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The Rise of Neo-Fascist Populism and Islamophobia in the West

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Conflict Resolution

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Portland State University
2022

Abstract

Trumpism can be defined as racist right-wing neo-fascist populism and nativism combined with a cult of personality. There is very little distinction between neo-fascists, the alt-right, and far-right groups. All can be identified by their socio-political philosophy and vehement beliefs of racial supremacy, ultranationalism, populism, xenophobia, nativism, and anti-immigrant sentiment, as well as being opposed to liberal Western democracy and its values. This thesis explores why there has been a popular international resurgence of far-right neo-fascist movements throughout the European Union and the United States and examines the impact on inter-group social and political relations with those of different racial and religious backgrounds. Using Qualitative Methodology, this thesis reveals how these right-wing, neo-fascists in America maliciously use their constitutionally protected rights to carry arms openly in public as well as in demonstrations to incite tensions on inter-group dynamics, creating an explosive, unsustainable level of social and political tension across the US and EU. In conclusion, this thesis provides reasons, examples, and solutions for bridging the social and political ethno-religious divide between far-right groups and ethno-religious communities, as well as an explanation for the need for "protected hate speech" exceptions to free speech laws in the United States, so that both groups on either side of the socio-political divide can better understand, humanize, and respect one another instead of fearing one another.

Dedication

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Bismillah Al Rahman Al Raheem

(In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful)

"Oh, you who have believed, become those who stand out firmly for Allah as witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness, and be obedient to Allah. Verily, Allah is All-Aware with what you do."

-The Quran 5:8

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"I guarantee a house in Jannah [paradise] for the one who gives up arguing, even if he is in the right

-Narrated by Abu Dawud

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Chapter 1 - Introduction and Problem Statement

Since 2008, there has been an international surge of neo-fascist right-wing

nationalism and extremism, throughout many Western democratic societies (Jones, 2018)

These radical right-wing groups, also known as the alt-right (alternative right), have

managed to organize themselves into social and political parties that subscribe to the

ideology of ethno-religious centrism, ultranationalism, racial supremacy, inter-group

violence, populism, xenophobia, nativism, and anti-immigrant sentiment as well as

opposition to liberal democracy and its values (Fritzsche, 1989).

Due to their opposition to multiculturalism, some of these neo-fascist groups and

individuals have gone so far as to attempt to trigger race wars and other socio-racial

unrest involving ethno-religious minority groups such as Jews, Blacks, Muslims, and

Latinos (Hedetoft, 2020). The infamous, mass shooter Dylann Roof stated after his arrest,

"I would like to make it crystal clear; I do not regret what I did, I am not sorry. I have not

shed a tear for the innocent people I killed," (Zapotosky, 2017). His comments were in

reference to his heinous 2015 church massacre, where he was warmly welcomed into the

historic all-Black, Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South

Carolina. Roof worshiped with members of the church that day in a Bible study, before

killing nine Black churchgoers.

Right-wing neo-fascist political movements in the United States and in the

European Union have undermined many long-standing democratic systems, beliefs, and

ways of life, while also influencing social and political discourse in order to spread their

racist and discriminatory philosophy throughout the world. By partaking in the

democratic political process within the limits of the law, these neo-fascist parties

subsequently get a national platform and media coverage for better or worse. This has

resulted in their divisive social and political ideological viewpoints being spread

unrestricted due to the fundamental tenants of Western liberal democracy. This includes

the promotion of social and political free speech including public demonstrations as well

as the right to form political opposition parties within the country's political framework.

Additionally, by giving the right-wing neo-fascist groups a national platform unhindered,

this has given them the opportunity and ability to tailor and spin their social and political

philosophy to the public. This social and political advantage for the alt-right has resulted

in the natural promotion of divisive behavior toward minority groups throughout society.

The American and European alt-right Identitarians describe themselves as

"…wanting regions and nations that are different from one another, but at the same time

culturally and ethnically homogenous within their borders" (Southern Poverty Law

Center, 2015). Identitarians believe they are the only true, authentic defenders of the

nation's unique democratic values and norms. Specifically, the alt-right and other white

supremacist groups envision a less ethnically diverse society, one that promotes the sole

dominance of the white race only, and that America is to become a home for white

people only (Thompson et al., 2018).

It is my intention to uncover the root causes of Islamophobia throughout Western

societies that includes both the social and political use of protected hate speech and the

dynamics that drive Islamophobia. Examining the reasons why many Western countries

hold a heightened level of anxiety, trepidation, xenophobia, ignorance and intolerance

towards Muslims and Islam and the reasons behind the justification for Islamophobic

social and political tendencies.

The alt-right Identitarian movement's utopian vision of the United States' social order and structure is one that promotes and encourages ethnic cleansing of minorities to remove them off white lands. This vision consists of an ultra religio-nationalistic and ethnocentric philosophy that uses violence to achieve their means in establishing the alt-right social and political order they envision for the US, which is making America white again.

Trump's contentious political slogan "Make America Great Again" is code for a promise to reinvigorate and reestablish this country's White racist past." (Roman & Sagas, 2020). These groups hold public rallies such as the neo-fascist "Unite the Right" rally that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia, ultimately turning deadly when a right-wing supporter drove his car into a large crowd of opposition demonstrators. This Charlottesville incident is just one of many communities throughout America that have witnessed the tragic and senseless loss of life, social upheaval and wide spread violence. The many rallies that have taken place all over the country, has only promoted public unrest, turbulence, and inter-group animosity. This has destabilized and polarized the country as well as the many communities that have played host to these unruly events.

The election of Donald Trump as president in 2016 translated into political gains for the alt-right nationalists, manifesting in multiple different milestones across many Western democratic societies. Trump ran his campaign and early presidency on excluding Muslims from the country and to build a wall on the U.S. southern border with Mexico (Yee & Jordan, 2018). Influencing and formulating much of Trump's political agenda and strategy were notable figures from the neo-fascist alt-right such as co-founder of Breitbart News, Steve Bannon. Furthermore, one of Trump's key leading senior figures

in his administration on immigration policy is Stephen Miller, the chief policy architect behind Executive Order 13769, otherwise commonly known as the "Muslim Ban" (Siddiqui, 2017). In an act to deter other Latino migrants from coming into the country, Miller is most notably known for his creation and promotion of the policy that separated young Latino migrant children from their parents at the US southern border (Boston Globe, 2018). This resulted in many very young children tragically dying and over 500 children that have been lost in the system, not able to be reunited with their families out of intuitional oversight failures while in custody of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

In the European Union, we also observed the increase in popular support for Marie Le Pen and her 'National Front' party in France, despite her presidential election loss in 2017 to now current French president, Emanuel Macron. France has also seen a resurgence in right-wing nationalism, due in part to the frequent murderous attacks done by Islamic extremist to French citizens. These attacks on French soil, in most part as of recent, have been in relation to the insensitive and inciteful Charlie Hebdo cartoon depictions of the Prophet Muhammad. These caricatures of the Prophet frequently portray him as a maniacal figure related to terrorism in one form or another. The Western media narrative for these Islamist extremist attacks, is because Islam forbids the depiction of the Prophet and therefore by depicting him, this has drawn the ire of the Muslim world and those Islamic fanatics in France. While it is correct that drawings of the Prophet are taboo in the Islamic culture, the grievous offence felt by Muslims here however, (and that the Western secular media fails to emphasize to Western audiences) is that the outrage is not because of someone simply drawing the Prophet Muhammad. Rather, it is due in part to

the blatantly inflammatory, disrespectful, Islamophobic representations and depictions of the Prophet Muhammad, usually as some sort of blood thirsty terrorist preaching death and destruction as a central tenant of Islam in these cartoon depictions of him. These xenophobic illustrations were provocatively drawn out of ignorance and antagonism towards Islam, due to specifically targeting the Prophet Muhammad who is the iconic central figure of Islam and Muslims maliciously (Larsson, 2013).

Alarmingly, Western democratic standards have tolerated, allowed, and even proliferated social and ethno-religious tensions between Western societies and their Muslim community members through the many forms of divisive free speech. Many opposed to this kind of institutionalized democratic hate speech have called for the reconceptualization of the right to free speech, and how it should not be a green light to foment social unrest targeting any ethno-religious minority groups. If government's role in society is to establish and maintain confluence and social order, it seems contradictory to permit intentionally inciteful hurtful speech that directly targets another group solely based on race, religion, or ethnicity would be exclusively prohibited if the state's mandate is public safety and avoiding the collapse of social order of any kind. It is apparent that protected hate speech and Western democratic values need reexamination in terms of inciting and inflaming inter-group tensions.

Today, this populist far-right resurgence has brought back into the secularist state one of mankind's oldest polarizing self-identities that countless generations of men and women have lived and died for. The modern-day fusion of both religious belief and radicalism combined with nationalistic fervor has created religio-nationalist identity throughout the EU and US (Hedetoft, 2020). Historically, societies that engage in this

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form of group self-identification usually have a designated ethno-religious group for the

initial transformation into this religio-nationalistic social and political approach. These

conditions target Muslim communities specifically and exacerbate religious and socio-

political relations between the Christian West and the Muslim communities living

throughout the West (Strube, 2020).

Chapter 2 - Methodology

Creswell (2003) explains qualitative research is "fundamentally interpretive. This means that the researcher makes an interpretation of the data" (p. 182). Therefore, the methodology followed in this thesis is qualitative content analysis, focusing on academic scholars of right-wing neo-fascist politics, Islamophobia, and conflict resolution. In observing the present social, political, and religious environment shaping Western societies and national politics across the EU and US, I examine existing literature on right-wing populist groups and how their social and religious ideology connects to nationalism. Additionally, I review how they incorporate their fundamentalist approach to conflict, including the use of violence against Muslim communities living in the West.

This thesis will begin with conflict analysis of Western democratic societies, the norms, values and protected rights followed by a historic look at the dominant culture of the US and their direct interaction with minority groups. This includes the instigation of hate speech by right-wing groups and constitutionally protected rights. The qualitative methodology compares and contrasts the content of relevant texts focusing on intergroup conflict, US historical interactions with minority groups, social justice, Islamophobia, and the decline of democratic values in the Trumpian era.

The literature I chose to review examines socio-political ideology and ethnocentrism of far-right anti-Muslim groups and how Islamophobia has proliferated around the West but particularly in the US. Furthermore, this includes the under vocalized social viewpoint of those from both the Middle Eastern and Muslim communities living amongst the dominant culture and the social pressures they have

experienced in the West. More specifically, the research will examine their view of Islam and how they incorporate the Islamic religion into their efforts of bridging the cross-cultural gap with their non-Muslim neighbors both historically and presently. This includes the examination of Middle Eastern and Muslim perspectives including their narrative, and how Islamic religious ideology connects conflict resolution to intergroup community conflict with their non-Muslim neighbors living throughout Oregon communities.

I conducted a meta-analysis on the aforementioned dimensions of the rise of Islamophobia and the decline of Western democratic norms and values in order to allow readers to broaden their understanding when reflecting on similar questions in their own studies, in an attempt to make sense of the delicate balance between free speech and hate speech in the United States, and how that negatively impacts minority identity groups both directly and indirectly, in order to allow readers to broaden their understanding when reflecting on similar questions in their own studies. Taking this into consideration, I have provided viewpoints on socio-political and intergroup conflict through the lens of both community member groups living in Oregon (ex., Muslims and Non-Muslims alike) and opinions on defusing tensions between each other's ethno-religious identification group. I conducted research a meta-analysis on the aforementioned dimensions of the rise of Islamophobia and the decline of Western democratic norms and values to allow readers to broaden their understanding when reflecting upon similar questions in their own studies, in an attempt to make sense of the delicate balance between free speech and hate speech in the US and how that negatively impacts minority identity groups directly and indirectly. In this light, I have included perspectives of the socio political and inter

group conflict from the lens of both community member groups living in Oregon (e.g., Muslims and Non-Muslims alike). And their perspective on defusing tensions between the other's ethno-religious identity group.

Key words: Islamophobia - Right-wing hate groups and Islam - Freedom of speech - Islam and the West - Islam and conflict resolution - Islam and peacebuilding - Western Societies view of Muslims - September 11th - The war on terror.

