

The rise of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim experiences in the U.S.

Introduction

Although hatred and fear of Muslims are as old as Islam itself and has existed from the Crusaders to the Middle ages, from the Ottoman Empire to European colonialism, the actual term ‘Islamophobia’ has been coined and popularised fairly recently. ‘Islamophobia’ is a neologism that is used to describe the ‘fear and dislike of all Muslims, and thus, results in discrimination against Muslims through their exclusion from the economic, social, and public life of the nation’ (Conway, 1997. p.5). While this term has been considerably accepted to some degree, it has also received a substantial amount of criticism which will be explored later in the essay (Kincheloe et al. 2010. p.38). There are many challenges to Islamophobia, the greatest being the questioning of its actual existence. Similar to how concerns with Islamophobia are being ignored, hate crimes against Muslims are also underreported as authorities fail to tackle ‘societal bias, prejudice, and violence’ against Muslims (Ameli et al. 2013. p.12).

Islamophobia is an important issue that needs to be addressed, especially in America (Gottschalk and Greenberg, 2008). The first section of this essay defines the term Islamophobia and provides an insight into its origination. It also includes criticisms of the term itself as well as providing alternative arguments for how Islamophobia should be defined. For example, a substantial part of this section also focuses on the racialization of Muslims. Academics have argued that Islamophobia and anti-Muslim experiences need to be defined in the wider context of cultural racism. For the most part, the term Islamophobia does not necessarily deal with cultural racism, but it cannot be denied that Islamophobia ‘both results from and contributes to the racial ideology of the United States, which is based on socially constructed categories of phenotypical characteristics’ (Love, 2009). This section also notes how Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred emerged in the U.S. by looking at its historical background through exploring Said’s Orientalism and focusing in particular on the 9/11 attacks.

The middle two sections of this essay focus on what contributes to Islamophobia and anti-Muslim experiences in the U.S. The two examples used to display this are: Representations of Muslims in American mass media and discrimination and hate policy. The portrayal of Muslims in the media is based on Orientalist concepts, as it paints all Muslims to be ‘extremists’ and ‘outdated’ (Flood et al. 2012. p.34). The TV show Homeland and the comparison of two brutal attacks are used as examples to analyse the extent negative representations have on American Muslims. The role of gender is also brought into this segment as it compares western feminism to Islamic feminism, as well as touching upon the domination of ‘Whiteness, Eurocentrism and the West’ (Law, 2002. pp.20-23). This then relates to the section of discrimination as those in power in the U.S. such as government bodies are mainly White and have Eurocentric perspectives and thus, perceive Muslims as inferior. The motivating and increase of hate policy in law and political discourse has led to the formation of hate environment, in which ‘hate-crime, discrimination, and acts of prejudice and bias are fueled’ (Ameli, 2011). The final section of the essay focuses on combatting Islamophobia by looking for reforms in representation, policy, and integration of Muslims and non-Muslims.

The Definition of Islamophobia and its emergence in the U.S.

The understanding of the term ‘Islamophobia’ today and its usage in academia, media, politics and policy discourse are influenced by the publication of the 1997 Runnymede Trust report on

'Islamophobia: a challenge for us all' (Scott, 2015). This report defined Islamophobia as the 'unfounded hostility towards Islam' which is often the result of closed minded views about Islam and Muslims (Conway, 1997). It is generally believed that the concept and neologism originated in Britain, however, there is evidence of the word used in earlier prints. For example, The Oxford English Dictionary indicates that the term appeared in print in 1991 American periodical, whereas other sources and literature suggest that it was used in France in 1925 (Allen, 2010. p.5). Others have claimed that it was used during the Iranian Revolution by Muslim feminists around that period of time (Fourest and Fiammetta, 2003. pp.27-28). However, in the early 1900's the concept of Islamophobia and the way the term was employed at that period of time is different to now. Thus, the Runnymede Trust became the first organisation to specify an institutionalised definition of Islamophobia and in the modern day, this definition and concept are referred to globally (Scott, 2015).

