Wesleyan University The Honors College

Civic Islam in New York:
The Dynamics of Muslim American Participation

by

Chiara Anne Di Lello
Class of 2010

A thesis submitted to the
faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Departmental Honors in General Scholarship

Middletown, Connecticut April, 2010

Acknowledgements

Completing a senior thesis has been a challenging, exciting and occasionally terrifying process. I am deeply grateful to all the people who have helped me along the way.

Thank you to my thesis advisor, Professor Peter Gottschalk, for undertaking this project with me, for helping me "keep the faith," and for keeping me on track. I am indebted to him for his patience, reassurance, and his tolerance of certain verb forms.

To my major advisor, Professor Typhaine Leservot, for all her support over the past three years, and for reminding me that a thesis "should be fun." I could not have completed this project or my Muslim Studies major without her guidance. Merci.

To Professor Stuart Schaar, for setting me on this path in "Islam and the West" last spring;

To Professor Henry Goldschmidt for his help with sources, and for encouraging me to mix apples and oranges;

To the Religion Department and the Religion thesis writers, for being my adoptive major family;

To Jerri Dodds, my neighbor, for her enthusiastic advice and the loan of her books;

To George Shulman, for his support and his spot-on recommendations;

To Erhard Konerding for his good spirits, and for copyediting;

To Faiza and Aliya for their dedication, positive outlook, and hard work;

To my mother Luba, for believing I could do it, and for breakthroughs over pierogi.

And to Davy, for asking all the right questions, for listening, and for everything else.

Table of Contents

Introduction 4

Chapter One

A Double Timeline: The Dual Roots of Islam in New York 8

Chapter Two

Theorizing "American," "Muslim," and the Public Sphere 22

Chapter Three

The Islamic Cultural Center 37

Chapter Four

The Council on American-Islamic Relations 52

Conclusion 68

Glossary of Arabic Terms 74

Works Cited and Consulted 75

Introduction

I had to leave the U.S. in order to discover that I wanted to know more about American Islam. The earliest inspiration for the project that would complete my Muslim Studies major came from my time spent in Rabat, Morocco during the spring of 2009. In the cultural immersion of a Muslim-majority country, I saw more clearly than ever before the baselessness of a host of stereotypes about the faith and its practitioners. My host family, in particular, disproved daily the idea that all Muslims care about nothing but their religion, or the idea that there is a conflict between Islam and "modernity." My three Moroccan host sisters live fully modern lives – skinny jeans and instant messaging included – but do so with Muslim values and with a Muslim perspective. They do not live a contradiction, but rather a negotiation.

In the summer of 2009, following my time abroad, I interned for two months at the New York chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). Although I was working and not conducting field research, my time at CAIR proved to be essential to the thesis work I undertook in the fall. During my internship at CAIR-NY, I saw two remarkable Muslim American women (the entirety of the chapter's paid staff) undertake the same sort of negotiation as my Moroccan host sisters, but in the American context. They updated the CAIR Facebook page from their smartphones while drinking Snapple or Dunkin Donuts coffee, then consulted each other on what to buy their younger cousins for Eid. The dynamics of their negotiation intrigued me, because they work on a daily basis to find opportunities and mechanisms for Muslim activism and civic participation, and follow up on as many as

possible. I was inspired to explore what it meant to be both Muslim and an active American citizen.

I decided to focus on New York City in part because it is my home city, but also because of its remarkably multifaceted Muslim population – both domestic and foreign diplomatic, African American and immigrant, Sunni and Shi'a. Despite the fascinating history of Muslims in New York (which may go as far back as the eighteenth or even seventeenth century), I decided to focus on the past twenty years because of the current historical moment and its implications for Muslim New Yorkers. By now, the Muslim population of New York is well established. There are an estimated 700,000 Muslims in New York City, who come from over forty countries in the Caribbean, the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, Central Asia, India, and Southeast Asia, with the highest concentration of Muslim New Yorkers located in Queens and Brooklyn.[1]

After four decades of steady immigration, second generation Muslim Americans are now coming into their own, navigating multiple sources of identity and values. It was and still is compelling to me to see the ways in which New York's Muslims enact both their faith and their citizenship, despite pressure from both sides to choose one over the other. To hold on to and live both is to reject a polarized view of both American and Muslim identity that sees the two as incompatible.

This thesis concerns the public performance of citizenship by Muslim Americans in the city of New York, as seen through the work of two of the city's many Muslim organizations. The groups included in this thesis by no means represent

[1] Abdellatif Cristillo, "The Muslim Population of New York City" (Unpublished article, Teachers College, Columbia University), 1.

the sum or limit of all Muslim New Yorkers or the entities that represent them, but they provide a valuable non-exhaustive look at Muslims' participation in New York civic life. New York City Muslim organizations include religious and cultural associations as well as civic organizations and lobbying groups. The first organization I chose to focus on is the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), specifically the New York chapter where I worked, located in Manhattan. I contrast it with the Islamic Cultural Center (also located in Manhattan), one of the largest mosques in the five boroughs, which has its own form of public presence and community involvement. The differing structures of these two organizations make the similarities in their methods and goals all the more striking. I argue that through their work, these two groups construct a Muslim-American civic actor in the New York context. The primary mechanism by which they achieve this objective is by defining active American citizenship in terms of Muslim values, while framing Muslim values as compatible with and contributing to American civic ideals. The groups encourage civic participation using Muslim values as well as making room for Muslim civic actors within the established American norm of citizenship. Through their public discourse, the groups produce a profile of a civic actor which marries these two sets of values. The result of the groups' work has important implications for conceptions of American secularism, politics and the question of religion and citizenship in the U.S.

My approach in this project has been to analyze newspaper articles, press releases, and radio interviews both from and about the organizations, and contextualize my analysis using relevant published research. The sources that have

informed this work are varied in their discipline, methods, geographic focus, and intellectual background. They include ethnographies, statistical research, journalistic portraits, political science articles and social theory texts. I believe this diverse distribution underscores the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to the subject of American Muslim participation. The many concerns, contexts, and backgrounds of American Muslims cannot be deeply understood if considered through the lens of only one academic discipline. When considering Islam in the U.S., it is also important to keep in mind the global context of contemporary Islam. A de-centered geographic approach has enriched my research on this topic by allowing me to consider the American case alongside other Muslim communities grappling with similar concerns, albeit in very different contexts.

In the first chapter, I introduce each of the organizations I have studied and provide an overview of Islam in New York City. The length of time Muslims have been present in New York originally surprised me, confirming my feeling that it is vital to include Muslims in any discussion of New York City's contemporary religious, civic, or social circumstances. The second chapter situates CAIR and the ICC in a theoretical framework, and the final two chapters provide an in-depth analysis of each group.

CHAPTER ONE

A Double Timeline: The Dual Roots of Islam in New York

Muslims are no strangers to the city of New York; their history in the five boroughs stretches back over a century. We have reached, however, a key moment in the history of American Muslims that makes their presence in the American public sphere a particularly relevant object of study – and New York an especially interesting location. Today, after a century of independent development, New York's multiple forms of Islam are meeting, collaborating and sometimes competing with each other, making the city an important location in which to study just what constitutes "American Islam." Needless to say, New York is also the symbolic center of the question of Islam in America after the events of September 11, 2001, and remains a place where the stakes of representation are high. 9/11 had a profound effect on the city's Muslim community organizations, especially as they coped with the backlash.

Muslims first began to arrive in New York in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as a religious minority in the wave of mostly Christian Arab immigrants from Lebanon, Jordan and other parts of the Middle East.[2] Immigrants in this first wave rallied at first around their Orthodox Christian congregations, as well as a few philanthropic organizations for Arabic speakers of a particular nationality. In the 1930s, more social clubs and charitable organizations formed within specific national enclaves. The Syrian Young Men's Association, originally formed in

[2] Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 51.

Brooklyn in the 1930s, still exists today.[3] One of New York's first Muslim establishments was the American Mohammedan Society, founded by Polish, Lithuanian and Russian immigrants in 1907 in Brooklyn, New York. It was renamed in the 1960s, and survives today as the Moslem Mosque.[4]

The early twentieth century also saw the rise of Islamic hybrid movements in the United States – that is, organizations whose tenets and practices were influenced by Islam, but were not in keeping with mainstream Muslim practice. In 1913, a man named Noble Drew Ali (born Timothy Drew) founded the Moorish Science Temple in Newark, New Jersey. His organization's principles were "love, truth, peace, freedom and justice," which were laid out in *The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America*, a document that had nothing in common with the Muslim Holy Qur'an. Ali's movement spread to other urban centers, establishing itself in Chicago in 1925. Around the same time, the Nation of Islam movement began to take shape in Detroit, Michigan under the leadership of W.D. Fard. A mysterious figure, Fard first appeared in the early 1930s in Detroit. He addressed American blacks as members of the ancient lost tribe of Shabazz, which he aimed to restore to its former power. A man named Elijah Poole became an ardent follower of Fard, and came to see him as a prophet and divine figure. When Fard disappeared from public view in 1934, Poole took the name Elijah Muhammad, became the leader of the Nation of Islam and continued to spread Fard's teachings.[5] NOI mythology claimed that blacks were superior to whites, who had been engineered from cross-bred recessive genes, as well

---

[3] Kathleen Benson and Philip M. Kayal, *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 16, 22, 25.
[4] Smith, *Islam in America*, 56.
[5] Ibid., 79, 81-82.

as teaching that blacks were not American citizens. This ideology of racial superiority and separatism greatly attracted a man named Malcolm Little, in prison after an early life of vice and crime. He joined the NOI from the inside, dropping his given "slave" name and adopting the placeholder "X." Upon his release in 1952, Malcolm X became one of the movement's most prominent ministers, bringing the NOI to its greatest visibility in the 1950s and 60s.[6] Elijah Muhammad put Malcolm X in charge of establishing a Nation of Islam Temple in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. Once called Temple Number Seven, it now survives as Sunni mosque, Masjid Malcolm Shabazz.

Throughout the mid-twentieth century, Islam in New York continued to grow in the two separate, largely disconnected arenas of immigrant and native-born Muslims. The two types of communities had very different degrees of visibility. In terms of Muslim immigration, New York City was one of several U.S. cities where strong enclaves of Muslims developed. As more and more Muslim immigrants settled in the U.S. and Canada, they sought each other out across communities and coalesced into larger organizations. In 1952, multiple Muslim American communities came together in Cedar Rapids, Iowa for the first national Muslim conference.[7] Two years later, the Federation of Islamic Associations was established. FIA's primary activity was to hold annual conferences, but it served as an important platform for further developments in Muslim-American organizations.

In 1965, the easing of U.S. immigration restrictions brought a new influx of Muslims to America and New York. Muslim immigrants from this wave were

---

[6] Smith, *Islam in America*, 81-86.

[7] Gutbi Mahdi Ahmad, "Muslim Organizations in the United States," in *The Muslims of America* ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 12.

predominantly Southeast Asian and Pakistani. They settled in diverse regions and cities, with particularly strong enclaves forming in Detroit, Chicago and New York. In general, these groups organized themselves by nationality or ethnic group, and their communities were concentrated enough to sustain the lifestyle, language and culture of the home country. Strong examples are the Indian and Arab Sunnis of Chicago as well as the Lebanese, Palestinian and Yemeni Sunnis of Dearborn, Michigan.[8]

The 1960s were also the height of the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad and the ministers under his authority preached justice and equal opportunity for American blacks, as well as the establishment of a social and political order independent of all whites. In New York and all over the U.S., Malcolm X preached what many considered inflammatory and controversial doctrines; his insistence that the white man was "the devil," along with other statements, led to the accusation that he preached "racial hatred." In the early 1960s, Malcolm broke with the Nation when discrediting rumors about Elijah Muhammad came to light. In 1964, Malcolm completed *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. The trip, along with the speaking tour he conducted afterward in a number of African countries, was transformative for Malcolm.[9] He realized while on *hajj* the inadequacies in his Muslim training, and the distortions of Islam presented within NOI doctrine. He changed his practices to become an orthodox Muslim. When he returned to the U.S., however, the Nation denounced him. In 1965, Malcolm was

---

[8] Smith, *Islam in America*, 53, 58-59. See also Geneive Abdo, *Mecca and Main Street* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2006).
[9] Ibid., 88.

assassinated during an address to his newly formed Organization of Afro-American Unity.[10]

After the assassination of Malcolm X, and the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975, some remaining NOI members took up the work of "mainstreaming" the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad's son, Warith Deen Muhammad, was particularly responsible for this change. Today, organizations like Masjid Malcolm Shabazz of Harlem survive as Sunni Muslim congregations whose practices conform to those of orthodox Sunni Islam, and those who followed W.D. Muhammad's mainstreaming efforts are today organized in the American Muslim Mission.[11]

Since the end of World War II, Muslim international students studying in the U.S. had formed and joined Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) as a support network in their community away from home. By the 1960s, these associations were active and present at numerous American universities. In 1963 a national organization, called simply the Muslim Student Association, was created to coordinate the efforts of campus chapters. Since then, alumni of undergraduate MSAs have created many professional organizations affiliated with the national MSA, such as associations of American Muslim engineers, social scientists, and doctors. In 1981, after thoroughly reevaluating its structure and mission, the national MSA evolved into the Islamic Society of North America, one of the largest Muslim organizations today. ISNA oversees many constituent organizations, including both community and

[10] Smith, *Islam in America*, 84, 86, 89.
[11] Haddad, *The Muslims of America*, 20.

campus organizations, professional organizations, and service institutions such as Islamic trusts and lending associations.[12]

A wealth of Muslim community organizations also contributes to today's New York Muslim landscape. The growth of organizations like ISNA paved the way for a new generation of organizations that cropped up in the 1990s, focused on social and political issues pertinent to the American Muslim community. These included the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) and the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), which are national organizations with chapters in New York and other states. They build on the legacy of the cultural associations and national organizations, and in the past fifteen years have taken an important new tack. Working against decades of American film, television and print bias about Muslims and Arabs, MPAC and CAIR are explicitly devoted to creating a positive Muslim presence in the American public sphere. Day by day they work to create that presence in the form of voter mobilization and registration campaigns, media watchdog work, or by advising American Muslims in cases of passport delay and religious accommodation in the workplace.

