

## **The Black Muslim Scare of the Twentieth Century:**

### **The History of State Islamophobia and Its Post-9/11 Variations**

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Though Islamophobia has deep roots in both American culture and U.S. society, its vitality in those domains is a result, at least in part, of the state repression of political dissent organized around Islamic symbols and themes. Long before 9/11, the U.S. government was concerned about the possibility that Muslims on American soil would challenge the political status quo. Beginning in the 1930s, this fear resulted in formal government surveillance and prosecution of African American Muslim civil and religious organizations and their members. Organized and state-supported Islamophobia was not confined to the use of state surveillance, local police departments, and the U.S. courts. After World War II, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) used mainstream media to prosecute a war of disinformation about Muslim groups, and by the 1960s, engaged in aggressive counter-intelligence to repress what it deemed to be the threat of political radicalism among Muslim Americans.

Previous scholarship on images of Muslims and Islam has exposed the entanglement of anti-Islamic views with U.S. politics. From the election of 1800, when John Adams and Thomas Jefferson referred to each other as oriental despots and Mahometans to the evocation of Muslims

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in the repression of Mormons, Islam was already a potent symbol in U.S. electoral politics in nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Islam's symbolic power was resurrected in the twentieth century when the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, and Muhammad Ali came to represent, respectively, the greatest threat to the liberal promise of civil rights, a strong domestic voice for the rising tide of color and pan-Africanism, and perhaps the most prominent symbol of domestic resistance to the Vietnam war.<sup>2</sup> With the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the labeling of Islam as a form of anti-Americanism only rose.<sup>3</sup> By the time of the 9/11 attacks, the association of all Muslims and Islamic religion with violence, misogyny, and general backwardness had already become an entrenched form of conventional wisdom in some policy circles, especially among neo-conservatives.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars have documented the consequences of such fears, images, and appropriations in U.S. politics and society before, but they have not yet paid ample attention to the role of the state and particularly the FBI in producing such irruptions and iterations of Islamophobia. This chapter explores the reasons for and forms of government surveillance, media manipulation, and finally counter-intelligence behind the making of Islamophobia in the twentieth century. It argues that though Islamophobia may be a social anxiety, its salience in U.S. society is not exclusively the reflection of certain cultural and political interests, including those of *some* evangelical Christians, pro-Israeli activists, academic orientalist, and mass media; Islamophobia is also the product of the state's legal and extra-legal attempts to control, discipline, and punish Muslim American individuals and organizations.

The chapter examines the anatomy of state Islamophobia directed toward African American Muslim groups and other black religious or political activists associated with Muslims or Islamic ideas or symbols. In order to show the dynamic nature of changing state policies

toward domestic black Muslim populations, the first section of the paper, a prologue, charts the federal government's and other interest groups' interactions with enslaved Muslims in the antebellum era. Enslaved U.S. Muslims played key symbolic roles in antebellum debates over slavery and emancipation, market capitalism, and evangelical Christian missions. A few such as Abdul Rahman Ibrahima (c. 1762-1829) and Lamén Kebe (ca. 1767 - ? ) were genuine American celebrities and the federal government took extraordinary measures to intervene on behalf of individuals whom, despite their long residence on American soil, the government defined as foreigners. These Muslim "foreigners" were the friendly kind—friendly, that is, to the interests of certain antebellum political and religious groups.

When slavery ended in 1865, however, the image of the Muslim as the friendly foreigner disappeared. With the exception of an occasional federal judicial decision regarding the ability of Muslims to integrate into American culture and the banning of polygamists from entering the country in 1891, the federal government seems to have had little to say about its domestic Muslim populations, most of whom were Gilded Age immigrants from the Ottoman Empire. Important legal cases questioning the whiteness and assimilability of Muslim immigrants arose in the period, but there was little guidance from the executive or legislative branches regarding the relatively small numbers of Muslims who lived in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

By the 1920s, this federal silence toward domestic Muslims began to change. The second section of the chapter examines the growth of Islam in various organizational guises during the interwar period, showing how Muslim American groups such as the Moslem Welfare Society of Sunni Muslim missionary Sattī Majīd, the Nation of Islam, and the Moorish Science Temple became targets of the FBI's RACON, an wartime investigation that attempted to collect all-known instances of "Foreign-Inspired Agitation Among the American Negroes."<sup>6</sup> Then, the third

section analyzes the development of war-time Islamophobia by scrutinizing what I have dubbed the Black Muslim Scare of the 1960s. In the context of the Cold War and the conflict in Vietnam, the Nation of Islam, above all other Muslim groups, became the focus of FBI surveillance, disinformation campaigns, and counter-intelligence activities. A conclusion examines the reverberation of the Black Muslim Scare in the post-9/11 period.

### **Prologue: Black Muslims as Friendly Foreigners**

Muslims were consequential figures in Anglo-American history from the eighteenth-century onward. Some of them were among the most educated Americans of the era—of any race or class. These elites were literate in Arabic and often fluent in more than one language. They had ties not only to their homelands but also to global Muslim networks of scholarship, trade, diplomacy, and travel. Contrary to the images that most Anglo Americans had of Africa, these Muslims came from cultures that celebrated literacy, scholarship, calligraphy, poetry, and Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam in which Muslims cultivate personal and intimate relationships with God.<sup>7</sup>

Muslims in the thirteen colonies and the United States may have numbered in the tens of thousands--though the number of Muslims in other parts of the Americas was surely much higher. Historian Allan Austin has reckoned between 1711 and 1808, about five to ten percent, perhaps as many as thirty to forty thousand of slaves brought to the thirteen colonies and the United States, were Muslim. Austin traces their roots mainly to Senegambia, “the source for the most sought-after slaves, especially by American slavers working fast between the end of the Revolutionary War [in 1783] and January 1, 1808,” when the U.S. officially outlawed the

international (but not the domestic) slave trade.<sup>8</sup> Historian Michael Gomez gives similar figures, estimating that 255,000 of the 481,000 first-generation Africans transported to British North America were inhabitants of African locales where Muslims lived or ruled. Gomez has written that thousands or perhaps tens of thousands of African Americans may have been raised as Muslims.<sup>9</sup>

Setting aside the question about population size, the important point is that, whatever their number, educated Muslims such had a disproportionate impact on U.S. political discourse in the antebellum period. Since large numbers of Americans, slave or free, were still illiterate in this era, those slaves who could write attracted the attention of planters and other elites, including merchants. Some of these persons became genuine American and even trans-Atlantic celebrities. Long before the United States declared its independence, for example, Job Ben Solomon (c. 1701– c. 1773) became a figure of renown on both sides of the Atlantic. According to his biography, one of the earliest English-language biographies of an African slave, Job was born Ayuba or Hyuba, Boon Salumena Jallo (Job, Son of Solomon, of the Fulbe tribe) around 1701 in Boonda, also known as Bundu, in eastern Senegal.<sup>10</sup> He was the child of an imam, or religious scholar and leader, and thus educated in qur'anic Arabic and Islamic studies. During his ten years, he married twice and had four children. Hyuba, like many in Africa, was himself a slave trader. In 1730, on a journey to a port along the Gambia River where he hoped to sell two slaves, Hyuba was abducted and enslaved.

