that Islam was a permanent part of the religious landscape.

Two years later, the French government enacted a similarly controversial policy, banning the wearing of full veils by Muslim women in public. The decision was the first of its kind to impose restrictions on personal attire. Whereas the minarets in Switzerland were merely symbolic structures, some Muslims considered the veil to be a religious obligation. The measure was widely popular in the French Parliament and received only one opposing vote. Fears over France's loosening grip on national unity and its secular image pervaded the public as well. A poll conducted by *Le Monde* newspaper and the Institut Français d'Opinion Publique (IFOP) in January 2011, three months before the interdiction went into effect, revealed that 68 percent of French citizens believed that Muslims were "not well integrated into society."[49] Fifty-five percent said that the "visibility of Islam is too large," with nearly 60 percent reporting that the problem results from the refusal on the part of Muslims to integrate into French society.[50] Similar numbers were also reported in Germany, where 79 percent of those surveyed in a Pew Research poll took their animosity one step further, saying that Islam was "the most violent religion."[51]

Following France's lead, Belgium enacted a law that banned the veil in public. Fully enacted in July 2011, it was the culmination of the country's long struggle with immigration and identity. That the western European nation, famous for its waffles and its chocolate, had arrived at such a policy was far from surprising. Like its European neighbors, Belgians by and large held negative views about foreigners. Topping the list of countries whose populations detested immigration, a startling 72 percent of Belgian citizens reported that it "has generally had a negative impact" on their country.[52] Strangely enough, in Anders Breivik's home country, Norway, where minaret and veil bans seem mild when compared with his unrestrained savagery, a poll conducted by an Oslo newspaper in 2009 found that 54 percent of Norwegians opposed minaret bans.[53] In October 2011, three months after Breivik's killings, a Norstat survey revealed that only 24 percent believe Islam is a threat to

Norwegian culture and more notably, 42 percent were okay with a family member marrying a Muslim.[54]

Still, Islamophobia was solidly mainstream. It knew not the taboos of political correctness that once-accepted strains of racism and xenophobia had come to know. Its manifestation in government and its resonance among the public represented the rise of a new generation among the European Right that was marked by the union of traditional bigots and a contemporary squad of populists. They weary of their changing continent.[55]

For them, Europe had become increasingly unfamiliar. The number of Muslims in Europe had grown from nearly 30 million in 1990 to 44 million in 2010. In France, they comprised 10 percent of the population and according to Pew Research, by the year 2030 Muslims were expected to make up 8 percent of Europe.[56] Some suggested a causal relationship between these numbers and the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment. The victories of far-right politicians, the narrative went, were simply a matter of campaigns effectively responding to widespread public anxieties. While that may be so, it is only part of the story. More than exploiting existing fears of Muslims and Islam, some stand-patters of the Right were manufacturing them.

* * *

The first thing one usually notices about Geert Wilders, the 48-year-old leader of the Netherlands' Party for Freedom, is his wavy mane of peroxide-blond hair. Shooting straight up from his scalp like a mad scientist or composer, it is no wonder the voluminous hairdo has garnered him the nickname "Mozart." Charismatic, eloquent, and fervently dedicated to stirring up hatred of Islam, he is of a political stripe that few in his Dutch homeland can pinpoint.[57] He is just as likely to rail against the political establishment of the Netherlands as he is to proclaim brashly that Muslims who wish to stay in the country should "tear out half of the Koran," which he refers to as a "fascist book" that should be banned.[58]

Wilders is the central figure of a continental movement that has been brewing in Europe for some time. They are a cohort of fire-breathing politicians and activists who trek boldly into the territory of Muslim bashing and portray themselves as regular people who have grown tired of the limitations of political correctness and the decorum typically expected from elected officials. It is a popular uprising of sorts, based solely on the claim that Europe and the

greater western world are at risk of being injected with the poisons of Islam. And, it has quite an appeal. Wilders's Party for Freedom, which was founded in 2005, won nine seats in the 2006 general election making it the fifth largest party in Parliament. In 2009, it came in second, winning 4 out of 25 seats and the next year, in the 2010 general elections, it grabbed 24 seats making it the third largest party in the Netherlands.

