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YASMINA'S NECKLACE

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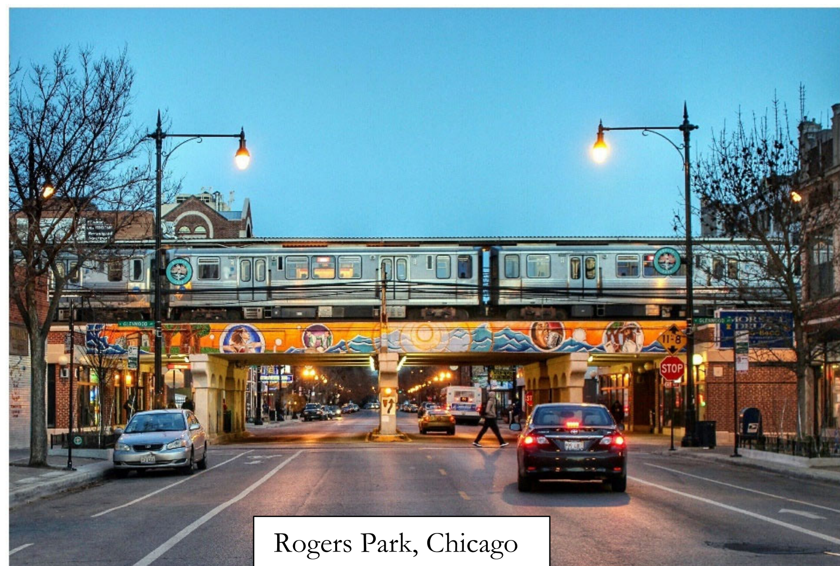
Chicago and the World of Yasmina's Necklace

Yasmina's Necklace takes place in Chicago, a city in Illinois with a population of 2,705,994. Of that number 49.1% of the population are white, 30.5% are black, 6.2% are Asian, 29% are Hispanic, and 0.3% are indigenous people (over 100%). The average household income for the Chicago area is roughly $52,497. Of the above mentioned 2,705,994 people in Chicago, 20.6% live in poverty. The religious demographic is as follows: Christianity is the largest religion, making up 71% of the population, but Islam is the second largest in all of Illinois with about 352,264 people or 2.8% of the population. Chicago is broken up into neighborhoods and is home to the Bean, Wrigley Field, and many theatres. Yasmina and Sam live in two completely different worlds in Chicago.

Chicago, Illinois

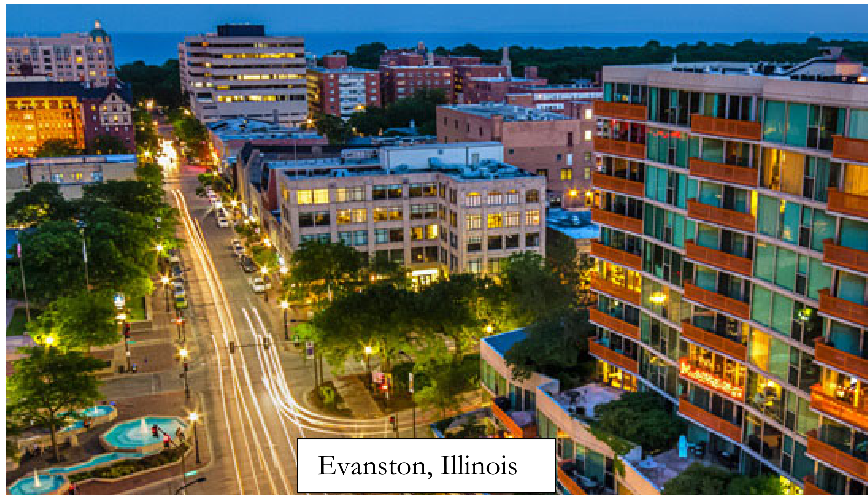
Yasmina and Musa live in a section of Chicago called Roger Park. It is one of the most common places for Iraqi refugees to settle. It boasts easy access to multiple train stops, so it's easy to get to downtown Chicago, as well as food, art, and other sources of entertainment. It is considered one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Chicago. In fact, there is no dominating ethnicity in Rogers Park. Instead, residents speak nearly 40 different languages and come from around 80 different countries.[1] It is home to Loyola University, one of the nation's first Jesuit Catholic universities, and it is one of the most affordable places to live in Chicago. Some apartments go for as little as $850- $996, which is cheap when compared to the average in Chicago, $1,647. Although the website for Rogers Park boasts safety and cooperation with local police, the community still struggles with gang violence, sexual assaults, and firearm murders. On August 3, 2019 a bicyclist was shot and killed. On August 7th, a PHD student from Northwestern (with is around 9 miles north) was shot and killed. A slew of people have gone missing in the last two



Rogers Park, Chicago

[1] "Rogers Park: Chicago Neighborhoods: Choose Chicago," accessed August 7, 2019, https://choosechicago.com/neighborhoods/north/rogers-park/.

weeks and a gunman was terrorizing the neighborhood after he committed two murders last month. [2]



Evanston, Illinois

In stark contrast stands Evanston, Illinois where Sam and his family live. Though technically not a part of Chicago, it is right outside the boarder of the city, and right next to Rogers Park. It is known for housing Northwestern University. Evanston is also known for their beaches, as they are located on Lake Michigan, mansions on landscaped boulevards, tree-lined bicycle paths, and beautiful parks. It has one of the largest and most diverse arts and theatre community in the entire state of Illinois, and it is known as one of the most "vibrant and inviting communities". It was the birthplace of the temperance movement and backed prohibition in the 1920s. It stayed a dry community until 1972, even though prohibition ended in 1933. Evanston has a diverse population and a rich history of activism. They even hosted an event last month on July 24th called "Countering Islamophobia and Place Making Chicago Muslims" in an attempt to teach the community about Islamophobia and combat racism. Rent in Evanston is around $1,519 per month, and owning a house costs roughly $305,400. The average median household income is $74,901, which is above average for the Chicago area. [3]

Evanston is also known for their two Mosques that reside there: Dar-us-Sunnah Masjid and Community Center and Ahlul Bait Center. Dar-us-Sunnah Masjid and Community Center wants to be an anchor for the Muslim Community in the north-west side of Chicago. It is the only place of its kind today (as stated on the website). They offer "community and social services to all humans irrespective of color, race, and national origin."[4] Ahlul Bait Center's members are mostly Iraqi immigrants from the early 90s. There are also several other nationalities such as Lebanese, Moroccans, Algerians, Palestinians, and Saudi Arabians who worship there. [5]

[2] Ama Otet, "Living in Chicago's Rogers Park: The City's Best Kept Secret," RENTCafe Rental Blog, February 29, 2016, accessed August 7, 2019, https://www.rentcafe.com/blog/cities/rogers-park-chicago-neighborhood-guide/.