Job was taken to Maryland, where he grew tobacco and herded livestock. He also wrote a letter in Arabic to his father, asking for his help. Though a confusing series of events, James Oglethorpe, a member of the British Parliament and founder of Georgia, discovered this letter and the unusually well-educated man who wrote it. In 1733 Oglethorpe ordered the letter

translated into English and so impressed by Job's story, he purchased Job's bond and had him brought to England, where he introduced him to nobles and members of the Royal Court.

Job was a religious man whose devotions, fasting, temperance, and food preparations—he butchered his own meat in order to make it *halal*, or permissible—were seen as noble by his English hosts. He was an excellent conversation partner who refused to convert to Christianity, despite reading the New Testament in Arabic. Job challenged the doctrine of Trinity, observing that the word “trinity” was not included in the New Testament and expressed his concern that his English brothers and sisters were being led to engage in *shirk*, the association of anything with the one God. Job insisted that God was not three in number but one; even Prophet Jesus, who was born of a virgin and who performed miracles, was not God, he said. If his English sponsors were disappointed by Job's refusal to convert to Christianity, their disappointment was not recorded by Thomas Bluett, Job's biographer. Bluett was happy to note, however, that Job was especially critical of the English Protestants' political and religious rivals, the Roman Catholics, whose African missionaries practiced idolatry, he argued.

Perhaps the lack of disappointment over Job's failure to convert to Christianity was because his sponsors had different plans in mind for Job's future. Around 1734 the Royal African Company transported Job to West Africa, where it was thought that he might be able to advance English commercial interests as an employee of the company. Though this did not occur, Job would live on in Anglophone literature; his biography was one of the earliest published English-language slave narratives.<sup>11</sup>

Job's relationship with his Anglo sponsors was an important precursor to Americans' later patronage of certain Muslim Americans. It helps to identify the differing interests that

shaped Anglo and later Anglo American interactions with the Muslim other in the colonial versus antebellum eras. Job's return to Africa was not made conditional on his promise to convert the "heathen" to Christianity nor was it explained as an expression of anti-slavery sentiment. Neither Job nor his sponsors seemed to oppose slavery. His return to Africa, like that of later Muslim Americans, was seen instead as having potential economic benefit through the establishment of trade networks. Job's repatriation served the interests of those merchants who wished to develop English-speaking native agents in West Africa, and in so doing, anticipated a larger trend in the antebellum United States.

In a similar fashion enslaved African American Muslim Abdul Rahman Ibrahima was willing to entertain the idea of working for U.S. business interests once his sponsors sent him and his family back to West Africa. But Ibrahima was willing to go further. He pretended to convert to Christianity and joined his northern abolitionist sponsors in criticizing slavery. His interaction with the state and its competing interests is a tale whose implications are important for understanding antebellum U.S. history and especially the early relationships between the U.S. state and the Muslims under its authority.<sup>12</sup>

This nineteenth-century American celebrity, an ethnic Fulbe, was born the child of a Muslim leader in Futa Jalon, located in the contemporary West African nation of Guinea. Ibrahima studied in both Jenne and Timbuktu, two important centers of Islamic learning. Like many educated people of his era, he could read and write in Arabic. In 1788, during a war to gain new territories for his clan, Ibrahima became a prisoner of war and was enslaved. He was transported to the West Indies and then to New Orleans, Louisiana. He finally settled in Natchez, Mississippi, where he married a Christian woman, Isabella, and had several children.<sup>13</sup>

Though he was apparently known as a “Muslim prince” in his local community, it was not until the 1820s that Ibrahima became a national celebrity. In 1826, he wrote to his father, asking him to pay whatever ransom was required to free him. With the help of local whites, the letter was sent to one of Mississippi’s U.S. senators, then to the U.S. consul in Morocco, and finally to Secretary of State Henry Clay. Secretary Clay apparently intervened in the case because he thought that freeing him might help smooth relations with the North African Barbary states with which the United States military had fought two wars—one from 1801 to 1805 and the other from 1815 to 1816. Why did Clay think that the freeing of a Muslim from West Africa might have some effect on North African Muslim leaders? This was no simple error of geography. It was also an expression of Clay’s racialist thinking. Like other slave holders, Clay likely thought of Muslim slaves literally as a “breed apart.” The elites among them were seen not only as better educated but also as more “civilized” than non-Muslim slaves and thus, it was assumed, these Muslims had to be not only from different religious and ethnic communities but also from different racial stock. Ibrahima could not possibly be of pure “Negro” origins; for Clay and others like him, Ibrahima must have had Arab or Moorish blood in his veins. Some black Americans held to similar views, often analyzing the racial, religious, and ethnic backgrounds of Muslim slaves to account for their “superiority.” The New York’s *Freedom’s Journal*, edited by African American John Russwurm, said in an 1828 article about Ibrahima that “it must be evident to everyone that the Prince is a man superior to the generality of Africans whom we behold in this country.”<sup>14</sup>

Secretary of State Clay also supported sending Ibrahima to Africa because of his support for emigrationism, the movement to transport black Americans to Africa. Offering to use federal resources, Clay said that he was willing to provide Abdul Rahman with passage on a ship.<sup>15</sup>



Abdul Rahman responded that he would not leave without his wife and children. In 1828, he embarked on a speaking tour through the northern states in which he solicited donations to free his family from slavery and transport them to Africa. The tour attracted a great deal of media attention as northern newspapers embraced this enticing story of an unfortunate prince who has been denied his rightful place in African society. Philanthropist and advocate for the deaf Thomas Gallaudet wrote that “his life appears like a romance, and the incidents would seem incredible if the evidence was not so undeniable.”<sup>16</sup> Another source, the *Freedom’s Journal*, said that Abdul Rahman was “brought up in luxury and Eastern splendor--but for forty long years [he was] compelled to taste the bitter cup of poverty, and slavery.”<sup>17</sup> By referring to the “Eastern splendor” to which Abdul Rahman was supposedly accustomed, the article and others like it played on the stereotype, increasingly important in U.S. literature, popular media, and consumer culture, that the Muslim Orient was a sensual wonderland.