Early "congregational" organizations like the American Mohammedan Society also have their descendants in present day New York. The Islamic Mission of America, still active today, was founded in the 1930s by a Moroccan immigrant named Sheik Daoud. More common than mosques built as such, however, are mosques made from converted residences, meeting halls or storefronts. Susan Slyomovics notes that several of New York's prominent mosques began in makeshift

---

[12] Haddad, *The Muslims of America*, 12, 14-16. Iqbal J. Unus, "Governance in Muslim Community Organizations," in *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square: Hopes, Fears, and Aspirations*, ed. Zahid H. Bukhari and Sulayman S. Nyang (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2004), 348.

structures or exist as thoroughly converted structures. For example, the Masjid Al-Falah in Queens, now a one-story original structure, began in the storefront of a three-story wooden house in Corona, Queens. Brooklyn's Al-Fatih Mosque, by contrast, is permanently located in a converted movie theater. Since the 1930s, Muslim New Yorkers have turned a variety of spaces into places for worship, converting suburban homes, warehouses, townhouses, store basements, even former medical offices or church buildings.[13]

It is clear today that different American Muslim groups and different New York Muslim groups have varied ways of engaging in American public life. In New York, Muslims put their energies toward a variety of causes and activities: domestic and international, educational and cultural, religious and leisure. Some groups like CAIR and MPAC also combat regular negative press from journalists, columnists and bloggers who are determined to link them to violent extremist groups like Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, and accuse them of trying to create "jihad in America."[14]

The activities that these groups engage in and the causes they undertake indicate multiple ways of negotiating Muslim American identity, which is currently contested in New York and in the country as whole. America's Muslim enclaves have a well-established presence, but recently they show unprecedented movement towards engagement beyond the Muslim community. I believe this shift is due in part to the work of Muslim community groups, who speak to both the Muslim community and the wider community. As such they exemplify both Muslim values and civic

---

[13] Susan Slyomovics, "The Muslim World Day Parade and 'Storefront' Mosques of New York City," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, ed. Barbara Daly Metcalf (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 210-213.
[14] This is the title of a 1994 television documentary by Steven Emerson.

engagement. Rather than being agents of divisiveness or anti-American sentiment (as outsiders tend to insist), I argue that they are in a unique position to encourage and solidify a body of Muslim American civic actors. This thesis both analyzes the mechanisms by which they create active Muslim citizenship and studies the resistance to their work in order to uncover the contradictions of American secular mythology and the implications of Muslim civic actors for the American political landscape. In this thesis I will examine two Muslim community groups who are engaged in constructing a Muslim American civic actor.

Two Muslim Community Organizations

The first group my research concerns is the Islamic Cultural Center of New York, one of the largest and most visible Muslim organizations in the city. The Islamic Cultural Center (ICC) is a key organization representing and serving the Muslim community of New York. The ICC mosque, casually referred to as "the 96th Street mosque" is located at 96th Street and Third Avenue, at the intersection of Manhattan's Upper East Side and Spanish Harlem neighborhoods. Finished in 1991, its planning, fundraising and construction spanned almost forty years from beginning to end.[15]

The rise of the dome and minaret that so visibly contribute to the neighborhood landscape is in and of itself a form of public engagement and self-representation by the Muslim community. The initial push to organize and fundraise for the building of a mosque occurred in 1952, when the mostly foreign diplomatic

[15] Marc Ferris, "To 'Achieve the Pleasure of Allah': Immigrant Muslim Communities in New York City, 1893-1991," in *Muslim Communities of North America*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 218.

Muslim community formed the New York Mosque Foundation. The momentum for the Foundation had been building due to the relocation of the United Nations Headquarters to Manhattan and the increased visibility of Muslim ambassadors and dignitaries in the city. Three years later, the Foundation in turn established the Islamic Center of New York, headquartered initially at Pakistan House on East 65th Street.[16] Construction of a mosque was to begin in 1956 at a location on the west side of the United Nations plaza; in the end both the date and location changed considerably.

In the meantime the Mosque Foundation purchased a building at 72nd Street and Riverside Drive to house the Islamic Center and the Mosque Foundation on a more permanent basis. This became their center of operations for the next thirty years.[17] The Islamic Center evolved into the Islamic Cultural Center (ICC) in 1963, and was joined by representatives of the thirty-three Muslim states represented at the UN.[18] In 1966, the Mosque Foundation purchased the current plot on Third Avenue; even though the completion of construction was advertised four times between 1967 and 1989, the mosque did not hold its first prayers until 1991. By September 1988 the mosque's dome was clearly visible, and Sheik Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, the Emir of Kuwait, presided over a ceremony to lay the cornerstone of the mosque's minaret.[19] In 1990, worshipers gathered for Eid ul-Fitr prayers on plastic sheets laid on the ground of the construction site outside the mosque.[20] Eid ul-Fitr celebrates the end of

---

[16] Ferris, "To 'Achieve the Pleasure of Allah,'" 214.
[17] Ibid., 216.
[18] *The New York Times*, "Postings: $10 Million, 30,000-Square-Foot Project; School Building to Rise Next to 96th Street Mosque," May 26, 1996.
[19] Paul Lewis, "Mosque Rising is a First in New York," *The New York Times*, September 26, 1988.
[20] Peter Steinfels, "For New York Muslims, a Soaring Dome is Ready," *The New York Times*, April 16, 1991.

the month of Ramadan, during which devout Muslims abstain from food, drink, smoking, and sexual activity from dawn until sunset. The mosque proper was first used in 1991 on Leilat ul-Qadr, the Night of Power, which occurs on the 27th night of the month of Ramadan. And on April 15, 1991, the mosque hosted its first official Eid ul-Fitr, this time inside the mosque. Even then, the interior was not fully completed.[21] Soon after, construction began again on the site, this time to erect a 30,000 square foot school building next to the mosque. Excavation began in early 1996 and was completed in the summer of 2009.[22] The two-story building holds classrooms, a small library, imam's offices and an auditorium.

The multinational character of the ICC and the Mosque Foundation is important, because it overcomes the single-nationality focus of many mosques and community centers previously established to serve New York's many Muslim enclaves. The mosque and the ICC are located at the intersection of Harlem and the Upper East Side, which puts them close to both the African American Muslim population and the foreign diplomatic Muslim population. Harlem holds the surviving Nation of Islam headquarters, as well as many mainstream Sunni mosques that serve a majority African American congregation. The Upper East Side is peppered with foreign embassies, and contains the UN headquarters at 42nd Street and First Avenue, two factors which lead to the wide range of nationalities in attendance at the ICC.

The physical structure and location of the 96th Street mosque serves as a public representation of the Muslim community. Most striking is the fact that the building is rotated 29 degrees north off of the rigid grid that determines the rest of

---

[21] Steinfels, "For New York Muslims, a Soaring Dome is Ready."
[22] *The New York Times*, "Postings."

New York City's plots.[23] This rotation allows the north and south walls of the building to align with *qiblah*, the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Kaaba is a large cube shaped shrine that in pre-Islamic times contained all the idols (now destroyed) of the tribes of Mecca. Mosques all contain a niche to mark the *qiblah*, called a *mihrab*, toward which Muslims prostrate themselves during prayer.

The 96th Street mosque represents the contributions of Muslim nations including Morocco, whose King Hassan II contributed interior furnishings; Kuwait, whose government provided $8 million of the $12 million in total expenses; and Indonesia. The diversity of the Foundation that planned it is reflected in the mosque's attendees: it continues to serve Muslim diplomats and ambassadors from a variety of nations, and brings together New York Muslims of various ethnicities and backgrounds. A reporter at the mosque's first Eid prayers remarked on the mix of "traditional African, Middle Eastern and Indian garb [as well as] business suits and leather jackets" among the 2000 people in attendance.[24]

The second group I analyze is equally prestigious as the ICC, but has a very different scope of operations. The Council on American-Islamic Relations, or CAIR, whose national chapter is located in Washington, D.C., was founded in 1994. CAIR-DC or CAIR National remains the largest and most visible chapter, and initiates various programs and policies for the regional chapters, although each chapter also maintains its own set of activities as well. The purpose of CAIR's founding was to create a resource for victims of anti-Muslim bias and encourage them to report

---

[23] David W. Dunlap, "Michael A. McCarthy, 68, Architect of Mosque on Upper East Side," *The New York Times*, July 18, 2002, A19.
[24] Steinfels, "For New York Muslims, a Soaring Dome is Ready."

incidents.[25] The bias incidents in question were those that occurred as backlash after the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. If we consider the formation of CAIR National as an indirect response to the 1993 bombing, the formation of CAIR-NY can be seen as an indirect response to the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995. Americans blamed and targeted Middle Easterners and Muslims after the bombing, as they had done in 1993. Authorities quickly determined that both perpetrators were neither Arab nor Muslim; nevertheless, several hundred Muslims reported incidents of harassment.[26] This caused CAIR National to call on members to create a New York chapter, based on the need for New York Muslims "to become vocal around issues of civil rights violations, to be proactive in advocacy, to access educational information, and to increase civic engagement."[27] The CAIR-NY chapter is located in Manhattan, in The Interchurch Center in Morningside Heights. The Interchurch Center (TIC) houses "offices and agencies of various religions, and of ecumenical and interreligious organizations."[28] Like the East Side location of the ICC, CAIR's choice of home makes a statement. It is housed in the same building as Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Jewish, and Muslim organizations, as well as secular organizations like the Riverside Park Fund and International Baccalaureate North America. This location situates CAIR in a network of faith organizations, implying multi-faith collaboration and tolerance within the building space, and connects the group to a larger network of civic organizations (such as the Park Fund).

---

[25] James Brooke, "Attacks on U.S. Muslims Surge Even as Their Faith Takes Hold," *The New York Times*, August 28, 1995.
[26] Mary Abowd, "Arab-Americans Suffer Hatred After Bombing," *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 13, 1995, 14.
[27] This text appeared on CAIR-NY's website, www.cair-ny.org, in 2009 but was removed in early 2010 when the website was redesigned.
[28] The Interchurch Center, www.interchurch-center.org.

Though different chapters of the Council on American-Islamic Relations emerged at different times, the organization as a whole and the New York chapter in particular both emerged in response to events like the WTC bombing and the Oklahoma City bombing. Incidents like these create a feedback loop of backlash that first implicates American Muslims (who are assumed guilty by association when Muslims are, or are assumed to be, the perpetrators), non-Muslims who commit physical or verbal bias acts, followed by Muslims who react largely within their own faith community to cope with the backlash. CAIR breaks this cycle in New York by broadcasting a group viewpoint or response to multiple publics, including the domestic and international media, the local community, and lawmakers or politicians. The ICC, insofar as it speaks for a collectivity of Muslims, also has the same capacity to break the cycle of backlash, and call positive attention to the Muslim community.

At the same time, the efforts of groups like CAIR or the ICC are often ignored. For example, CAIR routinely issues media statements following both domestic and international incidents to assert to the public that Islam does not condone violence or extremism. Yet after these instances many publications also carry articles with titles like “where are the moderate Muslims?” that call for the denunciation that CAIR has just provided. The Muslim community and the groups that work to represent it still struggle with the frustration of low visibility and misrepresentation. Both phenomena have to do with the specifics of America’s national religious makeup, as well as the complex dynamics of Islam, democratic structures, and the public sphere. Before examining how CAIR and the ICC are

implicated in these dynamics, I present the theories and concepts that provide context for my analysis of their work.