With that success came a stringent agenda. "We would love to govern," Wilders said. "1.5 million people voted for us and our plans for more safety, less immigration and less Islam. We are the big winner and they cannot ignore us. We want to be taken seriously."[59] So seriously that Wilders' victory prompted him to declare that his fight against Islam would be not just a Dutch endeavor but a worldwide campaign. Hoping to roadblock Islamic law and halt the immigration of Muslims into western nations, Wilders had plans to form alliances with key Islamophobic actors in the United States and Britain. "The message, 'stop Islam, defend freedom', is a message that's not only important for the Netherlands but for the whole free Western world," he said. "The fight for freedom and [against] Islamisation as I see it is a worldwide phenomenon and problem to be solved."[60]

His first stop, appropriately enough, was New York City, where Pamela Geller had organized an opposition rally to the Park51 community center on the ninth anniversary of September 11, 2001. The sizzling debate, echoes of which had reverberated around the world including the Netherlands, was appealing to Wilders, who was comfortable with contention. It was the environment in which his politics thrived.

Before a raucous crowd, Geller introduced the Dutch politician. "He came all the way from Holland," she said. She was so giddy as he crawled up onto the stage behind her that she cut her speech short. "Oh my God," she shouted, turning around to hug him. "Listen, I'm going to cut my introduction but this man is my hero. Geert Wilders!" Wilders in his usually tranquil style seemed unfazed by the screams and applause. He leaned into the microphone and inaugurated his keynote address with a line that ignited an approving response from the audience. "Ladies and gentlemen, let me start by saying *no mosque here*!"[61]

For 15 minutes, Wilders harangued the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque" with the usual fustian of the Islamophobia industry. It would be, he said, a house of Sharia, a desecration of hallowed ground, and a command center for future terrorist attacks. The

images his address brought to mind were not new nor was the content of his message. It was, instead, a repetition of a frightening narrative that had been drilled into the heads of Americans and Europeans over and over again: chaos, destruction, and turmoil at the hands of Muslim monsters.

Wilders's ability to pack so much fear into a quarter of an hour was impressive. But he had some practice. The previous year he had traveled to the United States to peddle paranoia. Unlike the speech in Manhattan before an angry swarm of protesters, Wilders's 2009 trip across the Atlantic brought him to the north-east corner of the United States Capitol building where he met with a congressional audience in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Room for a private screening of his 15-minute anti-Muslim film, *Fitna*, an Arabic word for "turmoil." The Republican Senator from Arizona, John Kyl, hosted the event. Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy sponsored it.[62]

His flick was chockablock with horrifying images and hateful juxtapositions. Bloodied bodies, dismembered by terrorists, and references to female genital mutilation ran alongside handpicked verses of the Quran. So provocative were some scenes that the ambassadors of 26 Muslim-majority countries called for it to be banned.[63] The Dutch prime minister said that the film "serves no other purpose than to cause offense," while the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called it "offensively anti-Islamic."[64] Wilders's appearance on Capitol Hill came just one month after an Amsterdam court decided to prosecute him under Dutch hate speech laws for "insulting" and "spreading hatred" against Muslims (The Middle East Forum, headed up by the grandfather of Islamophobia, Daniel Pipes, paid for Wilders' legal fees.)

A week before his appearance in Washington, Wilders had been prohibited from entering the United Kingdom. There, he had planned a similar film screening. Two conservative British politicians invited him to show his film at the House of Lords. Shortly before his departure from the Netherlands, he received a letter from immigration officials who warned that his presence "would pose a genuine, present and sufficiently serious threat to … community harmony and therefore public security in the U.K." He boarded the plane anyway, only to arrive at Heathrow Airport with a swarm of journalists he had tipped off. Turned away and forced to return to his country, he was championed by some on the right as a hero for free speech.[65]

