Chávez and the UFW. Later, it pursued collective bargaining for home care workers who care for the elderly in private homes. [For more on the UDWA, see Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein, *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 143–48, 207–208, 212.]

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22. Jennifer Gordon, "Immigrants Fight the Power," *The Nation*, Jan. 3, 2000, 16–20.

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# ASHRAF ZAHEDI
# Muslim American Women After 9/11

The date September 11, 2001, has become a defining moment in U.S. history. On that day, four airplanes crossing U.S. territory were hijacked by al-Qaeda terrorists. Two of the planes flew into and collapsed the twin towers of the World Trade Center. Another targeted the Pentagon, and a fourth was brought down by passengers before it could be used as a weapon. In response, the government launched a global war on terrorism, targeting al-Qaeda, the organization responsible for the attacks.

Critics have noted that the war on terrorism has often been conflated with war on Islam. The term Islamaphobia has been coined to describe this intense fear and hatred of Muslims and Muslim culture. In addition, non-Muslims, such as Sikhs, have been mistaken for Muslims and targeted for violence.

Ashraf Zahedi's essay explores how Muslim women in the United States have navigated this fraught political landscape. Zahedi, a sociologist, interviewed women of diverse ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds as part of her research. She also draws on images of Muslim women in the mainstream media and in political discourse, and she tells us about women's leadership roles in several American Muslim organizations. Skewering the classic European assumption that veiled Muslim women are passive, uneducated, and monolithically oppressed, Zahedi underscores the variability in contemporary veiling practices. More importantly, we see the wide range of issues about which Muslim women are concerned. As with all the essays and documents in this book, think about how you could use her findings to contradict misinformation and spark constructive dialogue.

The events of 11 September 2001 are clearly marked as transformative events in the history of the United States of America. These events shattered Americans' sense of security and heightened their anxiety. While the majority of Americans feared potential future terrorist attacks, Muslim Americans not only feared such attacks but also feared attacks from their fellow Americans.

Unfortunately, this was not an unfounded fear. Many Americans associated Muslim Americans with the attackers who happened to be Muslims. Public frustration and misplaced anger, in many cases, have led to violence against

Muslim men and women or those perceived as Muslims, such as Sikh men wearing turbans and beards. They have been chased, attacked verbally and attacked physically, resulting in a number of deaths, Among Muslim women, those wearing headscarves or the hijab were the most identifiable Muslims and got the brunt of the hate and harassment.

Concerned with the negative public perception of Islam and Muslims, some Muslim women have retreated to their own communities. Other women, however, have chosen to engage non-Muslims and serve as public educators. They have used public spaces available to them to explain their religion, affirm their membership in American society, and assert their identities as Muslim, American and women. This has been a major shift from keeping a low socio-political profile, as had been the case before 11 September, to demonstrating their integration in American society and claiming their place in civic and political spaces.

This [essay] seeks to explain the socio-political dimension of "Otherization" of Muslim women and examines the impact of the 11 September events on their lives. These events paradoxically posed challenges to their civil rights as American citizens while serving to present them with opportunities to engage with Americans at large and move from the margin to the mainstream. Their efforts in engaging Americans, however, have been hampered by discriminatory anti-Muslim sentiments including racial profiling and hate crimes. Their efforts have also been eclipsed by two opposing discourses on Muslim women, Orientalism and Islamic fundamentalism, which essentialize the image and meaning of Muslim womanhood. Despite the odds, Muslim American women have been taking an active role in simultaneously challenging and changing the singular image imposed on them by Orientalists and fundamentalists alike and carving a space for themselves as Muslim American women.