CHAPTER TWO

Theorizing "American," "Muslim," and the Public Sphere

The Public Sphere

In order to study the type and effects of Muslim community organizations, it is necessary to locate them conceptually within the American context. If groups like CAIR and the ICC aim to construct a Muslim American civic actor, they must necessarily work and move in the same conceptual "space" as the non-Muslim American civic actor. This space is the public sphere.

The concept of the "public sphere" was originally formulated by the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas in his 1962 book, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. On a basic level, his book explored how and when collective arguments and exchanges could become the basis for political action.[29] Writing in the 1960s, Habermas looked back to nineteenth century Germany, when the country's government changed from monarchy to democracy. During that transition, a new norm of public debate emerged among middle class individuals, which formed a mediating zone between the private individual and the state.[30] In this new model, according to Habermas, social standing and money ceased to be the determining factors in whose interests won out (as had been the case under the monarchy). Instead, in this new public sphere the gathered individuals *debated* what was in their best interest and came to a collective conclusion based on the best argument rather

[29] Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 1.
[30] Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts, ed. *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 2.

than the majority opinion.[31] Some of the key debates at the time concerned the state and the role of government, making use of the new ability to talk *about* the state from outside of its structures. Habermas concluded that a thriving public sphere was essential for the growth of civil society, and thus a necessary condition for a functioning democratic government.

A Habermasian public sphere has multiple prerequisites, most notably a) centralized governing power that can be distinguished from "the everyday" (otherwise a coffeehouse discussion would simply be the extension of government activities), and b) the separation of "church and state," meaning the distinction between private morals or interests and public law.[32] The public sphere is distinct from both the official sphere, comprising the state and government, and the private, made up of individuals.[33] While Habermas did not originally acknowledge it, the public sphere in his German example systematically excluded certain groups, such as women, religious minorities, or those without property, and for this reason did not provide for comprehensive public debate.[34]

Despite efforts to universalize Habermas to a wide variety of social and cultural contexts, his work and conclusions derive from the specific context of European states in transition from monarchy to democracy. For this reason, scholars since Habermas have resisted the application of his conclusions to worldwide attempts to cultivate democracy. Instead, they advance alternate models, citing cultures or nations in which the public and private spheres are far less distinct and the

---

[31] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 6.
[32] Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 2-3.
[33] Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion, ed. *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 140.
[34] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 183.

same suppositions about civil society do not hold. In imperial China, for example, the private and governmental spheres agreed in most of their interests, due to the cultural relationship of ruler and ruled.

Recognizing the limits of Habermas, this thesis reapplies his ideas selectively. I find that Habermas' original conclusion – that democratic society depends on the informal functioning of the public sphere – holds true for the present day United States, in which the public sphere both nurtures civil culture and provides an arena for civic participation.[35] Americans enact (perform) their citizenship through a variety of acts that are neither individual/private nor governmental – and thus occur in, and rely upon, the public sphere. Citizenship includes acts of voting, demonstrating, rallying and lobbying, reading and contributing to an uncensored press, and expressing opinion (dissent or support) on government actions in a variety of ways. All in all, the American public sphere is thriving, and has been a key arena for the performance of citizenship throughout the country's history.

A public sphere and civil society may not both be present in a given society, however, and the debate continues as to whether both or only one are necessary for democracy to function. Some argue that an existing public sphere is not a sufficient condition for democracy to function if no civil culture exists. Others maintain that civic actors without the freedom of a healthy public sphere cannot perform the necessary actions of democracy. It has been the work of a variety of scholars to decouple the concepts of public and civil spheres in order to examine them individually in different contexts. This decoupling has become particularly salient in

[35] Robert Hefner, "Public Islam and the Problem of Democratization," *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 62 No. 4 (2001), 497.

light of the U.S.'s recent mission to institute democratic systems of government in various parts of the Muslim world, which has galvanized the question of whether Islam and democracy are "compatible." Since the publication and subsequent translation of *Structural Transformation*, many scholars have contested, qualified or otherwise reexamined Habermas' work. They put Habermas in dialogue with other theorists like Foucault and Bakhtin, or discuss the implications of his model in the world of mass media and the Internet. For the most part, I rely on Habermas for his original conceptions of the divisions between governmental, private, and public, as well as his overall conclusion concerning the public sphere and civil culture. However, exclusion in the Habermasian public sphere should also be kept in mind when discussing the entry of Muslim voices into the non-Muslim dominated American public sphere.

In my research I have relied in particular on two scholars whose work involves both Habermas and Islam: Shmuel Eisenstadt, an Israeli sociologist, and Robert Hefner, an American social anthropologist. Both have built on Habermas within the Muslim context. In his conclusion to the volume *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, Eisenstadt adds his own interpretation to Habermas' use of the word "public," noting that a public sphere must be both public in the sense of being *independent* of the political structure, as well public in the sense of "accessible to different sectors of society."[36] The work of the ICC and CAIR is, in part, that of gaining and maintaining access, in Eisenstadt's sense, to media and modes of communication that will allow them to resist dominant social discourses. One useful example to illustrate the problems of access and the public sphere would be a social

[36] Hoexter, Eisenstadt and Levitzion, 140.

club, a type of gathering present in the context originally studied by Habermas. A club is public in that it is a gathering of private individuals based on collective interests. At the same time, a given club may be closed to women, or men of a certain race or class. The nineteenth century German public sphere of Habermas' study excluded significant sectors of society from the public debate. It also limited whose claims were seen as "legitimate" – worthy of attention or support – denying those whose opinions or demands were too socially, politically, or morally extreme to be addressed. In the present day American public sphere, Muslims often find that their non-Christian religion is enough to undermine the legitimacy of their claims and limit their access to the public sphere. As we will see, accessibility (mostly via the mass media) and making the American Muslim voice heard and heeded are key concerns for the Muslim American community.

In my research, I have found that the American situation inverts the situation abroad, which has been well documented in Indonesia and Morocco as well as other Muslim-majority countries. In those countries, communities of Muslim actors are working to create public space in which to perform citizenship. In the U.S. the public space for citizenship exists, and Muslims must work to find ways of being Muslim actors in that space.

Robert Hefner's writing deals principally with Indonesian Islam, but he documents several trends that are helpful in examining the American case. Writing against the grain of arguments that Islam and democracy are fundamentally incompatible, Hefner points to emergent "civil pluralist Islam" that seeks to combine

Islamic tradition with democratic culture and balanced powers of state and society.[37] He notes that in many contemporary Muslim societies, practicing Muslims look to their faith "for principles of public order as well as personal spirituality." Pro-democracy Muslims find grounding for a new ethic of public debate and egalitarianism *within* the principles of their religion. In 1980s Indonesia, a group of young, pro-democracy Muslims whom Hefner terms "junior modernists" rose in opposition to the repressive Suharto regime. The group committed itself to a contextual ("empiricist") interpretation of Islamic law, as well as principles of democratization and human rights. Their overall aim was to create a Muslim civil society, and a "public culture of pluralism, participation, and social justice." The Suharto regime cracked down on this and other political opposition. The junior modernists, however, made use of the public sphere as a way to circumvent state repression. Through public campaigns for Islamic banking or against government marriage regulations they retained an ability to influence policy.[38] Hefner's work on Indonesian Islam and democracy and his arguments concerning Islam, civil society and the public sphere have informed my own research in vital ways. It is striking to see the similarities between Indonesian and American Muslim discourses on Islam and civil society, and their shared commitment, by way of Muslim principles, to participation and social justice.

Another international example which provides a helpful counterpoint to the American example is twentieth century Morocco, in which the active expansion of the public sphere allowed the growth of a distinctly Muslim civil society. From 1956

---

[37] Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 13.
[38] Hefner, "Public Islam," 493, 499-500, 504-505.

to 1999, King Hassan II silenced political dissent within the country through arbitrary arrest, illegal detention, and torture. Many women were the victims of this state violence, either due to the disappearance of family members or through being themselves imprisoned. To call attention to their struggle, they took part in sit-ins, demonstrations and public testimony. [39] Voicing their experiences in public not only broke the strong gender barrier that usually consigns women to the private sphere in Morocco – these women witnesses advanced the cause of free speech, a key aspect of civic engagement, through the use of the public sphere.

Indonesia, Morocco, and many other Muslim countries today face challenges to the creation of democratic government and civil society to go with it, but as is clear in the examples above, these challenges have much more to do with histories of repressive power structures than any inherent religious/political incompatibility. There is nothing to prevent the civil Islam that Hefner observes in Indonesia from existing in and contributing to American democratic culture – except, perhaps, the particulars of the American situation.

Because Hefner's writing deals in part with the American democratizing mission, he also provides important insights about religion in the American public sphere. He cites Alexis de Tocqueville, who observed as early as 1835 that while the separation of religion and state in the U.S. prevented the government from coercing religious conformity, it did not prevent individuals' religious convictions from playing a part in public life.[40] With these authors and their observations in mind, part of the work of this thesis has been to situate the U.S. among other international

[39] Nadia Guessous, "Women, Gender and Political Violence in Morocco 1956-1999", 1, 16.
[40] Hefner, "Public Islam," 493.

examples, to see how Islam and democracy, a question so thoroughly debated for foreign countries, plays out on American soil.

The American public sphere is vital because it provides a space for dialogue, for citizens to respond to the actions of the state, and for transparency of government actions. These uses of the public sphere have become especially important for the Muslim community after the September 11th attacks, as they deal with issues like illegal detentions, passport delays, and racial profiling. Muslims are also affected by their fellow citizens' resistance to their participation in civil society.

Everywhere from academic journals to internet blogs, Americans decry the idea of Muslims in civil society either at home or abroad, and say that Islam and democracy are incompatible. These conclusions rely on one of the many stereotypes of Muslims. Often, these stereotypes rely on double standards, such as the idea that Muslims are either depraved and faithless, or excessively religious and fanatical.[41] Stereotypes of Muslims, however, are not the only obstacle to their participation.

Muslim Citizenship in "God's New Israel"

For the majority of Americans, voting or otherwise participating in civic life according to their religious principles is the norm. Yet Muslims receive a great deal of negative press and pressure for refusing to leave their faith "at the door." Herein lies the peculiarity of the American case. While the U.S. has a secular government, it is not by any means composed of nonreligious citizens. As noted by Hefner, the privatization of religion in the U.S. means the government cannot enforce a religious

[41] See Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg, *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

agenda, but it does not prevent religion from playing a part in public life. Talal Asad echoes this evaluation in his writings on secularism when he says that the secular "cannot do without the idea of religion," and politics and religion implicate each other profoundly.[42] Conrad Cherry's description of the "American civil religion" illustrates this point well: it relies on the national myth of America as a new Israel founded by Puritans who sought to set a godly example for England and the rest of the world. The Puritans likened their departure from England to the Biblical Exodus story, and thus cast themselves as a chosen people. While the American civil religion (or, to alter the term slightly, civic use of religion) is omnipresent – invocations of God in presidential speeches, for example – it has strong barriers that significantly limit fully inclusive participation in American public life. In fact, the American civil religion does not encompass "the African American, the poor, the American Indian, and all those other citizens who have been excluded from a white, male-dominated, affluent mainstream."[43] This exclusion creates a huge obstacle to Muslim-American civic participation. It is also worth noting that other faiths, such as Christianity, enter into American politics with far less opposition. Only the most extreme positions are considered inappropriate or intrusive – consider, for example, the debate surrounding abortion laws – whereas the threshold of tolerance for Muslim values in politics is lower by far.

American civil religion has the important consequence of giving a religious cast to national concerns: the U.S., as God's chosen nation, is inherently "good," so

---

[42] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 200.
[43] Conrad Cherry, ed. *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 11, 17-18, 27.

any opposing nations or individuals must be "evil."[44] Muslims become suspect for bringing religious elements into the public realm which do not match the strongly Judeo-Christian roots of the national civil religion. If and when Muslims voice dissent for American policies, non-Muslims perceive it as "evil" religious otherness opposing God's chosen nation. The ICC and CAIR create more opportunities for Muslim participation in part to introduce greater pluralism to the New York public sphere and normalize the presence of what is currently the Muslim minority of civic actors.