Chapter 3 - Literature Review

Xenophobia, prejudice, and intergroup conflict remain intractable facets of Western societies, particularly in the United States, irrespective of politicians and policymakers' efforts and attempts for over half a century to successfully implement social justice reforms and protections geared towards minority identity groups living in the US from a social, political, and economic perspective. There has always been a need for an alternative solution to challenging xenophobia, prejudice, and intergroup conflict that is both impactful to society and a natural humanistic approach between both identity groups at odds, but is not dictated to or promoted by governing bodies, legislation, or politicians. Rather, these interpersonal developments and interactions should instead, encouraged, and implemented by local community leaders and members from both the dominant and minority cultures.

Contact hypothesis proposed by Gordon W. Allport (1954) posits that contact between people who belong to different ethno-religious groups can foster the development of more positive minority group perspectives by those of the dominant culture, allowing them opportunity to reexamine the misconceptions and stereotypes associated with a marginalized minority group throughout inter-group / inter-personal contact and dialogue (Allport, 1954). From a historic human perspective, contact theory is an enduring human trait integral to past and present societies on many levels socially, economically, politically, and militarily. Contact theory is also an integral component of combating today's anti-Muslim stereotypes, prejudices, and stigmatization in Western communities. Henri Tajfel (1982), a social psychologist best known for his work on prejudice's cognitive dimensions, ethnocentrism, and social identity theory, is a critical

resource for understanding the sociological phenomenon of collective social cognitive prejudice and discrimination of out-groups interacting with the dominant in-group.

Additionally, Tajfel's insights are critical in comprehending ethnocentrism's social structures. Along with the in-group attachments most frequently observed in inter-group conflicts, Tajfel's work demonstrates and explains why there is a direct correlation between being in the dominant in-group and the proliferation and perpetuation of anti-Muslim, Islamophobic sentiment in the United States and Europe. Social psychologist Henri Tajfel (1919-1982), best known for his work on the cognitive aspects of prejudice, ethnocentrism, and social identity theory. He published *"Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations"* (Tajfel, 1982). Tajfel is a significant resource in understanding the sociological phenomenon of collective social cognitive prejudice and discrimination of out-groups, interacting with the dominant in-group.

Tajfel's contributions are essential in grasping social constructs of ethnocentrism. Along with in-group attachments most commonly found in inter-group conflicts that include behaviors that are associated with in/out-group perceptions of self, viewing it through the framework of race, religion, ethnic background, national identity, including in-group power and control socio-politically. Tajfel's work will help shed light on why there is a direct correlation with being between those of the dominant in-group and the proliferation and perpetuation of anti-Muslim, Islamophobic sentiment found in the US and EU.

Dr. Harry Anastasiou expert on International Peace and Conflict Studies, Author of *"The Broken Olive Branch"* discusses the historic and modern aspects including the socio-political ramifications and impacts that nationalism, ethnocentrism, and ethnic

conflict have on intergroup relations throughout the populace. Dr. Anastasiou explains that:

"Nationalism has since saturated modern history with countless cases where ethnonationalist revolutionary groups, having attained control of the state and its instruments of power, employed violence as a presumed legitimate means of forging sociopolitical integration and conformity. In this process, ethnocentrically administered states relentlessly and forcefully subjugated, and even annihilated, countless distinctive or dissenting subnational ethnic groups. The nationalist mind discloses the antinomy between means and ends in that it always undertakes the use of violence, whether in revolution against the state or in the enforcement of monoethnic conformity by the state, in the name of the nation, in the name of the people, in the name of national unity, in the name of the nation's well-being." (Anastasiou, 2008, p. 24)

Dr. Anastasiou's contributions expand on Tajfel's work by delving deeper into inter-ethnic and religious group relations, violence, and conflict resolution. Dr. Anastasiou's work contributes to a better understanding of right-wing nationalist groups, as well as their rise in Western society and interactions with minority identity groups. Dr. Anastasiou's contributions helps build upon Tajfel's work and will also elaborate deeper on inter ethno-religious group relations, violence, and conflict resolution. Dr. Anastasiou's work will help facilitate and establish the understanding of right-wing nationalist groups, ethnocentric conflict along with the modern nation state's involvement in perpetuating ethnocentric ideas, values and public policies that target minority identity groups whether directly or indirectly through the passage of legislative and executive orders.

John Burton's 1990 work titled *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* (Burton, 1990) Additionally, Burton's (1990) work will be useful in describing the complexities of

intergroup needs and relationships with others from both within and outside of the group. Burton (1990), will be also valuable in expressing the intricacies of intergroup needs and interactions with others from both the in and out group social dynamics. Additionally, *The Sage Handbook of Conflict Resolution* (Sage Publications, & Sage eReference, 2009), is also a tremendous resource for my research and literature. Chapters that stood out from this text on the topics of ethnocentric nationalism and ethno-religious interpersonal conflict was chapter 14 Ethno-Religious Conflicts: Exploring the Role of Religion in Conflict Resolution authored by *S.* Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana. As well as Michael S. Lund's chapter 15, titled *Conflict Prevention: Theory in Pursuit of Policy and Practice* as well as chapter 19 *Dialogue as a Process for Transforming Relationships* authored by Harold H. Saunders.

The newly published (2019) *Islamophobia and Psychiatry: Recognition, Prevention, and Treatment* (Moffic, Peteet, Hankir, & Awaad, 2018) explains social psychology and neurobiology's understanding and discoveries about intergroup conflict This text also discusses the social symbols and acts associated with Islamophobia. In addition to the social and psychological consequences of Islamophobia, which contributes to the subconscious normalization of Islamophobic prejudices and inclinations that Western cultures already have. It also examines the psychological and sociological variables that contribute to violent extremism from the perspectives of both Western right-wing nationalists and Muslims.

Many members of the dominant culture throughout Western societies simply do not want to understand Islam for what it truly is. This can be attributed to a myriad of

reasons that negatively impacts modern Western society's overall view of Islam and Muslims, both on an individualistic and national level. A predominant reason for this stems from both historical and present-day events, that shaped and influenced Western society's outlook on Islam and Muslims. Samuel P. Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' (1996) Theorizes that this clash between the West and the Islamic world stems from many socio-historic encounters that goes back over 1400 years ago from when Muslims conquered Jerusalem in 637 AD along with the Iberian Peninsula in 711 AD. To the numerous different Crusader campaigns from 1096-1291 AD. Along with the Ottoman Empire's conquest of Constantinople in 1453 including the siege of Vienna in 1529. To the modern-day 1991 Gulf War, the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001 the ensuing wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Which introduced the Western Public to terms such as jihad, fatwa, Muslim ummah, Mujahadin, Sharia law, Al-Qaida, Taliban, ISIS and suicide bomber, all of which gained widespread prevalence throughout Western societies and their vocabulary impacting society negatively on Islam and Muslims on both sides of the Atlantic. Greatly influencing negative popular views of Islam and the Muslim community's relationship to Western societies and civilization as being an adversarial one. (Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations?, 1993, pp. 22-49).

Many Western citizens view Islam as a religion, that wants to spread harm their way of life in their countries. In addition, many citizens see Islam as a foreign religion, with no ties or connections to Judeo-Christian social values, faith, culture and society (Abu-Nimer & Augsburger, Peace-Building By, Between, and Beyond Muslims and Evangelical Christians, 2009) . This socio-religious disconnect by the dominant culture is one factor that has spurred the growth of Islamophobia country-wide. Dr. Hatem Bazian

of UC Berkeley states that the "…USA and Europe, Islam and its adherents are not considered participants or partners in the affairs of 'civil society" (Bazian, 2018, p. 19). Thus, Dr. Bazian believes those in the dominant American culture have categorized and labeled Muslims and Islam as an existential threat to the United States and its citizens, believing that Muslims are worthy of social and political scrutiny due to being stereotyped as being terrorists who are violently against American freedoms, values, and principles.

Duderija and Rane ((Duderija & Rane, 2018)) examined the major issues and debates concerning Islam and Muslim communities in the West. Its focus is not confined to Muslim communities but extends to the manifestations of Islam in Western Muslim-minority contexts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. My own research into Islamophobia has led me to discovering key academic advocates and institutions against Islamophobia and promoting community understanding and unity. As well as shedding light on the many misconceptions Western societies have concerning Islam's fundamental beliefs, values and interpersonal relations with non-Muslim groups.

Together the themes found in the literature review, derives from topics regarding Western governments and society have interacted with Muslims living throughout their communities in a post 9/11 world. Which also encompasses the rise of Islamic terrorist groups that openly call for the destruction of the West and violent attacks against their public. Including the socio-political examination of the populist surge of far-right groups as a response to the perceived threat by the influx of Muslim refugees and communities in the West. And how the far-right's use of free speech by both social and political groups

only further spreads ethnocentric rhetoric and Islamophobic aspersions that is cast over the entire Muslim community living in the US and EU.

Chapter 4 - Analysis and Discussion

American Fear of Muslim Communities and Toleration of Democratic Neo-Fascism

Multi-culturalism has been promoted as a fundamental component and principal of Western secular liberal society. Today, however, many Western societies have shown a decrease in social tolerance to multi-culturalism, while simultaneously seeing a noticeable intensification of anti-Muslim sentiment and rhetoric by neo-fascist groups. Many Western governments and societies have concerns and trepidations to one degree or another about their local Muslim communities and citizens (Corbin, 2017) (Duderija & Rane, 2018). For this reason, many critics of Islam undeniably and rightfully so, point to the multiple episodes of terrorism since 9/11 that have occurred throughout the US and EU by Al-Qaida or ISIS-inspired attackers. Another factor that contributes to Western social anxiety and fear of Muslims resulting in Islamophobia is the willingness of the attackers to die in these attacks, resulting in mass social hysteria and anxiety, followed by reactionary policies and measures.

These sentiments regarding Muslim citizens and migrants have proliferated considerably, deliberately suspending Western social norms and values towards Muslims. "Muslims have come under attack by their fellow citizens as a result of the belief they are a monolithic group that is a threat to American society. Consequently, they are treated as if they are unworthy of the universal protections afforded by American citizenship." (Selod, 2015, p. 78). Even though right-wing hate groups and their abhorrent agendas have existed long before the election of Donald Trump, there seems to be a more social and political tolerance and popular acceptance of these right-wing neo-fascist ideals and doctrines involving anti-Muslim, ethnocentric rhetoric.

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Because of this discourse, populist political movements in the United States and the European Union have gained a footing in the democratic process. Eurosceptic political opposition parties that are prominent and vocal, and in some cases, run the country Italian right-wing League party has established a coalition government with the populist far-right Five Star Movement, and governments in Hungary, Poland, and Austria are examples of this far-right political paradigm change. Many other right-wing parties have scored better than predicted in general elections held throughout the Western World. This rhetoric has translated into many populist political movements throughout the US and EU, in which these political groups have established a foothold in the democratic process. Becoming prominent vocal Eurosceptic political opposition parties, and in some cases as the governing ruling party running the nation.

Additionally, these governments, as well as the social trends at large throughout the US and EU, have large segments of their populations that openly oppose and stonewall EU refugee resettlement policy contemptuously. The reason for this is that, many in West fear that the millions of Muslim refugees seeking political asylum is a soft form of social, religious and cultural invasion, that would destroy Western culture and shift the social and religious demographics of American and European Christian secular societies. Furthermore, terrorist attacks throughout the West, have exacerbated fears of cultural infiltration in many Western societies. And has negatively impacted public opinion about Muslims and Islam around the globe hence, the rise in right wing populism throughout the West, both socially and politically (Wike, Stokes, & Simmons, 2016). Those oppose to refugee resettlement into the EU refer to this as a form of Islamization of Western societies by utilizing a 'demographic jihad' tactic. For this, many state and local

governments have passed laws specifically directed towards their local Muslim communities by enacting anti-sharia legislation to keep these fears from becoming a reality particularly in the US (Mitchell & Toner, 2016; Hafez, 2014; Gorondi, 2018). The 2015 European migrant crisis that resulted in tens of millions of economic and political refugees from the Middle East, Africa, and central Asia fleeing their war-torn societies in search for peace and safety away from their homelands at great risk to themselves in order to seek political asylum in the EU. This had been one of the major catalysts that many believe created the social and political backlash from numerous EU nation states. The loudest of which were nations geographically closest to the Middle East and North Africa, such as Italy and Greece, has seen the rise of populist right-wing social and political groups intensify. This resulted in many right-wing European political parties, governments and many in the public to voice their concern and fears of the Islamization of modern day European Christian societies. A Pew Research Center study found that:

"Muslims are much younger and have more children than other Europeans. In 2016 the median age of Muslims throughout Europe was 30.4, 13 years younger than the median for other Europeans at 43.8 years old. Looking at it another way 50% of all European Muslims are under the age of 30, compared with 32% of non-Muslims in Europe. In addition, the average Muslim woman in Europe is expected to have 2.6 children, a full child more than the average non-Muslim European woman with 1.6 children." (Hackett, 2017).