[3] Sydney Stone, "Why Evanston, Illinois Is So Much More than Northwestern University- It's One of the Coolest Suburbs in America," Apartment Therapy, June 14, 2019, accessed August 7, 2019, https://www.apartmenttherapy.com/evanston-illinois-guide-32252469.

[4] "Dar-us-Sunnah," Dar-us-Sunnah Maskid Community Center, accessed August 7, 2019, https://www.darussunnah.org

[5] Ahlul Bait Center Chicago, accessed August 7, 2019, https://ahlulbaitcenter.org/.

Iraqi Communities in the Chicago Area

The most well-known Iraqi organization that builds a community in Chicago is the IMAS, or the Iraqi Mutual Aid Society. They have been serving the Iraqi community for over seven years. They were founded in 2009 as a non-profit by a group of Iraqi refugees in response to the challenges they faced when they were trying to adapt to life in America. "There is no comparable organization serving this population in the Chicago area," IMAS says. The majority of the Iraqi community live on the north side near West Ridge and Rogers Park. Those neighborhoods seem more welcoming and familiar with refugees from the Middle East, especially Iraq. The trend shows that the largest groups of refugees coming into Chicago are Iraqi and Syrian refugees.[6]

Islamophobia in the United States

Sam and Yasmina often reference moments of Islamophobia and racism they have faced in the play. Islamophobia refers to the dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force. It has increased across the United States since 9/11. In 2007, there was a recorded 33 anti-Muslim assaults, yet in 2017, just ten years later, the FBI recorded 105 assaults, as well as another 168 incidents targeting Muslims for practicing their religion. Among the growing list of terror attacks against Muslims are mass shootings, or planned mass shootings, and bomb threats. In January of 2019, police in upstate New York arrested four white teenagers for allegedly plotting to attack a largely Muslim community. The teens believed that any Muslim was an "automatic terrorist", and when their home was raided, police found 22 firearms, ammunition, and at least two homemade bombs. Also in January of 2019, two white men from Illinois pleaded guilty to federal weapons charges after they detonated a bomb at a Mosque in Bloomington, Minnesota. No one was harmed, but the men said they committed the act to show Muslims that they were "not welcome". In New Zealand on March 15th there was a massacre at a mosque in Churchville in which a radical white supremacist killed 51 people and wounded another 40 when he opened fire during a service. That shooting was broadcast over Facebook live. [7]

There have been several authors that have published their experiences about being Muslim in America in the post-9/11 world. Louis A. Cainkar wrote a book, *Homeland insecurity: the Arab American and Muslim American experience after 9/11*, in which he interviewed Muslims living in Chicago, he details how Muslim Americans felt unsafe and fearful in every day spaces and the discrimination they felt (most often women in hijabs felt the most discrimination). Those narratives bring to light the negative effects of internment, surveillance, and ethnic profiling events.

Microaggression and discrimination in the workplace

Sam mentions that he, along with his friend Tony, were both discriminated against in the workplace. This is a type of discrimination called microaggression. In the workplace or at school, microaggression, specifically religious microaggression, are the cause for feeling out of place or discriminated against. Religious microaggression can be defined as subtle behavioral and verbal exchanges (both conscious and unconscious) that send denigrating messages to individuals in various religious groups. There are four specific themes relating to microaggression against Muslim Americans: 1. Endorsing religious stereotypes of Muslims as terrorists 2. Pathologizing the Muslim religion 3. Assuming religious homogeneity and 4. Exoticizing Muslim religion. Experiences of religious microaggression have been linked to lower self-esteem and higher rates of stress. Religious discrimination is also correlated with "paranoia, vigilance, mistrust, and suspicion" which

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[6] IMAS, accessed August 7, 2019, https://www.iraqimutualaid.org/.
[7] Mike Levine, "An 'odd' FBI Case Highlights the Impact of Anti-Muslim Bias in US," ABC News, March 19, 2019, , accessed August 06, 2019, https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/odd-fbi-case-highlights-impact-anti-muslim-bias/story?id=61761006.

may lead to functional impairment. For Muslims, the loss of religious integrity due to pressure from microaggression may be more detrimental than conformity to racial standards, considering the centrality of religion in their lives. [8]

History of Islamophobia in the United States

The current, post-9/11 atmosphere stands in stark contrast to how the United States used to view Islam throughout history. In fact, it was not until the 1800s that Muslims and the Islamic religion were discriminated against. In the early days of this nation, slaves that were forcibly brought over were often Muslim. Former presidents and Constitutional Convention members like Thomas Jefferson and John Adams even had their own copies of the Qur'an in their libraries. Benjamin Franklin envisioned not just Muslims, but the allowance of a Muslim religious scholar, the mufti, into the public sphere. He is quoted saying, "even if the mufti of Constantinople (current day Istanbul) were to send someone here to preach Islam and teach us about Mohammed we should offer a pulpit, we should listen, for we might learn". The start of immigration through Angel Island in the 1800s started the racist view toward Muslims. Muslims and Sikhs were lumped into one category, and faced the same discrimination as Asians who were referred to as "slaves". Laws were also enacted between 1800 and 1945 (the end of WWII) to deny citizenship to any people that were non-European in an attempt to restrict migration to the United States. Films, during this time, sought to create an 'other' between Muslims and Americans. The 'othering' process only further increased after the US involvement in Iran and Iraq, which led to 9/11. [9]

Refugees and the Refugee Crisis

Yasmina and her father are both refugees from Iraq. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) refers to a refugee as "someone who had been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence". In Iraq, where Yasmina is from, 3.3 million people were forced to flee their homes. 370,000 of those people fled to neighboring countries. 700,000 people are considered 'displaced' and are living in temporary housing inside of Iraq, during the winter these people need additional aid to survive. It is not just displaced people that are in need of aid, 25% of the population of Iraq, or 11 million people, are in need of humanitarian assistance. On top of this, refugees from other countries (mostly Syria) have come into Iraq, the number reaching 280,000. This puts stress on the displacement camps who struggle to provide assistance to all who need it. [10]

In 1951 the United Nations held a refugee convention and key legal documents were ratified by 145 State parties. The convention defined the term "refugee" and outlined the rights of the displaced, as well as legal obligations of States to protect them. A refugee, according to the convention, is someone who is unwilling or unable to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. The core principal of the convention was a term called non-refoulement. Non-refoulement asserts that refugees should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. Not only may they not be returned, but they may not be expelled back to their country. Outlined in the legal document, States cannot discriminate refugees as to sex, age, disability, sexuality, or other grounds. Refugees also have rights to court access, primary education, work, and the provision for documentation, including a passport. The convention

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[8] Aktaf Husain and Stephanie Howard, "Religious Microaggressions: A Case Study of Muslim Americans," Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work 26 (January 19`, 2017): , https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15313204.2016.1269710. (whole article attached)

[9] IBID – microaggression

[10] "What Is a Refugee?" USA for UNCHR, accessed August 7, 2019, https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/.

does not apply to persons involved in war crimes, crimes against humanity, serious non-political crimes, or acts of contrary (it is also not applicable to those who are already receiving UN aid).[11]

Displacement Camps

UNHCR camp

As of April 30, 2018 there are 2.1 million displaced people are inside Iraq. Camps are dealing with overcrowding and temporary settlements for around 700,000 of those displaced people. 1.5 million of the 2.1 displaced Iraqi and Syrian refugees have been moved into the Kurdistan region of Iraq where 25% of the population is displaced. [12]

In much of northern Iraq, the displacement camps are in places where tents are pitched directly on low-lying ground, where the only protection from the elements are plastic tarps. This became a big problem when two weeks of heavy rain flooded the camps, killing 21 people and injuring 180 more. Many of the camps are in need of a severe upgrade. Some of the tents haven't been replaced in years and less donor money has been coming in, as attention has turned away from Iraq.