Reading Meaning in the Public Sphere

There are challenges to CAIR and ICC's work from within the Muslim community as well as from without. Participation in civic life can be a fraught subject for Muslims living in America (both foreign- and American-born), and many different viewpoints and methods justify their positions. Some look to classical Muslim religious law (*fiqh*) for guidance on living as a religious minority while remaining faithful and observant. One paradigm found in several schools of *fiqh* divides the world into *dar al-Islam* (the abode of Islam) and *dar al-harb* (the abode of war). *Dar al-Islam* implies "a place of Muslim rule that is just and in which Muslims are safe from tyranny," whereas *dar al-harb* implies a more hostile realm where Islamic norms are not present "as guidance in public affairs." There is also *dar al-`ahd*, the abode of treaty, in which "Muslims living as a minority among unbelievers should live peacefully but without truly joining these societies." Even this prescribed peaceful coexistence nevertheless preserves a binary of insiders and outsiders. Scholar Aminah Beverly McCloud, who discusses this and other Muslim-American

[44] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 7.

paradigms, notes that this discourse has "come under critical review and spawned new discourses," and is therefore not widely present as a conceptual vocabulary in the U.S.[45] Omar Khalidi, however, reasserts the relevance of *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb*, pointing to discourses within the Muslim community that seem to descend from this older paradigm. Khalidi divides his findings into Muslim arguments for and against social and political participation. Those against participation see the U.S. as a land of hostile unbelievers, sometimes using the term "Khufrstan" – *khufr* means unbelief; the suffix -stan means "country of." The major objection to participation in American society for those who hold to this paradigm is that American leaders and lawmakers are (largely) not Muslims, yet they frame the law which should be "the prerogative of god" alone.[46] Political participation is therefore *haram* (forbidden) because it would implicate Muslims in a secular system.

Other Muslims may be against participation because of their perception of U.S. foreign policy. The Indian scholar M.A. Muqtedar Khan notes that for Muslims, America has a dual identity, "America the colonial power" and "America the democracy." The latter is "liberal, democratic, tolerant, and multicultural," while the former seems intent to "destroy and eliminate Islam and Muslims."[47]

Of the American Muslims who perceive this duality, some must also acknowledge the strong arguments for participation by American Muslims, which are put forth by political scientists and *muftis* (religious scholars) alike. Taha Jabir

---

[45] Aminah Beverly McCloud, "Conceptual Discourse: Living as a Muslim in a Pluralistic Society," in *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square*, 77.
[46] Omar Khalidi, "Living as a Muslim in a Pluralistic Society and State: Theory and Experience," in *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square*, 67-68, 77.
[47] M.A. Muqtedar Khan, "Living on Borderlines: Islam beyond the Clash and Dialogue of Civilizations," in *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square*, 96.

Alalwani is an Iraqi-American *mufti* and scholar who says political participation is "incumbent" upon American Muslims because it provides an opportunity to protect their domestic rights as well as the welfare of Muslims in other countries. Alalwani sees American culture as "still open to influence from Islam." His language implies that Muslims can be and are part of the American cultural fabric. Muqtedar Khan further argues that the U.S. Constitution provides many of the things an Islamic state would ideally provide for its citizens, making it an institution worthy of American Muslim support. [48] Note that both Khan and Alalwani use language that either finds or seeks to include values familiar to Muslims within American culture and law. This mechanism, we will see, is key.

Because of the ambivalence about participation, the ICC, CAIR and groups like them must find ways to incorporate civic values and practices *into* an American Muslim identity. Pervading the groups' media presence as well as their coalition building efforts and their activities within the community is a discourse on what constitutes *muslim* (small m) behavior or characteristics. Concerning the term *muslim*, I draw on the word's grammatical position in Arabic: where Islam is translated as "submission," a Muslim is "one who submits." The word *muslim* is a participle of *Islam* and derives from the same triliteral root, sin-lam-mim (letters equivalent to S-L-M), meaning whole or safe. The word *muslim* is an adjective, and I use it throughout this thesis to refer to "that which falls within the purview of Islam" or "that which is compatible with Islam," such as "*muslim* values" or "*muslim* participation." I have chosen to use small-M *muslim* rather than "Islamic" because I

[48] Taha Jabir Alalwani, "Toward a Fiqh for Minorities: Some Reflections," in *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square*, 68-69.

take the latter to refer to "that which derives from Islam," such as "Islamic architecture." Subject to believers' diverse interpretations, a given action or characteristic is either *muslim* or it is not. For example, two New York Muslims may both observe *zakat* (almsgiving required by Islam), but disagree as to whether it is more important to give money to a local homeless shelter, which provides services to both Muslims and non-Muslims, or to send the money to an entirely Muslim community in a foreign country. Muslim community groups have their own interpretation of these values and the decisions associated with them. I argue that in the form and content of their media presence, community activities and coalition building efforts, both CAIR and the ICC are implicitly but constantly asserting a view of what constitutes *muslim* American participation and citizenship within their regional New York City context.

In order to make their vision of *muslim* civic participation available beyond their own organizations, Muslim community leaders at both the ICC and CAIR must work to externalize their definition of *muslim*. The way they make their definition public is through a) claims-making and b) framing, two actions that include (and implicate) the whole New York Muslim community *and* are visible to the wider community of New York City (and sometimes beyond). "Claims" are public demands made in the interest of a particular group, which are by definition contentious because they infringe on the interests of other groups. Claims, to use the language of Ruud Koopmans, consist of "a unit of strategic action in the public sphere" – various examples of which will be examined. Making claims requires "frames," meaning culturally resonant language, symbols and forms that provide ways of interpreting and

constructing social grievances. For individual actors in a social movement, framing "assign[s] meanings to their activities in the conduct of social movement activism."[49] The idea of frames was first explored by Erving Goffman, and expanded by many theorists including Steven Buechler, Robert Benford, and David Snow.

One example of a claim by the New York Muslim community is a recent protest against the detention of Syed Fahad Hashmi, a Muslim American citizen who has been held in solitary confinement since 2007 in Manhattan's Metropolitan Correctional Center. Hashmi has been charged with providing and conspiring to provide material support to Al Qaeda. Though not charged with any violent crime, under Special Administrative Measures (SAMs, which have become much more common in U.S. prisons since 9/11) Hashmi is deprived of outdoor exercise, has no contact with anyone except his lawyer and his parents, and can write only one letter a week.[50] CAIR's campaign to raise awareness about Hashmi's detention focuses on more than the severity of his prison conditions, and offers an example of tactics of framing: CAIR frames the use of SAMs as an infringement on Hashmi's rights as a citizen, because the psychological and physical effects of solitary confinement hinder his ability to testify on his own behalf and participate in his own defense.[51] A group o CAIR-organized protesters in March of 2010 carried signs that said "No Gitmo at Home or Abroad," referring to the inhumane treatment of prisoners at the U.S. prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. This choice of frames associates Hashmi's circumstances

---

[49] Anny Bakalian and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, eds. *Backlash 9/11: Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans Respond* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 17.
[50] Jeanne Theoharis, "Guantánamo at Home," *The Nation*, April 20, 2009.
[51] CAIR-NY Chapter Press Release, "Vigil for Muslim Held in Pre-Trial Solitary Confinement," CAIR-NY, http://www.cair-ny.org/content/?content_id=64

with a widely familiar example of prisoner abuse, thus making the campaign easy to understand and able to motivate the public.

Using this theoretical and paradigmatic background, this thesis examines how CAIR and the ICC attempt to construct a Muslim civic actor. Because of the groups' different natures and programs, I emphasize different types of work in dealing with each of them. Chapter Three, focusing on the Islamic Cultural Center, deals principally with community service, media presence, and interfaith relations. Chapter Four centers on the New York Council on American-Islamic Relations, and focuses on the group's media and civic participation campaigns as well as government partnerships. In the conclusion, I investigate the significance and implications of Muslim civic participation in the United States.

CHAPTER THREE

The Islamic Cultural Center

As noted in the first chapter, the ICC visibly asserts the existence of American Islam simply by the physical presence of its mosque. The ICC's programs and public voice go even further in constituting and clarifying the characteristics of an American Muslim civic actor. This chapter focuses on the ICC's two major *entrées* into the public sphere: interfaith and community building programs, and media relations. In each case, I will first explore why and how to read meaning in each of these forms of civic participation.

Interfaith Relations and Community Involvement

Community programs, if a mosque is large enough to run any, go beyond its basic function as a place for prayer. They are dependent on a congregational community structure, which is particular to American mosques, and resemble the model of Christian and Jewish congregations in the U.S. In Muslim-majority countries, there is no mosque equivalent of a Christian parish or congregation. Many Muslims attend a variety of mosques for their daily prayers, although they may more regularly attend a specific mosque for Friday prayers, which are especially important. "Congregationalism" in the American Muslim community extends mosques' caretaking from the purely spiritual to other areas of well-being as a way to adapt to the American context.[52] The most common community service, provided by 90

[52] Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, "Structural Adaptations in an Immigrant Muslim Congregation in New York," in *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*, ed. R. Stephen Warner and Judith Wittner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 241.

percent of American mosques, is cash assistance for the poor through *zakat* collections. (*Zakat* is one of the five pillars of Islam, in which Muslims must give alms yearly to the less fortunate.) This statistic comes from *The Mosque in America: A National Portrait*, a study conducted in 2000 by the Hartford Seminary's Faith Communities Today (FACT) initiative. The study identifies trends in outlook, community services, and outreach activities among a sample of 416 American mosques, randomly chosen from a group of 1,209. The results showed that mosques participating in outreach programs (interfaith dialogue, media relations, and visits to schools or churches) have a positive perspective on Islam in American society – an outlook that recalls Mufti Alalwani's affirmation of the positive role Islam can play in the U.S.[53] Community programs and positive involvement are self-reinforcing, and I will demonstrate in this chapter how valuing citizenship and performing outreach can reciprocally motivate each other. It is in this intersection of programs and perspective that we can locate the production of a Muslim civic actor in a community like that of the ICC.

New York is a city with an extremely diverse religious makeup, but it is also large enough to have independent religious enclaves that are capable, if they desire, of insulating themselves from the community at large. Seeking out interfaith dialogue or collaboration, then, is a voluntary action that acknowledges shared space and a shared concern for community issues. The ICC has partnered with several groups in activities and alliances that reveal a great deal of information about *muslim* ways to actively engage with one's religious neighbors.

---

[53] Ihsan Bagby, "The Mosque and the American Public Square," in *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square*, 324, 343.

In 1998, the ICC partnered with the Anti-Defamation League, an organization founded in 1913 to fight anti-Semitism whose projects now extend to defend all groups from injustice and unequal treatment. Regional ADL members visited the 96th Street mosque and began a dialogue with the current imam, Sheik Muhammad Gemeaha, about the differences between radical and mainstream Islam.[54] The dialogue between ICC and ADL indicates a search for common ground in fighting prejudice – perhaps because of tacit acknowledgement that some of the same physical and character stereotypes once deployed against Jews are now used against Muslims. Alternatively, the message in partnering with ADL could be that current shared goals are more important than past differences. Even if the ICC might not have had much in common with the ADL of the early twentieth century, their collaboration is based on mutual interest in the present.

In addition to participating in dialogue, in 2008 the ICC partnered with the Jewish Theological Seminary (located at 120th Street in Manhattan's Morningside Heights neighborhood) to create a soup kitchen for the homeless.[55] This move shows concern for the local community, regardless of faith, and indicates a commitment to helping the less fortunate that is integrated into the operations of the mosque – making it much like the practice of *zakat*.

The ICC school, located next to the mosque on the same 96th Street plot, incorporates interfaith activities into its educational program, which makes an important statement that *muslim* education includes cross-community learning and collaboration. In 2002, ICC school students took part in an event called "Cordoba

---

[54] Martin F. Karlinsky, "Letter to the Editor: Jewish-Islamic Relations," *The New York Times*, October 28, 2001.
[55] "New York Muslim Leader Forges Close Ties With City's Jews," *Reuters*, May 16, 2008.

Bread Fest," a multi-faith performance based around the resonance and importance of bread in Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths. The event's name made reference to the tolerant environment of Cordoba, the Spanish city that in the Middle Ages was home to a thriving community with members from all three faiths. The ICC was one of several sponsors for the event. Others included a New York synagogue, the Catholic Archdiocese of New York, and several other religious community organizations.[56] "Bread Fest" as well as the ICC's partnership with the seminary both show collaboration that focuses on commonality – either a common goal, such as feeding the homeless, or a shared element of their faiths. With programs like these the ICC defines *muslim* participation as constructive, looking for points of similarity rather than difference.