However, it can be said that the definition of Islamophobia is limited and does not capture the 'multidimensional aspects' of discrimination such as the indirect or psychological effects of discrimination (Scott, 2015). Some contemporary studies of Islamophobia fail to see Islamophobia as the racialization of Muslims, as it is an 'attack against not Islam as a faith but Muslims as people' (Halliday, 1999. p.898). Academic Tariq Modood (1997) argued that the concept of 'cultural racism captures the social realities that Islamophobia allows to escape', and thus needs to be defined in the wider context of cultural racism (Modood, 1997). Muslims are racialized in media and political discourse and thus, in reality, it affects those who look Asian or Arab (Tufail and Poynting, 2013, 44). A shocking incident of Islamophobia occurred in Arizona (2001), when Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh man was shot and killed in a deliberate hate crime due to his 'Muslim-like appearance'. It is proposed that Islamophobia contributes to a racial ideology based on 'social constructed categories of phenotypical characteristics, on how individuals physically appear' (Malik, 2013. p.192). Therefore, there are suggested alternatives for the term, a popular one being, 'anti-Muslimism' which is deemed a more appropriate term to use (Halliday, 1999. pp.898-899). However, in contemporary study, there is still a discussion between academics on establishing a clear exact definition. Though, regardless of this, it cannot be denied that there was a need for a term to ensure prejudice and discrimination against Muslims and those affected do not go ignored (Allen, 2010).

Studying the racial dynamics that exist in the U.S. brings out analytical advantages in understanding Islamophobia. It draws on patterns of racial scapegoating: prejudice and discrimination directed towards people with certain physical appearances e.g. those who are Asian/Arab looking (Love, 2009). Race is a sociocultural category, and the ideology of race is understood as a social construct, subject to adjustment (Banton, 1998. p.196). Every person is seen to belong to socially constructed racial categories and thus, the process of racialization affects all individuals in the U.S. (Spears, 1999). American Muslims cannot be easily pigeonholed into certain categories as they belong to various demographic groups in terms of ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic class and political tendencies (Love, 2009).

Cultural critic, Edward Said noted that since the period of European colonialism in the 17th century, the Orient (East) has been perceived as the 'Other'. Orientalism provided a rationalisation for European colonialism as the 'East' is perceived as extremely different and in need of 'Western intervention and rescue' (Said, 1978). It was in the 1700's when the Orientalist tradition made its way from Europe to the U.S. Douglas Little (2009) argued that U.S. popular culture processed orientalist images in widely circulated magazine: National Geographic. 'The Arabs, Africans and Asians who grace the pages of National Geographic are backwards, exotic, and dangerous folk... who need help and guidance to undergo political and cultural modernization' (Little, 2009. p.10). Current day representations of the Middle East and South Asia have shifted from 'exotic' more towards 'dangerous' which has led to the growth of Islamophobia. These representations have been engrained in American politics and society ever since.

When the events of 9/11 occurred, the entire world was shaken by the tragic loss of life as a result of the attacks, yet outside of academia, only a few have paid attention to the effect it had on the lives of thousands of American Muslims. A framework was in place for a popular culture backlash against

Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians who were kept without a warrant under the USA Patriot Act (Haddad and Harb, 2014). Numerous mainstream American political leaders, from President Bush to New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani emphasised upon a racialized political rhetoric warning about the dangers (at home and abroad) at the hands of 'Islamofascism', 'Islamists' and ' sleeper cells' (Love, 2009). Due to this, new political discourses emerged frequently in the 2000's about the so called 'dangerous' Muslim, some subtle and some entirely obvious. The U.S. has become a 'time/space in which American Arabs and Muslim were linked to enemy and were expected to prove their loyalty to the nation-state in ways other Americans were not' (Nabeel, Howell and Shryock 2011. p.2). Efforts to distort the teachings of Islam, to dishonour and slander Islamic organisations and to question the religion itself are widespread in contemporary American society (Love, 2009).

Muslim representations in American Mass Media

The rising of Islamophobia in the U.S. speaks to the era of the 'New American Century', a visibly growing neoconservative group based on aggressive imperialism and missionary politics (Project for the New American Century, 2014). The increase of such hate groups stems from the perceptions of Muslims who are inaccurately represented in American Mass Media. In 2008, 26 million copies of Islamophobic pseudo-documentary - 'Obsession: Radical Islam's threat to the West' were embedded in 70 newspapers, including so-called 'liberal' papers, The New York Times (Colton, 2008). Obsession features footage which incorporates sections of discourses by Imams, activists, and radicalised individuals who talk about the legitimacy of Jihad. These were publicised close to the timing of the seventh 9/11 anniversary and Republican National Convention. It was also screened on college grounds, on Capitol Hill, in chapels and synagogues, and broadcasted on Fox News. It is also easily accessible on the Internet, by the means of YouTube and Netflix (Stein and Selime, 2015. pp.-384-385). Although this documentary tried to suggest that 'ordinary' Muslims want to live peaceful lives, claims made in the videos suggested the opposite. For example, in Obsession, Daniel Pipes proclaims that '10-15% of Muslims in the world support terrorism' and by taking the lower 10%, it suggests that there are 124 million radical Islamic militants in the world (Bilecki, 2010. p.20).