Stunts of self-promotion were the stuff of which Wilders's politics was made. In fact, had he not securely harnessed Islam to the mast

of his political career, he would have likely sailed slowly into the oblivion of ordinary European parliamentarians. At $20,000 per speaking engagement—a fee that was paid by Robert Spencer's boss and benefactor David Horowitz—it made perfect sense.[66] Aboard the anti-Islam bandwagon, Wilders rode it to stardom. A report issued in April 2008 by the Nederlandse Nieuwsmonitor revealed his skill at baiting controversial issues for personal gain:

> In the period between the announcement in November 2007 and March 27, 2008, the day Wilders made *Fitna* available on the Internet, the case evolved into a remarkable media event … The movie would appear on television in January, Wilders stated. Ultimately, this wasn't the case and the politician repeatedly postponed the 'launch' of *Fitna*. However, somehow the attention didn't fade away. From then on, Wilders, *Fitna*, and Islam became the subject of a fierce, highly negative debate in Dutch society and—given the democratic function of journalism—in the news media.[67]

The day after the film's debut, a Dutch polling organization, Peil, found that nearly half of those who viewed it believed that it was accurate. If Wilders was hoping for a popularity boost, he got one. The Maurice de Hond agency released a survey showing that had he run for office one day after *Fitna* hit the Web, his party would have gained six more seats than it had earned during the previous election.[68]

Wilders owed his rise in the European political right to more than his film. According to the Dutch magazine *Vrij Nederland*, he owed it to another film entirely: *Obsession*, the anti-Muslim movie produced by the extreme Israeli settlement group Aish HaTorah.

In an article published in October 2009, the journal noted the similarities between the two movies and wrote that not only was *Obsession* listed in the credits of Wilders' picture but a shot-by-shot inspection showed that Wilders appeared to have "copied entire scenes." Both films show a young Muslim girl, draped in a headscarf, saying that Jews are "apes and pigs." Subsequent images that follow appear in the same sequential order: a charred body, a naked man dragged on the ground, a Christian cross torn off a church, and masked fighters who give a Nazi salute. "I think Wilders has seen our film on a DVD or the Internet," said *Obsession* director Wayne Kopping. "He has scenes from *Obsession* 'ripped' and uses [them] himself. In *Fitna* even our subtitles [and] our music [are used]."

Kopping insisted that he had never met Wilders and that despite the undeniable similarities, he had no problem with them. "Why should I be angry? We are not the owners of the material," he said. "Most importantly, the truth is told … Films like *Fitna* and *Obsession* are a wake up call." Itamar Marcus, the director of Palestinian Media Watch, a pro-Israeli watchdog group that was also behind *Obsession*, sounded less than pleased that Wilders had lifted material from the film. "I also recognize images in *Fitna* were also in *Obsession* … Like many others, Wilders has not bothered to approach me. The images we have archived [were] diving all over the world," he said. Still, though, the fact that the Dutch politician sought to advance a narrative that was decidedly pro-Israel and anti-Muslim was enough to allay his concerns. "That's okay," he remarked. "It is good that Wilders is the alarm bell."[69]

Anders Breivik responded to the alarm. In his manifesto, Wilders and his film *Fitna* were mentioned 30 times. Breivik hoped to one day meet the politician.[70] Like Robert Spencer, the murderer deemed him worthy of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize.[71]

* * *

As goes Britain, so goes Europe. That is not to say that Islamophobia is of a particularly British flavor. But the rise of the Right in London and other cities did tip off a fierce fury over the place of immigrants in European society. A study conducted by the German Marshall Fund of America, for instance, found that concern over immigration in the United Kingdom is greater than anywhere else on the continent. The year ending in September 2010 gave birth to the biggest influx of foreigners in Britain's history: 586,000.[72] According to Pew Research, more than a quarter of all immigrants to Britain in that year were expected to be Muslims.[73] Since 2001, the Muslim population had increased by 74 percent, from 1.65 million to 2.87 million. The demographic boom was not welcomed.

One poll suggested that more than 52 percent of some 5,000 British respondents believed that Muslims created problems in their country.[74] Lauren Collins of *The New Yorker* reports that "The newspapers are filled with stories about the loss of the British way of life, with halal meat and niqabs as its spoilers."[75] To preserve British society from what they see as a rowdy and growing band of Muslims with an eye on turning "The Old Smoke" into a greenish caliphate, a thuggish group of mostly white, tattooed, shaved-headed men have taken to the streets in combat mode.