The ICC is typical of American mosques in some aspects of its interfaith work. According to Bagby and the *Mosque in America* statistics, 71 percent of mosques visit schools or churches as an outreach activity. In addition, 65 percent participate in interfaith dialogue, although this figure is based on participation by outside invitation. As in the case of community programs, there is a correlation between interfaith dialogue and a congregation's perspective on Islam. Mosques with a less conservative or "contextual" approach to Islam are twenty percent more likely than conservative mosques to participate in interfaith dialogue (for contextual and conservative mosques the numbers are 71 and 51 percent, respectively). Mosques with a high level of community involvement also tend to believe strongly that the U.S. is not hostile to Islam – 74 percent of mosques in the 2000 survey fall into this

[56] American Society for Muslim Advancement, "Cordoba Bread Fest: Children of Abraham Break Bread Together," http://www.asmasociety.org/calendar/pastevents.html

category. Mosques of all degrees of conservatism, however, take on community service projects consistently.[57] Participation, as we can see, is the norm and not the exception, and it is carried out in a spirit of involvement and community that surpasses religious boundaries. Studies like *Mosque in America* throw into relief the sharp divide between the discourse about American Muslims and the reality. In many cases, opponents of Muslim-American participation cite a lack of patriotism or other shared values, or an excess of isolationism as reasons to be wary of American Muslim citizens. These fears ignore the most recent statistics. For the ICC, the task of undoing this gap between the community reality and public perception requires, in large part, a widespread media outreach.

ICC in the Media

In the histories of CAIR and the ICC, media presence has been a key way to respond to negative press directly and in some of the same forums, as well as an effective way to publicize more positive representations of the Muslim community. Both organizations had a significant media presence before the 2001 attacks – CAIR had made its name denouncing bias incidents in the wake of the first World Trade Center bombing as well as the Oklahoma City bombing, and the ICC had a large degree of visibility and prestige because of the diplomats and foreign dignitaries who worshipped there. As we will see, however, the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 was an event that transformed both groups' roles in and approaches to media relations. Media appearances and presence became an important way to publicize the groups' new discourse about being Muslim and American. The

[57] Bagby, "The Mosque and the American Public Square," 340, 343. 342.

authority and visibility that the groups accrued gave them the opportunity to take part in the important process of naming and defining what was "American" and what was "Muslim," a process previously monopolized by mass media and non-Muslim voices.

There are several factors that make media relations a weathervane for Muslim identity formation. The media (and here I include print, visual and audio news media as well as cartoons, films, and literature) provides subjective representations, even if they claim objectivity. The capacity to represent, speak for or depict an individual or group implies power over the entity being represented. Far from being solely a question of journalistic truth or artistic realism, representation provokes questions of identity, which, as Stuart Hall notes, is "always constituted within, not outside, representation."[58] At stake in the media, therefore, is the power to define. When Muslim leaders and community organizations conduct a media campaign, they must work to undo more than a century of negative film, cartoon and news representations of both Arabs and Muslims, groups which the media conflates up to the present day.

Muslim groups are clearly aware of the power of American media to influence the perspectives of U.S. citizens. According to *The Mosque in America* study, 70 percent of U.S. mosques write to or call media representatives as an outreach activity. The rate is somewhat higher in immigrant mosques than in African American mosques, likely due to the fact that immigrant mosques risk more misperception because they seem both culturally and religiously other.[59]

---

[58] Jennifer L. Bryan, "Constructing 'the True Islam' in Hostile Times: The Impact of 9/11 on Arab Muslims in Jersey City," in *Wounded City: The Social Impact of 9/11*, ed. Nancy Foner (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005), 154.
[59] Bagby, "The Mosque in the American Public Square," 339, 341.

ICC media visibility pre-9/11 was largely limited to newspaper articles concerning the mosque inauguration. After the destruction of the World Trade Center, however, media representatives immediately looked to and sought out the mosque leaders for comment on the events. The ICC rose to the occasion, responding with a profile of mosque officials and constituents as compassionate and pious community members.

One pre-2001 event that did invite a statement from the mosque's imam, however, was the funeral of Amadou Diallo, which was held at the 96th Street mosque in February of 1999.[60] Diallo was a West African immigrant who was killed by police in front of his home in the Bronx. Controversy erupted after his death because police fired forty one shots despite the fact that Diallo was unarmed. Imam Abdel-Rahman Osman, the senior imam of ICC at the time, said Diallo's funeral ceremony would leave politics outside. His comment humanized Diallo, and addressed a public that Osman seemed to perceive as tolerant and compassionate rather than confrontational and hostile. Osman implicitly showed respect for the boundaries of public and private, setting mourning inside the private, refusing to let it be politicized. Osman's remarks represented the Muslim community as pious, sensitive to the community issues surrounding Diallo's death, but also capable of separating activism and antagonism.

Responding to 9/11

The September 11th attacks had a profound impact on New Yorkers, Muslim New Yorkers and their community leaders included. In addition to the undeniable

[60] Kevin McCoy, "Devout Muslim Funeral for Vendor," *New York Daily News*, February 12, 1999.

emotional impact and personal losses, 9/11 set off major transformations for a host of Muslim community organizations. Bagby notes this transformation for mosques, and the ICC was no exception.[61] Because of the size of its congregation, the ICC leadership was particularly responsible in the wake of the attacks for sending a message both to the New York community and to its Muslim congregation denouncing the violence, calling for peace and understanding, and helping its constituents cope. To counter the local as well as national backlash, the ICC took up the practice of naming acts or values as Muslim or un-Muslim, but they also took conscious part in the larger social and cultural contest to name what and who was "American" and "un-American." The ICC's response to the tragedy, since it was coming from the mosque, was necessarily seen as a Muslim response, but the organization's leaders also took care to cast it as an American response, thus allowing the two descriptors to co-construct a profile or impression of an American Muslim. In her study of the post-9/11 Jersey City Muslim population, scholar Jennifer L. Bryan observed that "it became important for Muslims to take ownership of the representation of Islam." The ICC's discourse, however, did not target the community alone: it took to the media along with groups like CAIR and MPAC in order to "control the representation of Islam among themselves [Muslims]" and broadcast its own representation to contest the Goliath of established stereotypes and portrayals of its community.[62]

The media-related ICC response was immediate, direct, and for better or worse, well publicized. Three days after the attacks, Imam Sheikh Muhammad

---

[61] Bagby, "The Mosque in the American Public Square," 344.
[62] Bryan, "Constructing 'the True Islam' in Hostile Times," 154.

Gemeaha delivered a *khutba*, or Friday sermon, that called for "peace, healing and love among people of all religions."[63] The service was attended by U.N. diplomats, leaders of other New York faith communities, and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, who heard Gemeaha assert that "nowhere is it written that there is a time for terrorism."[64] Clearly, the mosque's first response was one of compassion and openness to the affected greater New York community. Four days after the attack, the ICC offered its information for a *New York Times* article of emergency helplines and resources under the heading "Memorial and Religious Services."[65] It was the only Muslim listing among the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Greek Orthodox services, but was in line with other large houses of worship, such as St. Patrick's Cathedral and the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, that were opening themselves to the community. The ICC positioned itself as an active agent of support and reconciliation immediately after the attack. This and the open Friday prayer both indicate an invitation to participation from both the mosque and the community it represents. This matches a comment made in 2003 by the ICC's Assistant Imam Muhammad Shamsi Ali, who said that since the 9/11 attacks, the ICC had a "much more important role in voicing the aspirations of the New York -- and America's -- Muslim community."[66] After 2001, there was a new emphasis for the ICC on performing its activities with greater visibility and outreach. As in the response to Diallo's funeral,

---

[63] Laurie Goodstein, "New York Cleric's Departure from Mosque Leaves Mystery," *The New York Times*, October 23, 2001.
[64] Richard Pyle, "Islamic Leader, Adherents Condemn WTC Terrorism," *Associated Press Newswires*, September 14, 2001.
[65] "Where to Get Information: A List of Emergency Numbers and Web Sites," *The New York Times*, September 15, 2001.
[66] Rita A. Widiadana, "New York Islamic Center Promotes Interfaith Relations," *The Jakarta Post*, October 22, 2003.

the ICC called for unity rather than antagonism, presenting both Muslim values and respect for the American context.

About a month after the attacks, the ICC received some less positive publicity, but the way the mosque's representatives spoke about it publicly continued to demonstrate a commitment to *muslim* participation based on both Muslim and American values. Two weeks after Gemeaha's ecumenical sermon, an Arabic language website quoted the imam as saying that Muslims in the U.S. were being "persecuted," and that Zionists in air traffic control towers had aided the attackers in early September. In the same week, Gemeaha also told *Newsday* that the Muslims involved in the attack must have been involved on someone else's behalf – that is, he did not believe Muslims themselves would commit such violent acts on their own initiative.[67] His remarks caused an uproar, and Gemeaha left the ICC for Cairo in late September.

As a public, media-recorded act of the ICC, Gemeaha's remarks are interestingly consistent with the discourse of naming *muslim* and un-*muslim* acts that the ICC used pre-9/11. While Gemeaha's accusation of Zionists is inflammatory, it is coupled with the insistence that a Muslim acting on his own convictions would not commit such a violent and destructive act. In their turn, ICC board members insisted that Gemeaha's remarks were not representative of the ICC's beliefs.[68] The two messages here are, to use our earlier vocabulary, "the attacks were not *muslim* (the act of proper Muslims)" and "anti-Semitic remarks are not *muslim*." Both of these declarations seek to repel reproof from outside the Muslim community by distancing

[67] Goodstein, "New York Cleric's Departure from Mosque Leaves Mystery."
[68] Ibid.

inappropriate remarks within the community. Both remarks also draw a line between the behavior one can and cannot expect of "proper" Muslims. It is important to note that Gemeaha's discourse, which defines *muslim* behavior, also names what is "American" and "un-American." In another interview just after September 11, Gemeaha said the terrorists would "love it" for Americans to turn against each other and start aggression towards innocents, implying that an anti-Muslim backlash would be as anti-American as the terrorists themselves.[69] He emphasized that the terrorists had acted as individuals, isolated aggressors who could not be connected to Islam any more than they could be connected to America. He underscored their violence as wanton and directed toward civilians and innocents. After constructing the terrorists this way, his remarks made domestic acts of bias just as heinous by parallelism.

After Sheik Gemeaha's departure, Imam Omar Saleem Abu-Namouss became the leader of the ICC mosque. This choice on the part of the ICC board shows a direct effort to combine Muslim leadership with American citizenship, and demonstrates the ICC's awareness in the aftermath of 9/11 that the exigencies of Muslim self-representation in the New York community had changed. The ICC board selected Abu-Namouss because of his English language ability, as well as his immediate availability – he had been assistant imam at the 96th Street mosque. The ICC was inundated after the attacks by questions concerning "Muslim-American Relations."[70] Media representatives who wanted to know more about Arabs and Muslims often called the first local Muslim organization they found in a phone book – and the ICC

[69] Pyle, "Islamic Leader, Adherents Condemn WTC Terrorism."
[70] Daniel J. Wakin, "New Head of Mosque Wants Proof," *The New York Times*, November 2, 2001.

was already prominent in the New York community.[71] With its high visibility, it is not surprising that the ICC shouldered a large part of the new burden. The selection of Abu-Namouss under the new circumstances indicated an acceptance of the heightened degree of dialogue and community participation within New York City. Scholar Ihsan Bagby has remarked that in the U.S., immigrant mosques are called upon, whether appropriately or not, to comment on international issues.[72] From the very start, Abu-Namouss's tenure at the ICC illustrated that trend.

The ICC's choice entailed a significant change of policy. After fifty years of relying on imams from al-Azhar University in Cairo (who often first set foot in the U.S. to take up the post), the ICC promoted a longtime U.S. resident. *Time* magazine cast the promotion of Namouss as "a rift among Muslims" and noted that the new imam's salary would be paid by the government of Kuwait, already a major sponsor of the mosque, and not by al-Azhar.[73] The ICC board's choice can be read as an effort to emphasize American allegiance – despite the fact that the ICC congregation is composed of many foreign diplomats from Muslim-majority countries. For many American mosque communities, choice of imam requires balancing the service needs of the community with religious requirements and qualifications. The choice of Abu-Namouss becomes even more significant considering this balancing act. While a foreign-educated imam, like one from al-Azhar, may have more exact knowledge of the Qur'an, the *hadith* (collected sayings of the Prophet and anecdotes about his life), and legal texts, he (I say "he" because women are almost without exception forbidden from leading prayer) will often have only moderate English skills and be unused to

[71] Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, 115.
[72] Bagby, "The Mosque in the American Public Square," 341.
[73] Nadia Mustafa, "A Rift Among Muslims," *Time*, November 5, 2001.

the community responsibilities that fall to American imams. As Jane I. Smith, a prominent and prolific scholar of American Islam, has noted, the position of imam does not traditionally correspond to that of the ordained clergy in either Christianity or Judaism. In American Muslim communities, however, the need for leadership in a minority-Muslim country alters the list of imams' responsibilities. Imams are called upon to perform weddings and funerals, manage mosque finances, give legal advice, address community and neighborhood concerns, and complete many other functions that are usually filled by other specialists in Muslim-majority countries.[74] Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf has specifically studied a "Muslim congregation" at Brooklyn's Islamic Mission, founded in 1928, in order to discover what makes the congregational model work for American Muslims. In her research, conducted from 1994 to 1996, she noted the roots of congregational structure found in Islamic theology. Coming together for prayer as a *jami'i* (congregation or collective) fosters a sense of community and recalls the Islamic ideal of the *umma*, the global Muslim community of faith.[75]

In his new position, Imam Namouss continued the stream of media appearances his predecessor had begun. He was interviewed by the *New York Times* and appeared on CNBC's *Hardball* with Chris Matthews in early November of 2001. Namouss's comments on *Hardball* show the same distancing of Imam Gemeaha as that employed by the ICC board. He emphasized that his predecessor represented only "his personal opinion" and insisted that Muslims around the world all condemned the terrorist attacks. Matthews then pressured and badgered Namouss to

---

[74] Smith, *Islam in America*, 155, 157.
[75] Abusharaf, "Structural Adaptations," in *Gatherings in Diaspora*, 239.

reveal "who did it" (i.e., September 11), to say whether his congregation thought Jews were responsible, to comment on Osama bin Laden's previous attacks on American interests, and to condone American Muslim collaboration with the CIA and Immigration Service to "locate the evildoers." Namouss, by contrast, insisted that he was "not a politician"; and maintained that American Jews, Christians and Muslims have "interwoven" and "interlinking" interests. He denied the usefulness of mosque-attendees as informants on terrorist activity.[76] Like the ICC imams before him, Namouss resisted the politicization of himself and his community, and emphasized commonality with other faith groups rather than conflict and difference. He responded to Matthews' language of denunciation and retribution with language of interdependence.