Similar to documentaries like Obsession, various media formats of the United States portray a succession of images that identify Muslims based on stereotypes that have negative connotations (Lyden, 2009). The media, in general, is inseparable from controversy as there is a public fascination with the spread of 'disturbing and taboo-breaking images'. Controversial representations in the media are under-theorised which enhances media power and dangers (Attwood, 2012). In regards to the portrayal of Muslims, the media predict a clash of civilisations, 'culminating in a racial-religious war with apocalyptic consequences and utilise a series of "reformed Muslims" to present their defence' (Stein and Selime, 2015. p.387).

American TV and film is one example of how the media presents distorted representations of the Orient. The West propagate such negative imagery of Muslims for power politics and knowledge which manipulates the thoughts of its viewers, examples being: The Sheik (1921), Law and Order (1990-2010), The Mummy (1999), Homeland (2011) and The Dictator (2012) (Alsultany, 2012). The political thriller, TV series 'Homeland' (2011-) illustrates how a popular American TV show perpetuates such oversimplified stereotypes. In season 4, the show's hero Carrie strolls among Muslim women but it is clearly portrayed that she is not one of them. The Muslim women are 'secured' in black burqas, faceless and voiceless, whereas Carrie, on the other hand, stands out. She wears red and her golden locks slip out from her loose head covering (see Appendix 1). This show represents Western feminism, suggesting that the white woman is 'free' and 'liberated', whilst it robs Pakistani Muslim women of their agency and portrays them as oppressed (Abrahams, 2014). A key note to mention here is that gender also plays a part in representation. A common reaction from Western feminism is that Muslim women are 'mere pawns in an intrinsically patriarchal system'. It ignores the effects of Western colonialism and feeds directly into the idea of a 'White Savior' (Haddad, Smith and Moore. 2006. pp.17-19).

This notion of 'saving' the 'oppressed Muslim woman' creates a hierarchy between women and assigns power to the white western woman, as displayed in Homeland. Muslim women have spoken out on

their feelings of exclusion and disagree with the views of mainstream western feminism as it does not stand against intersecting oppressions e.g. race, religion and ethnicity (Kerber et al. 2015. p.780). It is from mainstream media which has led to such narrow-minded views to believe the Orient to be connected with barbarism, despotism and violence, whilst the West is demonstrated as cutting edge and free (Said, 1978). American Film and TV can further marginalise a minority even within movements that supposedly fight for solidarity. These images misrepresent the majority of Muslims who are educated, successful and socially conservative. Yet, despite multicultural awareness, stereotypes of Muslims persevere in popular media increasing anti-Muslim experiences.

Moreover, Teun van Dijk (1993) explores how the 'elites indirectly control the minds of others' through 'biased news reporting' and racism in the media. Dijk identifies the 'elites' to be an 'ethnic group dominance' which is historically rooted in the 'dominance of whites over others' (Dijk, 1993. p.7). However, there are different perspectives on where this dominance lies, whether it is the domination of 'whiteness', 'Eurocentrism' or the West (Law, 2002. pp.20-23). Although there are arguments put forward for each of these perceptions, what must be acknowledged is that biased news reporting towards minorities exists in the U.S. Recent events of two dreadful attacks and their portrayal serve as a perfect example (Eminic, 2015). The first example being that twelve French people who worked for satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo were killed in cold-blood, and in the second attack, three people were gunned down in their home in Chapel Hill USA. When portrayed in this manner there is no significant difference, but the U.S. media shared them as two very different stories. The first attack being depicted as an 'Islamic Terror in Paris' receiving wide coverage while the second attack was carried out by a 'lone wolf', and did not deserve headline news exposure. The family are adamant that the gunning down of the three was a Muslim hate-crime, yet the media did not dwell on this issue (Eminic, 2015).