The English Defence League (EDL), formed in 2009, is a tight-knit band of bullies, united by their love of football, partiality towards white-washed jeans and muscle shirts, and their uncompromising hatred of Muslims. The group claims that it is not racist and has welcomed Jews, blacks, homosexuals, and other minorities to actively participate in its events so long as they affirm their commitment to harass Muslims. Mostly, their sorties bear the semblance of an after-school brawl in the parking lot; testosterone-raging vigilantes arrange to meet via email or text message (the group keeps no formal rosters) and descend upon an agreed location to wreak temporary havoc until the police eventually force them out. During one street demonstration in Leicester in October 2010, a breakaway group of the EDL barged through police lines and headed towards Big John's, an Asian restaurant in the town that sold halal food, that is, meat slaughtered according to Islamic ritual. The mob reached the small fast-food shop, shattered its windows, and burst inside, sending Muslim parents and children scattering for hideouts. "People saw them coming and someone locked the door. They smashed some windows and one of the EDL people kicked the door open and stood there threatening people," one observer reported. "There were only families in there; men, women and children eating together. The whole thing was over in a minute but it was very scary."[76] Their short spree of rage, it appeared, was designed to frighten Muslim shop owners and discourage them from catering to the needs of a growing community. Halal meat shops and other Islamic markets were, to the EDL's street army, evidence of a growing problem.

In March 2010, the EDL held a rally in front of the House of Lords in support of Geert Wilders during his hate speech trial. "How I wish I could be there with the English Defense League," Pamela Geller pined on her blog.[77] "I share the EDL's goals," she wrote in another post that "exposed the myths" of the group she loved so dearly.[78] A few Israeli flags waved above the crowd outside Parliament—a staple of the group's unruly get-togethers. Shouts belted out from the protesters and at one point their demonstration interrupted the traffic flow as they sat down in the road. One of the league's devotees said that the construction of a mosque in a nearby neighborhood irked him. The fact that Muslims ran convenience shops in the area did too. Towards the end of the gathering, one of the speakers blared into a megaphone, "God bless the Muslims." It was a strange remark, one that seemed to take the crowd by surprise. What could such a hardliner of the EDL have meant by invoking God's protection on a group of people that were so hated

in Europe? After a brief pause, he finished his sentence. "They'll need it in fucking hell."[79]

Anti-racism campaigners at a group called Searchlight reported shortly after Anders Breivik's Oslo massacre that the 32-year-old Norwegian butcher had deep connections to the EDL. According to their reports, on March 9, 2011, Breivik logged on to the group's online forum and, under a pseudonym, posted a message of support:

> Hello. To you all good English men and women, just wanted to say that you're a blessing to all in Europe, in these dark times all of Europe are looking to you in such [*sic*] of inspiration, courage and even hope that we might turn this evil trend with islamisation [*sic*] all across our continent. Well, just wanted to say keep up the good work it's good to see others that care about their country and heritage. All the best to you all. Sigurd[80]

Breivik's made the link clear in his manifesto. "I used to have more than 600 EDL members as Facebook friends and have spoken with tens of EDL members and leaders," he wrote. "In fact, I was one of the individuals who supplied them with processed ideological material (including rhetorical strategies) in the very beginning."[81] Some individuals reported seeing him at various events. "OMG [Oh, my God] … HIM?!," wrote one surprised EDL supporter on another forum. "He wrote some books and did talks didn't he?"[82]