During his tour Abdul Rahman Ibrahima met some of the nation’s most important business, social, and political leaders. Perhaps most notably, Abdul Rahman seems to have been one of the first Muslim or black Americans to have met a U.S. President on a semi-official visit to the White House. Secretary of Clay arranged for him to meet President John Quincy Adams—a meeting that would become fodder for Andrew Jackson’s 1828 campaign against Quincy Adams. The Muslim prince also met Massachusetts Congressman Edward Everett, philanthropists and merchants Charles and Arthur Tappan, and *Star-Spangled Banner* writer Francis Scott Key. Many of these men were supporters of abolitionism, emigrationism, and a burgeoning commercial interest in African goods and markets. Many were also evangelical Christians. Soliciting donations from them all, Abdul Rahman permitted these men to claim him

as a supporter of their various causes, including the hope that English-speaking blacks would become agents for white business interests in Liberia.<sup>18</sup>

Political operatives in Mississippi made hay of Abdul Rahman's tour. Supporters of President Quincy Adams' rival, Andrew Jackson, claimed that Adams' meeting with Abdul Rahman was proof that Quincy Adams was "actually exciting the slaves to revolt, by the same species of arguments which produced the massacre of St. Domingo [Haiti]."<sup>19</sup> For planters, slaveowners, and white Southerners more generally, the idea that black slaves in the South would engage in a violent struggle for independence was terrifying, especially since the Haitian revolution had been successful. As the southern states used what by today's standards would be considered fascist or at least dictatorial politics to head off any such revolt, the threat of terrorism—at least in their own minds—seemed to increase. Abdul Rahman had become a symbol of abolitionism, the movement that threatened Southern business interests and the Southern way of life.

But northerner supporters of Abdul Rahman were not exactly believers in the beloved community, either. They, too, were thoroughly racist in their attitudes toward black people—they just happened to be opposed to slavery because they saw it as a sinful stain on the American soul. Their answer to the problem of freed slaves was to transport them—that is, English-speaking, American-born blacks—to Africa. The freeing of Abdul Rahman and his family did not challenge the views of northern whites; it confirmed the notion that blacks were a foreign element in a white republic. Abdul Rahman Ibrahim was willing to cooperate with such people not because he necessarily shared their political views, but he wanted to raise the funds necessary for his family to emigrate. In this he was remarkably successful--and given the horrors of slavery, who could blame him for using whatever resources were at his disposal to free him and

his family? During his 1828 tour, colonizationists, abolitionists, and others donated approximately \$3,400 toward his cause. In 1829, Abdul Rahman left with his wife, Isabella, from Norfolk, Virginia, and sailed for Liberia, the American colony in West Africa peopled by African-American freedmen and women. Some of his children immigrated to Liberia in 1830 while others apparently remained in the United States.<sup>20</sup>

Ibrahima's departure from American soil is an important indication of his friendliness to northern U.S. interests, especially those associated with the administration of President John Quincy Adams. He veiled himself in the social, ethnic, religious, and class differences of a Muslim prince—covering up the fact that he had been in America for approximately three decades. His very marginality within American culture meant that he was a useful vessel for his white allies. Impressing his patrons by writing in Arabic, he could rely on his education to demonstrate the differences between him and most other slaves. Invoking a royal heritage, he set himself apart from other black people. His campaign for liberty was based not on the republican idea that all people deserved to be free, but rather on exceptionalist claims that he was robbed of rightful place in society. His background as a Muslim—who was, still, willing to convert to Christianity—also enabled Abdul Rahman to claim ethnic and racial distance from most other slaves. His extraordinary talents were not seen as indicative of innate black ability; they were seen as expressions of his “Muslim blood”. For his white and black American supporters, Islam was not an African religion but an Oriental one, and as such, it embodied a civilization of which black Africans were not capable. Finally, Abdul Rahman Ibrahima lent his imprimatur to the emerging consensus among northern whites that slavery made people bad Christians. According to Cyrus Griffin of the *Natchez Southern Galaxy*, Abdul Rahman argued that the New Testament was “very good law. . . [but] you no follow it.” Slave holders were “greedy after money. You

good man, you join the religion? See you want more land, more niggers; you make niggers work hard, make more cotton. Where you find that in your law?"<sup>21</sup> White abolitionists, many of whom were evangelicals, could not have agreed more with such anti-slavery sentiments.

In sum, this Muslim American was willing to eschew any claims to Constitutional rights, to support evangelical Christianity, to buoy white business interests in Africa, to accept white prejudices against blacks, and most importantly, to leave the country. As long as Muslim Americans were willing to behave in this manner, there was no conflict between them and the state. But when Muslim Americans began to agitate for equal rights, to oppose U.S. foreign policy, and to reject racial apartheid, they became downright dangerous.

### **Interwar Islamic Denominationalism and World War II-Era Repression**

Documenting the rise of Islam among black Americans is essential to understanding why the FBI became so concerned about Islam in America by the 1930s. It was in the roaring cauldron of 1920s nativism and white supremacy that African Americans, responding to and working with foreign Muslims from the Caribbean, the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa, began to join and create a number of different Muslim American organizations. The 1924 National Origins Act, focused on further reducing immigration from non-white lands, was emblematic of the age. This new law expressed concerns among many Anglo Americans that immigrants from non-Western European countries were bringing both physical and ideological disease to America. Such concerns were amplified in the development of domestic securities agencies such as the nascent FBI, which focused on the spread of "dangerous" groups such as Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the Communist Party.

As enormous federal, state, and local resources were committed to Jim Crow segregation, a racial apartheid system implemented most strongly in the southern United States but present in the North as well, the fear of America's people of color uniting with colonized people abroad put the growth of Islam among black Americans at the front of the federal government's surveillance and suppression agenda.<sup>22</sup>

To understand the scope of the threat, it is important to remember that in the interwar period, Muslim American history was not as racially divided as it would become in the last three decades of the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> All Muslim Americans, with the exception of the very few Muslims who were white Americans, were racially oppressed persons in this period. Treated by the executive and judicial branches of the federal government as non-whites, defined as non-white by the National Origins Act, and in at least once instance subject to lynching, Asian Americans, like black Americans, did not succeed in fighting the legal discrimination against them until after 1945.<sup>24</sup> The period between World War I and World War II witnessed instead an alignment of interests among some Muslims Americans who viewed one another as fellow travelers in the fight against white supremacy and colonialism.