European anti-immigrant groups argue that, if they were to allow migrants and refugees, i.e., Muslims, with their high birth rates, in comparison to the declining birth rates of many European societies, along with the lack of social and cultural integration

and assimilation, Muslim communities will pose a threat to Europe. The native European social and cultural dynamics would have to contend with a formidable non-European ethno-religious population, translating to the decline of Europe's traditional Christian societies, traditions, and demographics. "Commentators in Europe have fueled the perception of incompatibility and conflicting values between the Muslim and the Western world, without any acknowledgment of how their zeal may contribute to such strife, as they portray Muslims as a symbolic threat to European cultural values including Christianity, secularism, and liberalism." (Obaidi et al., 2018, p. 2).

According to a Pew Research Center estimate, "There were 1.8 billion Muslims in the world as of 2015 – roughly 24% of the global population. But while Islam is currently the world's second-largest religion (after Christianity), it is the fastest-growing major religion. Indeed, if current demographic trends continue, the number of Muslims is expected to exceed the number of Christians by the end of this century" (Lipka, 2017). The anti-migrant/anti-Muslim fears and concerns throughout the European population and governments does in fact have merit to a specific degree on certain issues such as terrorism, as there have been terrorist attacks and other social ills committed throughout the EU since the influx of the migrant crisis began. However, the overwhelming majority of migrants has nothing to do with terrorism, nor do they associate with extremist hateful ideologies or violent tendencies. Essentially, all the migrants really want is to live a life devoid of violence, war, injustice, and poverty. (Melkonian-Hoover & Kellstedt, 2019) (Greenberg, Capps, Kalweit, Grishkin, & Flagg, 2019)

Ideally, European nations would take extraordinary measures to properly integrate migrants into society while also limiting the number of new migrants entering the countries. We perceive the current European socio-political state of affairs becoming increasingly populist and right-wing as a result of the lack of such an ambitious international social plan. In some nations, the normalization of racist, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim beliefs and rhetoric is becoming a mainstream component of national discourse. Many leaders and governments in EU democratic countries, such as Italy, Portugal, and Germany, have used this to legitimize and advance racist and discriminatory beliefs and policies. This simply strengthens racist and bigoted beliefs, as well as anger and worry among the general people. This ongoing cultural anxiety allows extreme groups to thrive and emboldens them to defend their Christian homeland from immigrant Muslims, whom they see as invading their white, Christian neighborhoods and way of life (Obaidi et al., 2018).

Anger, ignorance, and violence are not new problems; the capacity to quickly and internationally disseminate propaganda and fabricated stories is. Anxiety is sparked on a societal level because of the constant flow of aggressive and purposefully false statements. Rather than bringing people together, the "digital age's" impact has polarized and classified people based on their social or political opinions. For too long, the two sides have been arguing rather than collaborating in order to find actual answers to their common concerns. Even President Trump, in a speech in front of an enthusiastic crowd of supporters, retold a story about how General Pershing dealt with 'radical Islamic terrorism' during the Philippine War of 1899-1902. General Pershing was said to have taken 50 bullets dipped in pigs' blood and used them to execute 49 out of 50

Muslim Filipino captive rebels. The last Filipino was not killed and was instead released and told to go back to his people and tell them about the humiliating, desecrating massacre that took place. This story has been debunked by historians (Reilly, 2017).

These self-identified anti-Muslim extremists in American society portray Muslims as an evil religion, the ethno-religious adversary. When you specifically characterize, demonize, and vilify other cultures and ethno-religious groups, sincerely believing in your own race's superiority, you inevitably see all others as 'inferior' identity groups. This opens the door for that person or group to commit violence against anyone from these minority groups because they are seen ignorantly as subnational or even subhuman. This lack of human empathy for different peoples or groups can ultimately lead to a person committing acts of violence against X-Y-Z identity group.

Radical right-wing, armed militia super-patriot groups, in similar fashion to ISIS terrorists, are vehemently against any 'othered' groups living in their communities or coming into the country. Many members travel thousands of miles from all over America to 'protect' the southern border areas from Latin American migrants and potential Muslim terrorists. Militia groups like these fervently believe, just like other extremist groups, that God and Jesus are on their side, that their conduct and actions are sanctioned and condoned by God. Many members of radical or extremist groups believe their actions and statements have a moral and ethical legitimacy. Terrorist groups like al-Qaida to ISIS and every radical organization use this exact same mentality and ideology in justifying their acts of violence and terror against the world. Ironically, these two polar opposite ideological groups have extremism, hate, and violence in common.

The Mounting Challenges to Democratic Norms and Values Throughout the West

Throughout history, the United States (US) has positioned itself as the moral authority and defender of democratic values, standards, and laws throughout the developing world, particularly in non-Western countries. For decades, Europe and the United States, among other Western democratic nation states and institutions, have lauded the virtues of adapting and implementing Western democratic principles, values, and standards such as a free press; an open opposition that can run freely in elections; policies implementing and protecting individual civil liberties and free expression; and a transparent and independent judiciary.

Yet, if one were to examine Western society since the incident of World Trade Center September 11th, 2001, which profoundly transformed human history, governments have belied their own values with legislation. The Patriot Act implemented laws and policies that steadily backtracked, restricted, curtailed, disregarded, and even suspended the democratic rights, liberties, and protections that have exemplified American democratic values traditionally on the international stage as being a blueprint for other nations to follow.

As a result, the United States developed a nationalistic fervor that permeated the nation's culture and politics. This new mentality put the American public (and Western society) against Arabs and the Muslim world, as well as the diasporic populations living in Western societies, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Attacks on Muslim persons, their businesses, and mosques were carried out by a majority of the White American populace, which led to an increase in anti-Muslim discourse known as Islamophobia. Federal and state authorities including law enforcement, specifically targeted Muslim communities

and religious centers across the country during the subsequent hysteria in which Muslims living domestically and internationally were rounded up, sent to detention facilities, or placed in the CIA's extraordinary rendition program, which was launched under the G.W. Bush era, with the War on Terror. The Bush administration continually denied the existence or knowledge of the extraordinary rendition program until the cat was out of the bag (Johnson, 2009).

The War on Terror campaign and the ensuing national security clampdown that followed the September 11th attacks had a significant role in the establishment of Guantanamo Bay, the infamous prison facility that bears his name. Thousands of innocent Muslim men were kept in Guantanamo Bay without the benefit of due process for many of those detained at the detention facility. There have been numerous events in the United States and abroad that have confirmed the public's belief that al-Qaeda was responsible for the September 11, 2001, attacks on the Twin Towers, which has fueled intergroup hatred, discrimination, and the idea of the 'other' in American socio-political discourse since that time. Because of screams of 'freedom of expression!' this debate was permitted to not only continue for years, but to become even more fiery as time went on. This justification, in my opinion, is analogous to a hacker or troll abusing faults or gaps in software or a system. Even when the authorities know who the hacker is and what their malicious motives and intentions are, they legally cannot do anything, proclaiming their hands are tied. Because of this kind of misuse and abuse of the First Amendment (freedom of speech) by hate groups, these constitutionally guaranteed protected rights have directly been used to serve as a platform to promote and propagate racist, white ethnocentric hate speech. From pro-Trump far right groups standing in front of Islamic

centers and Mosques demonstrating with assault rifles, hand guns and vulgar racist picket signs, chanting anti-Islamic slogans. While local law enforcement neutrally observes and affirms the right to demonstrate from the sidelines. And at the same time Muslim worshippers, men, women and children witness such a hateful intimidating event in front of their Mosque on their way to congregational prayers (Wyloge, 2015).

Additional anti-Islamic protected hate speech made by popular public figures like that of Televangelist Pat Robertson. Who's been the host of the popular Christian right-wing ultra conservative tv show for 60 years that still airs on the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) channel called the "700 Club". Robertson has frequently used his platform in order to dehumanize Islam and Muslims by using false, bigoted and incendiary language saying publicly that "Islam is a very evil and wicked religion." That Islam is a violent religion by nature", "Islam is a satanic religion" (The Associated Press, 2006). His intentionally false and denigrating statements concerning Islam and Muslims are no different than the antisemitic language propagated by the Nazi regime. However, in this modern instance Robertson's deliberately inflammatory and divisive speech is considered in the US protected speech by the First Amendment. Even though Robertson's statements are factually, ethically and morally incorrect on so many levels his audience nevertheless, accepts and believes in his rhetoric to be factually true.

This complicated multi-dimensional socio-political and ethno-religious confrontation is mostly between, these conservative, far-right white Christian nationalist groups and all other peoples that doesn't fit the far-right white Christian ideological definition of being a part of their dominant ingroup culture in society. The multitude of

reasons typically derive from one's racial and ethnic background, immigration status or religious affiliation.

Many critics of the right-wing Christian anti-Muslim groups see strong parallels both socially and ideologically to Islamic right-wing extremist groups who also demonstrate strong ingroup views and beliefs concerning how their society should be politically, socially and religiously homogeneous. Additionally, these far-right Muslim and Christian groups both demonstrate the marginalization of those ethno-religious groups that don't fit the criteria of the socially dominant ingroup. Both sides have the intention to keep a culturally and religiously. These right-wing extremist Christians and Muslim groups, advocate for a puritanical society that includes the ethno-religious exclusion, assimilation or removal of any person or groups that are considered to be non-compatible with the dominant culture's ingroup definition that ultimately creates a two-tier class in society with an us versus them social mentality. (Rydgren, 2007).

The US and the Middle East: Shaping the American Public's Perception of Arabs, Muslims and Islam

Growing up in the dominant society, I've come to know that American social attitudes regarding Arabs and Muslims have always been antagonistic, giving me the distinct sensation of being an out-group member. This poor public opinion of Arabs and Muslims in America is the result of a confluence of historical and contemporary geopolitical events and forces. It is reasonable that the American public has an unfavorable perception of Arabs and Muslims as a result of these socially painful events. Several significant events witnessed and endured by the American public over the last 50

years include the 1972 Munich Olympic massacre, the 1973 Arab oil embargo, the 1979 Iran hostage crisis, the 1983 US embassy attack in Beirut, the 1986 Libyan civil war, and the 1988 Lockerbie bombing in Scotland. Other crimes have happened afterward, including the 1991 Gulf War, codenamed "Operation Desert Storm," the 1993 bombing of New York City's World Trade Center buildings, and the 1998 murder attempts on US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. In 2000, the USS Cole, a Navy destroyer, was bombed off the coast of Yemen, serving as a forerunner to 9/11. The United States initiated an aerial assault and invasion of Afghanistan as part of its War on Terror agenda only after the September 11 attacks on New York's World Trade Center and Washington's Pentagon. Additionally, the 2003 US invasion and war in Iraq, as well as the well-publicized capture, trial, and execution (2003–2006) of Saddam Hussain, a former American ally. Additionally, to all foiled and successful terror acts performed on US and European land by Muslims affiliated with terrorist organizations such as Al Qaida and ISIS. These are only a few examples of incidents that have badly impacted and harmed the American public's opinion of Islam, Muslims, and Arabs worldwide.

However, without a doubt the most single impactful event that has further aggravated and escalated anti-Muslim rhetoric and Islamophobia of all types in the US to new heights was the September 11th, 2001, attacks. The overall official government narrative (that has been hotly contested on many different fronts) holds 19 Arab-Muslim hijackers responsible for that disastrous day. Whether one believes the official US government narrative or not, this nonetheless, has set into motion an unforeseen socio-political and geo-security paradigm shift to an international scale, that the world has never seen or experienced before. Therefore, since the 9/11 attacks, US society has

witnessed the increase of hate crimes and anti-Muslim rhetoric, which has become widespread throughout the socio-political spectrum in many cases.