* * *

Islamophobia in Europe spilled over into a number of ugly scenes in the late 2000s. Though none were as widespread or vile as that of Anders Behring Breivik's miserable wasting outside the Norwegian Parliament and on Utøya Island, the growing climate of fear and suspicion of Muslims ripened the possibility for other instances of backlash. In April 2011, the same day Geert Wilders's party announced plans to introduce legislation to remove the Queen of Netherlands as the governmental head, worshipers at a local mosque in Brussels, Belgium found the head of a slaughtered pig buried beneath a Christian cross. "Muhammad lies here," an inscription read.[83] It was the beginning of a trend. Two months later in June, Belgium's Center for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (CEOOR) found that discrimination of Muslims was at an all-time high. An astounding 84 percent of discrimination cases reported to the Center were anti-Muslim in nature.[84] In November of that

year, police in the town of Grechen, Switzerland responded to a call from Muslims at the site of a future mosque. Vandals had buried swine parts and strewn 120 liters of the animal's blood across the grounds in an attempt to stop its construction. "This operation was done (conducted) to protest against the growing expansion of Islam in Switzerland," a banner that was left by the assailants read.[85] In France, the graves of 30 Muslim soldiers that fought in World War I were defaced, some of them sprawled with spray painted words that read "Arabs out!"[86] In England, mosques also came under attack by graffiti artists who depicted derogatory images on their outer walls. In 2010, Britain saw more than 1,200 anti-Muslim attacks, a figure that the University of Exeter used to suggest a drastic increase in the country's anti-Muslim hate crimes:

> Well-informed interviewees are clear that the main perpetrators of low-level anti-Muslim hate crimes are not gangs but rather simply individuals from a wide range of backgrounds who feel licensed to abuse, assault and intimidate Muslims in terms that mirror elements of mainstream media and political comment that became commonplace during the last decade.[87]

In the United States, the FBI similarly noted a dramatic spike in anti-Muslim violence. According to a report released in November 2011, crimes directed at Muslim Americans had increased by 50 percent over the past year. Notably, crimes against Muslims in the United States had declined in 2009, indicating that the climate of fear manufactured by the Islamophobia industry, particularly during the summer of 2010, was responsible for the rise in hate.

Conclusion

Safaa Fathy, a fifty-something physiotherapist from Murfreesboro, Tennessee had never seen anything like it. But that did not mean that the bout of destructive trauma that beset the Muslim community in her small town, the shiny golden buckle of the Bible Belt, was of a distinctly new origin. Cyclical hate, by its very nature, fed on other similar prejudices. "There is something around the whole United States, something [that] is different," she said. "I was here since 1982. I have three kids here and I never had any trouble. My kids, they go to the girl scouts, they play basketball, they did all the normal activities. It just started this year. It's strange, because after 9/11 there was no problem."[1]

Earlier that year, Fathy's hometown house of worship, the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro, announced plans to expand their facility. In a lush, green 15-acre field in the city, not far from a local Baptist church, a sign was erected announcing plans for the future mosque: "Future Site of the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro."

Within days, though, vandals stormed the property and broke the sign in half. Undeterred, members of the center put up another sign, only to discover soon thereafter that it too had been defiled. This time, the message was more explicit. In purple and brown spray paint, the words "not welcome" were emblazoned across the white wooden announcement.

Petty vandalism soon turned felonious. The anti-Muslim extremists who hoped to deter the mosque's construction took matters into their own hands—hands that gripped canisters of gasoline and lighters and set ablaze the land and construction equipment at the site of the future building. If the law would not stop its construction and the terror-preaching, Sharia-abiding worshippers they believed would occupy it, they would—by burning it down to the ground.[2]

Nearly a thousand miles away from New York City, where opponents of the Park51 community center had ramped up their noisemaking to claim that "Ground Zero" was too sacred a space for such structures, activists concerned with what they saw as the all-too-certain Muslim takeover of America had lashed at out their fellow citizens. "It really started in May," said Fathy. "I keep asking myself, why this year? Why are they suddenly lying about us now?"[3]

The mosque's imam, Ossama Bahloul, pointed out that the bigotry was not different from other prejudices that gripped Tennessee. A generation ago, African-American activists were physically tormented, beaten, and burned out of their homes for protesting segregationist policies and advocating civil rights. Some Catholic and Christian minorities, he added, were also targets of the Klu Klux Klan:

> If we are really dangerous, let them close this [existing] center too. This community did not do a single act of violence. Maybe it has a relationship with the election, maybe with the economic problems we have in the country, maybe it was September 11, but I doubt this, because why did we have a fine time last year and the year before and before that when the memory of September 11 was still fresh in everybody's mind?[4]