UNHCR camp in winter

All of these camps are managed by different people, so they all have different needs. For example, the camps managed by the UN's refugee agency have tents raised on concrete platforms with gravel around the bases that prevents the ground from getting too muddy. That may be an upgrade from other camps who are just pitched on the ground. Yet, even these camps face problems like holes in tents, which

[11] United Nations, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees," UNCHR, 1951, accessed August 6, 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/3b66c2aa10.

[12] United Nations, "Iraq Emergency," UNCHR, May 14, 2018, accessed August 6, 2019, https://www.unchr.org/en-us/iraq-emergency.html.

allow insects to come in, as well as the cold and the rain. The UN asked for less aid to Iraq, a considerable less aid in 2019 than in previous years, by a few hundred million dollars.

This decrease in funding will impact the living conditions for the people in these displacement camps and lower their ability to adequately respond to natural disasters. This coupled with the ever growing list of newly displaced people happening every month, is disastrous for those who rely on the camps. Just last month, in July, 325 people were evacuated and displaced in Shingal, Nineveh province due to a field dire that they suspect was started by ISIL trying to hinder the return of displaced people. [13]

Refugee's negative connotation

In recent years, the term refugee has received a negative connotation. Refugee means "necessity for refuge". It is a term that is meant to generate empathy to those that hear it. Yet, it has become, for some, a word that instead they relate to terrorists, undesirable amounts of people, and people that are not seen as human. This negative connotation is happening to other terms that may describe a refugee as well, like migrant, immigrant, and asylum seeker. Much of the reason these words have such a negative connotation is because of the way they are used in the media. The media often discusses whether asylum-seekers or refugees' claims are 'worthy' or 'authentic', implicating that those people might somehow be involved in something criminal.

There is always the question of humanity. People are conditioned to feel empathetic toward those who are like them and more fearful and dismissive of those that they don't understand. Therefore, the choice of language when used by those who control public discourse, have the power to dehumanize a group while generating sympathy for others. Regardless of political affiliation, the press uniformly refers to a large number and overwhelming quantities when discussing refugee or immigration crisis. [14]

Brief History of Iraq and Saddam Hussein

It is important to know Iraq has had a complicated relationship with imperialism and imperial powers since the disillusion of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. Great Britain was given Iraq after the war. Great Britain brought troops into Iraq, similarly to what they did in India, and occupied the country. Nationalism protests broke out, and one leader, Imam Shirazi of Karbala, issued a religious decree that British rule violated Islamic law. He called for a Holy War against Great Britain. The whole country was united in this war against the British, who responded with aerial bombs, machine-gunning rebels, and the destruction of whole towns. At the end of the war, Great Britain won, but 6,000 Iraqis and 500 British and Indian soldiers perished. Winston Churchill set up a constitutional monarchy system for the Iraqi government, and placed Faisal on the thrown, a 35-year-old man who had never set foot in Iraq. In 1924 the new Constitutional Assembly of Iraq met to consider the Angle-Iraq treaty, a treaty that made Iraq honor all

King Ghazi

[13] Pesha Magid, "As Displacement Runs to Years, Northern Iraq Camps Need an Overhaul," The New Humanitarian, April 16, 2019, accessed August 8, 2019, https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/02/25displacement-runs-years-northern-riaq-camps-need-overhaul.
[14] Lingua Obscura, "Migrants, Refugees, and Expats: How Humanity Comes in Waves," JSTOR Daily, September 15, 2015, accessed August 6, 2019, https://daily.jstor.org/language-of-migrants-refugees-expats/.

previous agreements made by Great Britain (including agreements on oil). Great Britain threatened to withdraw and leave Iraq vulnerable if the treaty was not signed, so it was ratified. The King Faisal died in 1933, and after his death Great Britain tried to undermine the government and monarchy by putting pressure on them to serve British interests. Ghazi, Faisal's son, took the throne at 21-years-old and was able to rally and unite his subject through speeches over the radio, which Great Britain did not like.

Ghazi's reign was short, he died after a car crash in 1939. The people blamed Great Britain for his death and violent street demonstrations broke out in Baghdad that next day. The British consul was also killed. Ghazi was succeeded by Faisal II. A coup took place in 1958 when rebel troops killed the 23-year-old king, blaming his uncle, the Regent, for the monarchy's pro-British slant. The country was divided yet again, and Great Britain did nothing to remedy the situation.

Saddam Hussein and his rule

Musa mentions in the play Saddam Hussein and his rule in Iraq. Hussein's rule is important because it is what led to American involvement in the Middle East. In 1968 after a decade of instability after the monarchy system collapsed, Saddam Hussein led a coup and put General Bakr into power in Iraq. In 1979 Saddam Hussein became president after Bakr's resignation, which is thought to have been engineered by Hussein. His rule was bloody and filled with fear. Hussein had Mosques, airports, neighborhoods, and entire cities named after him. A military arch, erected in 1989, was modeled after his forearm and enlarged 40 times to hold two giant crossed swords. Schools taught songs about him. While he was in power his statue guarded the entrance to every village, his portrait watched over each government office, and he peered down from at least one wall in every home. [15]

Saddam Hussein

Simple information, like the weather, was classified and hidden from the government. There was no freedom of expression. Foreign newspapers were banned. The people were not free to travel. He unsettled the ranks of his party, the Baath Party, with purges and packed his jails with political prisoners to defuse real or imagined plots against him. He even carried out the torture and execution of those he felt had crossed him. One of the most brutal acts happened in the northern Kurdish village of Halabja, where he rained down poison gas on the people killing 5,000 and wounding 10,000 more. These were his own people.