Other geo-political events that have significantly influenced and contributed to US public sentiment and the deepening of intergroup anti-Muslim divide, was the substantial number of returning US civilian and military personnel from Iraq and Afghanistan, either wounded or killed. This essentially created a plethora of grieving American families that lost loved ones across the US. These grieving families and those associated with them significantly contributed to and compounded the American Public's anti-Muslim sentiments and racist views about Muslims and Arabs, because in essence Muslims and Arabs are the enemy US servicemen and their families are fighting against in Iraq, Afghanistan along with the War on Terror. Thus, only further reinforcing a good segments of the public's hatred and resentment towards Islam and Muslims. That was predicated on their own personal social, and family ties to that US servicemen killed or injured in action by the Muslim enemy terrorist.

Additionally, the horrendously shocking and widely seen internet videos of graphic first-person war footage and executions that are uploaded to the internet by Jihadi insurgent groups. Portraying horrendously outrageous and traumatizing visual scenes of beheadings, suicide bombings and public executions of other Muslim captives along with the occasional random non-Muslim foreign journalist or aid worker. Screaming "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is Great), at the top of their lungs, cheering the despicable and deplorable killings portrayed on screen for all the internet to witness. This has quite understandably negatively impacted and swayed the American public's opinion against Islam and

Muslims confirming to many of them that Islam is a cruel, violent bloody religion, hell bent on killing Christians and Westerners alike.

These appalling occurrences involving Muslim extremist violence, whether witnessed online or otherwise has understandably created this public image nightmare for Islam and Muslims globally, but particularly by those populations in the West. Many Americans and non-Muslim's regard Islam and Muslims as savage, brutal, and merciless, as well as a dangerous bunch of individuals determined to kill the infidel whenever possible. These graphic videos portray Islam in an extremely negative and cruel light and are ironically perpetuated by those who claim to be Muslims.

International and domestic national security challenges have thus become the primary obligations and responsibilities of all governments worldwide. As a result, many Western and non-Western governments have repeatedly invoked the rationale of national security to violate domestic and international conventions, as well as basic human and civil rights, in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks. While spying on specific segments of the population, whether through electronic or traditional monitoring methods, this type of drag net surveillance of entire Muslim and Arab communities solely on the basis of their ethno-religious background is nothing more than racial and religious profiling and targeting. This government scrutiny has furthermore left many Arab and Muslim communities feeling stigmatized, targeted and under a microscope.

Furthermore, because of the asymmetrical nature of terrorist groups' warfare, today's hardline politicians and their respective law enforcement institutions around the world now have the perfect political strategy of fearmongering and using ethnic groups as scapegoats as an excuse to justify their racist, heavy handed behaviors and rhetoric. As a

result of the government's propaganda, the narrative that there are sleeper cells and lone wolves, as well as biological and 'dirty' bombs ready to strike an American community near you has been widely propagated, effectively drowning out rational debate and public discourse in the United States. This message is regularly broadcast to the nation's frightened and apprehensive electorate, yet it does little to alleviate their fears and anxieties. Instead, it contributes to the exacerbation of fears to heights of frenzy not seen since the McCarthy era's 'Red Scare.' In the United States and other Western countries, social manipulation and confusion have permeated the psyche and subconscious of the dominant social groups. As a result, there has been a noticeable increase in nationalist, far-right groups and political entities, laying the groundwork for anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, and Islamophobic violence and threats, particularly in Europe (Gura, 2015; Liu, et al., 2019).

Paid Patriotism: American Manufactured National Pride at the Expense of the Muslim Community

Understandably after the 9/11 attacks, the US saw a dramatic spike in nationwide patriotism and nationalistic fervor. Throughout the Bush administration, the US government has been found to have collaborated with major sporting leagues as well as major media outlets and executives from Hollywood to New York, having them create and proliferate the government's narrative and agenda of increasing patriotism and nationalistic sentiment on all media fronts in the country. Hollywood struck it big with the critically acclaimed TV series that lasted from 2001-2010 on FOX called "24". The protagonist was named "Jack Bauer" and played by Kiefer Sutherland. In the show's eighth season, Bauer was always seen chasing down, stopping, and killing terrorists from

bombings, assassinations of world leaders, keeping the American public and the

homeland safe, in the name of the government agency he worked for. The majority of the

antagonists the series portrayed were Muslims or Arabs trying to plan attacks and

bombings on US soil, typically done in some masterful plot that only Bauer and his team

were capable of foiling.

This television series appeared to grab the American public's imagination and

alter their perceptions of how real the threat of terrorism is to their town and how alert the

government must be to counter it. Additionally, the television series 24 has purposefully

portrayed and reinforced the image of Arabs and Muslims as the bad guys, the adversary,

the out-group, the alien religion and people bent on causing harm to America. Tajfel

(1982) states that:

> "…intergroup behavior and attitudes was the tendency shown by members
>
> of an ingroup to consider members of outgroups in a relatively uniform
>
> manner, as 'undifferentiated items in a unified social category'. The
>
> phenomena of depersonalization, dehumanization, and social stereotyping
>
> which tend to increase in scope as and when intergroup relations
>
> deteriorate are no more than special instances of this wider principle of the
>
> increased undifferentiation of the outgroup. The endpoint of this process is
>
> the 'depersonalization' and 'dehumanization' of the outgroup which often
>
> occur in conditions of acute intergroup tensions." (Tajfel, 1982, pp. 13,
>
> 21)

When governments instigate and proliferate this kind of nationalist propaganda

strategy among the citizenry, the social fervor always impacts and drowns out reasonable

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public discourse and debate. It reinforces a "either you're with us or you're against us" societal mentality, strengthening the othering of those who disagree or have divergent viewpoints on the subject at hand. This inherently increases social extremism whether socially, religiously or politically, and creates an atmosphere of xenophobic and racist attitudes against a country or group of people the nation is rallying against. "…The most fundamental characteristic of nationalism lies in its overt or covert absolutization of the idea of the nation, while conceptualizing the national community as an ethnically homogeneous identity group" (Anastasiou, 2008, p. 19). Nationalists are quick to point out that Arabs and Muslims do not match the American identity group concept and have incompatible values and ways of life. Arabs and Muslims, on the other hand, are assigned to a totally distinct identity group that is ostracized, harassed, and regularly threatened as a result of their clear outgroup status in American society.

Following the 9/11 attacks, the American public's reaction of irrationality, ignorance, and violence became more obvious across the country as a result of the American government's strong dose of nationalistic propaganda, fear tactics, and indirect societal demonization of Arabs and Muslims. It's understandable that the American public's anger and dread of Islamic radicals and terrorists within their communities may be perceived as a genuine threat by many. What made matters worse was the American public's inability to tell the difference between Arabs, Indians, and Latinos, as well as Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs who dwell in American society. This resulted in the deaths of many non-Arab and non-Muslim individuals in the years following the 9/11 attacks as a result of nationalistic violence directed towards Arabs and Muslims. (Bleich et al., 2016; The Runnymede Trust, 2017).

The social history in the US between minority identity groups and the dominant white culture always seemed exploitative and an inequitable oppressive relationship to say the least. As a country we have an ideology of 'Freedom and Justice for All.' But from a historic and social perspective, we have yet to attain social harmony between the dominant culture and the minority identity groups that live in America. We see social, political, and economic inequity baked into the very institutions that prop up the reality of the American Dream, that every minority group is trying to reach. However, this creates an unspoken social dimension of class hierarchy that predominantly benefits the dominant cultural group, i.e., white Americans (Abrams & Hogg, 1998).

The Far-Right White Christian Militia, The Expressions of Free Speech Targeted against Islam, and the Muslim Community's Response

Despite Islam's call of racial unity and social harmony, the far-right Christian groups in the West have intentionally misunderstood Islam's universal peaceful message that is meant to transcend the social, racial, and economic constraints of societal hierarchies found in every community around the world. Those members of the dominant white culture of the West and their super-patriot, armed white nationalist militia groups are strongly opposed to any 'non-native' Euro-American, ethno-religious identity groups living in their country. Instead of being viewed as protectors of American values and borders, many in the United States see these right-wing militia groups as being an intimidating force who openly carry firearms at public rallies and protests. Nothing is more direct than this type of demonstration (an act of showing that something exists or is true by giving proof or evidence) and free speech than social group intimidation

techniques, which are both legally permissible and theoretically protected under US law, as reflected in the 1st and 2nd Amendments to the US Constitution.

Moreover, we see these White extremist hate groups, such as the Proud Boys blatantly use and abuse, this right of protected free speech, by demonstrating morally corrupt, violent and bigoted expressions of hate, intimidation, social discord, street violence and disrespect towards the target minority group(s) they are against. "Since its formation in 2016, the Proud Boys have acted as a physical wedge for societal polarization in America, engaging in politically motivated street fighting to purportedly defend Western society from forces the group views as degenerate and threatening Western values, such as Islam and immigration into the West" (Kriner & Lewis, 2021). This undoubtedly upholds the long tradition of white supremacy and the social privileges these far-right groups and their supporters have enjoyed since the end of slavery in the US till today (Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2018).

Far-right politics and attitudes even managed to find their way into the White House with President Trump employing. chief White House strategist, Steve Bannon, along with senior policy advisor Stephen Miller. Both of which are unapologetic populist, right-wing nationalist, who are openly anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and zealous Islamophobes. These two individuals heavily influenced Trump's domestic and foreign policy matters in the first 18 months of his administration. Policies such as the ban on Muslims entering the US from specific countries, considerably curtailing the refugee resettlement program, building of a wall on the US-Mexico border to keep Latinos out, consequently rolled back human rights and democratic norms. The justification of such far-right discriminatory policies always centered around safety and security in order to

protect America people from threat and harm of undocumented Latino criminals and

Muslim terrorists (Watkins & Gray, 2018) (Blake, 2018) (Hayden, 2019). (Kaufmann,

2019).

The policies of the Trump administration galvanized the anti-Muslim and anti-

immigrant right-wing nationalist groups across America. The far-right has been

emboldened further by political super-PACs and wealthy influential individuals who fund

conservative political campaigns with far-right agendas, many of which are very capable

of exploiting and influencing the socio-political discourse and the dynamic tensions of a

polarized society (The Center for Responsive Politics, 2019). Additionally, the far-right

political entities are also able to legally utilize provocative free hate speech that is

directed towards minority groups the far right are religiously, ideologically,

philosophically, culturally, racially, and socially opposed to (Bazian, 2015).

Many Americans who are in opposition to these hate groups and their use of

violent hate speech and rhetoric believe that freedom of speech the founding fathers had

in mind when they originally memorialized the Bill of Rights, was intended to give

protections and guarantees to the American public who speak out against the government.

Free speech, they believe, is not applicable to hate speech against other ethno-religious

identity groups. Instead, the government was forbidden to censor said speech against it

and was prohibited from taking retaliatory measures to suppress those speaking out

against the government. Furthermore, to substantiate this claim, one can point to the fact

that the creation of the American Bill of Rights, and many other laws involving US

government authority, during the time of the Founding Fathers. Were legislative policies

and initiatives that were in direct opposition to King George and the British monarchical laws of that time both socially and politically (West, 2004).

Regardless of the intellectual dispute over free speech in the United States, many of these American Christian extremist hate groups and their members are overtly and unabashedly anti-Muslim. Numerous individuals make Islamophobic remarks and use discriminatory reasoning in public and on camera. In 2015, the "Freedom of Speech Event Round 2" drew 250 individuals to Phoenix, Arizona for an anti-Muslim rally. Numerous attendees at this discriminating demonstration were observed wearing obscene t-shirts and waving racist banners that blatantly insulted Islam, Muslims, Allah, and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Many attendees wore military fatigues and dangled frightening 'hunting guns' over their shoulders as they yelled Islamophobic remarks. The rally participants were certain that they were legally protected and well within their rights to exercise their first and second amendment rights. There was also a shameless and antagonizing public display of anti-Muslim sentiment involving the public burning of the Quran, performed by Gainesville, Florida pastor Terry Jones. Pastor Jones runs the 'Dove World Outreach Center' church and gained international attention and notoriety for his notorious acts of anti-Muslim rhetoric and Islamophobic hate speech. Jones planned to burn 3,000 holy Qurans on the 2011 anniversary of the September 11th attacks. Furthermore, Jones polarized the local community as well as the national public opinion and discourse by directly creating a social narrative of the 'Christian good guys' vs. the 'Muslim bad guys' element, in order to legitimize his immoral rational and the religious desecration of Islam. Jones insists that "Burning the Quran is not radical… I can understand if you don't agree with so-called burning someone's holy book. But I don't

know how you can agree with sharia. You don't see Mennonites going around chopping people's heads off" (Hull, 2015). A 2011 report, entitled "The Anti-Muslim Circle" published by The Southern Poverty Law Center, ranks pastor Jones in the top 10 of their 2011 list, as one of America's foremost anti-Muslim advocates in the country (Steinback, 2011).