Namouss was asked to appear on the show again a month later when Osama bin Laden's confession tape appeared, evidently because Namouss had been unwilling to concede during his first appearance that Muslims were responsible for the attacks. In both of his appearances, however, the imam resisted Matthews' aggressive attempts to extract an accusation from him. Namouss succeeded in presenting his Muslim identity and the Muslim community he represented while sidestepping and neutralizing questions that cast him in a harmful stereotypical role.

Conclusion

The key trend in the ICC's media and community involvement is the combination of resisting stereotypes *about* Muslims while continuing to participate *as*

[76] CNBC, Inc., "Profile: Omar Saleem Abu-Namous, chief imam for New York Islamic Cultural Center, discusses his views on the terrorist attacks," (*Hardball with Chris Matthews*, Nov. 6, 2001).

Muslims. This trend of participation without assimilation refuses to compromise between faith and civic life, sometimes showing the greater New York community an as yet unfamiliar example of how to combine the two productively. In the next chapter I examine CAIR's activities through a similar lens. We find a very different type of organization in which many of the same mechanisms are nevertheless at work.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Council on American-Islamic Relations, New York

Like the ICC, one of CAIR-NY's strongest tactics for strengthening and improving Muslim American participation in the New York public sphere is through media presence and campaigns. In the case of CAIR, however, coalition building is also a key part of the organization's efforts when it comes to raising awareness within the community and among lawmakers or other elected officials.

The New York chapter of CAIR was founded in 1997. While CAIR-NY was consistently active in its earliest years in media as well as advocacy work, the terrorist attacks of 2001 profoundly changed the chapter's work. In order to situate their pre- and post-9/11 work, I will cover some example campaigns from before 2001. It is since 2001, however, that defining and encouraging a set of Muslim American civic actors has become especially important. The years after 9/11 provide the strongest examples of CAIR co-constructing civic and Muslim values through its work.[77]

Pre-9/11

In the chapter's early days, CAIR-NY's focused largely on denouncing and responding to bias acts or hate crimes, as well as countering biased representations in mainstream news and cultural media. We can read the organization's fight against bias as an effort to modify the norms of interchange and debate in the public sphere according to a Muslim point of view. CAIR's campaigns rest on the assumption that

[77] Throughout this chapter I use "CAIR" as a shorthand for the New York Chapter of the organization, and specify CAIR National or CAIR-DC when I refer to the national branch.

discourse among civil (non-governmental) figures still contains power relationships, and the words of individuals both civic and political can influence the perspective of the public as a whole. For this reason, CAIR fights equally hard to improve how Muslims are represented in movies, cartoons and political debates. CAIR uses media relations, civil rights advocacy, and coalition building to translate community concerns into collective action. The organization's work takes many forms, including press releases, letters to the editor, print advertisements or video spots, and television appearances.

In 1998, CAIR-NY and many other CAIR chapters fought onscreen bias in the civic context. The organization took a stand against the film *The Siege*, which premiered in early November. In the film, directed by Edward Zwick, the U.S. Army puts New York City under martial law in the aftermath of a series of terrorist attacks, and the government detains Arab-Americans as part of its crackdown.[78]

Previews for the film appeared in the summer of 1998, and included images of bombings directly intercut with images of Muslims at prayer. Arab and Muslim leaders publicly protested. Representatives from CAIR National and other groups met with Zwick toward the end of the filming process to voice their concerns that the film's previews created a close association between Muslim religious practices, violence and terrorism.[79] They also suggested changes to the plot that would lessen the association of Islam and violence in the film. Zwick conceded to re-cut and re-release the previews, but refused to change the plot. When the film reached theaters,

---

[78] Julian E. Barnes, "Protestors Say a New Movie Likens Islam to Terrorism," *The New York Times*, November 7, 1988.
[79] Willow Bay, Director Ed Zwick Defends 'The Siege,'" *CNN Web Post*, November 10, 1998, http://www.cnn.com/SHOWBIZ/Movies/9811/10/siege/

CAIR National officials decided against extended protests, which would have provided the film with "free publicity."[80] Instead, all chapters distributed instructions to their members on how to hold leafleting campaigns or host a mosque open house, measures intended to counteract the negative impressions audiences would take away from the film. In this example, American Muslims pursued *muslim* values, like truthful representation of Islam, through participation and engagement with Zwick, rather than outrage or antagonism.

Responding to 9/11

The post-9/11 backlash had a profound effect on Muslim community organizations, affecting the "scope, nature, and intensity" of their work. The result was no different for CAIR. The New York chapter's response to the September 11th attacks was geared both toward protecting its constituents, and toward circulating a productive message to the non-Muslim public. Across the country, CAIR found itself in high demand as media representatives approached Muslim organizations after the attacks wanting to know more about Arabs and Muslims. It was an unprecedented opportunity for CAIR and other Muslim community organizations to have their constituents heard in American society.[81] CAIR's tactics were very much in line with those of other Muslim community-based organizations, as catalogued by Anny Bakalian and Mehdi Bozorgmehr in their study, *Backlash 9/11*. The study was initiated via a National Science Foundation Request for Proposals in various disciplines that came a week after the attacks. The authors used the NSF grant to

[80] Barnes, "Protestors Say a New Movie Likens Islam to Terrorism."
[81] Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, 114-115, 179.

interview seventy-five Muslim community organization leaders in order to monitor the Muslim and Arab American response to both the attacks and their backlash, and report on them. According to Bakalian and Bozorgmehr's analysis, common tactics used by Muslim community organizations in the wake of the terrorist attacks included: distancing terrorism from mainstream Islam, demonstrating Muslim American allegiance to the United States, and calling for inclusion of Muslim Americans within the nation's communities. Muslim community groups also made a widespread effort to make it clear that the terrorists involved in the attack did not represent American Muslims. In talking to the public, the groups focused on "spelling out the fundamentals of Islam and denouncing the ways in which Al Qaeda has misappropriated the true meaning of the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed."[82]

CAIR's response was both levelheaded and pragmatic, acknowledging what the atmosphere would likely be in the aftermath of the violence. CAIR National, located in Washington, D.C., announced via the local chapters that Muslims wearing head scarves or other religious attire should avoid public areas so as not to be harassed.[83] CAIR also reportedly circulated an email soon after the attacks that contained a premade form for reporting bias incidents.[84] CAIR National leaders clearly based the organization's response to the attacks on what they had learned from the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. On the national level, CAIR received more than

---

[82] Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, 185.
[83] Jim Irwin, "Muslim groups, Arab-Americans decry attacks, plead for restraint, worry about harassment," *Associated Press Newswires*, September 11, 2001.
[84] Tarek E. Masoud, "Letters to the Editor: America Muslims: Be American," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 14, 2001.

two hundred reports of "harassment, threats, or violence" toward Muslims in the days immediately following the 1995 bombing.[85]

There are several ways in which CAIR's response succeeded in marrying civic values and tactics with specifically Muslim goals to create *muslim* response tactics. Denying that the terrorists "represent" Islam or Muslims uses language familiar to American citizens as the language of representative government. It subconsciously speaks to the American conviction that citizens have a choice in who represents them, and that they can withdraw their recognition (if only symbolically) if they find their representative's actions unacceptable. CAIR's call for inclusion and assertion of the allegiance of American Muslims is founded on a view of Muslims as a legitimate part of the American fabric, making the same claims to legitimacy via patriotism that other American groups employ.

The varied responses to CAIR's actions from within the Muslim community show to what degree the organization must carefully balance American and *muslim* values. One letter to the editor, written by a CAIR member and published in the Wall Street Journal, criticized CAIR for presupposing a backlash and prematurely situating Muslims as victims – saying that it was un-American to even expect a backlash from fellow citizens.[86] These concerns echo Imam Gemeaha, who also called a backlash un-American. Conversely, Bakalian interviewed Muslim community leaders who faced accusations in the wake of 9/11 that they had "sold out" to the American public by cooperating with law enforcement or apologizing for the attacks. Some members

[85] Irwin, "Muslim groups, Arab-Americans decry attacks."
[86] Masoud., "Letters to the Editor."

of the Muslim community perceived statements like these as too assimilationist.[87] Overall, however, CAIR successfully weathered the difficult community conditions, and continued their expanded and transformed chapter operations in the following years.

Media Campaigns Since 9/11: Broadcasting a Muslim Perspective

Since 2001, CAIR's New York chapter has continued to maintain its news media presence. The chapter regularly produces press releases containing a response to current events of various types or a statement to the community. The overall goal of these and other media efforts is to make the Muslim community's perspective (as interpreted by CAIR) available to mainstream media. CAIR uses these media announcements as an opportunity to assert that the public sphere should include Muslim participants, and that it is for the good of both the Muslim and greater community to have Muslim voices heard.

In 2008, CAIR-NY participated along with CAIR National and other state chapters in a national campaign called "Obsession With Hate," run by a coalition of groups called "Hate Hurts America." The coalition sought to expose the agenda behind a film called *Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West*. A few months before the 2008 election, 28 million copies of the DVD were distributed as a free gift in newspapers in swing states.[88] The promotion was paid for by the Clarion Fund, reportedly a nonpartisan group. The film, however, took an extremely biased position

---

[87] Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, 188.
[88] "Swing States targeted with 'anti-Muslim propaganda,'" france24.com, http://observers.france24.com/en/content/20081013-swing-states-anti-muslim-propaganda-28-m-obsession-raphael-shore

in its representation of Islam and Muslims, conflating radical and mainstream Islam and casting baseless suspicion on American Muslims. The film interspersed sequences showing Muslim children being recruited as suicide bombers with sequences of Nazi rallies, among other affronting juxtapositions. Through the "Obsession With Hate" website, CAIR and other groups in the "Hate Hurts America" coalition exposed the lineup of Islamophobic individuals interviewed for the film, and uncovered the pro-Israel donors and producers that had made and marketed the pseudo-documentary. "Hate Hurts America," still an active coalition, is made up of ethnic organizations, religious congregations, and other nonpartisan groups, largely based in California.[89] Like CAIR's response to *The Siege*, "Obsession With Hate" fought bias with fact, seeking to set the record straight (even if, in the case of *The Siege*, the attempt was unsuccessful) rather than simply denounce and decry a hateful representation. The name of the coalition also frames the issue of hate as a national problem, not limited to the Muslim community.

One undeniably positive result of CAIR's media efforts is its now-established reputation as a knowledgeable resource about the Muslim community. This reputation affords the chapter opportunities to take the lead in providing a Muslim perspective. For example, in the summer of 2009 when President Barack Obama gave a speech from Cairo, Egypt, CAIR-NY hosted a post-speech talkback that invited Muslim community leaders to share their responses to the President's remarks. The event exemplifies CAIR-NY's current approach to *muslim* media representation. It was a proactive measure, with the talkback occurring the same morning as the speech. The structure of the event, which was hosted by CAIR-NY in the Interchurch Center,

[89] Hate Hurts America Coalition, "The Coalition," http://www.hatehurtsamerica.com/?page_id=8.

allowed the Muslim community to choose and invite its own respondents, who included imams, a Muslim chaplain, professors, and heads of community organizations. Media presence at the event was extensive, which is a testament to both the media demand in New York City for a Muslim perspective, and also the working relationships CAIR has made with local outlets. The press included television stations WABC, WCBS, and the Italian-American *Rai Italia* network; public radio stations WNYC (the New York syndicate of National Public Radio) and WFUV (the radio station of Fordham University); newspapers *AM New York* and the *New York Post*. The Associated Press also carried the story.