This alignment of interests can be seen, for example, in the work of Muhammad Sadiq, the first North American missionary for the Ahmadiyya movement, which formed in the late nineteenth century around the personality and teachings of Ghulam Ahmad. Ahmad was a Muslim reformer believed by his followers to be the long-promised Christian Messiah and the Islamic Mahdi, a figure in Islamic tradition who will bring peace and justice to the world before the Day of Judgment. Many also believed that Ghulam Ahmad was a prophet, a view that conflicted with the Sunni Muslim belief that Muhammad of Arabia is the "seal of the prophets" and the final messenger of God to humanity.<sup>25</sup> These doctrinal disagreements would later restrict

the interaction of Ahmadi followers with other Muslim Americans, though in the early 1920s few communal divisions yet existed among Muslims in America. For example, when Detroit's first purpose-built mosque was opened in the Highland Park area in 1921, Ahmadi missionary Muhammad Sadiq joined Shi'a imam Khalil Bazy to celebrate the accomplishments of the community and its Sunni imam, Hussien Karoub.<sup>26</sup> Sadiq and Bazy represented different strands of Islamic religion, but their presence at the opening of a Sunni mosque suggested their willingness to cooperate—as well as to compete—with other Muslim American leaders.

In 1922, Sadiq created a permanent mission along Wabash Avenue on Chicago's South Side in 1922 and founded the *Moslem Sunrise*, a periodical that documents the emergence of the first Muslim American denominational institution that was national in scope.<sup>27</sup> This accomplishment was the result of Sadiq's strategy to target African Americans for conversion. Sadiq brought together the the Qur'an and the Sunna, or tradition of the prophet Muhammad, with post-World War I agitation by people of color for freedom from colonialism and Jim Crow segregation. On the one hand, he emphasized the ecumenical appeal of Islam as a religion of social equality; on the other hand, Sadiq argued that Arabic and Islam were part of an explicitly African past that had been taken from blacks when they were enslaved. He endorsed the activities of black nationalist and pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey and sought converts from Garvey's UNIA. In this era of the new nativism, when the Ku Klux Klan rose to political prominence based on a combination of Protestant Christianity, white supremacy, and terrorism, the Ahmadi linking of domestic struggles for racial liberation to what Sadiq and others identified as a rising call for self-determination, the deep spirituality of the Qur'an, and black historical achievements under Islam was a powerful message that convinced over 1,025 mostly African American people to convert to Islam from 1921 to 1925.<sup>28</sup>

Sadiq was only one of several Muslim activists in the 1920s. Dusé Mohamed Ali (1866 - 1945), the founder of the *African Times and Orient Review*, was another. Ali traveled the United States first as a Shakespearean actor in the nineteenth century and returned from Great Britain to become a foreign affairs columnist for Marcus Garvey's *Negro World* in New York in 1922. Though he worked for the UNIA for only a short while, Ali remained in the United States, establishing entrepreneurial ventures in various American cities. He also helped to create a multi-racial and multi-ethnic group of Muslim worshippers in 1925 Detroit, when, along with Shah Zain ul-Abdein, Joseph Ferris, and S. Z. Abedian, he became involved with the Universal Islamic Society, also known as the Central Islamic Society. In 1926, Ali became secretary of the American Asiatic Association, also called the America-Asia Society, which apparently gained support from the Iranian chargé d'affaires, the mayor of Detroit, and the Egyptian ambassador in Washington. But unlike Sadiq, Ali may have left little evidence of his impact on the development of Islam in the United States when he departed for Nigeria in 1931. Once there, Ali emerged as an elder statesman of the pan-African movement.<sup>29</sup>

Satti Majid (1883-1963), who led groups of Muslim Americans in the 1920s when he advocated on behalf of Yemeni sailors stranded in New York during World War I, had a much greater influence on the development of American Islam. In 1922, he applied to incorporate a benevolent association named the Moslem Welfare Society in Detroit and later established the United Moslem Society in Pittsburgh. His followers in this period included Daoud and Khadija Faisal, who went on to establish the most successful multi-racial and multi-national Sunni mosque in New York City. In 1927 and 1928, Majid also created the African Moslem Welfare Society in Pittsburgh.<sup>30</sup> After Majid departed the United States on January 31, 1929, for Africa, followers in Pittsburgh sent letters addressed to the "Rev. Magid" and the "Respectable Father

Sheich [shaykh, or leader] of Islam in America” there. One of them, composed on February 29, 1932, wanted to know about his goings-on and shared news that Pittsburgh followers remained in contact with Muslims in New York and Cleveland. Helena Kleely, secretary of the Pittsburgh group, was co-author of a May 18, 1932, letter, which requested English translations of the Arabic literature that Majid had forwarded to his followers from abroad. A 1935 letter addressed the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, an event that was closely watched in black America, and speculated that in the future African Americans would “return back to our homeland Africa,” where they would establish a colony. Several followers also lamented the lack of replies to their correspondence.<sup>31</sup>

Missionaries such as Satti Majid were not the only Muslims of African descent to build organizations in the 1920s. American-born converts also established their own groups, some of which seemed to depart from both Ahmadi and Sunni forms of Islam. The most important of these new groups was the Chicago-headquartered Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA), organized formally in the 1920s by North Carolina-native Timothy Drew. Drew, who took the name Noble Drew Ali (1886-1929), combined his own prophecies with Islamic tropes and symbols, elements of Freemasonry, and themes from American metaphysical movements to establish a new form of Islamic religion. Ali preached that African Americans were Moors, part of a Moroccan nation whose religion was Islam and whose racial heritage was Asian. The MSTA borrowed its Islamic dress, rituals, and other visibly Oriental symbols largely from the Shriners, a Masonic organization. It hoped to establish a community that informed by a strict moral code and the science of “New Thought,” a branch of metaphysics that stressed the idea, among other things, that personal health was the product of self-mastery and mental discipline. Human beings, Ali promised, could better their health and their wealth through meditation, prayer, and other



spiritual practices. Members of the MSTA understood these teachings to be “Moorish Science,” and they thought that such science was both a modern manifestation of ancient wisdom and a new revelation called Islam.<sup>32</sup>

Missionary Satti Majid disagreed. He thought that the group was heretical and wrote to scholars at al-Azhar seminary in Cairo to obtain a fatwa, or learned religious opinion, that condemned the group. In this moment of transnational exchange Muslim Americans and Muslim visitors looked beyond to U.S. borders to appeal to Islamic authority abroad in setting the limits of Islamic authenticity in the United States. Majid wrote that Ali thought himself to be a prophet and composed his own holy scripture, *The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple* (1927), which did not include a single verse from the Qur’an or a single allusion to the Sunna. Al-Azhar responded in November 1931 by releasing an English translation of its fatwa, which declared Ali an “unbeliever or a mentally-deranged person.”<sup>33</sup> If the fatwa was ever distributed in the United States—and there is no evidence indicating that it was—it had little impact on the growth of the MSTA, which boasted thousands of members by the 1940s.