It should be noted that the United States had an intimate relationship with Saddam Hussein, as they sponsored the coup that brought the anti-communist Baath Party into power. That coup, in 1963, was accompanied by a bloodbath of suspected communists that was provided by the CIA. The Baathists systematically murdered untold number of Iraq's educated elite (as Musa mentions that there are no educated

[15] Jonathan Kandell, "Iraq's Unruly Centruy," Smithsonian, May 1, 2003, accessed August 6, 2019, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/iraqs-unruly-century-82706606/.

people left in Iraq). There is no exact number, but it is suspected hundreds of doctors, teachers, technicians, lawyers, and other professionals as well as military and political figures were killed. [16]

Sectarian Violence in Iraq and ISIS

Sectarian violence exists in Iraq between two different sects of Islam: Sunni and Shiite. Sunni and Shiites are both sects of Islam that share many fundamental beliefs, but differ when it comes to doctrine, ritual, law, theology, and religious organization. In the case of Iraq, the primary source of violence has stemmed from these two groups, as they fight against each other. When the US left Iraq in 2011, the Shiite-dominated government, under Nouri Al Maliki, widened the sectarian divide, dispossessing and marginalizing the Sunnis. When Adider Al Abadi became the new Prime Minister in August of 2014, he tried to turn things around and end the sectarian violence. He banned airstrikes from being conducted in residential areas, started recruiting key Sunni tribal leaders to the Iraqi security forces, and ordered the Iraqi security forces to stop shelling Sunni-inhabited areas within ISIS controlled territories. Yet, this was not enough for Sunni leaders, who claimed that sectarian violence was increasing daily. Iran has had increasing influence as well, another Shitte state. Iran has given military assistance to counter ISIS in Iraq, but in doing this has also increased its hold over the Iraqi government. [17]

ISIS

The roost of ISIS trace back to 2004 when al Queda in Iraq formed. The original goal of this group was to remove Western occupation and replace it was a Sunni Islamist regime. The leader of al Queda in Iraq was killed during an airstrike in 2006, and the new leader renamed it ISI, or the Islamic State of Iraq. In 2010, that leader died and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took power. ISI renamed themselves again in 2013 after the civil war in Syria broke out to ISIS, which stands for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. In 2014 ISIS took control of some key places in Iraq, including the city of Mosul, Falluja, Tikrit, and the Mosul Dam. They attacked a northern town in Iraq that was home to a religious minority, the Yazidis, and killed hundreds. ISIS also sold women from that town into slavery, forced religious conversions, and caused tens of thousands of Yazidis to flee from their homes. This sparked international coverage and brought attention to ISIS and their brutal tactics. They have been known to carry out public executions, rapes, beheadings, and crucifixions. They have also claimed several terror attacks that have taken place in the past several years, causing outside powers, like the US, to get involved in places like Syria, to eliminate the group.[18]

Art Therapy After Trauma

Trauma is the result of an overwhelming threat to our person that ignites our fight/flight/freeze stress response. If a person is overwhelmed by a threat, they may develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), where the body is stuck in the stress response and continues to behave as if it is still fighting that enemy. Yasmina struggles with PSTD from the traumatic events that happened to her when she was in Iraq. When people experience traumatic events, the part of our brain that is responsible for language shuts down. At the same time our brain's danger recognition center is on high alert and records the traumatic memory visually and in the form of bodily sensation. Using art to express emotion accesses both visually stored memory and body memory, as it not only enables people to create images, but the use of art materials such as clay (or in Yasmina's case, dirt) can reconnect them to physical sensation. Researches have suggested that the sense of

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[16] Roger Morris, "A Tyrant 40 Years in the Making," The New York Times, March 14, 2003, accessed August 6, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/14/opinion/a-tyrant-40-years-in-the-making.html.
[17] Aida Arosoaie, "Iraq," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses 7*, no. 1 (2015): 62-66, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26351318.
[18] History.com Editors, "ISIS," History.com, July 10, 2017, accessed Augusy 14, 2019, https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/isis.

touch and sight connects directly to our brain's fear center, which is why art therapy is ideally placed to work with traumatic memory. As traumatic memory is visually stored, connecting to it through art can be more immediate. It allows the person suffering from trauma to choose what they create, and they release aspects of the trauma at their own place, which stops them from being overwhelmed. [19]

Examples of Art Therapy after War and Trauma

Ahmad Abdulrazzaq: Chicago based artist.

[19] "How Does Art Therapy Work With Trauma?" The Palmeira Practice, May 18, 2017, , accessed August 07, 2019, https://www.thepalmeirapractice.org.uk/expertise/art-therapy-trauma.

Ahmad
abdulrazzaq
2019....

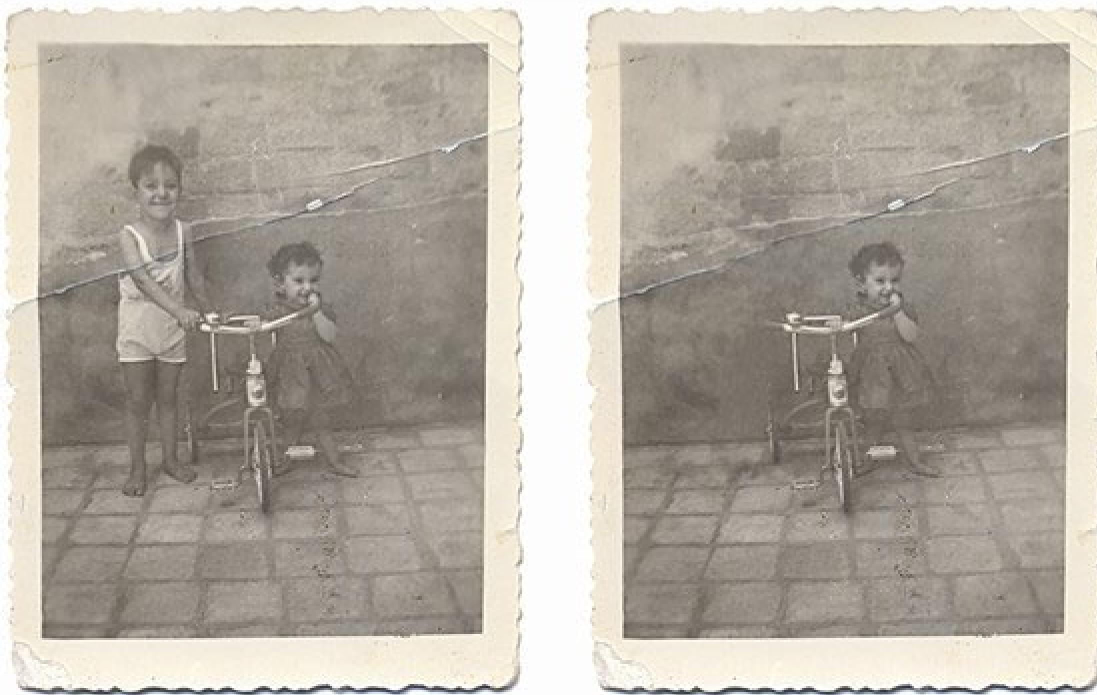
إنا فتحنا لك فتحا مبينا
ليغفر لك الله ما تقدم من ذنبك
وما تأخر ويتم نعمته عليك

Abduel-Karim Khalil: his sculptures refer to the Abu Ghraib torture scandal perpetrated by the US government.