The Muslim leaders present at the New York talkback reacted positively to the speech, calling it "fair," but saw it as only a first step that they wanted to see followed up with "concrete policies." The respondents' emphasis on accountability draws on the language of American democratic representation (recall a similar example in CAIR's response to 9/11), thereby giving their reactions a distinctly American as well as Muslim perspective. It is worth noting that many of those responding to the speech expressed feelings of patriotism, including one who felt "not only proud to be an American but… proud of America."[90]

Coalition Building

As in the case of ICC interfaith efforts, CAIR-NY's choice of coalition partners says a great deal about their views on effective and appropriate Muslim American citizenship. On the broadest level, CAIR's numerous partnerships with

[90] Arun Venugopal, "NYC Muslims React to Obama's Cairo Address," *WNYC News*, June 4, 2009. http://blogs.wnyc.org/news/2009/06/04/nyc-muslims-react-to-obamas-cairo-address/

many other types of organizations show the group's commitment to community involvement, and their ability to come together over issues "of mutual interest and concern," much as in a Habermasian public sphere.

Early in the organization's history, CAIR National partnered with the American Civil Liberties Union, taking part in a coalition against the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, or AEDPA.[91] AEDPA came in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, making various changes to laws concerning Immigration and Naturalization Services' detention of noncitizens. In this particular example, CAIR's participation shows the group's ability to support causes that do not directly implicate CAIR's membership or community, but which are *of mutual concern*. CAIR-NY shows the same flexibility of alliance in its list of local partners. Significantly, CAIR partners with both nonaffiliated organizations, such as unions, but also with multiple New York ethnic organizations, which may or may not include Muslims: these include the Sikh Council of New York, DRUM (Desis Rising Up and Moving), and New York Arab community organizations.[92]

All of these coalition efforts paint a picture of what constitutes *muslim* participation in the greater community. For CAIR-NY, *muslim* participation involves a large variety of connections and partnerships, which are overall unified not by shared religion, but by shared values and concerns. For example, CAIR-NY's alliance with the Sikh community clearly is not an alliance over shared religion. Perhaps it is due in part to recognition of the fact that both Sikhs and Muslims suffer discrimination because of the dress and appearance required or recommended by their

---

[91] Mohammed Nimer, "Muslims in the American Body Politic," in *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square*, 153.
[92] "Desi" literally means "from the country" and describes people of South Asian descent.

faiths. Sikh as well as Muslim men have been profiled or discriminated against based on their beards, which in both religions are an outward symbol of faith; their skin color; or their turbans (in the case of Sikh men). The first casualty in the September 11 backlash was an American Sikh.[93] CAIR's combination of faith and citizenship requires acknowledging problems like prejudice that affect Americans in more than one identity group.

In 2008, CAIR became a sponsor of the KGIA Coalition, supporting the Khalil Gibran International Academy. The multi-faith coalition formed to support the school after it came under attack from New Yorkers who accused the school's Yemeni-American principal, Debbie Almontaser, of teaching fundamentalist Islam. The opponents called KGIA a "madrassa" – an Arabic word that simply means "school" but which has taken on the connotation in English of a Qur'anic school that teaches conservative interpretations of Islam. The opponents sought to oust Almontaser and close the school, located in Brooklyn. In fact, KGIA had been designed as a dual language Arabic-English program, with no Muslim or other religious affiliation whatsoever. The school is named for Khalil Gibran, the famous Lebanese Christian poet, who spent part of his life in New York City. The accusations against the school, which had so little to do with its actual mission, arose from Almontaser's indirect connection to another local organization, called Arab Women Active in Arts and Media (AWAAM).

AWAAM came under fire in the summer of 2007 for selling t-shirts reading "Intifada NYC" at a street fair. While the word "intifada" literally means "a shaking off" in Arabic, the slogan particularly offended some New Yorkers because of its

[93] Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, 2.

connection with the First and Second Palestinian Intifadas, or uprisings against Israelis. When opponents connected AWAAM to Almontaser, who served on the organization's board, they cast her as a "9/11 denier" and a "jihadist" and labeled KGIA a "madrassa." Under the Stop the Madrassa Coalition, they pressured the Department of Education to dismiss Almontaser and close the school. Both AWAAM and Almontaser attempted to clarify the use of the word "intifada," and insisted that Almontaser was not responsible for the t-shirts. Nevertheless, *The New York Post* published a highly sensationalized article that misconstrued Almontaser's words and worsened the controversy. The Department of Education dismissed Almontaser in late 2007. She filed a lawsuit against *The New York Post* for misrepresenting her remarks about the t-shirts, and filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to protest the loss of her job. While Almontaser has not been reinstated, the EEOC found in March of 2010 that she had been discriminated against on the basis of her "race, religion and national origin."[94] CAIR's participation in the KGIA Coalition once again shows that *muslim* participation means active outreach to causes of mutual concern, and a commitment to altering perceptions and representations of Muslims, in this case Debbie Almontaser.

Overall, CAIR-NY's coalition building efforts show a quest for visibility and just representation, as well as an emphasis on commonality also present in the ICC's interfaith and community efforts. The *muslim* civic actor fulfills the responsibilities of citizenship as a community member.

---

[94] Andrea Elliott, "Federal Panel Finds Bias in Ouster of Principal," *The New York Times*, March 10, 2010.

Effective Citizenship Campaigns

In addition to coalition building in the religious and greater community, CAIR-NY also commits a large part of its energy to "effective citizenship" campaigns. These take many forms, but overall CAIR aims to cultivate active citizens within the Muslim community. To do so, the organization must successfully combine the values and injunctions of Islam with the demands of American political participation. One particularly strong example of this combination is CAIR-NY's voter registration and education effort. As a nonprofit organization, CAIR cannot endorse any candidate in a political race. However, through the organization's VOTENYC initiative, CAIR seeks to educate voters about both national and local races, compiling booklets with registration information and a description of the candidates' stances – but in order to emphasize the *muslim* importance of voting, VOTENYC materials include a Qur'anic quotation as well, which instructs Muslims to "render your trusts to whom they are due" (Sura an-Nisa v.58) – in other words, to take responsibility for selecting their leaders. As was discussed in Chapter 2, American Muslims may have reservations about participating in the American political system because of their faith. CAIR's work succeeds in giving participation a *muslim* context and sense of purpose. Whether due to the organization's efforts or other forces, CAIR members are far from indifferent to politics. In 1996, CAIR members donated more than one million dollars in campaign contributions. In 2000, the organization's national membership totaled 1200. Between 1995 and 2000, over

five thousand individual donations from those members totaled nearly four million dollars.[95]

In addition to encouraging active citizenship through voting, CAIR also mobilizes the community surrounding issues specific to Muslims. In 2006, the New York State Education Department scheduled a statewide exam on Eid ul-Adha, the Feast of the Sacrifice. Eid ul-Adha is the largest annual Muslim celebration, commemorating Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ismail, whom Allah spared by asking for a sheep as sacrifice instead. Traditionally, Muslims celebrate Eid by slaughtering a domestic animal, such as a goat or sheep, and share the meat in large gatherings as well as donating a portion of it to the poor. Eid follows the Islamic lunar calendar, and so occurs on different days each Gregorian calendar year.

In 2006, Muslim public school students were forced to either miss their exam, or miss their family celebrations. Since then, CAIR-NY has joined a coalition of over sixty community organizations, immigrant groups, labor unions and mosques working to put the two major Muslim holidays, Eid ul-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha, on the New York public school calendar. The group justifies the days off with the fact that there are 100,000 Muslim students in public school, representing 95 percent of all school-age New York Muslims. In 2009 the coalition hosted several rallies, communicating and organizing through email and Facebook. They urged city representatives to take action to change the school calendar. In June of that year the New York City Council adopted a nonbinding resolution in support of the holidays, but Mayor Michael Bloomberg remained opposed to the change.[96] In the case of

---

[95] Nimer, "Muslims in the American Body Politic," 158.
[96] Kirk Semple, "Council Votes for Two Muslim School Holidays," *The New York Times*, July 1, 2009.

Muslim school holidays, the motivation for participation was clearly grounded in *muslim* reasons, but the campaign still required communicating that a faith-related change could be made through civic participation. CAIR-NY's efforts in the Campaign for Muslim School Holidays also show that *muslim* participation requires finding allies both within and outside of the faith.

Due in part to the difficult relationship between the Muslim community and law enforcement after 9/11, CAIR's recent work shows a commitment to developing a dialogue and working relationship with the New York Police Department. CAIR has hosted town hall-style meetings with law enforcement officials to discuss the use and misuse of mosque informants. In addition, CAIR was among the group of Muslim community organizations who worked to change the NYPD's 2007 report on homegrown terrorism, entitled "Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat." The report analyzed thwarted terrorist plots since 2001 to discern trends that would help identify other radicalized individuals, who were described as male, wearing traditional clothing and a beard, praying five times a day, and abstaining from smoking and gambling – a description that applied to thousands of religiously observant, law-abiding New Yorkers.[97] Much like *The Siege* and *Obsession*, the NYPD report correlated religious behavior with a likelihood of violence. CAIR joined a coalition that included the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) and the Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC) to press the NYPD to amend the report. In 2009 the NYPD issued an unpublicized correction that allayed some, but not all, of the Muslim community's concerns. The correction denied any intrinsic link

[97] Faiza Patel, "Welcome NYPD Terror Revisions Should be Widely Distributed," *New York Law Journal*, September 23, 2009.

between Islam and violence or terrorism, and advised that the report could not "be a license for racial, religious, or ethnic profiling." It also asserted that the original report had not stereotyped Muslims in the first place. The coalition, CAIR included, remained concerned after the appearance of the clarification because the original report had not been changed, and still contained language that "criminalize[d] religious behavior," such as the attributes listed above.[98] Regardless of the shortcomings of the correction, the NYPD report provided an opportunity to open lines of communication between Muslim community groups and law enforcement, and allowed another form of *muslim* participation and engagement to take place. The fact that the coalition's work prompted a response is itself significant, pointing to the accountability of advocacy and professional Muslim organizations in New York.

When President Obama announce the "United We Serve" initiative in June of 2009, the Muslim American community, CAIR included, responded with a particularly strong example of *muslim* participation. Dalia Mogahed, a member of the White House Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, reached out to the Muslim community and initiated a national campaign, "United We Serve: Muslim Americans Answer the Call" (MAAC). The campaign framed its acts as responding to "three calls" – that of the President, that of the needy, and that of god. MAAC officially launched on July 4, 2009, at the Islamic Society of North America National Convention, and started MuslimServe.org.[99] The website mirrored the Serve.gov website as a place for participants to register their projects and connect with others

---

[98] Tom Hays, "NYPD Rewords Report That Some Say Insulted Muslims," *Associated Press*, September 9, 2009.
[99] Muslim Americans Answer the Call Campaign, "A Summary of 2009 Summer of Service National Service Projects" (http://www.maserve.org/admin/story/1263867165_2.pdf), 8.

interested in service. MuslimServe.org, however, quotes the Qur'an as well as the President, particularly the verse "race one another in good works" (Sura Al Ma'ida, v. 48). The combination of civic and religions imperatives proved highly effective. The President's "United We Serve" summer initiative lasted from June 22 to September 11, 2009. During that time, MuslimServe.org logged 3,600 individual, day-long community service projects, far exceeding its original goal of 1,000. These included food drives, literacy programs, "green mosque" initiatives and more. CAIR-NY, for its part, helped to organize a Hudson River Estuarine Cleanup in July.

Conclusion

As the MAAC campaign shows, *muslim* participation can be a powerful force for good in American communities. Like the ICC, CAIR-NY frames its actions using both civic and faith-based discourses, resulting in mutually reinforcing motivations for participation. The results of the Campaign for Muslim School Holidays or the MAAC campaign are as impressive as they are hopeful, and they have far-reaching implications for both American civic identity and American Muslim identity.

CONCLUSION

The Ramifications of Representation

In his book *Formations of the Secular*, Talal Asad explores concepts of secularism, its power dynamics and its relationship to modernity. In a chapter focusing on secularism and modern nationalism, he states that:

> When religion becomes an integral part of modern politics, it is not indifferent to debates about how the economy should be run, or which scientific projects should be publicly funded, or what the broader aims of a national education system should be. The legitimate entry of religion into these debates results in the creation of modern "hybrids": the principal of structural differentiation – according to which religion, economy, education and science are located in autonomous social spaces – no longer holds."[100]

The Council on American-Islamic Relations and the Islamic Cultural Center construct and produce a Muslim American civic actor through their work, and thus create one such "legitimate entry" of religious actors into civic space. The profile of Muslim American civic participation emphasizes tolerance, dialogue, and civil discourse. It draws out values common to both Islam and American civic norms, including truthfulness, nonviolence, negotiation, and a commitment to social justice. Actions inappropriate to both the Muslim and civic standards of these organizations include public insults or inflammatory remarks, self-isolation and nonparticipation, and divisiveness between groups. The work of community groups like CAIR provides opportunities for Muslims to participate *as Muslims*.