Islam is falsely equated with violence and extremism, 'Islamic terror' and 'Muslim terrorist' are routine terms in mainstream media (Ameli et al. 2013. p.142). Portraying Islam as inferior and dissimilar to Western cultures, and painting it to be a violent political and religious ideology are also part of the concept of Islamophobia (Rane and Martinkus, 2014). Misrepresentation has led to an increase of Islamophobia and Muslim hate-crimes, and these crimes go underreported or brushed under the carpet. In order to target this issue there needs to be coverage on positive aspects of Muslim communities and an accurate portrayal of Islam and Muslims in both TV, film and news reporting (Ameli et al. 2013). Representation can form changes the more it is 're-presented' as 'representation has no fixed meaning until it has been represented' (Hall, 1997).

Discrimination, hate crimes and hate policy:

'Discrimination refers to the differential, and often unequal, treatment of people who have been either formally or informally grouped into a particular class of persons' (Ritzer and Ryan, 2010. p.151). American Muslims have reported that in this era there is intensified suspicion about Islam, whether it be in public, in their own neighborhood or at work. Over the previous 12 years, it has also been reported that law enforcement officials, politicians, and homeland security agents have encouraged the scrutiny and suspicion of Muslims and Muslim communities (Bakalian, and Mehdi. 2009. p.4). The phrase double discrimination can be used to characterise the hostile effects of multiple factors that has led to the discrimination and social exclusion of Muslims on the part of non-Muslims and state officials (Tang, 1997). Muslims face double discrimination when two indicators are conflated, such as religion and ethnicity (EUMAP, 2005), or where a hate crime victim reports an incident to the police and faces further discrimination by bodies who are 'legally responsible for their natural rights' (Ameli, Ahooei and Merali. 2013. p.131).

Discrimination also takes place in many forms as a 'spectrum of discrimination' can be identified in terms of its forms and severity (Marger, 2000). Firstly, the most serious acts of discrimination include 'mass societal aggression together with violent racism and domestic violence'. Secondly, discrimination involves the refusal of access to societal opportunities and thirdly, it involves the utilisation of oppressive and derogatory verbal language, offensive stereotyping and pejorative expression (Law, 2010. p.167). The increase in enmity and the forms of discrimination that take place towards Islam and

Muslims by authorities and individuals seem to have directly affected the faith and practice of Islam in the U.S. This includes the interpretation of sacred writings and scriptures, the development of Muslim identity in America and civic engagement (Haddad and Harb, 2014).

A survey conducted for the National Conference for Community and Justice (2000), found that American Muslims 'remain unfamiliar to many people in the U.S.' (Ciment, 2015. pp.146-147). The most serious cases of discrimination include the growth of Muslim hate-crime, these include threatening phone calls, vandalism, assault, and murder. Islamic appearance (having a beard or wearing hijab) is a significant variable for experiencing hatred and if a Muslim cannot be identified by his/her appearance there will be less of a chance to be discriminated against (Ameli et al. 2013). ADC documented over 700 violent hate crimes directed towards Muslim Americans in the first few weeks following the 9/11 attacks (Hussain, 2003). Furthermore, in the first six months following the attack, a total of 1,717 anti-Muslim harassment and discrimination cases were reported in the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) report (CAIR, 2002). A surge of contemporary reports displays that anti-Muslim hate crimes are linked to concerns with specific events in the Middle East that involve both the interests of U.S. citizens (Hussein, 2008).

Anti-Muslim experiences and Islamophobia is bound to increase in the U.S. with ISIS carrying out countless terror attacks in the West and Donald Trump calling for a 'total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States'. CAIR publish annual civil-rights reports to track incidents of anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination in the U.S. and every year it continues to increase (Peek, 2011. p.32). A recent example of a violent hate crime in North Carolina is the brutal murder of Deah Shaddy Barakat, his wife Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha. Neighbour, Stephen Hicks shot the three young Muslims in their apartment as what the media alleged to be over a 'parking dispute', although there is evidence to show it was a Muslim hate-crime (Ose, 2015). This horrifying wrongdoing came on a day marked by media confirming the death of prisoner Kayla Mueller, who was being held hostage by ISIS militants. This killing, therefore, took place during a period of rising Muslim tensions in North Carolina and across the U.S. (Ose, 2015). 'People are thus convinced that the social order and future of the society is really threatened by Muslims and hence, the most shocking behaviors are perpetrated against Muslims' (Ameli et al. 2013. p.129).