Following 11 September, many Muslims and ethnic minorities experienced racial profiling, hatred and hate crimes; however, the focus of this article is hijab-wearing immigrant Muslim American women. Although African-American Muslim women observe the hijab as well, their head covers and style of wearing the hijab draw on African tradition and reflect their African-American identity. Often they do not cover their ears and necks while hijab-wearing immigrant Muslim women do. The difference in style of hijab signifies their different ethnic identity. Hijab-wearing first- and second-generation immigrant Muslim women are more likely to be associated with Islam and foreignness. What is more, African-American Muslims and immigrant Muslims have different ethno-racial histories and are divided on ethnicity, race, social class, and claims of Islamic authenticity and American nativism. While both groups have experienced ethnic, racial and religious discrimination, ... "after 9/11 it was better to be African Americans than immigrant Muslims." African-Americans were regarded more as Americans and less as Muslims while the opposite was true for immigrant Muslim Americans.[1] Thus the latter have been the subject of mistrust and misplaced anger following 11 September. With these differences in mind, I have chosen to focus on immigrant Muslim women, both the first generation and second generation born in the United States.

... I have drawn on different research methods. ... I have consulted the reports of Muslim civic and community organizations, attended Muslims' public events, reviewed academic literature, and interviewed twenty-four first- and second-generation immigrant Muslim women. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted individually. In conducting this research, I have drawn upon my training as a sociologist, my religious background as a Muslim woman and my relations with Muslim organizations.

I have changed interviewees' names to protect their identities. These women belong to diverse ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds. Their national origins are: Pakistan; India; Bangladesh; Syria; Palestine; Sudan; Eritrea; and Montenegro (former Yugoslavia). The interviewees were mostly middle class and college educated, as these are often the characteristics of the members of formal community and civic organizations. Their age ranged from 23 to 50 and all except two of them wear the hijab. They work for Muslim organizations in different capacities: as staff, attorney and board members. ...

Muslims have had a long history in the United States. Amber Haque believes that the "first Muslims may have arrived in the Americas as early as 1178, when Chinese Muslim sailors landed on the West Coast." Of the estimated 6 to 10 million African slaves who came to the United States in later centuries, about 30 percent

of them were Muslims. Arab Muslims migrated to America between 1870 and World War II. They came from Greater Syria (Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinians, Israel, Jordan and possibly Iraq), which was under Ottoman rule. Since World War II, and particularly after the long-standing national origin quota was repealed and the Immigration Act of 1965 was adopted, Muslim migration to the United States has increased significantly. Political upheavals, wars, and revolutions have expedited Muslims' migration from all over the world.[2]

American Muslims enjoy a great diversity. According to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, "The three major ethnic groups in the Muslim community are South Asian (32 percent), Arabs (26 percent) and African American (20 percent)." The remaining Muslims come from Africa and Europe. Of the estimated 6 to 7 million Muslim Americans, 36 percent were born in the United States and 64 percent were born in eighty different countries around the world. They are indeed a microcosm of the Muslim world. They have higher levels of education than average Americans and thus enjoy higher incomes and are professionally and economically integrated.[3]

Despite Muslims' long presence in the United States and their diversity in terms of ethnicity, race, national origin, social class, and gender, the American public tends to view them as homogenized and as an undifferentiated distinct religious community. Some Muslims have been in the United States for generations but are still viewed as outsiders . . . and as the perpetual "Other."[4]

Much like the Europeans, the Americans' perceptions of the Muslim Other were shaped by the ideology of the Crusades Wars, which promoted the superiority of Christianity. Christian missionaries were important players in shaping these perceptions by providing "the lens through which" people of the West saw Muslims.[5] Americans' views of Muslims had also been influenced by the European colonial constructs of the colonized as less civilized people who led inferior religious and social lives compared to the Europeans: these constructs justified Europe's civilizing mission. . . .