Ali Talib Alkayali: this instillation, *To Whom It May Concern*, underlines the suffering and death endemic to the lives of the Iraqi people. The carved-gypsum multiethnic heads buried in the sand are the reminders of the horrific and ongoing massacre to his people. [20]

[20] "IRAQI ARTISTS IN EXILE," Station Museum of Contemporary Art, , accessed August 07, 2019, http://stationmuseum.com/?page_id=2869.

Nedim Kufi: *Absence*



Iraqi Wedding Traditions

There are seven steps in a traditional Iraqi wedding ceremonies. Most take place before the wedding. Each of these steps are very important and meant to prepare the future bride for a lifelong commitment. It is also a way for the family and friends to bond.

1. Mashaya and Sherbert – members of the groom's family visit the bride's house and notify her father of the groom's intent. After the bride and her father accept rose water, cordial, and Turkish coffee is served.
2. Engagement – Shorter engagements are preferred. Though some engagements can last anywhere from a month to several years. During the engagement is when the family and the couple plan the ceremony and exchange rings.
3. Nishan – This pre-wedding event is a party complete with music, dancing, family, and traditional religious readings. The bride-to-be often dresses in new gowns. Gifts are exchanged between the families as well.
4. Mez al Sayed – Two days before a Muslim wedding, the soon to be bride and groom meet with an Imam to sign the official contract. The table is decorated traditionally with a mirror facing a candle oraba, the Qur'an, and other items like Jordan Almonds. The couple faces East, toward the rising sun.
5. Henna – The evening before the ceremony, the woman of the bridal party gather and adorn the bride's skin in traditional henna.
6. The Ceremony – the men of the bridal party come to escort the women of the bridal party to the ceremony. Candles are lit, children may carry olive brances. Traditional music is played as the bride walks down the aisle. The bride, escorted by her father, meets the groom on stage, where they are

seated on the Kosha (a sofa type item). They remain seated during religious readings and exchanging of vows. In a Muslim wedding, vows are led by an Imam and focus on commitment to each other and their religion. After, a party is held.

7. Sab's - Seven days after the ceremony, the couple celebrates at the groom's house, where more gifts are exchanged. [21]

Traditional Iraqi bride wears seven dresses, each a different color of the rainbow. Red represents love and romance

[21] "Global Wedding Traditions: 7 Essentials of an Iraqi Wedding," Diamond Bridal Gallery, accessed August 7, 2019, https://diamondbridalgallery.com/2018/02/23/global-wedding-traditions-7-essentials-of-an-iraqi-wedding/.

Images of Mosques in Chicago

Mosque Maryam

Inside Dar-us-Masjid Mosque

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Religious Microaggressions: A Case Study of Muslim Americans

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ABSTRACT
The increasing population of Muslims in America faces challenges not uncommon to other faith and immigrant communities. One particular challenge is Muslim experiences of various forms of discrimination, prejudice, anti-Muslim bigotry, and microaggressions, especially in post-9/11 America. While microaggressions have been discussed in the social sciences literature, religious microaggressions have not been clearly addressed in the social work literature. This article aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining the connections among racial microaggressions, the racialization of religion, and ultimately religious microaggressions. The article concludes by presenting implications for social work policy, practice, and education in the area of religious microaggressions.

KEYWORDS
Asian-American and Pacific Islanders population; immigrants and refugees; Islamophobia; microaggressions; spirituality

As the population of Muslims in the United States increases, the social work client base is likely to expand to include those individuals who self-identify as Muslim (Husain, 2015). Since the population growth is due to natural births, ongoing immigration, and conversions to the faith, the challenges Muslims face in their daily lives are likely to also require access to various types of health and human services. One particular challenge that has received minimal attention within the social work literature is Muslim experiences of various forms of discrimination, prejudice, anti-Muslim bigotry, and microaggressions. While microaggressions have been discussed in the social sciences literature, religious microaggressions have not been clearly addressed in the social work literature. This article is divided into four major sections and utilizes an interdisciplinary approach to make a unique contribution to the existing literature on religious microaggressions. Following this introduction, an overview is provided of the impact of microaggressions, particularly racial microaggressions, as a preface to a subsequent discussion on the racialization of religion. The next section provides an in-depth examination of religious microaggressions, with a particular focus on the racialization of religion throughout American history. Before the section

on final implications for social work, the overall discussion about religious microaggressions is contextualized within the framework of the history and roots of anti-Islamic bigotry in the United States.

The impact of microaggressions

Researchers conceptualize microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). The language was originally designed to capture the experiences of people of color; however, its use has been extended for other marginalized and oppressed people to include ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, physical (Sue et al., 2007), and religious minorities (Nadal et al., 2012). To help understand the impact of microaggressions, Sue (2010) presented a process model that traces the immediate impact of microaggression on the victim from the inception of the offense. His process model identifies five distinct phases: the incident, the perception, the reaction, the interpretation, and the consequence. The microaggression flow chart begins with an incident that the client perceived to be "racially motivated" (p. 68). A reaction then follows; the reaction may include rumination over the incident, questioning of his or her perception of the incident, emotionality, a desire to rescue the offender, and/or a sense of empowerment/self-validation. The target may then interpret the meaning of the offense as indicating that he or she does not belong, is abnormal, inferior, untrustworthy, or stereotypical. Over time, the target may demonstrate feelings of powerlessness, invisibility, forced compliance/loss of integrity, or pressure to represent one's group (Sue, 2010). While this model was not designed explicitly as a diagnostic tool, it may be useful in helping clinicians to organize the assessment phase of treatment and to anticipate possible mental health and behavioral outcomes.

Religious microaggression and the racialization of religion

There is evidence of burgeoning interest in religious microaggressions. However, this literature is limited and fragmented. In 2010, Edwards attempted "the first successful expansion of the microaggressions model to a population targeted for their religion, as opposed to their race" (p. 43). He demonstrated that Muslim Americans experience microaggression, which is accompanied by emotional arousal. In 2010, Nadal, Issa, Griffin, Hamit, and Lyons presented a conceptual definition of religious microaggression as follows:"Religious microaggressions can be defined as subtle behavioral and verbal exchanges (both conscious and unconscious) that

send denigrating messages to individuals of various religious groups" (p. 297).

These researchers posited that religious minorities have historically been discriminated against and persecuted in America. Their focus was the collective experience of various religious minorities. They contributed a theoretical taxonomy of religious microaggressions to the dialogue. In 2012, Nadal and colleagues empirically evaluated the taxonomy of religious microaggressions among a small sample of Muslim Americans. Their findings supported four of the themes previously proposed and identified two additional themes specific to Muslim Americans:"Endorsing religious stereotypes of Muslims as terrorists, pathologizing the Muslim religion, assuming religious homogeneity, exoticizing Muslim religion, Islamophobic and mocking language, and feelings of being an alien in one's own country" (Nadal et al., 2012, p. 22).