To burn or desecrate the Quran, Torah, or Bible for any reason is not only forbidden Islamicly, but it would indeed be a blasphemous act. This sacrilegious act goes directly against a Muslim's fundamental beliefs, along with those of Christians and Jews as well. The fact that Jews and Christians are frequently mentioned throughout the Quran by Allah as "People of the Book" is a direct form of respect and an honorable mentioning in the Quran by Allah. This is due in part to the similarities of beliefs and prophets to both their Jewish and Christian counterparts and a recognition that their teachings have come from the same divine source. Islam further mandates respect for all other 'non-monotheistic' religious groups and that their sacred texts would still be respected. This tolerance and respect of other ethno-religious beliefs and houses of worship has centuries of documented historic precedence.

The revelations that constitute the Quran coincide with military activity, and many address issues related to the conduct of jihad; one of the earliest of these defines just causes for waging jihad, emphasizing the essential component of justice:

"Permission is given to those who fight because they are wronged. Surely Allah can give them victory. Those who were driven out of their homes unjustly, merely for their saying: "Our Lord is Allah." Had Allah not repelled some people by others, surely monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is

mentioned frequently, would have been demolished. Indeed, Allah will support whoever supports Him. Allah is surely Strong and Mighty." (22:39–40 Quran)

This essentially is the Islamic method of managing inter-religious contact and promoting a set standard that avoids religious conflict between differing faiths. "…as the [Islamic] armies of conquest encountered communities of Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, the model of [Prophet] Muhammad's accommodating behavior extended the original notion to incorporate all these recipients of God's revelation as Ahl al-Dhimma, or Dhimmi, protected peoples" (Newby, 2018). These positive historical social events are something in which many Western critics of Islam including the American public, fail to see that Muslims have traditionally been a positive social force, transforming societies for the better and a pillar of stability, especially for minority religious groups and sects who were governed and lived under Islamic rule.

The Socio-Political Ramifications of Ethno-Religious Minority Groups in the US if they Behaved Like the Far-Right

No ethnoreligious minority group of color (Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, or Muslims) has ever used or shown its protected right to free speech and public bear arms to threaten the country's white Christian populace. Additionally, we have never witnessed in American social history any of these relegated minority groups using the same morally and socially appalling, reprehensible 'free speech' tactics, that involved demonstrations using ethno-religious racist taunts, slurs, threats, and intimidation being conducted outside of any White Christian churches. Unlike just like the 250 White far-right members that attended the 'Freedom of Speech Rally Round 2' did to the Muslim community in Phoenix, Arizona (Wiechec, 2015).

The Second Amendment describes "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." (Cornell Law, 1992). Since the formation of a militia is permitted under US law, many militias have an overwhelming demography of white Christian far-right members who believe it is their civic responsibility to assist in defending the United States' borders and neighborhoods against 'illegal aliens' and 'jihadi terrorists. (Sweeney & Perliger, 2018). Many of these militias may travel thousands of miles from all over the United States to 'protect' the border areas of the southern US-Mexico border to assist in law enforcement efforts in curbing illegal immigration from Latin American migrants along with, potential Muslim terrorists they may come across.

These alt-right groups promote an ethno-pluralistic ideology and society achieved through violent means, i.e., ethno-religious cleansing. This is the exact opposite of a multi-cultural, diverse population, in which "Different ethnicities are not necessarily superior or inferior, only different, incompatible, and incommensurable" (Rydgren, 2007, p. 244). Because of the way social hierarchy works, two or more polarized ethnic or social groups will eventually clash, leading to acts of ethnic cleansing until one group gains social, political, and military supremacy over the other.

Far-Right Extremist Groups and Inter-Group Interactions Past and Present

In more recent times, we have seen the rise of violent Islamic extremism and other non-state actors such as ISIS and many others that have attacked, killed, abducted and displaced tens of thousands of Muslim families and villagers, including minority non-Muslim ethnic groups. In the last five years, we have seen ISIS fighters that have actively attempted to ethnically cleanse many different non-Muslim ethnic minority

groups around the Middle East (ME). The majority of these non-Muslim ethno-religious groups living in the ME have long developed over the many generations a deep-rooted, cultural heritage to the lands they called home.

Unfortunately, for many ethnic Yazidis, a minority ethno-religious people of the ME, ended up becoming forcefully displaced from their traditional land and homes. Many met their untimely demise or became captives to ISIS members, or have ended up living in refugee camps, not able to return to their ancestral lands. Today, many blame the attacks on minority groups on the lack of security services or influence by the state security forces in MENA nations. Many people look back and see the 2003 invasion and conflict with Iraq as the initial spark that ignited the ME, as well as the subsequent emergence of Jihadi, Islamic extremist radical groups waging a proxy war against the Iraqi, Afghan, and Syrian governments and their Western allied militaries. The historic reality, however, shows that these differing identity groups such as the Arab Christians, the Kurds, and the Yazidis, to name a few, have been living throughout the MENA for centuries in relative peace and prosperity amongst their Arab-Muslim neighbors (Gervers & Bikhazi, 1990).

Unfortunately, but historically consistent, the fact about society and intergroup conflict is that we have a very poor track record of blaming and linking entire identification groups with the behavior of a few. These inter-group violence social reasoning errors, which rely on broad attribution, assumptions, and association, instantly polarize any and all communities, drastically increasing the likelihood of escalating violence against and/or displacement of those unfairly blamed.

When it comes to Muslims living in the West, the Western public has expressed

prejudices that associate and characterize Muslims as a potentially hazardous group or

religion, whether explicitly or implicitly. Additionally, many anti-Muslims say that

Muslims will not pledge allegiance to the Western secular countries in which they live.

Additionally, many non-Muslim Western populations identify Muslims with terrorism

and violent extremism, as well as being anti-American or anti-Western. Several Western

countries have conflicting, contradictory, and hypocritical opinions on the issue of

violence between different groups of people. These two groups have different reactions to

the virtually weekly rash of mass shootings in the United States, most of which are

perpetrated by white males with guns. (US Mass-shootings fig1)
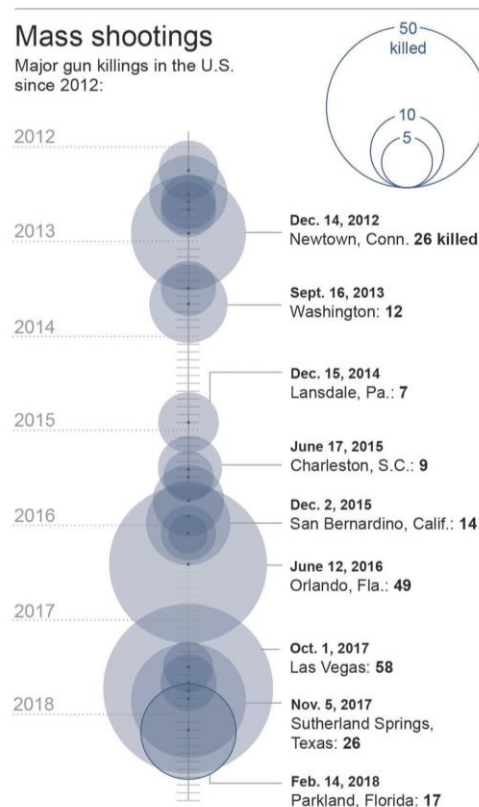
Figure 1. US Mass-shootings from 2012-2018 (Gun Violence Archive, 2019)

Numerous law enforcement agencies and news organizations in the United States have been cautious to classify these mass shootings by white men as domestic terrorism. Rather than that, we witness the dominant narrative in society, propagated by the media and others, that these mass-shooting culprits have mental health difficulties, which serves as justification for the heinous act of violence done against their victims. Additionally, when the serial pedophile scandal that rocked the Catholic Church emerged over the last few years, many in the Western public seem to be able to carefully discern and distinguish between the individual acts of these pedophilic priests from the entire clergy. While many individuals agree that the priest's actions were heinous and repugnant, they equally point out that they do not reflect all of the Catholic Church's great, industrious priests and nuns. So why are these same individuals so willing to generalize all Muslims based on the atrocities committed by a few? this wide spread fear of Muslims, has allowed many to overlook or minimize the violence and abuse towards by members of the dominant culture and their institutions towards Muslims. This confirms the socio-political narrative of the US having a double-standard when it comes to Muslims (Alexander, 2018) (Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2018)

The Trump Administration's far-right social policies have, without a doubt, divided both the American public. Trump's social platform and agenda promotes a social acceptance and a leniency towards bigotry and discrimination against minority identity groups. This has facilitated a notion amongst the dominant White culture throughout the public, a sense of racially based entitlement that has led many individuals of this group to categorize and label the many different ethno-religious minority groups living amongst them in their society in a negative light. The dominant white culture in the US, places a

high value on the preservation and continuity of their ethno-religious dominance over the socio-political status quo, that has intentionally favored their own White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) ethno-religious group since the inception of America. As a result of President Donald Trump's sociopolitical policies and the rise of nationalist populism, we are witnessing the reemergence of socially unacceptable behavior and episodes, whether in person or on social media, with an unsettlingly reminiscent rhetoric, reminiscent of the Jim Crow era and the days of racial segregation, ignorance, and contempt for other minority groups of color, and with an unsettlingly reminiscent rhetoric (Brown, 2019).

Much of the pro-Trump, far-right rhetoric we see presently is directed at, but is not limited to Muslims, Latino immigrants, foreign migrants and refugees, including the LGBT community. With Trump in office, the far right and those who identify with its ideology have prominently demonstrated and voiced their views on a regular basis (e.g., Fox, conservative talk show host Laura Ingraham) regarding their hostility toward minority identity groups and their negative social standing and impact on America, political correctness, including negatively opposing minority protections as reverse divisiveness. Certain extreme right-wing organizations and individuals, like as Richard Spencer, are unambiguous in their belief that America should be a homeland for White Christian Americans (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2018). These socially progressive laws and protected rights that are enforced in the United States are purposely designed to safeguard and elevate the numerous minority identity groups from the established, dominating cultural and byproducts of their traditional socio-political public institutions. Eric Kaufmann, who wrote the article, "Ethno-Traditional Nationalism and the Challenge of Immigration" says "Indeed, the American National Election Study (ANES) 2016 Pilot

Survey data shows that after opposition to immigration and political correctness, the extent to which a White American feels their White identity is important to them is the most important predictor of whether they supported Donald Trump in the presidential primaries…" (Kaufmann, 2019).

In the United States, an increasing number of people are voicing their dissatisfaction with how various ethnic minorities are treated. When analyzing and comparing their own sociopolitical acts to those of other groups, the dominant cultural identity group frequently minimizes racist and discriminating sociopolitical ideology and behavior. It is thus predictable to see that there are socio-political double standards. Rather, it is normal and even expected, to see dominant cultural groups with a monopoly on the socio-political power structure to create and maintain double standards on controversial social, political, religious and judicial matters pertaining to those identity groups who are marginalized and sidelined in all aspects of society. The dWc in the US has a long and prominent track-record with this kind of moral and ethical hypocrisy on a social, political, and economic level.

The Election of Trump and the Rise of Hate Crimes Throughout the US

The State of Oregon has 4.2 million residents with the majority of the state's population residing within the Willamette Valley. Major population centers in the state include Eugene, Salem, and the Portland metro areas, all with a reputation for being liberal forward-thinking cities, gives the false impression that Oregon is a liberal progressive state. However, from a socio-political perspective, a closer examination of the state's socio-political leanings, one would see that the majority of Oregon's counties are considered to be conservative leaning republicans, with very little diversity as well.

Communities along the I-5 corridor from Eugene, north to the Portland Metro area have some of the states' most diverse social, cultural, and ethnic populations and demographics.