This is not to suggest that other American religious communities do not participate in local or national politics as religious actors. The case of Muslim New Yorkers differs, however, in that their participation falls outside the norm, and must

[100] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 182.

be cultivated and encouraged, whereas the entry of Christian or Jewish values into public debates does not create opposition or suspicion. (I might add that Jewish participation, while normalized in New York City, does in fact create opposition in other parts of the U.S.)

Growing participation from American Muslims has significant consequences for civic life in the American public sphere. The work of Muslim community organizations in New York illustrates another of Asad's points, which is that religious adherents who enter the public sphere necessarily change its "preexisting discursive structure."[101] The ICC and CAIR introduce new discourses (think of Abou-Namouss's comments on *Hardball*, or CAIR's battle to change the public perception of Debbie Almontaser), which result in "the disruption of established assumptions structuring debates in the public sphere."

The presence of a Muslim voter bloc, state legislators, senators, Capitol Hill interns, and community activists alters the perception of non-Muslim Americans. It troubles the double standard held by many non-Muslim Americans that situates Muslims as ruled by their religious convictions, whereas Christians (and sometimes Jews) are not pigeonholed as merely agents of their faith when they vote, lobby, rally, or write a letter to the editor. Their participation as members of their faith goes largely untroubled and unquestioned. CAIR's work takes it as a given that the same people who watch films with biased portrayals of Muslims, listen to hate speech on radio programs, or look with suspicion on their neighborhood mosque are the *same* people who make decisions at the community, state and national levels through their civic lives, and their convictions stay with them throughout the process. The ICC

[101] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 185.

recognizes the same continuity by caring for its constituents in matters of community as well as matters of faith.

I established in the second chapter some of the misgivings American Muslims may have about participating in American political or civic life. Despite these potential obstacles, both religious organizations like the ICC and community/advocacy organizations like CAIR maintain a strong public presence, which indicates that while they have a strong commitment to Muslim values, their approach is a moderate one. It is interesting that the two groups project congruent messages about Islam and American values both to their constituents or members and to the general public. This common message demonstrates that in New York City's Muslim population, civic involvement comes for some Muslims as an extension of their faith. They do not see themselves as compromising *muslim* values in order to be active citizens. In this respect, New York's Muslim population confirms the results of a 2007 Pew Forum survey, which found that seventy-four percent of American Muslims believe they either are not changing much in their religious identity, or are becoming more religious.[102] In New York, this may be due in part to the presence of the Muslim community organizations and their effort to provide advocacy, raise awareness, and create *muslim* opportunities for participation. They cast care for the community, the pursuit of justice, and political participation as Muslim values as well as American ones, thus encouraging the simultaneous development of both national and religious sources of identity.

---

[102] Pew Research Center, "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," *Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life*, May 22, 2007.

In this way, CAIR and the ICC are not solely agents of integration or assimilation for New York Muslims. Further research may expand the argument that these groups, with their marriage of Muslim and civic values, are a force for what I call "additive assimilation," with its reciprocal reinforcement of two sets of overlapping community values. Unlike previous generations of Muslims who assimilated to American culture and ceased to practice their faith, today's Muslims (both foreign and American-born) may succeed in participating politically, serving their country in various ways, as well as preserving their religious and cultural identity.

The trends noted in this project can undoubtedly benefit from further research comparing the New York context to others. One possibility is a study of mosque or community group public presence in another urban center with a large Muslim population, such as Chicago or Dearborn; another might be a comparative study of different CAIR chapters that analyzes regional differences in operations. I once heard a CAIR-LA (Los Angeles) representative refer to his city as a "media town," which led him to focus on CAIR's public relations work, whereas CAIR-DC, in its offices down the block from the White House, stands to gain much more from concentrated lobbying efforts. Different chapters' adaptations to local contexts provide further evidence of the ways in which American Muslims actively seek inclusion and full participation, seeking out the forms that are most relevant to their communities. Of course, Muslim Americans and their community leaders still face the opposition and antagonism of those who believe American Muslims have a more sinister agenda.

Today, an internet search for the term "CAIR" yields a first page of results mostly connected to the organization's detractors, including CampusWatch, right wing blogs and "news" sites, even an organization called Anti-CAIR, which seeks to "defend the constitution from the Council on American-Islamic Relations." These detractors ignore or discount the language of participation, citizenship and patriotism that is an integral part of the community groups' message. These alarmist internet articles effectively demonstrate the anxieties generated by the growing presence of an American Muslim civic actor, and reveal quite efficiently the contradictions and double standards of the secular norm in American politics and civic life.

Muslims calling for civic participation do not aim for a religious or cultural takeover. With, at the highest estimate, eight million Muslim Americans in a national population of over three hundred million people, "Islamic takeover" is not about to happen through democratic challenge – and nowhere in CAIR's or the ICC's agenda is there any mention of force. The fact that Muslim Americans are mobilizing as a community to participate as citizens indicates a sanctioning and legitimizing of the American government – which flies directly in the face of nearly all their opponents' arguments, who assert that American Muslims only want to undermine the structures of American government.

The work of CAIR and the ICC has brought equality, justice, and enrichment to the lives of many Muslims in America by making Muslim American civic participation viable as well as effective. The groups' sustained positive engagement with American society redefines norms of citizenship in order to re-energize them. As Asad notes, Muslim entry into public life creates a hybrid of religious and social

concerns which some Americans resist and oppose – but the hybrid of *muslim* participation, far from threatening American civic ideals, strives for them, and affords Muslim Americans a chance to contribute to the civic culture and well-being of their country.

Glossary of Arabic Terms

Allah: God.

dar al-'ahd: lit., Abode of Treaty;" in fiqh, realm of non-Muslim rule where Muslims coexist but do not assimilate.

dar al-harb: lit., "Abode of War;" in fiqh, any area populated by non-Muslims.

dar al-Islam: Abode of Islam. In fiqh, the realm of Muslims and Islamic rule.

Eid ul-Fitr: Feast of the Fast Breaking, occurs on the last day of Ramadan.

Eid ul-Adha: Feast of the Sacrifice, on which Muslims traditionally slaughter a sheep or goat.

fiqh: Islamic jurisprudence.

hadith: collection of narratives about the Prophet Muhammad's life and sayings.

haram: from the root ha-ra-ma, lit. "forbidden," but also translated as "sacred" or "sanctified."

intifada: lit., shaking off. Also refers to Palestinian uprisings against Israelis.

jami'i: congregation or collective; Muslims gathered together for prayer.

khutba: sermon given by an imam during Friday midday prayers at a mosque; may also be given by a political leader.

khufr: unbelief or heresy.

madrassa: lit., school, deriving from the verb da-ra-sa, to study.

masjid: a mosque.

mufti: a religious scholar.

Muhammad: God's last prophet, to whom the Qur'an was revealed by the angel Gabriel.

qiblah: direction of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, toward which Muslims pray.

Qur'an: lit., "that which has been recited." The word of Allah as recited by the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad.

Ramadan: the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, during which Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset.

umma: lit., nation. The global community of Muslims.

Works Cited and Consulted

Abowd, Mary. "Arab-Americans Suffer Hatred After Bombing." *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 13, 1995.

American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA). "Cordoba Bread Fest: Children of Abraham Break Bread Together." http://www.asmasociety.org/calendar/pastevents.html (accessed April, 2010).

Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Bakalian, Anny, and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, eds. *Backlash 9/11: Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans Respond*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009.

Barnes, Julian E. "Protestors Say a New Movie Likens Islam to Terrorism." *The New York Times*, November 7, 1988.

Bay, Willow. "Director Ed Zwick Defends 'The Siege.'" *CNN Web Post*, November 10, 1998. http://www.cnn.com/SHOWBIZ/Movies/9811/10/siege/ (accessed December 2009).

Benson, Kathleen, and Philip M. Kayal, eds. *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002.

Brooke, James. "Attacks on U.S. Muslims Surge Even as Their Faith Takes Hold." *The NewYork Times*, August 28, 1995.

Bukhari, Zahid H., and Sulayman S. Nyang, eds. *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square: Hopes, Fears and Aspirations*. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2004.

CAIR-NY Website. http://www.cair-ny.org (accessed September 2009 – March 2010).

Calhoun, Craig, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992.

Cherry, Conrad, ed. *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

CNBC, Inc., "Profile: Omar Saleem Abu-Namous, chief imam for New York Islamic Cultural Center, discusses his views on the terrorist attacks." *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, online transcript, November 6, 2001 (accessed December 2009).

Cristillo, Louis Abdellatif. "The Muslim Population of New York City." Unpublished article, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Crossley, Nick, and John Michael Roberts. *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Dunlap, David W. "Michael A. McCarthy, 68, Architect of Mosque on Upper East Side." *The New York Times,* July 18, 2002.

Elliott, Andrea. "Federal Panel Finds Bias in Ouster of Principal." *The New York Times*, March 10, 2010.

Foner, Nancy, ed. *Wounded City: The Social Impact of 9/11*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005.

france24.com. "Swing States targeted with 'anti-Muslim propaganda.'" http://observers.france24.com/en/content/20081013-swing-states-anti-muslim-propaganda-28-m-obsession-raphael-shore.

Goodstein, Laurie. "New York Cleric's Departure from Mosque Leaves Mystery." *The New York Times*, October 23, 2001.

Gottschalk, Peter and Gabriel Greenberg. *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008.

Guessous, Nadia. "Women, Gender and Political Violence in Morocco 1956-1999." Unpublished manuscript.

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, and Jane Idleman Smith, eds. *Muslim Communities in North America*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, ed. *The Muslims of America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Hate Hurts America Coalition. "The Coalition." http://www.hatehurtsamerica.com/?page_id=8.

Hays, Tom. "NYPD Rewords Report That Some Say Insulted Muslims." *Associated Press*, September 9, 2009.

Hefner, Robert. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Hefner, Robert. "Public Islam and the Problem of Democratization." *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 62 No. 4 (2001), 491-514.

Hoexter, Miriam, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Nehemia Levtzion. *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Irwin, Jim. "Muslim groups, Arab-Americans decry attacks, plead for restraint, worry about harassment." *Associated Press Newswires*, September 11, 2001.

Karlinsky, Martin F. "Jewish-Islamic Relations." *The New York Times*, October 28, 2001.

Lewis, Paul. "Mosque Rising is a First in New York." *The New York Times*, September 26, 1988.

Masoud, Tarek E. "America Muslims: Be American." *The Wall Street Journal*, September 14, 2001.

McCoy, Kevin. "Devout Muslim Funeral for Vendor." *The New York Daily News*, February 12, 1999.

Metcalf, Barbara Daly, ed. *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996.

Mustafa, Nadia. "A Rift Among Muslims." *Time*, November 5, 2001.

Patel, Faiza. "Welcome NYPD Terror Revisions Should be Widely Distributed." *New York Law Journal*, September 23, 2009.

Pew Research Center. "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream." *Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life*, May 22, 2007.

Pyle, Richard. "Islamic Leader, Adherents Condemn WTC Terrorism." *Associated Press Newswires*, September 14, 2001.

Reuters News. "New York Muslim Leader Forges Close Ties With City's Jews." *Reuters*, May 16, 2008.

Semple, Kirk. "Council Votes for Two Muslim School Holidays." *The New York Times*, July 1, 2009.

Smith, Jane I. *Islam in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Steinfels, Peter. "For New York Muslims, a Soaring Dome is Ready." *The New York Times*, April 16, 1991.

The Interchurch Center Website. http://www.interchurch-center.org (accessed March 2010).

The New York Times. 1996. "Postings: $10 Million, 30,000-Square-Foot Project; School Building to Rise Next to 96th St. Mosque." May 26.

The NewYork Times, 2001. "Where to Get Information: A List of Emergency Numbers and Web Sites." September 15.

Theoharis, Jeanne. "Guantánamo at Home." *The Nation*, April 20, 2009. http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090420/theoharis (accessed April 2010).

Venugopal, Arun. "NYC Muslims React to Obama's Cairo Address." *WNYC News*, June 4, 2009. http://blogs.wnyc.org/news/2009/06/04/nyc-muslims-react-to-obamas-cairo-address/ (accessed March 2010).

Wakin, Daniel J. "New Head of Mosque Wants Proof." *The New York Times*, November 2, 2001.

Warner, R. Stephen, and Judith Wittner, eds. *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.

Widiadana, Rita A. "New York Islamic Center Promotes Interfaith Relations." *The Jakarta Post*, October 22, 2003.