The United States inherited the European Orientalist legacy and over time constructed its own. Scores of scholars have examined this construct and how Orientalism has made its way into American culture. Nineteenth-century American literature (novels, travel books,

missionary reports and books and political writings) has contributed to the making of American Orientalism. These literary works have been, to varying degrees, tainted by the authors' Orientalist views and ideological biases portraying the people of the so-called Orient, including Muslims, as inferior and unworthy others. Many travel writers . . . "focused on the picturesqueness and exoticism of the 'backward' Eastern races." The much-celebrated Mark Twain whose books were widely read viewed Muslims as "a people by nature and training filthy, brutish, ignorant, unprogressive [and] superstitious."[6]

Through text and images, the widely circulated magazine, *National Geographic*, contributed to the construct of American Orientalism by depicting African, Asians, Arabs, and Muslims as backward. The film industry has also been a significant player in the dissemination of Orientalist ideology. . . . Hollywood popular movies and television sitcoms have caricaturized Muslims, continuously casting their Muslim characters as villains, violent and fanatical. . . .[7]

What is more, Orientalist ideology is reflected in political writings and the view of many American political writers and politicians, . . . [often shaping] US foreign policy toward Muslim countries. Sharing this mindset, the American mass media have constructed a negative image of Muslims and justified unfair American policies in the region. Moreover, they have characterized the national aspirations and political struggles of the people of the Muslim world as violent acts of terrorism. In short, they have demonized the political forces critical of the United States.[8]

Unfortunately, the events of 11 September and the religious background of the attackers have intensified negative perceptions about Muslims. Now Muslims are associated with terrorism, and Islam as a belief system is blamed. Islam is generally perceived as archaic, barbaric, irrational and a "religion of violence and aggression that supports terrorism."[9]

Muslim women have shared the socio-political characterization of "Other" imposed on them. Yet, the Otherization of Muslim women has had a gender dimension as well. The Muslim female body, covered by the veil, serves as context for Otherization. Western perceptions of the veil and the social meaning they have assigned to it have led westerners to view the veil as symbolic of Muslim women's oppression. They have reduced the multifaceted

oppression of women in the Islamic world to the veil and concealment of the female body.

Although the veil is often associated with Islam, research indicates that veiling, as a status symbol, was practiced in Persia and the Byzantine before the advent of Islam. The practice of veiling, as a form of modesty, was observed in some Jewish and Christian communities as well. Early Muslims appropriated the veil as a result of their exposure to the cultures of conquered countries.[10]

In most contemporary Muslim countries, the practice of veiling has limited application and many observant Muslim women wear head scarves along with loose clothing, the hijab. Only two Muslim countries have mandatory veil (Saudi Arabia) and hijab (Iran); yet in the western mind, the image of Muslim women has been tied to the singular image of the veil. Western perceptions of the veil, as will be discussed, continue to essentialize Muslim women. In the veil or hijab, Muslim women are perceived as passive, oppressed and at the mercy of the male members of their family. Like many Muslim women throughout the world, Muslim American women challenge this portrayal.

Muslim American women, like other Americans, were devastated by the human tragedy of 11 September. They joined the search and rescue efforts; they donated money and blood. They mourned the death and destruction. They affirmed their loyalty to America, condemned acts of terror and reached out to other Americans; yet the legal system that was supposed to protect them worked to their disadvantage.

Drawing on public support for civil rights limitations for Muslims and building on the existing feeling of Otherization of Muslims, the House and Senate, without much critical discussion, passed the USA-Patriot Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001). The Patriot Act expanded the power of the US government. This expansion of power allowed the government, in the name of security, to wire tap Muslims' conversations, seize their property, and freeze their bank accounts.[11]

In the politically and emotionally charged environment of post-11 September, some directed their frustration and anger toward Muslims. According to the FBI, the number of hate crimes against Muslims rose from twenty-eight in 2000 to 481 in 2001, a seventeen fold increase. Hate crimes caused the deaths of Muslim and

Sikh men. The Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Muslim civil rights organization, reported 1,717 incidents of "backlash discrimination against Muslims" between 11 September 2000 and February 2001. Hate incidents ranged from verbal assault to damage to property to vandalism of mosques and Muslim organizations.[12]