Furthermore, Muslims experience discrimination at the hands of the state and at an institutional level. For example, workplaces are an area where discrimination against American Muslims have been widespread (Ameli et al. 2013. p.71). There are thousands of discrimination cases across the U.S. after employees are unlawfully fired, refused to hire or failed to accommodate employees that have religious requests/needs. This kind of discrimination affects Americans based on numerous foundations, but there are also reports of racialized victimization for those that appear 'Muslim-like' in their appearances (Karlsen and Nazroo, 2014). Moreover, post-9/11 institutions that were owned by Muslims and Muslim charity organisations were targeted by the FBI, many forced to shut down and a number of them unlawfully prosecuted (Bailey, 2008. p.48).

In 2001, the FBI requested police forces around the U.S. to arrange and lead 'voluntary interviews' with Middle Eastern Americans and immigrants. Middle Easterners were also required to submit to 'special registration' and extremely long waiting periods in order to be eligible for a visa. The Transportation Security Administration was also created, which had the authority and power to create 'no-fly' lists, which of course singled out Middle Easterners (Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, 2009). Starting in 2002, the FBI and Department of Energy conducted the surreptitious and possibly extralegal monitoring of American Muslim sites, mosques and homes. As well as this, an undercover National Security Agency effort, with no legal oversight, monitored the emails and telephone conversations of what they perceived to be 'suspicious American citizens', through what is known as the 'President's Program' (Risen and Lichtblau, 2005).

Apart from federal and government policy at airports and in public environments, profiling based on appearance led to discriminatory conduct on the part of law enforcement towards American Muslims. For instance, security workers kept a few individuals (with different religious and ethnic backgrounds)

for questioning without a reasonable basis, at two separate sporting events at Giants Stadium outside New York City. They were kept under ‘suspicious activity’ which was seen to be ‘taking photographs of the stadium’ and ‘observed praying near the stadium’s main air duct’. These instances are a piece of broadly reported examples of racial profiling experienced by Middle Eastern Americans across the U.S. This is shocking considering how the U.S. (self)projects itself to be a multicultural society and teaches tolerance and promotes religious freedom (Razack, 2008). The motivating and increase of hate policy (in law and politics) and the creation of hate representation (in media and political discourse), has led to the formation of hate environment, in which ‘hate-crime, discrimination, and acts of prejudice and bias are fueled’ (Ameli, 2011).

On fighting Islamophobia and finding solutions

This section will outline ways to combat Islamophobia. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) enters incidents of Islamophobia into the American Islamophobe database, which has found that Islamophobes can be assigned to one of three categories: inner core, outer core and of concern Islamophobes (CAIR, 2016). Inner core Islamophobes refers to groups or people who actively promote prejudice against Muslims, and consistently exhibit Islamophobic themes. For those groups or individuals whose main purpose does not seem to directly promote prejudice or hatred against Muslims, but indirectly support Islamophobic themes are known as outer core Islamophobes. Of concern Islamophobes are those groups or people who have utilized Islamophobic themes or supported Islamophobia in America, but do not do so on a regular basis. CAIR monitors but for the most part does not further report an account of those placed in the 'of concern' category (CAIR, 2016). Classifying Islamophobes into these categories provides a basis for knowing how prevalent Islamophobic incidents are and what type of Islamophobe it is, and how to tackle it.

Firstly, a paradigm shift is needed in the representation of Muslims and this should be targeted through education. Negative stereotypes towards Muslims and Islam must be mitigated by suitable solutions. For example, a solution to reducing stereotypes and negative representation is through ‘an integrated education on Islam’ to elementary school children (Achmad, 2013). If Islamophobia is combatted at an early stage, there is a possibility that in the future, Islamophobic comments and actions may be abolished as a fair representation of Islam and world affairs at education can shape future mindsets (Ameli, Ahooei and Merali, 2013. p.148). This could reduce all types of Islamophobes, especially inner core Islamophobes as tackling the inner core will lead to the removal of all other types. Moreover, regardless of which strategy is used to combat Islamophobia, it all needs to begin with or be strongly based on education. U.S. citizens will then no longer define Muslims as a national peril as academics and teachers will have the ability to destroy the myths that are deeply engrained in contemporary society. Also, encouraging cultural learning helps spread objective messages of different worldviews which promote diversity, multiculturalism, and tolerance (Malbouisson, D. 2007).