According to the 2017 FBI hate crimes report, out of the 84 reported cases in Oregon, Eugene with a population of 168,310 had 46 cases based on race, ethnicity, or ancestry, while Portland, with a population of 649,408, four times larger than Eugene, only had 10 reported hate crime cases. The state capitol of Salem, with its population of 169,565 had reported a total of 4 hate crimes (FBI, 2018; United States Census Bureau, 2019). Further analysis of the FBI hate crime statistical data shows the categories that were represented in their findings were based on race, ethnicity, ancestry, and religiously motivated crimes. The data shows that between 2015-17, there was a remarkable increase in reported hate crimes throughout Oregon. Furthermore, the Eugene-Springfield area surprisingly stands out in this specific time frame, with more hate crimes reported than any other city in the state. In 2015, out of a total 50 reported hate crimes throughout the state, the Eugene-Springfield area (population. 231,269 combined), had 32 reported instances of hate crimes (FBI, 2016). In 2016, 39 out of a total 84 hate crimes were reported from the same area. With Eugene recording 32, and Springfield reporting 7 hate crimes. This is in contrast to the city of Portland, which reported only 8 cases that year (does not include Portland metro area) (FBI, 2018). In 2017, Eugene alone reported 58 total hate crimes under the categories mentioned above, while Portland only reported 14 cases.

There appears to be a direct correlation between Trump's presidential campaign rhetoric, his election, and administrative policies, and the rise in reported hate crimes

across Oregon and around the nation. Many experts call this social phenomenon the 'Trump effect' (Gutsche Jr., 2018) (Korostelina, 2016). It refers to the fact that that Trump's sheer political rhetoric and the position he holds influences and reinforces the racist attitudes of particular right-wing nationalist groups, especially as racism is conflated with Trump's slogan 'Make America Great Again'. This trend has led to the creation of a whole new brand of modern, far right, radical Republicans with an ideology that traces its historic legitimacy and roots to the racist and discriminatory past of American society when Jim Crow was the status quo.

Since the election of Donald Trump, the city of Portland has become an ideological and political battleground, literally. The emergence of the pro and anti-Trump movements and demonstrations have violently clashed with one another on multiple occasions. These clashes have resulted in a heightened police presence, in businesses being vandalized, and people being arrested, hurt or worse. Portland activists have protested and camped out in front of a federal facility that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents use for housing migrant detainees' majority of whom are Latino. These public demonstrations against ICE eventually led to the facility being temporarily shut down out of safety concerns for the agents (Shepherd, 2018).

These outrageous social outbursts drew international attention, mainly due to the riotous activity and its socio-political aftermath. Portland is known as a hipster's utopia, and a tolerant, socio-politically progressive, open-minded city that welcomes diversity from all backgrounds of life. Unfortunately, the public has witnessed Islamophobic attacks against Muslim women who wear the hijab waiting for public transportation in the Portland Metro area (KGW Staff, 2020). Furthermore, members of the Muslim

community have been assaulted, murdered in their own home, or have had their businesses and centers of worship vandalized by white American Islamophobes who live in Portland (KATU Staff, 2017).

In many cases the past is a good indicator of the way racial tensions have evolved in American social politics that we see today. America's social past has been fraught with many different historic and modern incidences of systematic and remorseless discrimination and oppression, that touched every facet of social life for many racial and ethno-religious minority groups living throughout the US. Those that perpetuate and spread white racial superiority at the expense of others ethno-religious groups have fundamental beliefs and philosophies:

1. There is a far-right anti-immigration conspiracy theory referred to by many names, including "White genocide", "White extinction," and "The Great Replacement". The most memorable and widely adopted phrase by neo-Nazi and white nationalist groups is dubbed '14 Words' which are, "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White Children" (Jackson, 2015, pp. 207, 210-12).

2. Whites should be dominant over people of other backgrounds;

3. Whites should live by themselves in a whites-only society;

4. White people have their own "culture" that is superior to other cultures; and

5. White people are genetically superior to other people (Anti-Defamation League, 2017). White supremacists also believe that God Himself favored the white race over others races of the world and has chosen the white race

as a *civilized* and dignified people, sent to *civilize* (in the name of God and country) all non-Christian 'soulless heathen' minority groups of color.

These ideas of white ethno-religious superiority and identity recognized by a large portion of White Americans, has been a fundamental core belief and a deeply held philosophical and ideological conviction of White ethnocentric identity. Today, this conceptual belief has evolved socio-politically with the emergence of the alternative right (alt-right) groups and prominent White advocates such as the American neo-Nazi, Richard Spencer. Spencer, in his own words, says "In the mid-19th century, many Jews in Central Europe had an idea of an ethno-state, an idea of Zionism, and they were considered ridiculous and insane, but they had that dream, and that dream came into reality. Our dream is a new society, an ethno-state that would be a gathering point for all Europeans. It would be a new society based on very different ideals than, say, the Declaration of Independence" (Ciaramella 2013).

We even see US politicians like Steve King, who is an eight-term Republican congressman from Iowa. King shows no hesitation in making his white nationalist pride and ideology known when he visited Austria in August 2018. This is where he gave an interview with an Austrian right-wing, neo-fascist identarian named Caroline Sommerfeld. Sommerfeld represented an Austrian far-right propagandist site called "Unzensuriert" (uncensored), a German-language version similar to the American White nationalist website, Breitbart. Congressman King stresses the importance in the interview of the necessity to protect Western civilization from non-Western ethnic and religious entities, stating "If we don't defend Western civilization, then we will become subjugated by the people who are the enemies of faith, the enemies of justice."

King further speaks about the 'Great Replacement' and how this socio-political phenomenon has impacted White Euro-American populations and demographics that are brought on by "…mass migration, particularly from Muslim-majority countries, is an extinction-level event for White European culture and identity. Or as [King] put it in the interview, a "slow-motion cultural suicide." King elaborates further by claiming that the cause of the 'Great Replacement' stems from "The U.S. subtracts from its population a million of our [White] babies in the form of abortion. We add to our population approximately 1.8 million of 'somebody else's babies' who are raised in another culture before they get to us." (Mathias & Robins-Early, 2018).

It is not uncommon to hear comments and sentiments made by such prominent figures in the Trump administration by Miller or by the likes of Congressman King and others that command and influence large swathes of the population. In fact, this type of White alarmist perspective of the 'Great Replacement' or the 'White Genocide' has become the existential rallying cry for the White nationalist public, their affiliated hate groups and those local, state and federal politicians that campaign on it, and play up the fears of their white constituency with their alt-right nationalist rhetoric.

The ideological trepidations of the White nationalists' 'Great Displacement', stems from fears of an elitist Jewish conspiratorial influx to bring millions of non-Euro-American migrants who are intentionally sent to displace and water down the White ethno-religious and cultural identity. In the same process, these migrants would over time, destroy and sideline their 'nativist' White heritage and ethnic purity. This conspiracy, as the White nationalists put it, utilizes social diversity by introducing those different non-Euro-American cultural and ethnic backgrounds into their local

communities. The fear is that mixing of races and cultures as well as interracial marriages may occur, which would slowly dilute, and eventually wash out the White ethno-religious majority group from out of American society. Therefore, many prominent white nationalist figures, including the likes of Congressman King and the late neo-Nazi David Lane, have mentioned that this process of social diversification in the US, is indeed a slow genocide for the White race. They ultimately fear the subsequent decrease of their ethnocentric purity as well as their down fall from their dominant historic hegemony they have enjoyed since the inception of the United States over the many non-White ethno-religious identity groups. Essentially becoming relegated to a second-class citizen in their 'own country'; an absolute doomsday scenario for the entirety of White alt-right nationalists both in Europe and the US.

Furthermore, whether these White nationalists in political power implement discriminatory policies or simply decry the 'injustices' of their own marginalization that they claim is indeed happening as fact. "White genocide", "White extinction", a "Great Displacement" or a "Great Replacement" of their Euro-American White race, culture and religion, is ironically termed, and is the exact claims, actions and events that have taken place over the many centuries by these White identity groups, and their genocidal colonial histories committed upon the countless ethnic populations of the Global South.

Additionally, the American public and the rest of the world has witnessed the resurgence of institutionalized discrimination as well. Mostly led in part by the Trump administration's campaign promises specifically baring and restricting entry into the US by Arabs, Muslims and Latinos. The US Supreme Court's affirmation of the Trump "Muslim ban" has had deeply stigmatizing and discriminatory consequence on the

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different Muslim communities in the US and individuals arriving from overseas. Also, there is a concerted effort to deny entry to Latin migrants seeking political asylum in the US. (Ayoub & Beydoun 2017; Green, 2019). Government agencies such as the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), is essential in the administration's deportation efforts of individuals from Latin America and other foreign countries, apprehended and detained throughout numerous communities in the US.

Because of the right-wing stance of the Trump administration's immigration and domestic policy involving specific ethno-religious groups in the country. We have seen a surge in hate crimes nationwide shown by numerous data sets from a plethora of anti-discrimination organizations. The Trumpian policies have motivated right-wing groups and given them an excuse to violently discriminate against other minority groups. In this particular case, hate groups and hate crimes against ethno-religious communities indicates that there is a unique correlation between the election of Trump and the rise of hate groups and crimes in general. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), they indicate since 2017 there has been a 55% increase in White nationalist hate groups. And as of 2019, SPLC has tracked 940 hate groups across the US. (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020)

New America's Muslim Diaspora Initiative has published an in-depth data set of "Anti-Muslim Activities in the United States". This interactive webpage breaks down Islamophobic attacks into two separate categories, 'Incidents Over Time' and 'Incidents by State'. Claiming that "Across the United States, mosques are vandalized, local government officials denounce Islam, and state legislatures debate anti-Muslim laws. Such anti-Muslim activities have increased markedly since late 2015." The Anti-Muslim

Activities in the United States project, documents the increase of Islamophobic activities

by cataloguing 763 separate incidents from 2012 to the present 2020. Data is

continuously updated per the website every other fortnight. Thus, the compilation of anti-

Muslim activities by New America "…is one of the most comprehensive and up-to-date

sources of publicly available information about anti-Muslim activities at the state and

local level in the United States." (McKenzie, 2020).
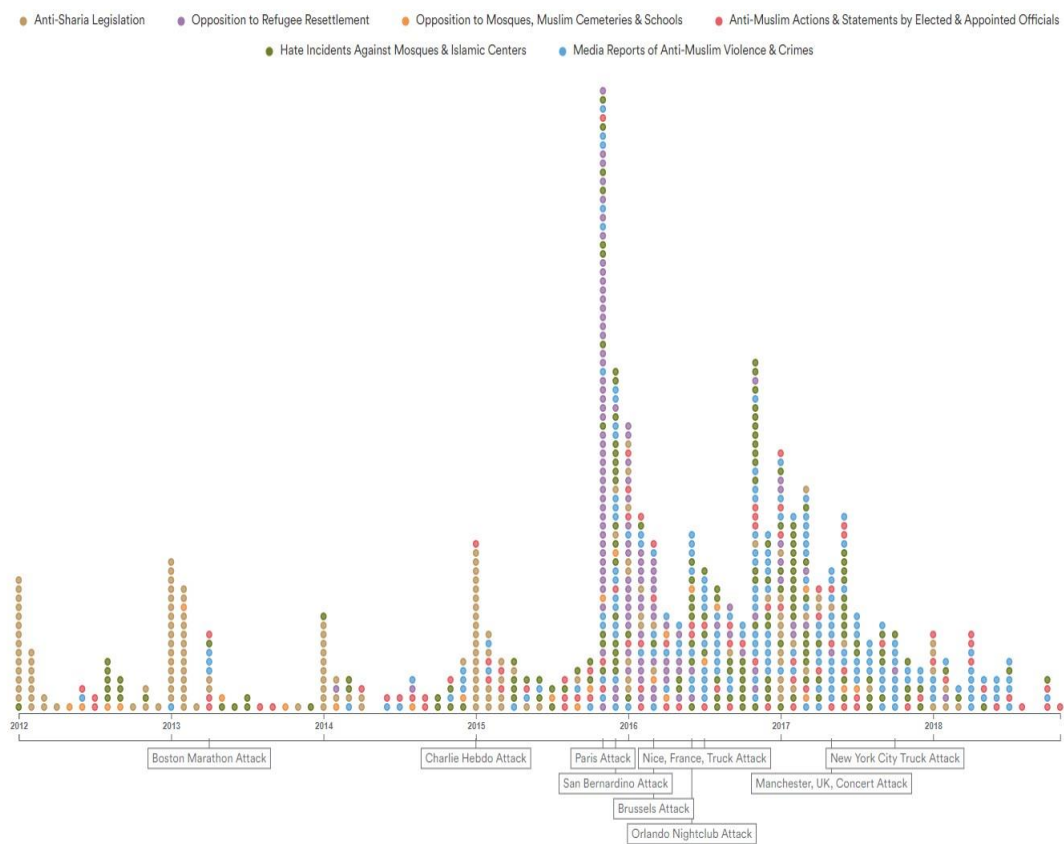
Figure 2. The many different socio-political anti-Muslim movements in relation to