* * *

Bahloul was skeptical that the political and economic climates of an election year were the only instigating factors for the sudden surge in anti-Muslim hate. He had good reason to be. The patient and meticulous work of the Islamophobia industry had spanned several decades, pushing forward with its campaign in both good economic times and bad, in election years and non-election years. They were in it for the long haul and were hardly fair-weather fear mongers. Their social cancer was incubated on the Internet and metastasized in the media. It grew in the pews of evangelical churches across America and found a league of promoters and funders among the pro-Israeli right. It gained ascendancy in the streets of London and Paris and the Netherlands and was pushed through the legislative machines of the European and American political systems with institutional fleetness.

Fortunately, in one such political system, the state of Oklahoma's, a Federal Court of Appeals ruled that a widely popular state statute banning Sharia law was unconstitutional. The court pointed out in its decision that proponents of the law admitted that they did not know of a single instance in which an Oklahoma court had applied Islamic law or any other foreign precepts.[5]

There was also another admission—one made by David Yerushalmi, the ultra-Zionist, right-wing lawyer who had crafted the blueprint for nearly all of the country's anti-Sharia legislation. "If this thing passed in every state without any friction, it would have

not served its purpose," he said during a period when Oklahoma's anti-Sharia bill drew initial fire. "The purpose was heuristic—to get people asking this question, 'What is Shariah?'"[6]

It appeared that Yerushalmi did not really fear that of which he warned others. His project in advancing anti-Sharia laws was, by his own divulgence, simply an exercise in heuristics. It was a way to stimulate public interest as a means of furthering investigation. Islamic law did not exist in the United States the way Yerushalmi said it did. It did not even exist at all. But by frightening the population otherwise, he could ramp up public paranoia to such a degree that Americans would fall in line lockstep behind his anti-Muslim campaign.

Unlikely it was, for sure, that the anti-mosque protesters in the "Sooner State" knew that Yerushalmi's campaign to stamp out Islamic law was an exercise in heuristics. They were frightened by what they viewed as the reality of Sharia law. So too was it unlikely that the swarms of sign-carrying, fist-pumping demonstrators in Manhattan and Murfreesboro were tuned in to his plan. They too believed that Islamic law would actually supplant the Constitution. It should go unsaid that the Norway killer Anders Breivik, who mentioned Sharia 252 times in his manifesto, did not believe that Yerushalmi's legislation to prevent its spread was simply an educational tool to foster public awareness and excite the public over an uncertain threat. He himself had said that "The fear of Islamisation is all but irrational."[7]

* * *

The Islamophobia industry is a growing enterprise, one that is knowledgeable about the devastating effects of fear on society and willing to produce and exploit it. They may be a relatively small group, but the scope of their reach and the consequences of their program engender anti-Muslim hate within vulnerable groups of people who, once tuned in to such propaganda, join their ranks. The prejudices they generate are not of little consequence. They are not a fringe group whose injections of poison into American and European societies can be dismissed. They have managed and continue to attach Islamophobia permanently to the banner of right-wing populism such that it is fast becoming structurally identical to anti-Semitism and other such institutionalized hates that eventually gushed bloodily into a horrible reality. Extravagant fantasies about war and the erosion of civil liberties of minority

groups pump through the vessels occupied by the Islamophobia industry, becoming reproduced by powerful policymakers and world leaders whose decisions, if colored by the toxic misrepresentations, have the potential to change lives in catastrophic ways. Muslims and Islam are not to be feared, nor are blacks, Jews, Catholics, or any other group that faces systematic discrimination. Rather, there is great urgency to resist and counter those whose aim it is to chop up humanity into different minority blocks, pitting them against one another, and gambling with other people's freedom for the sake of politics or profit. With the forward progression of time, the battle will become more difficult, the stakes higher, the dangers of escalation more real, and the prejudices more deeply engrained. Only by protecting one another from the fracturing of societies, only by refusing to fall prey to this vicious and ceaseless movement to antagonize, isolate, and persecute Muslims in the United States, Europe, and everywhere around the globe, will this fear factory, the Islamophobia industry, be rightfully, forcefully and finally stamped out.

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