Hijab-wearing women received the brunt of hate incidents in the first few years after 11 September. As a result, some women stayed home, others went out only in groups or in the company of non-Muslims. Muslim organizations and mosques developed safety tips for women and children. . . . While sharing the national pains of 11 September, they also had to endure the pain of being suspects, thereby carrying multiple burdens. Many women's husbands, fathers, brothers and sons were detained based on the Patriot Act.[13] . . . These women had to deal with the emotional, legal, political and financial impacts of their male relatives' detention. In the climate of hyper-patriotism, their troubles did not get much public attention. Rather, the public scene was saturated with images and symbols of American unity: American flags were displayed everywhere—houses, shops, buildings and even cars. Some people wore t-shirts with the American flag on the front and patriotic phrases on the back. Assortments of merchandise with flags or patriotic slogans flooded the market. In that political climate, some Americans did not view Muslim Americans as belonging to America and challenged their American-ness. Many Muslims shared conflicting feelings like those of Noor, one of the interviewees for this research: "I recall particularly the level of anger that existed, and the way in which American patriotism felt like an assault on ethnic and religious minorities. The number of flags waving everywhere was on the one hand reassuring, but on the other felt like a political statement against immigrants and non-Christian Americans."

Ironically, the hijab that was supposed to bring Muslim women anonymity brought unwanted attention. As Noor remarked, "Every day since 9/11 has reminded me vividly that I will never be anonymous again." A large number of the Muslim women I interviewed experienced stares, dirty looks, verbal attack, name-calling, harassment, and hate incidents. In the hijab, they were, as Noor put it, a "moving target." Twenty-two out of twenty-four interviewees indicated that they were yelled at,

chased or tail-gated on high-ways, and told to "go back to your country." Some men spat on women's head-scarves or tried to pull them off.... "Some people tried to light the tips of the scarves with a match to set them on fire."[14] Women I interviewed recalled unpleasant experiences: "I was verbally harassed by a car-load of college-aged guys while I was at an ATM machine, and I've been told to go back to my country more times than I can remember," said Noor. "The worse thing for me has been people yelling out of passing cars," ... remarked Sarah....

... [Due to the] many incidents of hate and discrimination target[ing] women in the hijab, discussions ensued in mosques, Islamic organizations, and on the Internet over the viability of wearing the hijab and the safety of Muslim women. A fatwa or religious decree was issued [by the Muslim Women's League] according to which it was permissible for women to remove their hijab: "If a Muslim woman senses a possibility of danger to herself, adjusting her attire to minimize the chances of physical attack is a logical and Islamically permissible precaution that falls squarely within the Figh [Islamic jurisprudence] principles of necessity and hardship."Muslim leaders validated "Muslim women wearing non-obvious alternative attire such as hats in public."[15]

Interestingly, the harassment of women wearing the hijab had different outcomes. Some took off the hijab; others, however, were more determined to exert their religious identity. Karima, for example, chose to take off her hijab: "Hijab is supposed to provide you with safety; it no longer did, so I removed my hijab," she remarked. Actually, many did, but with much hesitation and with a sense of being disempowered by the hostile political environment. At the same time, other women chose to wear the hijab. Shabana pointed out, "Other Muslim women felt empowered and started wearing the hijab shortly after 9/11." Mahbooba resisted the temptation to take off her hijab: "Even my husband thought at one point that I should [remove my hijab]; however, I refused to give up my Islamic identity." For women such as Mahbooba, the hijab symbolizes their choice of self-presentation and assertion of their identity.