The attempt to adjudicate the Islamic authenticity of the MSTA demonstrates the growth and diversity of Muslim Americans and their institutions in the 1920s. Shi’a, Sunni, Ahmadi, and Moorish Muslim institutions had a footprint in the United States by the end of the decade. The beginning of competition among them was an indication that Islam had become a bona fide American religious tradition structured at least in part by larger patterns of denominationalism. Whether born in the United States or just visiting, U.S. Muslims had acknowledged their religious differences, and in taking such notice, they also viewed the Muslim “other” as part of a nascent American religious community. There had been contact, exchange, and conflict in a shared political space.

The rate of such exchanges only accelerated in the 1930s. In 1930, W. D. Fard, a person of color whose background remains contested, founded the Nation of Islam, originally called the Allah Temple of Islam, an organization influenced by the Moorish Science Temple. In 1931, Muhammad Ezaldeen (1886-1957), perhaps a former member of the MSTA, went to Cairo, Egypt, and studied Islam under the auspices of the Young Men's Muslim Association. He came back to the United States in 1938 and established the Addeynu Allahe Universal Arabic Association, an African American Sunni Muslim organization that became successful along the East Coast.<sup>34</sup> In 1937, Wali Akram (1904-1994), formerly a leader of the Ahmadiyya movement, created a Sunni mosque in Cleveland.<sup>35</sup> By 1939, Daoud Faisal, Satti Majid's follower, had rented a brownstone for his international, inter-ethnic Sunni mission on State Street in Brooklyn, New York.<sup>36</sup> Then, in 1943, all of these black-led Sunni organizations convened at the All Moslem and Arab Convention in Philadelphia to form the Uniting Islamic Society of America.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of the 1930s, African Americans African Americans had formed the institutions that became the public face, or perhaps more accurately from the point of view of the state security agencies, the potentially dangerous face of American Islam. Based on evidence from membership reports and FBI surveillance, perhaps the MSTA and the Ahmadiyya were the largest religious groups with 10,000 or more members.<sup>38</sup> This estimate does not include the memberships of the AAUAA, the Midwestern mosques associated with Wali Akram, the New York-based Islamic Mission of Daoud Ahmed Faisal, and a growing Nation of Islam. No matter what the level of membership, this appearance of regional and national Muslim organizations was noted by scholars, the media, the police, and the FBI. In the early 1930s, the Bureau feared that the Moorish Science Temple was a potential threat to the state and initiated covert surveillance on this and other Muslim groups.<sup>39</sup>

But large-scale efforts to track and eventually repress African American Muslim groups did not occur until World War II. The surveillance of black Muslim groups was part of a much larger effort meant to track the potential rise of what FBI director J. Edgar Hoover feared were disloyal African Americans. From June, 1942, to August, 1943, the FBI conducted a massive investigation, later code-named RACON, that surveyed the full range of African American political dissent. One of Hoover's concerns was that "scheming peddlers of foreign 'isms'" were leading "malcontent" black Americans toward Communism and other putatively anti-American ideologies. The scope of the investigation was broad and the FBI defined disloyalty to United States to include support for the A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington movement and other civil rights activism. As Robert A. Hill, who has compiled and edited the RACON files, notes, "the aim of the investigation was to uncover the source(s) of the rising tide of black resistance to the wave of racial discrimination unleashed by the national defense program."<sup>40</sup> African Americans faced segregation not only in the U.S. armed services, but also among defense contractors.

What alarmed the FBI about African American Muslim groups on the eve of World War II was that many of them, or at least some of their members, saw Japanese people as potential allies. The transnational ties and diasporic consciousness of black Muslim Americans were viewed as increasingly subversive as thousands of African Americans, Muslim or not, put their hopes in the messianic prophecy that the Empire of Japan would liberate them from the cage of American racism through a military invasion. By the 1930s, black Muslims, black Jews, advocates of black emigration to Africa, and black advocates for pan-Asian solidarity declared their public support for a fellow "colored" nation, and a Japanese national, Major Satokata Takahashi, formed a "Development of Our Own" group to galvanize such feelings in Detroit,

Chicago, and St. Louis. Several African American leaders appropriated Takahashi's ideas. For example, Mittie Maud Lena Gordon, a former member of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, created the Peace Movement of Ethiopia (PME) in 1932. The PME called for the return of black Americans to Africa while also advocating for the war objectives of Japan. The organization's stationery featured an Islamic star and a crescent, and in a June 14, 1942, meeting Gordon declared that the PME was associated with Islam. Another Chicago-based group created in 1932 that included anti-colonial, pro-Japanese leanings was the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World (PMEW), which hoped to ally with the Japanese in order to buoy African American struggles for liberation. Rev. David D. Ervin, a Holiness pastor of the Triumph the Church of the New Age, led the PMEW from 1934 to 1940 and supported the idea that the Japanese should invade the United States to bring about equality. He also sometimes advocated the notion that blacks should immigrate to Japan.<sup>41</sup>

RACON's final report, the *Survey of Racial Conditions in the United States* (1943), reveals the way in which the FBI attempted to discipline religious conduct in the United States. The report creates a profile of pro-Japanese African American organizations that warned of Islam's links to pro-Japanese sentiment. It then attempted to catalogue all of the various Muslim groups popular among black Americans as a way of measuring the security risk to the U.S. nation-state. For example, it argued that Satti Majid's African Moslem Welfare Society of America presented "three of the characteristics common to pro-Japanese negro organizations: the adoption of Mohammedan religion; the identification of Japanese and the negroes as a kindred colored people, and the resettlement of American negroes in negro colonies." The report indicated that while the group's 1927 Pennsylvania incorporation records stated their intent to unite Muslims by eradicating racial differences among them, over a decade later its members

were arguing over whether it should side with Japan in World War II. The FBI characterized this change in the following way: “The society is said to have conducted itself as a religious organization until approximately nine months ago when several persons connected with it exhibited pro-Japanese sympathies.”<sup>42</sup> This framing suggests that for the FBI, religion, at least among black people, must be politically quiescent in order to be religion. Once a group began to articulate a position that ran counter to the dominant politics of the Bureau, it stopped being religion proper.<sup>43</sup>

The articulation of pro-Japanese sentiments was evidence of sedition, and as the dream of a Japanese invasion spread among thousands of African Americans in the early 1940s, the government arrested the African American leaders suspected of stoking such feelings. Among the twenty-five leaders arrested was Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975), leader of the Nation of Islam. Muhammad was acquitted of the sedition charge, but was sent away for refusing to register for the military draft.<sup>44</sup> His arrest and prosecution signaled the emergence of a larger pattern for dealing with African American Muslims who criticized the United States. These black Muslims would rarely engage in any genuinely treasonous activity against the United States, but they did capitalize on their imagined ties with foreign states and “foreign” traditions like Islam to resist, at least in rhetorical terms, the policies of the U.S. government toward people of color both at home and abroad. In Elijah Muhammad’s sedition case, for example, it was found that Muhammad had called the Japanese “brothers and friends” of black Americans. However, according to all the evidence introduced in the case, there was no record of a Japanese person ever attending the meetings of the Nation of Islam nor was there any correspondence indicating “any connection between the leaders of this group of colored people and the Japanese government or any Japanese person.”<sup>45</sup>