terrorist attacks in the West (McKenzie, 2020)
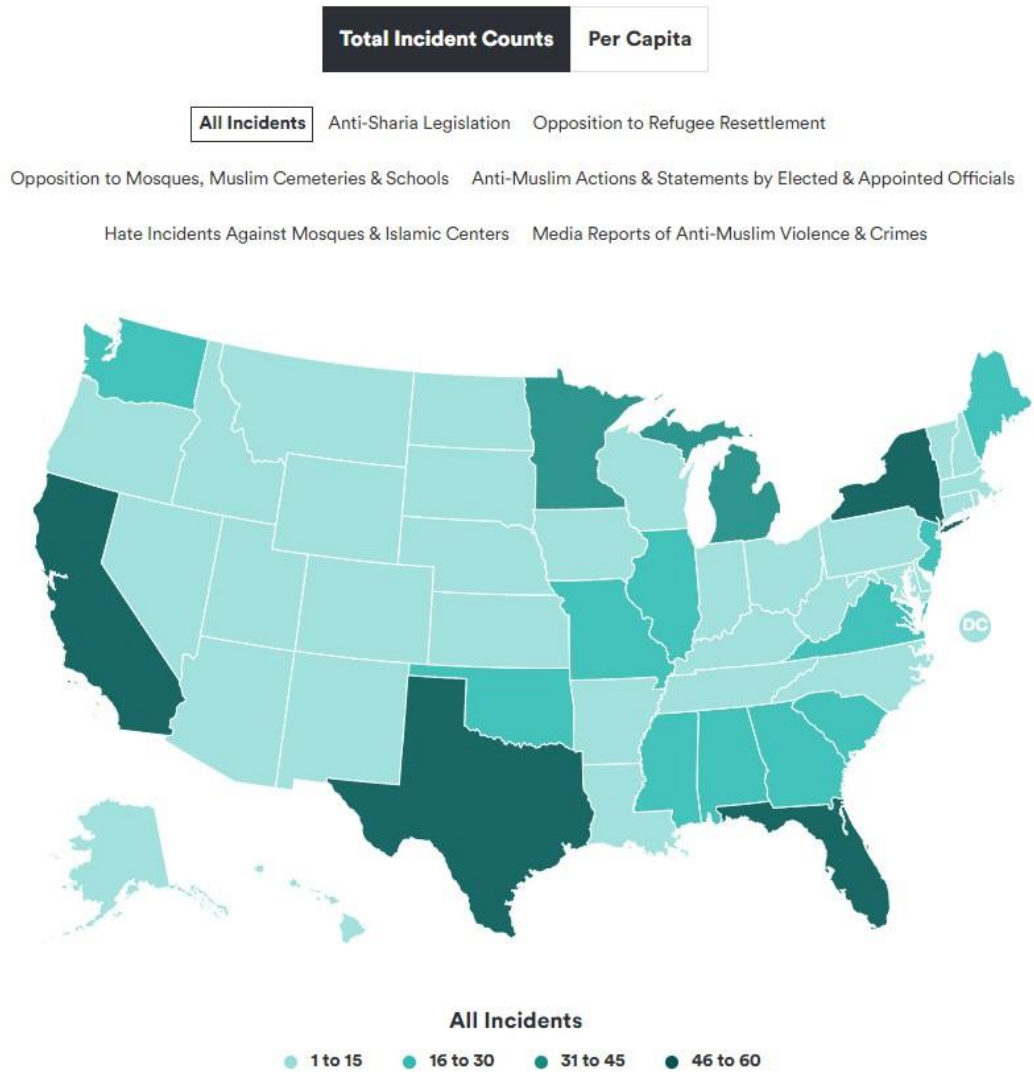
Figure 3. Incidents (McKenzie, 2020)

From the data, one can see that anti-Muslim instances have been committed by a wide range of the American population. Many anti-Muslim activities directly relate to the dominant culture's staunch opposition to Muslim refugee resettlement across the country, the establishment of local community mosques, and even Muslim cemeteries and schools. Additionally, the data includes anti-Muslim statements and sentiments by elected and

appointed officials, as well as incidents of hate against Mosques and Islamic centers. The top five US states with the most reported instances of anti-Muslim activity was California with 56, New York 48, Texas 48, Florida 46 and Michigan 32. Oregon was reported to have 11 instances during the same time period. The Southern Poverty Law Center in 2019, has tracked 15 hate groups in the state of Oregon, with one group called the Black Riders Liberation Party, is considered to be a Black separatist group out of Portland. The remaining 14 Oregon hate groups listed, classified seven of these groups such as 'American Front, American Identity Movement, Asatru Folk Assembly, Northwest Hammerskins, Pacific Coast Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and Patriot Front enjoy wide support throughout the state. Where other groups listed such as the Rense Radio Network (Ashland), Hell Shaking Street Preachers (Tillamook), Oregonians for Immigration Reform (Salem), Pacific Justice Institute (Salem), Proud Boys (Eugene, Salem and Portland) are located in and around specific localities with large populations in the state (Souther Poverty Law Center, 2020).

Despite the national and local rise in far-right hate groups during the Trump era and beyond, those of the Christian right and their neighboring Muslim community members living throughout the US and EU share many similarities and common beliefs with one another. Yet, many in the West are misled to believe otherwise. Because of this, it is imperative for those Muslims living in their communities, to push forward with solutions to bridge the divide both on an interpersonal and community level. That would set the foundation to inspire a reduction of social tensions and acts of Islamophobia as a whole, by focusing on the many avenues involving outreach and educational programs specifically focused on addressing the fears, anxieties and trepidations the dominant

culture has in regards to Islam and Muslims. This direct approach and involvement on an

intergroup level, would need to be met with the reexamination of free speech that is

provocative, confrontational and abusive including the protections and limitations of free

speech.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion and the Way Forward

Reevaluating Freedom of Hate Speech in the United States

In order to combat Islamophobia and other forms of incendiary speech towards any and all ethno-religious minority groups, one must critically analyze free speech in America and how it has been used historically up till today. Many Americans believe that the freedom of speech memorialized in the constitution gives people the right to say what they want about who and what they want irrespective of the social, ethical, and moral consequences. Originally when the founding fathers wrote the First Amendment protecting freedom of speech, they envisioned that freedom of speech was a protection for the public to speak openly and freely without constraint or retaliation from the government. The public's ability to voice their opinions, contrary viewpoints, or displeasures at government and its institutions, was a fundamental change with the status quo of the British colonial socio-political laws, in which speaking out against the king, his court or the government was treasonous and socially blasphemous during the time of the American founding fathers and the nation's young inception.

For quite some time now in the United States, we have seen free speech taken out of its original context and manipulated by the American public in a manner that the founding fathers of the country did not envision. This freedom afforded to all American citizens has been abused and taken advantage of over the decades. With rallies and demonstration marches by groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and other racist groups with no ideological agenda other than the hatred for Blacks, Jews, Latinos and Muslims along with other minority identity groups and their supporters. This type of government tolerated free hate speech is detrimental to all minority identity groups living

in the country, for the fact that this kind of free hate speech does not promote a unified

society that is safe and inclusive for all minority ethno-religious groups and peoples in

the country. Rather, this incites fear, hatred and intimidation throughout the minority

community being targeted by the far-right hate groups. These demonstrations send a clear

message, to these minority groups, that white people don't like them or want their kind in

their community. These rallies and demonstrations are a way to show that their hatred for

minority groups including their ideological and philosophical discriminatory rhetoric is

real, and that they are a substantial force that needs to be taken seriously (Beirich, 2018)

(Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2018) (Wiechec, 2015).

Up till now, as a society in America, we have enabled and protected right-wing

racist hate speech, ethnocentrically charged rallies and demonstrations, which directly is

disturbing public peace, that solely targets minority identity groups. And yet, as a country

we collectively wonder why America has traditionally had such heightened racial

intergroup tensions that have spilled over in race riots and lynchings numerous times

since the end of the Civil War. Furthermore, knowing the shameful history of America's

racist and discriminatory past, you would think that law makers would have instituted

some sort of curbs on speech that serves no other purpose than to promote White

American ethnocentrism at the expense of other ethno-religious minority groups.

Traditionally, whenever a person verbally, physically, or emotionally hurts

someone, or is hurt by another person, we expect or are expected to apologize for what

we've done. It's that simple, it's the moral and ethical thing to do, especially if you are

sincerely sorry and regret your actions and transgressions. Not only is apologizing for

one's wrong a fundamental universal human trait, but these basic moral and ethical

teachings and concepts, are both emphasized in Islam and Christianity. America as a government doesn't seem sincere or have enough political will or gumption to truly tackle hate speech and be remorseful in its efforts to stifle such racially charged demonstrations of discrimination and hate which are directed at other racial and religious groups in the country. These riotous public events only serve to disturb public peace and good social order and nothing else. Today we see many people covet their freedom to spew hate speech publicly or online, to the point where they don't feel they are morally or ethically wrong for their discriminatory behavior. The simple answer is because, many Americans feel that they are entitled to say whatever they want about anyone or anything, with no forethought, no censorship, and no consequences for their immoral and unethical public displays of hate speech and behavior.

This type of shameful social behavior these people are engaged in, is in their minds a constitutionally protected, God given, inalienable right that is uniquely American and an exercise staunchly in White American privilege. For generations America has allowed the KKK and other racist right-wing groups, to march and demonstrate openly and freely, showing off their social and political presence, intimidating minority groups and communities and making their presence loudly felt particularly towards Black communities (Jopling, 2015). The soul reason the KKK and other right-wing hate groups have been able to protest and vocalize their ideological hate for people of color and other ethno-religious minorities publicly. Is because of how free speech has been interpreted in the US and the protections it provides for individuals and groups to publicly voice their descent or opposition is based on how the Supreme Court has stated it will protect such free speech, out of fear of a tyrannical government that might one day restrict, censor or

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prohibit free speech that the government deems it doesn't like (Matal v. Tam, 2017) (West, 2004).

Have there ever been marches and protests by ethnic or religious minorities in America that used the same vile and revolting hate speech and intimidation tactics as far right or KKK groups have used in White cities and neighborhoods?? That has never occurred in my memory. Other minorities in America have never used the same tactics that the KKK does in communities of color to rally against White America. There is a sense that the system is meant to absolve white supremacists of responsibility for their prejudiced and lethal speech directed at minorities. How do you think White America would react if these minority groups of color gained the confidence to confront their racist counterparts? From my vantage point, there would be justification for a legitimate racial war. When the First Amendment is invoked to defend racist marches and hate speech, it becomes a societal folly that violates fundamental social norms of decency and decorum. The United States' entire system of free hate speech must be reexamined and reevaluated. Inciting hostility toward minority communities and groups is a certain strategy to foment racial and religious divisions.

I ask, how does free hate speech help end racial and social relations between the different groups here in America? How does such a policy bring these different fragile identity groups together as a unified nation? It does not help one bit, that's why I call on America to reconsider what protected speech and hate speech mean in a public context. Would the American public stand for ISIS or Al Qaida supporters to spew their propaganda and hate speech publicly down any American street in the country or in front of the 9/11 memorial like these 'traditional hate groups' do? This reflects the double

standard of 'free speech' in American society and further demonstrates that one form of

hate and rhetoric is tolerated publicly as protected speech, while another is considered

heresy and outrageous to American public sensibilities.