Fortunately, Muslim Americans' experiences with the American public have not been all negative: many non-Muslim Americans, driven by a strong sense of justice and morality,

extended their support to Muslim Americans. One of the highly praised expressions of solidarity with Muslim women was the Scarf Campaign. Jennifer Schock came up with this idea as "a simple gesture of solidarity with Muslim women"; she invited non-Muslim women to wear headscarves for a day. She wanted to convey to Muslim women that they are "not alone." Schock's Scarf Campaign created an opportunity for interaction and dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims. On 8 October 2001, non-Muslim women donned scarves in many cities through out the United States. They gathered in churches, mosques, community centers, and schools to show their solidarity with Muslim women.[16]

Many Muslim American organizations and individuals shared stories of support and sympathy from their neighbors, community members, and interfaith groups: they have received cards, phone messages, and flowers. Across the county, non-Muslim women volunteered to chaperone Muslim women to shopping, medical appointments, and schools to pick up their children. Zarina echoed the appreciation expressed by many Muslim women: "I was pleasantly surprised by the number of average Americans who reached out to us to let us know they stood with us and they were not falling prey to the climate of fear that was quickly taking over the country."

During these trying times, Muslim women established strong ties with other women with whom they otherwise may not have socialized. These newly found friendships have been very important to Muslim women. Noor put it nicely: "The deep and meaningful and dear friendship I have developed with many Christian and Jews and atheists have had a profound impact on my life, my perception of myself, my community and my faith. I wouldn't trade this enhanced self-awareness for anything."

Yet hate incidents continue to be documented. Although ten years have passed since 11 September 2001, anti-Muslim sentiments remain high due to the American led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Displaced anger in the wake of the unsuccessful wars and large numbers of American war casualties has continued to target Muslim Americans. Nevertheless, Muslim American women have continued to speak at interfaith gatherings, appear on television, take part in radio programs, and provide training for corporations, health care providers, and law enforcement authorities. Despite

their efforts, a singular, one-dimensional image continues to be projected on them by Orientalists and Islamic fundamentalists. . . .

The predominant image that outsiders have of Muslim women is one swathed in the veil/hijab. This constructed singular image has overshadowed the racial, ethnic, national, and cultural diversity of Muslim women. Their entire existence has been reduced to their public attire. Yet not all Muslims agree on the Islamic mandate of this attire and draw on Quranic verses to support their position. Many Islamic scholars, such as Leila Ahmed Asma Barlas, and Riffat Hassan, contest the universal use of the hijab and thus do not observe it.[17]

Muslim women choosing the hijab or the veil have emotional, socio-political, and religious rationales for this. The hijab can be functional, providing safety and generating respect. Observing the hijab can serve to gain access to resources and opportunities. Some women use the hijab as a means of "negotiating with patriarchy" and appropriate it to their own advantage. Observing the hijab can secure conservative families' consent, allowing their female members to get an education and seek employment, which in turn can lead to the empowerment of Muslim women. Wearing the hijab can serve as a symbol of political and cultural resistance against the West, as has been the case in Egypt, Turkey and Iran. Some women may use the hijab to challenge the tyranny of fashion and the sexualization of the female body. And last, but not least, wearing the hijab can be based on Muslim women's strong beliefs and their piety.[18]

Muslim women challenge the singular meaning that westerners assign to the hijab and their perception of the veil/hijab as a univocal symbol of women's oppression. As Yasmeen remarked, "Muslim women are viewed as illogical for choosing or complying with a religion that is viewed as oppressive towards women." All interviewees expressed their disappointment with many western feminists for their limited understanding of the hijab and Islam and their views of Muslim women as oppressed victims who need to be saved.

Saving Muslim women has served as an integral part of Orientalist/colonial ideologies. Many scholars have therefore challenged the notion of the Christian West saving supposedly oppressed Muslim women. The scholars ask, "do Muslim women need saving?" And what are Muslim women saved from? Inherent to the concept of saving is the given-ness of the power play: the superiority of the savior and the inferiority of the subjects in need of saving. . . . This form of western "compassion" effectively creates a hierarchy between women and assigns positive meanings to the lives of western women and negative meanings to Muslim ones. Dichotomous notions such as "veiled/unveiled, Islamic/secular, Western/non-Western, and free/unfree" both signify and legitimize this hierarchy.[19]

Despite their criticism of Orientalist feminism and the lack support from American feminists following the tragedy of 11 September, some of the Muslim women I interviewed expressed their willingness to work with American feminists. "While I obviously don't agree with all the premises and goals of western feminism, I do feel there are common challenges. We can stand together against [these challenges] as long as we have clear understanding of Islam's goals for women," Iman remarked. Noor agreed: "I have not worked with [American feminists] nor have they reached out to me . . . I am not opposed to working with them because there is value to exchanging ideas and experiences in order to enhance mutual understanding."