Given the lack of evidence of any actual treason, one of the few weapons that the Department of Justice possessed to suppress these groups was the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940. In September, 1942, seventy members of the Nation of Islam were arrested for failure to register for the draft, of which thirty-eight were indicted. Of these, thirty-one pled guilty, an obviously principled stand against the federal government since it was later determined that seven of these actually did register for the draft.<sup>46</sup> But while members of the Nation of Islam were willing to go to jail for their religious beliefs, members of the Addeynu Allahe Universal Arabic Association (AAUAA), a black Sunni group, were aware of the trap into which they might fall and they took action to avoid it. All members of the AAUAA registered as conscientious objectors, apparently on the grounds that they could neither consume food that was prepared by the military nor could they be expected to fight their own people, since the Japanese were a fellow “dark race.”<sup>47</sup>

Hoover’s commitment to curtail not only Communism but all forms of African American protest against racism resulted in a culture of suspicion at the FBI and in the executive branch more generally that sought to monitor and ultimately influence the practice of Islam among African Americans. There is some evidence that agents entertained the possibility that Islamic religion could be practiced in an apolitical way, but at the same time, Islam inevitably came under suspicion because of its association with African American protests against white supremacy. In sweeping Islamic religious practice, of various types, into the machinery of anti-black state suppression, Hoover and the FBI created mechanisms and meanings that framed Islam as a danger to the U.S. nation-state. It did not matter for Hoover’s RACON whether black Muslims were explicitly pro-American or not. Islam was a sign for the FBI on the eve of World War II of pro-Japanese sympathy. It was enough to tar Islam as a problematic political symbol

that deserved to be disciplined through surveillance, and if possible, prosecution. But the federal government possessed limited tools for the suppression of these movements during World War II. It was only after the war that more aggressive counter-intelligence techniques were employed to deal with black Muslims.

### **The Black Muslim Scare of the 1960s**

The government's fear of Islamic political movements after World War II shows the ways in which state power was inscribed and enforced in this period. Islamophobia became a form of government discipline that utilized propaganda, violence, and fear. There was irony in the fact that the government frequently accused Muslims, especially the Nation of Islam, of fomenting a race war, when it was the government that actively fashioned Islam as a threat to U.S. domestic peace, international relations, and civil rights. Though government interference in the practice of Islamic religion was limited by U.S. law during World War II, new legal and extra-legal techniques were used to discredit the practice of Islam among black Americans after World War II. Restricting the religious freedoms of Muslims, manipulating mainstream media, stoking violent conflict among African American organizations, and even trying to break up marriages, the Department of Justice and the FBI reached into the heart of U.S. society to create hatred of and between Muslim Americans.

Not all of the federal government's techniques for controlling the practice of Islam were successful. One of the government's strategies, for example, was the denial of First Amendment protections to Muslim prisoners. The Justice Department argued that since the Nation of Islam was not an authentic religious movement--but rather a "cult" that operated as political

organization--its followers in prison did not have the right to meet or conduct religious services. By redefining Islam as a "cult" the government could avoid the messiness of legal protections for religious expression. But the repression of Islamic practice in both state and federal prisons ended up expanding rather than limiting the rights of prisoners to practice the religion of their choice. The efforts of incarcerated African American Muslims in U.S. courts helped to establish legal precedents and rights for all prisoners. Generally speaking, these cases guaranteed prisoners the right, with conditions, to assemble for religious services, to read religious literature, to wear religious garb, to consume a special diet, and to communicate with religious leaders. For example, the Supreme Court's 1964 decision in *Cooper v. Pate* was one of the first significant prisoners' rights precedents established by the highest court in the land. Thomas Cooper, a member of the Nation of Islam sued Illinois prison warden Frank Pate on the grounds that Pate's prejudice against the NOI had resulted in the denial of Cooper's right to the free exercise of his religion. Cooper alleged that Pate denied him the right to read religious literature, communicate with NOI ministers, and to attend religious services. The State of Illinois argued that the NOI was a political rather than a religious organization, a position that the Supreme Court rejected. The court ruled for the first time that prisoners had the right, or the legal standing, to seek relief from religious discrimination and required lower courts to hear the law suits of prisoners that were filed on this basis. The 1964 ruling made clear that prisons must treat prisoners equally, regardless of their particular religious affiliation, unless there was a compelling reason not to do so.<sup>48</sup>

Overall, this and other victories of Muslim prisoners were exceptional checks against the executive branch's ability to repressing practices of Islam that it opposed. For the most part, the FBI faced few impediments to suppressing the forms of Islam that it found objectionable. Its



number one target was the Nation of Islam (NOI). In 1956, J. Edgar Hoover authorized technical surveillance, including phone taps, of Elijah Muhammad, the leader of movement. In addition, informants were either recruited from or placed within the NOI.<sup>49</sup> Using the information that it gleaned from its surveillance, the FBI then engaged in a disinformation campaign against the organization. In 1959, the FBI briefed journalists from *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and other major media outlets about the group, leaking aspects of their surveillance in order to prove its danger to U.S. society. The special agent in charge of the campaign in Chicago wrote that the purpose was to expose the “abhorrent aspects of the organization and its racist, hate type teachings.” This was also the year in which Mike Wallace of CBS News produced *The Hate that Hate Produced*, a television program that did as much as any other source to interpret the NOI for millions of Americans. Then, in 1962, the Bureau leaked information about Elijah Muhammad’s purchase of automobiles and homes; it forged anonymous letters to the editor accusing the movement of fraud. Finally, the FBI sent anonymous letters to Clara Muhammad, wife of Elijah, exposing the leader’s many extra-marital affairs.<sup>50</sup>

One of the Bureau’s main contentions about the NOI, an argument that echoed the Justice Department’s argument about the practice of Islam in U.S. courts, was that the NOI version of Islam was neither real Islam nor legitimate religion. A full-length monograph written within the FBI and circulated to all field offices in the early 1960s concluded that while the NOI purported “adherence to the religious principles of Islam . . . [and] the spiritual and physical uplift of the Negroes,” its “constant emphasis on the vindictive doctrines of the cult results in the propagation of hatred of the white race.”<sup>51</sup> The book admitted that while the NOI was not a serious security threat, it should remain an “investigative problem” due to its radical political profile. This

remarkable document also included a point-by-point comparison of the “orthodox” teaching of Islam and the “unorthodox” teachings of the Nation of Islam.<sup>52</sup> The lack of nuance in this scholarly polemic was helpful in furthering the idea that the NOI lacked Islamic bona fides.