‘Policy work and outreach are two keystones of community led integration strategies’ that combat Islamophobia (Ameli and Merali, 2004 and CAIR, 2011). Regardless of the difficulties that exist in recognising Islamophobia as a critical social problem, several organisations have worked for many years to go up against the issue at the national level in the U.S (Love, 2009). The prominent national organisations are the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR, 1994), the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, the Muslim American Society (1992) and the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund. As well as these organisations, hundreds of local and regional organisations work hard through political lobbying, electoral activism and legal assistance to deal with Islamophobic hate crimes and discrimination (Leonard, 2003). Structural change is needed in government policies which include an end to ‘the war on terror’, the surveillance state for Muslims, the securitization of the U.S. and new representations of Muslims in the media. This will enable the U.S. to be a step closer in reconciling the damages done to the image of Muslims and Islam (Ameli, Ahooei, and Merali, 2013. p.153). Middle Eastern and Asian American advocacy organisations have seen many triumphs through work that has been done to combat Islamophobia. For example, the Muslim American Society and the Sikh Coalition made significant

changes to the Federal Transportation Security Administration rules concerning religious clothing whilst working at an airport (Muslim American Society, 2007).

Furthermore, some believe that it is the responsibilities of Muslims to interact and engage more with non-Muslims in order to tackle and prevent Islamophobia and anti-Muslim experiences. It has also been argued that during the times that Muslims were scrutinized and interrogated, Muslims should have been more inviting and welcoming of the checks. This mindset was based on the view that if Muslims do not have anything to hide then as American citizens need to open lines of communications with government bodies (Bazian, 2012). It has also been argued that Muslims 'should see the FBI, military, justice department information tables as a sign of belonging to America'. However, this view is very much criticized as spying on and interrogating Muslims breaches their human rights. It is also as if the blame is put on Muslims and Islamophobes expect Muslims to apologise and pay for crimes they have no involvement in what so ever (Bazian, 2012).

Overall, responding to and finding solutions to Islamophobia means that all citizens need to accept cultural and societal differences, this can be done through becoming more educated about other groups of ways of life. In today's day and age living in global economies, cultural and social awareness must be embedded in society as it helps preserve every unique identity and bring harmony, rather than division (Smith, 1999).

Conclusion

Overall, this essay has found that Islamophobia is extremely prevalent in the U.S. as well as it being on the rise. Also, regardless of the debate about the origins of the term, it is vital to acknowledge that an institutionalised term and definition is needed so that anti-Muslim hatred does not go amiss. However, throughout this essay many references have been made of cultural racism, which has not been included or referenced to enough in the general definition of The Runnymede Trust institutionalised definition (Love, 2009). Thus, the term anti-Muslimism better defines anti-Muslim experiences as it explores how those who have 'Muslim like appearances' also face discrimination. Also, looking back at its historical background, Islamophobia has existed long before 9/11 but increased significantly due to these attacks. 9/11 enforced and promoted not only anti-Muslim hate crimes and prejudice towards Muslims, but also reformed and put in place new policies that scrutinise and interrogate innocent Muslims (Hussain, 2003).

This essay has also found that representation plays a key part in the increase of hostility towards Muslims as the media is a powerful tool in itself, as it has the ability to shape minds. As Said has mentioned, the West portrays the East as inferior and these negative Orientalist representations paint Muslims as 'backwards' and 'barbaric' (Said, 1979). Although ordinary Muslims that practice proper Islam are innocent, media coverage and Hollywood portrayal suggest the opposite, instilling fear and hatred towards Muslims. Thus, when such negative perceptions of Muslims are embedded in society, it leads to discrimination, prejudice and hate-crimes. There is more than sufficient enough evidence to show how discrimination occurs at a public, social and institutional level. The most shocking analysis found in this essay is that Islamophobia occurs at the hands of government bodies and those who are 'legally responsible for the natural rights of All American Citizen' (Ameli, Ahooei and Merali. 2013. p.131). As policy and law are reformed to belittle and target Muslims, what hope is there in combatting Islamophobia as a whole?

In closing, massive structural change is needed in order to fight Islamophobia and tackle discrimination, anti-Muslim hate crime and experiences at a national level. This can be combatted from educating the community. For example, teachers and academics have the power to shape the views of children in schools at an early age to not believe the myths about Islam and teach cultural and social awareness (Malbouisson, D. 2007). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, policy work such as political lobbying, electoral activism and legal assistance have proven to be successful solutions in fighting Islamophobia as found by advocacy organisations. This work needs to be carried out at a national level and on a greater scale with more organisations, and there may be a chance that Islamophobia will die out.

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Appendix:

Image (1) Homeland Season 4 DVD cover



Image taken from: <http://collider.com/homeland-season-4-trailer/>