Yet, many interviewees pointed out that they do not share some western feminists' prioritizing of gender over other forms of inequality. Much like other women of color, these women support "the basic premise of universal gender equality but reject the prioritization of gender over race and class." They are engaged in multiple sites of struggle and gender is a part of their struggle. Overall, interviewees expressed a preference for working with third-wave feminists who incorporate the issues of race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, and social class in their gender analysis.[20]

. . . Although some Muslim women are inclined to work with western feminists, others have a limited knowledge of western feminism, its struggles, and its achievements. Jahan's statement that "western feminism does not appeal to me" and Fatama's remark that "I have all the rights in Islam and do not need western feminism" . . . [obscure the possibility that there might be] much to be learned from western feminism. It seems that some Muslim women, while objecting to the essentializing of Muslim women by westerners, do not hesitate to essentialize western feminists. . . . Western feminists are viewed as anti-family, anti-men,

self-centered, and consumed with sexual liberation. These Muslim women's views are influenced by misinformation propagated by conservative forces, secular and religious, of their own communities.[21] . . .

Mainstream western feminists, for their part, will benefit from jettisoning their notion of saving Muslim women and freeing them from oppression. Women's oppression is not a creation of Islam; it is an aspect of patriarchy shared by other religions that have not completed the process of reformation. Islamic reformation has been truncated as a result of western domination and resistance to it. Resistance to foreign domination has diverted national attention to external threats and effectively masked domestic forms of gender oppression. . . .

Many western feminists are driven by their empathy for Muslim women as oppressed women, yet, . . . empathy "does not necessarily lead to insight."[22] Women's oppression has socio-economic, political, and cultural bases and manifests itself in different forms and degrees. Assigning meaning to the female body, covered or concealed, as a site of liberation or oppression is misleading and serves to prevent Muslim women's alliances with women of the West. Liberation and oppression are multilayered and dynamic. Understanding the complexity, . . . is essential for women's alliances. What is more, western women can make an important contribution to the status of Muslim women by demanding that their own governments pursue fair socio-economic and political policies in Muslim societies. By doing so, they can disarm Muslim forces, secular and religious, that have undermined women's rights in the guise of protecting Muslim women. One such force is Islamic fundamentalists.

Islamic fundamentalists aim to construct a singular image of Muslim women. In line with other forms of religious fundamentalism— whether Jewish, Christian, or Hindu—Islamic fundamentalism's agenda for women is framed in the language of care and protection. Control of women is an important element of fundamentalist movements. This control, fundamentalists claim, is for women's good and they have carefully selected self-serving religious texts to support their claim. Fundamentalists tend to refer to religious texts rigidly and literally and to project their interpretation of religious texts as the sole truth: final and unchangeable. Although Islamic fundamentalists tend to favor "puritan and literalist trends

within the Islamic ideological, social, and political traditions," not all of them adhere to extremism and violence. Nevertheless, all Islamic fundamentalists claim to have a monopoly on the truth about Islam and the status of women in Islam. Their truth, however, has been shaped by a patriarchal mindset and misogynist practices. Islamic fundamentalists have constructed one image of Muslim womanhood that is in sharp contrast with multiple images and identities of Muslim women and their varied life experiences.[23]