All manifestations of anti-Semitism have been banned in Germany, as the country

is committed to avoid repeating the horrors of World War II, which saw Hitler rise to

power and fall. When it comes to social history, the German Bundestag (federal

parliament) has been unwavering in its commitment to learning from the past and

rejecting the idea of re-creating it. Because of this, we see legislation criminalizing and

eradicating all sorts of hate speech from German society. So as a nation with a dark

history, it is the moral and ethical thing to do in order to prevent any future social and

community bloodshed. Aside from the fact that it is a method for Germany to make

atonement with the ethnic and religious minorities that they harmed during the reign of

Adolf Hitler,

These serious efforts as well as the steadfast determination shown by the

Bundestag to suppress all kinds of hate speech, should be a model for how America can

navigate the delicate balance between free speech and hate speech and still protect

fundamental rights to free expression. These legislative efforts have made substantial and

tangible changes to both German law and society as well. Additionally, these steps taken

by the Bundestag truly reflect the remorseful and apologetic nature of Germany for their

collective past actions, by preventing hate speech or right-wing groups to rear their ugly

heads ever again in German society. As an American person of color, I applaud these

aggressive measures to put an end to hate groups and their speech.

The American Supreme Court has interpreted and reaffirmed repeatedly that the first amendment covers and protects hate speech and other forms of discriminatory rhetoric, and confirms that hate speech is considered free speech, irrespective of the shameful, oppressive, racially discriminatory socio-political and economic policies of the past against minority groups (West, 2004).

Samuel Alito writing his opinion on behalf of himself and four other Supreme Court justices in Matal v. Tam case that:

"The idea that the government may restrict speech expressing ideas that offend … strikes at the heart of the First Amendment. Speech that demeans on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, or any other similar ground is hateful; but the proudest boast of our free speech jurisprudence is that we protect the freedom to express "the thought that we hate." (Matal v. Tam, 2017).

In effect, the Supreme Court unanimously affirmed that 'hate speech' is a protected form of expression. This can be viewed by many as legal protection and the ability to speak freely against any ethno-religious minority group they believe does not belong in the United States in the first place. Latino migrants and Muslim refugees are two examples of this.

In order for real substantial change to happen between the dominant white culture and those minority groups, there has to be a check on mass demonstrations that incites and fans the flames of hatred, intimidation and societal discord. However, the entire United States Supreme Court including many members of both Senate and Congress, see things differently. They do not seem to place importance on quelling ethnic and racial tensions or the promotion of a racially harmonious society in the diverse social culture we

live in today. It seems that the status quo is meant in keeping intergroup tensions at a

boiling point were in essence, any group can simply go and disrespect another racial or

religious group of people openly and freely (while being protected by the police, see

Figure 4). And for this very reason the proliferation of Islamophobia is a natural

development in this racially charged country and society because there is no emphasis in

restricting any social ethno-religious confrontation or conflict from a free hate speech

standpoint.

Figure 4. Austin, Texas 1983 a Black policeman protects a Ku Klux Klan member at a

rally, as protesters were closing in on him (Image Credits: Guy Reynolds)

By taking a page from Germany's anti-hate speech rules and protections for

ethno-religious groups and peoples, the US could align itself more closely with the

majority of liberal Western democracies and enact comparable measures. The inability of the United States to prevent open hate speech directed against minorities has been a visible stain on the country's reputation. If US politicians were sincerely serious about not repeating previous errors, they would have taken the required steps to enact specific, focused legislation aimed at combating hate speech directed against outgroups while simultaneously safeguarding the First Amendment's rights. Rather than that, this failure to eradicate hate speech reveals that it is still alive and well, and that it is being used by members of the dominant culture as a means of intimidation and repression.

How Muslims Need to Make First Contact with Anti-Muslim Hate Groups

I am a strong believer in what psychologist Gordon W. Allport (Allport, 1954) described as 'contact hypothesis' or 'intergroup contact theory'. Allport argues that contact is one of the best ways to improve relations among different ethno-religious groups that are experiencing conflict. This is typically done through positive contact with that group or person by creating rapport, familiarity, connections, finding the similarities between one another, including the creation of friendships.

Daryl Davis is the personification of Allport's contact theory. What makes Davis so special is that, as an African-American Christian from Ohio, he has convinced over 200 different members of various Ku Klux Klan (KKK) groups to quit, simply by befriending them. Building empathy, rationality, and understanding from once racist White KKK members who admit to senselessly hating people like Davis and others like him for no good reason whatsoever. Davis even has a 2016 documentary directed by Matt Ornstein called, *Accidental Courtesy: Daryl Davis, Race & America*. This documentary has been critically acclaimed by numerous film festivals as well as the New York Times.

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Davis is living proof that patience, persistence, and dedication to his cause, can have positive serious impacts and outcomes in the pursuit of inter-cultural relations.

The film portrays Davis's story and reasoning why he reached out to these KKK members, as well as former KKK members confessionals about their upbringing, economic insecurity, and former extremist ideologies of senseless hatred directed towards the Black and Brown communities they lived next to. It is amazing to see Davis's resolve in reaching out to the KKK, even though this very group of people historically have hated Blacks and other minority groups and have committed numerous horrendous acts of violence against countless African Americans. Ironically, the KKK has never been officially designated by the Justice Department as a radicalized, extremist, terrorist group that should be dismantled and stamped out from society with all ferocity like they did to the Black Panther Party, the American Indian Movement (AIM), or the Italian Mob.

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is the US think tank public policy research arm, of the United States Congress. A May 2012 CRS report authored by Jerome Bjelopera, entitled *The Domestic Terrorist Threat: Background and Issues for Congress* stated that:

> "In the last decade, domestic terrorists—*people who commit crimes within the homeland and draw inspiration from U.S.-based extremist ideologies and movements*—have killed American citizens and damaged property across the country…The Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) do not officially list domestic terrorist organizations, but they have openly delineated domestic terrorist "threats." These include individuals who commit crimes in the name of ideologies

supporting animal rights, environmental rights, anarchism, white

supremacy, anti-government ideals, black separatism, and anti-abortion

beliefs." (Bjelopera, 2012).

Furthermore, the United States officially does not monitor known domestic hate

or extremist groups. The United States officially does not monitor recognized domestic

hate or extremist groups, and the rationale for this is outlined in the next section.

"The U.S. government does not formally designate domestic terrorist

organizations, [because] claiming an affiliation to a domestic terror

organization…is not illegal…therefore, it may not be illegal to give

money or other forms of material support to a domestic terrorist group,

even if the group is known for its violence and hatred of others. The First

Amendment protects the right of people to associate with each other and to

express their points of view" (Oroszi & Ellis, 2019, p. 23).

It is this type of official legal constitutional definition and political perspective on

the First Amendment's use and definition of free speech mentioned above that continues

to perpetuate racial, and ethno-religious social tensions, and injustice throughout the US

by the dominant White culture. America's social policy regarding the First Amendment

and its status quo concerning hate groups and the use of hateful, inflammatory speech has

shown it is not concerned with nor interested in curbing such violent, hateful,

intimidating speech, that destabilizes society and polarizes communities at the expense of

ethno-religious minority groups. These well-established hate groups sole existence of

assemblage, is none other than to simply hate any and all non-White minority ethno-

religious groups that live amongst them. How then can an enlightened, developed,

advanced society such as America, be so intentionally blind as to let such blaring ethical and moral social wrongs flourish freely, yet still ask for a non-violent American society that respects law and order to happen?

Germany, on the other hand, has officially and privately eliminated such moral and ethical social concerns by implementing the aforementioned German laws and norms banning hate speech and hate groups throughout the country. However, this uniquely defined American interpretation of free speech and the right to assemble into hate groups, are the direct obstacles that impede and adversely escalate social relations and tensions between the many diverse racial and ethno-religious groups throughout the country and is at a clear boiling point from an intergroup relations perspective. One would think such laws specifically curbing all forms of hate speech and hate groups would be a socio-political and economic good for the whole nation and an ethical and moral imperative that would have been implemented long ago.

Despite this lack of official classification of hate groups and the political obstacles involved, Daryl Davis's extraordinary example of cross-cultural intergroup contact sets a precedence that positive change is possible and that honest effort is needed by those in the Muslim communities in the US. To implement this kind of outreach technique to slowly break down the xenophobia and prejudice towards those groups that have a real issue with Islam as a religion and with Muslims as a people living amongst them. The Davis approach involving his direct contact with KKK members is an essential lesson to be learned. Intergroup antagonists typically don't reach out to better improve relations with those groups or peoples they detest and look down at inferiorly. It is up to the minority group to improve their outlook and relations with the dominant culture and shed

light on the misconceptions and poisonous rhetoric that has polluted their understanding

and opinions of the minority group and what better way than to have direct contact with

those members or groups, so that Muslims can quell the trepidations and Islamophobia

that many in the West hold in ways that builds bridges towards, respect, understanding

and peace between the two groups.

Why is it incumbent upon the Muslim community to be proactive in these

situations? Because Arabs and Muslims have attracted national attention based on

negative socio-political instances in and out of America. Additionally, as we all know

Arabs and Muslims are not the majority ethno-religious ingroup in US society, with little

political and social representation and our religious beliefs are completely different than

those social and cultural norms of the ingroup. Therefore, we are perceived by many

Americans as a foreign ethno-religious identity group, regardless of how long our

communities have been established in the country for. It is important for this minority

community to reach out as neighbors do, living next door to another person. Showing the

ingroup the tradition of Islamic and Arab hospitality and good neighborliness to those

who don't understand or might otherwise fear your group out of sheer ignorance and lack

of understanding.

Muslims need to take use of interpersonal / intergroup contact theory to actively

correct and influence the common American cultures' perceptions of Muslims, Islam, and

Arabs. Contact theory aims to develop bridges of understanding and tolerance between

two diverse ethnic and religious groups by bringing them together. Attempting to reduce

xenophobia, and conventional beliefs often of the minority identity group, in this case

Islam and Muslims that reside in the local American community. This is the only way

Muslims will be able to collectively sideline Islamophobic activities including curbing

interpersonal ingroup trepidations and ideations, that leads others to act in a xenophobic

ignorant violent manner towards Muslims or other minority identity groups for that

matter. If the Muslim and Arab communities fail to take the appropriate steps and

measures needed, they will only be perpetuating further the dominant culture's

xenophobic and Islamophobic tendencies they fall back on as a default reaction to this

group.

Additionally, I feel it is imperative for Muslim communities, when engaging in

this endeavor, to understand and address the fears, concerns, and apprehensions of these

particular hate groups and the general public at large. This would include the emphasis on

the similarities between Christian and Islamic beliefs, and how the Quran tells the story

of Mary the mother of Jesus and the virgin birth of Jesus himself. Furthermore,

explaining how Islam is truly a religion of peace and tolerance, historically,

philosophically, and theologically by utilizing the examples of the Prophet Muhammad,

and emphasizing that ISIS or Al-Qaida or any other terrorist groups don't truly represent

Islam. Just like the predatory child molesting clergy of the Catholic church does not

represent the entirety of the clergy or Catholicism as a whole. These are essential, yet

simple steps in attempting to normalize the relationship between non-Muslims and

Muslim of the West.

No one says communicating and holding space with hate groups will be easy.

However, every person feels that they are intelligent and reasonable to a certain degree.

Having an open dialog with them is the only way to tamp down the flames of ignorance,

hate, and irrationality. I suggest that the Muslim community, actively seek out and invite

their local antagonists to Ramadan 'iftar' meals throughout the month, in a gesture of mutual respect, extending their hand in kindness and a willingness to engage and deliberate over the critical issues affecting both communities.

Assuming that anti-Muslim groups reject the opportunity to come together for meaningful dialogue, it only shows their entrenched ignorance and that their bigotry simply blinds their common sensibilities. Muslims would have shown their opposition the hand of peace and a willingness to hold meaningful dialogue with those that despise them. Keep inviting them until they do come. This persistence will show these hate groups that the Muslim community is serious in engaging in open dialogue to minimize community tensions. These interactions may leave a positive impression with some of these anti-Muslim group members, allowing some to introspect about their personal beliefs of hatred, and the logic behind it, quite possibly shifting that person's narrative regarding Islam and Muslims. Furthermore, this same person may reflect on how Christianity's teachings are not about hate, racism, social and racial superiority, or extremism against others, just like Islam's true teachings they do not promote or endorse the killing of innocent people or conducting acts of terrorism of any sort. Someone famously said, "kill them with kindness" and that is the strategy I implore the Muslim communities living in the West to adopt.

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