Figure 1 is an example of a microaggression that confirms the idea that Muslim Americans could be made to feel alone, despite being native-born. While the study by Nadal and colleagues (2012) was limited in methodological rigor by a small sample size and purposive sampling techniques, its findings provide support for a differential construct of religious microaggression. This research is also helpful in establishing a conceptual understanding of the lived experiences of religious minorities. Finally, in 2015, Forrest-Bank and Dupper presented at the Society for Social Work and Research conference on religious microaggression in public schools. They explored the qualitative experiences of religious minorities in a public school setting. Their study was the first to explore religious microaggression among children. Their sample population included 50 students from the Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, and Universalist Unitarian faith communities. Their findings indicated that children experience microaggressions in the public school setting at a significant rate (Forrest-Bank & Dupper, 2015). Furthermore, their article on the same topic indicates that teachers were among the perpetrators of religious microaggression(Dupper, Forrest-Bank, & Lowry-Carusillo, 2015). Their findings provide evidence of a need for training among service providers to include schoolteachers and administrators in cultural sensitivity for religious minorities.

Figure 1 is an example of a microaggression that confirms the idea that Muslim Americans could be made to feel alone, despite being native-born. While there have been no studies exploring the mental health impact of religious microaggressions, the implications of more overt forms of Islamophobia have been well-established (Nadal et al., 2010). Experiences of religious discrimination have been linked to lower self-esteem (Moradi & Hasan, 2004) and higher rates of stress in Muslim samples (Rippy & Newman, 2006, 2008). Religious discrimination is also correlated with "paranoia, vigilance, mistrust, and suspicion" that may lead to functional impairment (Rippy & Newman, 2006). Loss of sleep and headaches have also been

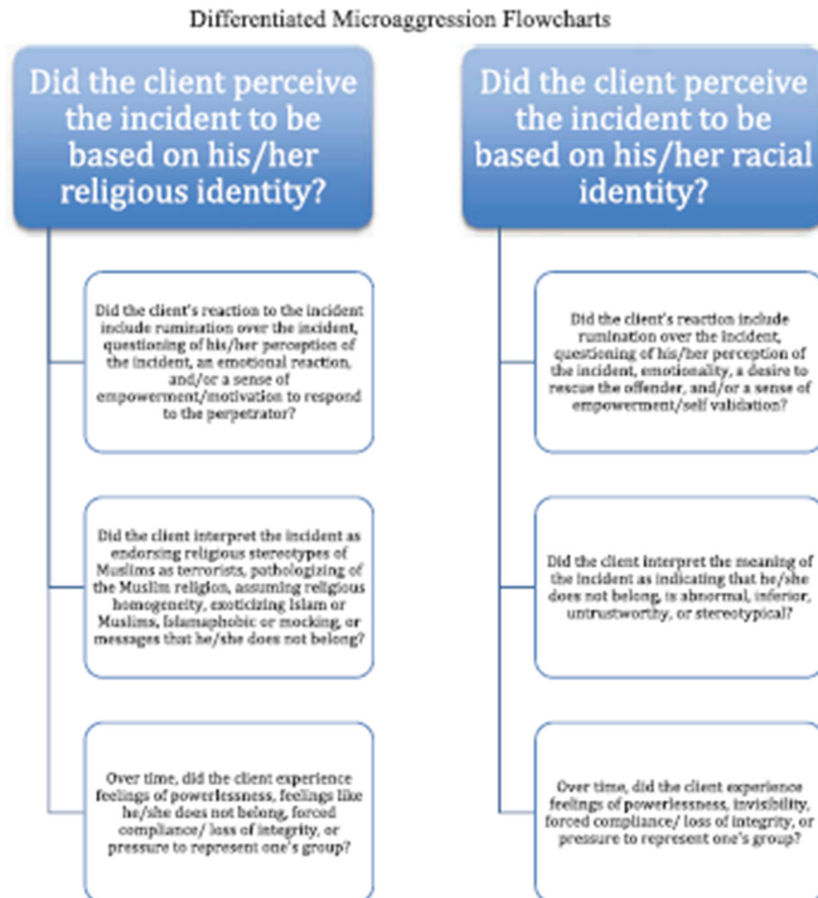

Figure 1. In support of a differential conceptualization of the impact of religious microaggression, the authors of this article adapted Sue's process model as a flowchart. The flowcharts in this figure trace the impact of microaggression from the inception of the offense. The flowcharts are intended to help the clinician to structure his or her questions to the client in order to assess the possible impact of the microaggression on the client. The flowcharts are separated by form of microaggression to help identify possible differential outcomes.

associated with religious discrimination (Nadal et al., 2010). However, there have been no studies that have explored the mental health implications of religious microaggression(Nadal et al., 2010). Thus, additional research is needed to determine if the impact of religious microaggressions shares a similar course and symptomatology as that demonstrated in the case of racial microaggressions. In particular, less is known regarding the internalization of Islamophobic messages. While extant studies indicate that forced conformity may have a deleterious impact on targets of microaggression, for Muslims, the loss of religious integrity may be more detrimental than conformity to racial standards, considering the centrality of religion in their lives. However, the long-term effects of distancing oneself from one's racial or ethnic group are not well-documented in the literature. Thus, additional information is

needed to understand the impact of acculturation as a result of microaggression on the well-being of Muslim Americans.

Of use in identifying how an individual psychologically copes with experiences of microaggression may be Sue's process model discussed previously (Sue, 2010). However, this model has not been adapted as an assessment tool and is limited in its implications for religious minorities. In support of a differential conceptualization of the impact of religious microaggression, the authors of this article adapted Sue's process model as a flowchart (see Figure 2). The authors desired to illustrate how Muslim Americans psychologically respond and adapt to experiences of religious microaggression.

The religious microaggression flowchart is founded on the taxonomy of religious microaggression as presented by Nadal and colleagues (2012). Similar to Sue's process model, it begins with an incident that the target perceives to be religiously motivated. Next, the client experiences a reaction to the incident that may include rumination over the incident, questioning of his or her perception of the incident, emotionality, and/or a sense of empowerment/motivation to respond to the perpetrator. These reactions are similar to those reflected by the racial microaggression flowchart with the exception of the last item. Edwards indicated that religious microaggressions may elicit anger that can empower the individual to respond to the incident (2010). As such, the religious microaggression flowchart was modified to indicate empowerment/motivation to respond to the perpetrator. The concept of self-validation or the "shifting of fault to the aggressor" was not confirmed in the religious microaggression literature (Sue, 2010, p. 75). Next, the client interprets the incident as falling into one of the themes of religious microaggression as conceptualized and empirically tested by Nadal and colleagues (2012). These themes are religious stereotypes of Muslims as terrorists; pathologizing of the Muslim religion; assumptions of religious homogeneity; exoticizing Islam or Muslims; Islamophobic or mocking language; and

"White American non-Muslim woman: Where you from?
Me: [ ]ville.
Her: I am from there, too.
Me: We should have carpooled into the city together.
Her: [laughs] But I meant… I thought you were an immigrant.
She waits for me to define myself for her. Anyone who is not Native American is an immigrant. But that's not what she means. She wants the name of a country, a box to put me into. I say, "No," and she frowns at my not giving her the critical information. I walk away. She doesn't want to interact with me until she can categorize me. I wonder how many strangers have ever walked up to her and demanded a country in the first minute of the conversation. I want to scream, "Sorry to disappoint you, but I am not your ambassador to The Exotic! I am a Muslim-American woman who wears a headscarf; we are volunteering for a community service project. Made me feel small, annoyed."