Muslim women scholars criticize fundamentalists' vision and definition of women and challenge their interpretation of Islamic texts. Azizah Al-Hibri believes that Muslims are bound only by the Qur'an and not its patriarchal interpretations. These scholars argue in favor of historicizing and contextualizing the religious texts; ijtihad, . . . [or adopting] critical thinking that corresponds to the changing times, is central to their arguments . . . Ijtihad "involves a process of recontextualizing the Qur'an through new modes of reading none of which can exhaust it meanings. Verses of the Qur'an fundamentalists rely on so heavily need to be historicised and contextualized rather than blindly followed." Riffat Hassan makes a similar statement: "In every age the Qur'an had to be reread and recontextualized."[24] Islamic fundamentalists, however, stand firm against reform in Islam and, correspondingly, against any change in the status of Muslim women. They have used harsh words for Muslim women who challenge them, accusing them of being agents of western colonialism and working against Islamic societies. . . . Fundamentalists' ideal of authentic Islamic culture can only exist outside history. As the Islam of the seventh century entered different regions and built on existing cultures and traditions, many Islamic cultures emerged. Muslim women of these varying regions and cultures have different views about their Islamic culture and the notion of authenticity. Yet, this belief in authenticizing Muslim women has been shared by some fundamentalist members of Muslim American communities and has impacted gender relations within Muslim American organizations.[25]

Muslim American organizations have played a major role in reaching out to the American public and presenting a peaceful image of Islam and Muslim communities. Embedded in the image of Islam has been the image of hijab-wearing

women. The hijab and the status of Muslim women have been of great interest to the American public and Muslim organizations have created opportunities for Muslim women's engagement with non-Muslims. Although the primary interest of these organizations has been the defense of Islam, the attire of these women has kept gender in the spotlight.

Faced with a barrage of questions about the status of women in Islam, many Muslim women have increased their knowledge of Islam and different interpretations of the Qur'an. Some acknowledge that certain beliefs and attitudes have had a negative impact on the social standing of women in the family and society; they often attribute these negative outcomes to pre-Islamic customs and cultures. These women believe the Qur'an has granted equal status to men and women, but that the male interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith (the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad) have led to social and economic disadvantages for women. They have been revisiting Islamic laws with a new vigor, analyzing the Qur'an, and extracting verses that support gender equality. With knowledge of Islam and dedication to the faith, Muslim American women have been serving as public educators.

As my interviewees and I have observed, Muslim American organizations have experienced an increase in women's participation after 11 September. These women, moved by their own agency and the desire to depict an accurate picture of a true Islam, have been engaged at every level of civic activity, some becoming the public face of their organizations. However, although there has been a significant increase in Muslim women's civic participation, the majority of these women have been volunteers and not part of a decision-making body. Even those in paid positions often lack organizational authority. Like other organizations, secular and religious, glass ceilings have been at play in Muslim American organizations. The interplay of gender, financial resources, and politics has kept many women out of the boardrooms. Since major donors to Muslim organizations are often men, they tend to support the board membership of men and prefer men for important organizational positions. Some women who have experienced this glass ceiling have chosen to form their own organizations. In small women-run organizations such as the Muslim Women's League and Muslim Women's Lawyers for Human Rights,

women do fill the boardrooms and exercise organizational authority. . . .

. . . The increased number of women board members of local chapters of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), and the recent election of Ingrid Mattson, a hijab-wearing Canadian-American Muslim convert, to the presidency of one of the largest Muslim organization in the USA, the Islamic Association of North American (ISNA), testify to changing tides. The glass ceiling may be broken [once] but the question remains: is Mattson in a position to advance gender issues? Wafa, [one interviewee,] believed Mattson "cannot afford to focus on women. She cannot alienate the others [men]. She is the first woman and needs to succeed to be politically effective (given the conservative framework of the ISNA)." . . .

While some smaller organizations such as the Muslim Women's League, Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights, and the American Society for Muslim Advancement have both hijab-wearing and non-hijab-wearing women on the board, women in hijab are still the dominant image of Muslim woman in larger Muslim organizations. Although non-hijab-wearing women staff these organizations, the two prominent Muslim organizations, CAIR and ISNA, have only hijab-wearing women officially representing them. Hijab-wearing Noor [commented].