The *real* Muslims of America, according to most in the academy, the media, and the FBI, were the immigrant Muslims. In the 1950s, a large percentage of immigrant Muslims was Syrian-Lebanese, and like their Christian compatriots, they became regarded after World War II as white ethnics. Their immigrant Islam, in contrast with African American Islam, was viewed as a sign by some in the 1950s as a healthy expression of American ethnic identity. As sociologist Will Herberg argued, it was fine for foreign religionists to retain their religious practices as part of their ethnic identity as long as they assimilated to other American values; in fact, it was laudable for them to retain their religious traditions, since this act demonstrated the Cold War claim that America was uniquely free—you could practice whatever religion you liked.<sup>53</sup> But the flip side of that argument was that those indigenous Americans who chose freely to associate with a foreign religion—a religion that was not perceived to be part of their a priori culture--were denying their true ethnic roots as Americans. Mainstream media echoed these claims, framing black Muslims as persons who adopted a false sense of ethnic identity. The black Muslim appropriation of Asia and Allah upset most black and white Americans’ racial and religious assumptions. When black Americans depicted themselves as oriental divines, Muslims, Jews, and Hindu spirit mediums, they were seen as having betrayed their real black heritage; they were deluded fakes.<sup>54</sup>

And yet their number continued to grow. Even the FBI admitted internally that drawing additional attention to the NOI may have backfired, making the organization and its leaders Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X even more popular. There was also a larger context to the

movement's growth. The U.S. prosecution of the Cold War, its manipulation of newly-independent African and Asian states, the beginning of the Vietnam conflict, and the lack of real progress on social equality at home made the religious and political critique of the NOI convincing to many both inside and outside the movement. On the domestic side, the NOI opposed integration as a solution to racism, perhaps becoming the country's most forceful postwar voice for black political, economic, and cultural self-determination. On the international side, the NOI, in the words of Penny Von Eschen, "permitted a space—for the most part unthinkable in the Cold War era—for an anti-American critique of the Cold War."<sup>55</sup>

But there was no more effective symbol of both domestic and international political resistance to U.S. power than Muhammad Ali, whose principled stand against the Vietnam War resulted in the forfeiture of his world heavyweight boxing crown. Ali, a hero to many people of color and leftists around the world, was seen as a fifth column--the enemy inside the walls--by the U.S. government, which sought to blunt his rising popularity by any means available. In this case, the U.S. Army drafted him. In 1966, at the height of the war military conflict in Vietnam, Ali proclaimed he was willing to give up his boxing crown and go to jail rather than be inducted. He said that he was a conscientious objector whose religion prohibited the killing of innocents. Casting the Vietnam War as a racist and immoral conflict, Ali also stated that the U.S. participation was hypocritical: quipping that "no Vietcong ever called me nigger," Ali pointed out the irony of the United States defending freedom abroad when it still had its own problems with racial equality at home. In 1967, he was convicted of draft evasion and stripped of his boxing title.<sup>56</sup>

That same year, the FBI began a new stage of "operational intensity" in seeking to suppress the NOI. Its tool for doing so was the Counter Intelligence Program, better known as

COINTELPRO. Cutting its teeth on the New Left, white hate groups, and the Communist Party in the early 1960s, COINTELPRO expanded FBI operations in 1967 to include “Black Nationalist-Hate Groups.” It conducted 360 separate operations, becoming the second largest area of all domestic counter-intelligence operations. The NOI was perhaps the most popular target of all the black groups.<sup>57</sup> “The purpose of this new counterintelligence endeavor,” wrote Hoover on August 25, 1967, “is to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership and supporters.”<sup>58</sup>

In trying to neutralize the NOI, the FBI engaged in activities both disturbing and tragicomic. Agents continued to write anonymous letters about Elijah Muhammad’s philandering, but this time they sent them to the leader’s daughters as well as to his wife.<sup>59</sup> It persisted in its use of journalists in disinformation campaigns. Agents also sent anonymous letters and used informants to try to pit one black nationalist group against another. In at least six cities, the FBI attempted to cause strife between the Black Panthers and the NOI. Though open conflict arose in Atlanta, tensions between the two groups were generally limited to healthy, spirited debates among African Americans over the best path to black liberation. FBI agents also penned anonymous letters to Elijah Muhammad, accusing his ministers of malfeasance, and planted informants inside mosques to spread rumors about members and leaders at the local level. One of the more amusing instances of this admittedly serious activity was an effort in New York to distribute a “large comic-book type of publication made up to ridicule the leaders” of the mosque.<sup>60</sup> Finally, the FBI’s field office may have begun a campaign to install W. D. Mohammed as Elijah Muhammad’s successor, writing in one declassified memorandum that Wallace was “the only son of Elijah Muhammad who would have the necessary qualities to

guide the NOI in such a manner as would eliminate racist teachings.” Whether the FBI’s paper support for W. D. Mohammed translated into operational support inside the NOI is not yet known.<sup>61</sup>

The Black Muslim Scare of the 1960s was the pinnacle of pre-9/11 fears about the Muslim threat to the American nation-state. In retrospect, the FBI’s efforts seem like an overreaction. Even the FBI admitted in 1960 that Muslims were mounting no serious challenge to the security threat, and still, significant government resources were committed to neutralizing them in the 1960s. In the end it was not the imminent outbreak of political violence that motivated the state’s heavy-handed tactics. It was the symbolic threat, the power of dissent, and the critique of U.S. society and U.S. militarism that led the FBI to wage a counter-intelligence war against the NOI. That counter-intelligence campaign constructed an anatomy of Islamophobia in every FBI field office and many local law enforcements agencies. The back-and-forth of memoranda to headquarters in Washington and the Central Research Division’s updated “scholarship” on the movement produced habits of fearful surveillance. The FBI spread this Islamophobia to the mainstream media and its consumers through organized and long-running disinformation campaigns. In summary, Islamophobia was not only an ignorant reaction of the public to the presence of Muslims in America. It was manufactured.

### **Variations on the Black Muslim Scare after 9/11**

The public face of Muslim America has changed since the 1960s. No longer represented by bow-tied black men hawking copies of *Muhammad Speaks* or the beautiful, semi-naked body of Muhammad Ali, public images of Muslims in America seem instead to rely on old Orientalist

tropes like the burka'd woman, the bearded mullah, or the wild-eyed warrior. The Muslim as public enemy is brown rather than black. How that occurred is a long story, one that has to do with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of political resistance in the name of Islam to U.S. empire and U.S. client states among a number of Muslim groups worldwide.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, today's "brown" Muslim, the dissenter, is generally a Sunni rather than a follower of Elijah Muhammad's unique prophecies.