Figure 2. Religious micoraggression with the theme of assumption of religious homogeneity.

alienation. The cumulative effects of religious microaggressions have not been examined in the literature to the best of the authors' knowledge. However, based on the religious microaggression themes and literature on the impacts of racial microaggressions, feelings of powerlessness, feeling like he or she does not belong, forced compliance/loss of integrity, and pressure to represent one's group may be associated with religious microaggressions. These outcomes are similar to that demonstrated in the case of racial micro-aggression. However, invisibility was removed, as it has not been noted as a theme in the religious microaggression literature. In addition, feeling like he or she does not belong was included to reflect the literature on religious microaggressions(Nadal et al., 2012).

Racialization of religion

The concept of microaggression can be extended to religious minorities by virtue of the historic racialization of religion. In pre-modern America, religious distinction was the basis for discrimination and persecution (Ibrahim, 2008). The roots of religious racialization can be traced back to the concept of Jewish blood (Nirenberg, 2009). The use of religion to demarcate privilege is carried forward in early American history in the race relations between Native Americans and Puritans in 17th-century America, wherein "whiteness emerged… as a common identity across class lines among Europeans, setting the colonial majorities apart from both African slaves and Native Americans" (Joshi, 2006, p. 213). Thus, Christianity served to unite early Americans under a single attribute, but also to identify others as outsiders (see Figure 3). Subsequently, American colonists developed laws explicitly associating Whiteness and Christianity with freedom. As one example, in 1811 in *People v. Ruggles*, the courts codified "the national community as white and Christian" (Ibrahim, 2008, pp. 131–132). This

"'Are you enjoying your vacation to the United States?' I'm 17, in 2008, at the local Walmart. I had been living in the United States since I was about five but people still assume that because I wear a hijab that I'm only here to visit. It made me feel like I would never be a part of the small town that I live in."

Figure 3. Religious microaggression with the theme of alien in own country.

"Chatting light-heartedly with a friend about whether Prince William could marry a Catholic (which she is). I joked that it would be cool if he married a Hindu or a Muslim (which I am). She said, "If he can't marry a Catholic **WHY WOULD HE MARRY A MUSLIM?**" in such a way that made it seem like it would be beyond distasteful and impossible for him to want to marry any Muslim ever. I was just joking around, but her comment made me feel like she'd labeled me and people like me as unlovable, unwanted, and 'beneath' Catholics. I am 20 and it made me feel singled out, hurt."

Figure 4. Religious microaggression with the theme of pathology of the Muslim religion.

ruling subsequently "describes Islam and Muslims as the opposite to Whiteness and Christianity, therefore, as the inferior 'other' that is excluded from the national polity" (Ibrahim, 2008, p. 131; see also Figure 4). In addition, in 1952, the higher courts ruled that one's "espousal of and relationship to Islam" identifies one as non-white (Ibrahim, 2008, p. 132). The racialization of religion was also evident in the violent conversion and persecution of enslaved Black Muslims in early American history, in which enslaved African-Americans were persecuted for practicing Islam (Ibrahim, 2008).

History and roots of anti-Islamic bigotry

Tracing the history of racism, Fredrickson (2002) states explicitly that bigotry rooted in religious difference "long predated the development of scientific racisms and notions of biological difference" (pp. 4–5). The history of Islam in America and the treatment of Muslims demonstrates the intertwining of bigotry rooted in religious difference as well as biological difference vis-à-vis Muslims of Arab origin. To contextualize the current climate of anti-Islamic bigotry and the likelihood of microaggressions directed at Muslims, social workers would benefit from a brief history of the existence of Islam in America and the roots of anti-Islamic bigotry.

Founding to the late 1800s

The current atmosphere of intense anti-Islamic bigotry stands in stark contrast to how Islam and Muslims were dealt with at the founding of the United States, and indeed until the late 1800s. There is no evidence to date pointing to the settlement of free men or women of the Muslim faith during the 1700s, although there is evidence of the existence of enslaved Muslims from West Africa as a part of the Atlantic slave trade (Diouf, 2013). Even so, the Founding Fathers were familiar with Islam as a world religion and the Qur'an was a part of the personal library of former presidents Thomas Jefferson (archived in the Library of Congress) and John Adams. Among the first major powers to recognize the newly founded nation in 1776 was the kingdom of Morocco, and there is ample evidence of American government interactions with the Ottoman Caliphate. Outside of the realm of the remnants of the post-Crusades negative image of Islam, much of the references to the faith are characterized incorrectly as "Muhammadanism," with "Muhammadans" used to reference the adherents of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. A cursory glance at this period reveals at least a fair treatment of Islam the faith, with concerns about Muslims expressed if at all in the realm of foreign affairs and not in particular about the tenets of the faith. Indeed, at a time when intense bigotry makes at least tacit approval of efforts

to exclude Muslims from the public sphere, it seems almost impossible that Benjamin Franklin quite explicitly envisioned not just Muslims but the allowance of a Muslim religious scholar, namely the mufti, in the public sphere: "even if the mufti of Constantinople were to send someone here to preach Islam and teach us about Mohammed, he argued, we should offer a pulpit, we should listen, for we might learn" (Isaacson, 2006, p. 574).

Late 1800s to World War II

The onset of Muslim migration to the United States is connected less with pull events within the United States and more push events, beginning with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the late 1800s. Marvasti and McKinney (2004) note how little was known at the time in the United States about the diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds of Muslims. Whereas the Ottoman Empire stretched well into and beyond lands from which Arabs hailed, U.S. officials nevertheless listed incorrectly immigrants of the Atlantic migration from lands ruled by the Ottoman Empire as "Turkish citizens." Those Muslim immigrants who arrived via the Pacific Ocean suffered a similar fate as far as confusion at the least or outright discrimination at the worst in terms of their treatment. Takaki (1998) notes that Indian immigrants of Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh background arrived into the United States via Angel Island during the late 1800s but the Muslims and Sikhs were lumped into one category and referred to racially as "Hindoos" and even "full-blooded Aryans." In addition, the Muslims suffered a similar fate in terms of discrimination as the other Asian immigrants of the time, ranging from being victims of violence perpetrated by White workers to being referred to as "slaves." Various pieces of legislation were enacted between the late 1800s until after World War II to both deny citizenship to Indians and other non-European peoples and to restrict their migration.