> Who gets to speak for Islam and Muslims with credibility and authority and truth has become only more complex since 9/11, particularly for women. Many mainstream Muslim leaders and organizations have been hesitant at least, and downright oppositional at worst, to the possibility of a non-hijab-wearing Muslim women speaker representing Islam. This symbol of modesty has become more and more a construction of Muslim womanhood—and has therefore placed a difficult question before Muslim women in public roles on behalf of the community . . . women feel obligated to wear hijab because of their public role.

In a way, the hijab, . . . "has become the litmus test of a Muslim women's piety" and those not "covering their hair and throat are judged as women" who have not reached the ideal "level of devotion to God." Some Muslim American organizations have promoted the hijab as an essential aspect of Muslim women's image and identity. Non-hijab-wearing Muslim women are highly critical of this singular image of Muslim women: they believe, as Saba said, that "beliefs are personal and private and

should not be publicly displayed. I do not want to wear my beliefs outside. I am a Muslim but hijab does not define me or my beliefs." They would like to see multiple images of Muslim women being allowed to surface at the high levels of Muslim American organizations.[26]

In the post-11 September era, Muslim American women have played an important role in shaping public perception of Islam and women in Islam. They are in a position to redefine the meaning of women in Islam, thereby shaping the meaning of American Islam. American Islam, in turn, has the potential to inspire the quest for reform in Islam worldwide. The amazing diversity of Muslim American women allows them to be culturally connected to all parts of the world and yet be truly Americans. Their unique position as Muslims and as believers in American values—liberty, personal rights, and democracy—provides them with a great opportunity to be agents of change both in the United States and, by extension, the world over.

## NOTES

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## Wilma Mankiller and Michael Wallis, A Chief and Her People

Wilma Mankiller (1945–2010) served from 1985–1995 as the first female principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, the second-largest indigenous group in the United States. She received *Ms.* magazine's Woman of the Year for 1987, the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1988, and was inducted in the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1993. In an obituary published by *Ms.* magazine, Mankiller was described as making "great strides to improve health, education, housing, utilities management, and tribal government during her time as chief. She also devoted much of her time to civil rights work, focusing largely on women's rights."*

The introduction to Mankiller's autobiography, written collaboratively by Mankiller and historian-biographer-reporter Michael Wallis provides an overview of Mankiller's life. It introduces the land and the community that inspired her political activism. The excerpt and the rest of the autobiography also highlight how Mankiller's commitments and achievements as a female indigenous political leader were shaped by a longer history. Mankiller felt that her life was intertwined with the forced removal of the Cherokee Nation (through the Trail of Tears) from the U.S. Southeast to the central plains in the 1830s. Mankiller's ownership of land traced back to the 1887 Dawes Severalty Act, which promised allotments of land in exchange for indigenous people giving up sovereignty, communal living, and reservations. The Cherokee were able to prevent tribal termination, but they faced steady pressure to assimilate culturally. These pressures intensified after World War II through the Termination Policy (1953–1968), which sought once again to relocate native people, this time to urban centers such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis. Mankiller's parents moved the family to San Francisco when she was 10. The ghettoization and poverty that "urban Indians" faced in cities as well as on reservations led to the emergence of an American Indian Movement during the 1960s. Inspired by black liberation and Third World liberation movements of that time, the movement attracted Wilma Mankiller, then a young mother. Her relocation back to Cherokee lands in Oklahoma and her political ascendancy represent the culmination of this longer history of oppression and resistance.

Wilma Mankiller's election to principal chief also resonated with an even longer history of indigenous women. Historian Theda Perdue argues that prior to European contact, Cherokee women held great authority and power. Women farmed, controlling a steady food supply for their communities. Kinship, clans,