Focusing on doctrinal differences between black and brown, pre- and post-9/11 Muslims, however, covers up a critical link between our current age and that of the Black Muslim Scare. Despite the great differences between the 1960s and the post 9/11 era, there is one critical similarity: Expressions of Islam that make radical critiques of the United States will be suppressed, even if they do not pose a direct security threat to the nation-state. A deep discourse of Islamophobia within government offices and departments governs the ways in which the state manages Muslim dissent both in the past and in the present.

As in the past, the FBI and the Justice Department—and now the Treasury Department, Homeland Security, and the National Security Administration, among other agencies—seek to reward those versions of Islam that are apolitical and innocuous to U.S. interests while also suppressing even peaceful Islamic resistance to U.S. foreign policy. The USA PATRIOT Act, passed in October 2001, authorized the resurrection of COINTELPRO techniques that had been killed, at least officially, in the post-Watergate era. The federal government reacquired Congressional approval, for example, for aggressive counter-intelligence, including so-called sting operations inside religious congregations. The Bush administration detained persons of interest as material witnesses without habeus corpus rights and determined internally that it could wiretap its own citizens without judicial or legislative oversight.<sup>63</sup>

The broad-ranging powers of the government to prevent terrorism have also resulted in the prevention of free speech, assembly, and the free exercise of religion. The federal government and U.S. Army, respectively, falsely accused lawyer Brandon Mayfield and Capt. James Yee of aiding terrorists, and though the names of both men were cleared, the false accusations may have scared some Muslim Americans from publicly voicing their opposition to U.S. foreign policy.<sup>64</sup> Muslim American charities that provided non-military aid to some of the government's declared enemies, groups such as the Palestinian party Hamas, were raided and in some cases shut down.<sup>65</sup> In an ultimate insult to the first amendment, the U.S. Supreme Court in 2010 decided in *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project* that offering training in non-violent, peaceful protest techniques to groups designated as terrorist organizations by the executive branch could be prosecuted as material aid to terrorists.

As in the 1960s, civil libertarians have challenged the government's increasing power to detain and punish its own citizens without just cause or evidence. Modest victories have been scored in the cases of *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld* (2004), *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* (2006), and *Boumediene v. Bush* (2008), in which the U.S. Supreme Court acted to check the unlimited power of the executive branch. But such decisions have done little to retard the increasing powers of the state to persecute political activism in the name of counter-terrorism.

President Obama's administration has largely continued the Bush era policies. Guantanamo Bay has remained open; the American mosque has remained a primary target of domestic counter-intelligence; and deportation of foreign nationals has actually increased. Obama also personally ordered the assassination of Anwar al-Awlaki and Samir Khan, two U.S. citizens who produced speeches and web materials in support of al-Qaeda. We will never know whether they were guilty of committing terrorist acts because they were killed by drones, an act

that many civil libertarians saw as a violation of Constitutional guarantees of due process and trial by jury. More recently, the White House gave its support to the National Defense Authorization Act, which allows the executive branch to detain foreigners and perhaps Americans accused of “substantially supporting” terrorism indefinitely without trial. On the domestic side of counter-terrorism policy, the Obama administration outlined what it has dubbed the “Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in United States.” One of the primary sites for implementation is the American public school, where teachers and students are supposed to be trained to identify potential terrorists—people who, according to National Security Council official Quintan Wiktorowicz, use the word “infidel,” defend Osama bin Laden, and watch extremist videos.<sup>66</sup>

These aggressive approaches to managing Muslim American dissent have been accompanied by simultaneous attempts to “reach out” to Muslims. The administrations of both George W. Bush and Barack Obama have hailed Islam as part of America’s religious fabric, using symbolic incorporation to craft Muslim American citizenship as another resource in the prosecution of U.S. interests both at home and abroad. Muslim Americans are among the approximately 15,000 informants employed by the FBI to identify potential terrorist threats in the United States; they often act as an *agent provocateur* attempting to catch fellow Muslims in a sting.<sup>67</sup> In addition, ordinary Muslim Americans are the single greatest source of tips in counter-terrorism investigations. They are congratulated for such exemplary work at the same time that the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, chaired by Rep. Peter King (R-NY), investigates what he claims is a widespread problem of jihadi extremism in the Muslim American community.



The suppression of politically-engaged, critical American Islamic voices is a long tradition. The disciplining of Muslim American politics has been a critical component of U.S. statecraft for decades. In an era in which the government negotiates with, occupies, makes peace, and wages war against more Muslims than ever before, there is little reason to hope that state Islamophobia will end any time soon.

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<sup>18</sup> *Freedom’s Journal*, October 31, 1828, 252, as quoted in *Ibid.*, 176-178.

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- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 547.
- <sup>48</sup> Moore, *Al-Mughtaribun*, 69-102.
- <sup>49</sup> Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham: NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 72.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-76.
- <sup>51</sup> Central Research Section, Federal Bureau of Investigation, "The Nation of Islam: Antiwhite, All-Negro Cult in United States," (October 1960), vi.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-67.
- <sup>53</sup> Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 27-28.
- <sup>54</sup> Edward E. Curtis IV, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 4-9.
- <sup>55</sup> Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*, 174.
- <sup>56</sup> William Brown, "Ali, Muhammad," in *Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History*, I:41-44.
- <sup>57</sup> Frank T. Donner, *The Age of Surveillance: the Aims and Methods of America's Political Intelligence System* (New York: Knopf, 1980), 178, 212-213.
- <sup>58</sup> Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad*, 86.
- <sup>59</sup> Clegg, *An Original Man*, 258.
- <sup>60</sup> Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad*, 87-91.

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<sup>61</sup> SAC Chicago to FBI Director, 100-35635-B, 4/22/68 quoted in Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad*, 101.

<sup>62</sup> See further McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, 198-234.

<sup>63</sup> See David Cole, *Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terror*, rev. ed. (New York: New Press, 2004) and Louise A. Cainkar, *Homeland Insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American Experience After 9/11* (New York: Russell Sage, 2009).

<sup>64</sup> Curtis, ed., *Encyclopedia of Muslim-American History*, 363-364, 597-598.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 449-452.

<sup>66</sup> Dina Temple-Raston, "Officials Detail Plan to Fight Homegrown Terrorism,"

<http://www.npr.org/2011/12/08/143319965/officials-detail-plans-to-fight-terrorism-at-home>, last accessed December 20, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> University of California Graduate School of Journalism, "Journalism School Investigates FBI Use of Informants in Muslim Communities Post 9/11," *Berkeley Research*, August 20, 2011.

<http://vcresearch.berkeley.edu/news/journalism-school-fellow-investigates-fbi-use-informants-muslim-communities-post-911>. Accessed September 28, 2011.