World War II to Iranian Revolution

The end of World War II and the beginning of the end of the bulk colonization and occupation by European powers of mostly Asian and African nations gave rise to not only the drawing and redrawing of national borders but also unparalleled displacement and movement of peoples around the world. Among those on the move and often in search of educational pursuits and the "American dream" were Muslims from mostly South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa (Haddad, 2004). The arrival of Muslims of Arab origin into the United States was a result of regional instability caused to varying degrees by the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the onset of civil unrest and ultimately civil war in Lebanon in 1975, and the beginnings in 1978 of the Iranian Revolution (Marvasti & McKinney, 2004). Whereas their Muslim

predecessors of the 1800s had blended into American society due to their white skin color and through active efforts at assimilation, the post–World War II Muslim immigrants were not only racially and ethnically diverse but also selected quite actively to retain or at least promote their Islamic identity in the United States. The context of their reception into the United States was marred by conflations in the media and entertainment of all Arabs with Islam. Ibrahim (2008) notes that films especially were responsible for creating an image of Arabs as the "other," dehumanizing not only a people with a great civilization, but also ensuring their second-class status upon arrival into the United States. This vilification of Arabs and Muslims worsened exponentially with the start of the Iranian Revolution and the subsequent hostage crisis.

Iranian Revolution to September 10, 2001

The conflation of Arabs with Muslims, even though a majority of Arabs are not Muslims, continued well after the Iranian Revolution and leading up to and including the first Gulf War and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Muslims within the United States had received minimal attention prior to the Iranian Revolution. Following the election of President Ronald Reagan and the continuation of the struggle to preserve control of oil supplies from the Middle East, the image of Muslims became associated with the dictatorial regimes of the Middle East, including the now deceased Saddam Hussein of Iraq and Muammar Qaddafi of Libya. American engagement with Islam and Muslims seemed to be confined mostly to foreign interventions, with less contentious framing of Muslim Americans as being responsible for the actions of their coreligionists overseas. Almost coinciding with the fall of Communism, the search for a new global threat ended conveniently with the identification of Islam as the new enemy of civilization. For example, the end of the Russian occupation of Afghanistan was facilitated almost entirely through direct American intervention, including training and arming Afghans and Muslims from around the world who joined the war. Those foreign fighters, called *mujahideen* or "freedom fighters," included Osama bin Laden, and many of them turned their attention to the United States itself as the enemy of Islam. Prior to the terrorist attacks of 2001, bin Laden and his supporters waged unrelenting attacks on the United States and its interests overseas. With every terrorist attack, bin Laden brought upon himself and his followers, including the nations which provided safe havens such as Afghanistan and Sudan, the wrath of the United States (Wedgewood, 1999). As the American armed attacks on bin Laden intensified, the focus publicly shifted from bin Laden as a rogue actor to Islam itself as a religion that was a purveyor of violence. Joshi (2006) asserts that "stereotypes perpetuated by the government and media come [sic] to paint Islam and Muslim

as intrinsically—perhaps organically—violent and evil in American public opinion" (p. 218). That public opinion on the most part appeared, at least until the 2001 terrorist attacks, to discern between Muslims overseas and the Muslims of America.

Post-September 11, 2001, to 2015

The post-9/11 anti-Islamic bigotry experienced by Muslims in the United States appears to be just that—a phenomenon spawned by the terrorist attacks that killed more than 3,000 Americans, some of them Muslim Americans. The so-called "war on terror" soon warped into a "war on Islam," with supporters of the latter name conflating terrorism and extremism with Islam itself. It is inconceivable that only the 9/11 terrorist attacks stigmatized Islam as a violent religion and Muslims as innately violent people. Ibrahim (2008) provides critical background as to how the image of Muslims became so vilified, starting in the late 1800s.

> Since 1896, there have been over 900 films made about Arabs portraying them as "brutal, heartless, uncivilized religious fanatics and money-mad cultural 'others' bent on terrorizing civilized Westerners, especially Christians and Jews." Images of Arabs were either implicitly or explicitly conflated with Islam and Muslims, serving not only to dehumanize Arabs but Muslims as well. This conflation of Arabs with Muslims and vice versa prevails even today despite the reality that the majority of Arabs in the United States are Christian and that Arabs are only a minority of the Muslims in the world. (Ibrahim, 2008, p. 137)

Almost as if a sequel to a film was produced, during the period following the 9/11 attacks, there was a seismic shift in the treatment of Muslim Americans, whose existence in the national psyche shifted from loyal Americans to the enemy next door. Whereas people of color including South Asians and Arabs of faiths other than Islam also mistakenly became victims of violence and bigotry, African-Americans who identify as Muslims perhaps suffered the worse fate due to the color of their skin and the choice of their faith. Peek (2011) documented painstakingly the depths of the blaming, marginalization, and traumatization endured by Muslims of diverse backgrounds. And unlike the point being made by Ibrahim (2008) highlighting the scapegoating and stereotyping of Muslims by the film industry intended perhaps for popular consumption without regards to education level, Peek (2011) notes that books were also used in a similar manner. Her research indicates that there were "more than twenty books on the 'Islamic menace' in the one-year period following the 9/11 attacks" (Peek, 2011, p. 6). Although she does not address microaggressions explicitly, Peek (2011) proffers the existence of what she terms "verbal bigotry," noting that such a form of bigotry was likely encouraged by "the rise in anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks" (p. 66).

The anti-Islamic bigotry continues to intensify even a decade after the 9/11 attacks but not because of the actions of Muslim Americans. Rather, the 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week news cycle presents as "breaking news" every horrific action of radical and extremist individuals and groups, most of them overseas, and influences the sentiments of average Americans, consuming that news in their living rooms, in doctors' office waiting lounges, airport boarding lounges, and on their smartphones. In 2009, Osama bin Laden was captured and killed and in the years following, there seemed to be relative calm since ostensibly the leader of Al-Qaeda was no more and the "hunt" had concluded. More recently (2014 onwards), the rhetoric in the media and from elected officials has intensified due to the appearance overseas of a barbaric group identifying itself as the "Islamic State." The abhorrent ideology and inhuman actions of this group have been condemned by Muslim American organizations and leaders and prominent Muslims around the world; however, a steady drumbeat persists in the United States, insisting that Muslim Americans do more to curtail the rise of violent extremism. Just as Peek (2011) found in the years after the 9/11 attacks, Muslim Americans continue to experience vulnerability and outright bigotry. In one such incident, a young woman wearing the *hijab* reported "an American white guy" looking at her and spontaneously singing the national anthem loudly. Peek (2011) surmises from the interview that the respondent "was left feeling as though patriotism was being used as a cover for anti-Muslim bigotry" (p. 68). Although not referred to as a microaggression in Peek's book, this incident does reflect the definition of a religious microaggression proffered by Nadal and colleagues (2010), "subtle behavioral and verbal exchanges (both conscious and unconscious) that send denigrating messages" (p. 297), in this case toward Muslim Americans.