

## **Hate Crimes and Discrimination against Muslims in America in Post 9/11 Scenari**

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### **Abstract**

This article is a detailed description of the hate crimes and discrimination committed against Muslims in America, as a backlash, soon after 9/11. It also highlights the contributing factors to that backlash, American Muslims' response and the American Government's steps which severed the wave of the reactionary hate crimes while its main focus remains on the detailed description, with classification, of those hate crimes and discrimination. It also provides facts and figures along with graphs showing rise in hate crimes against Muslims in America in post 9/11 scenario. This study becomes pertinent in the context of the recently held American presidential elections in which Donald Trump, notorious for anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies, has turned out to be victorious. This article has used detailed interviewing of the victims and witnesses as its main source of getting the first hand information. Besides this, fact and figures and qualitative narratives of relevant incidents from authentic books, newspapers and United States Federal Bureau of Investigations' website have been included.

*Keywords: Hate Crimes, Discrimination, American Muslims, 9/11, Backlash*

### **Introduction**

Hate crime is a crime especially against people such as members of ethnic minorities and it is motivated by feelings of hatred. It is also described as a crime that is committed against a victim only because the victim belongs to a particular race, religion etc. Soon after 9/11, Muslims in the United States, especially Arabs and the South Asians, realized that there is going to be a backlash of violence, hate crimes and severed discrimination against them. This prior awareness or foresightedness was due to the fact that there were past experiences of anti-Muslim bias in America.<sup>†</sup> For example, soon after 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the oil embargo, anti-Muslim biases were circulating in the American society.<sup>‡</sup> Similar was the position of stereotyping against Muslims in America after 1979 Iranian hostage crisis. In 1985, when some militants hijacked an Airliner (TWA-

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<sup>†</sup> Jack Levin and Jack McDevitt, *Hate Crimes Revisited: America's War on Those Who are Different* (Boulder, Co: West view Press, 2002)

<sup>‡</sup> Fredric Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed ( New York: McMillan, 1994)

847) in Lebanon, a wave of anti-Muslim hate crimes was observed in the United States.<sup>§</sup> In the same way, when the USA was engaged in bombing Libya in 1986, Muslim students were beaten and harassed and Muslim buildings like mosques, Islamic centers and Muslim homes were damaged. Not only this, when the US troops were being deployed in the Persian Gulf, the political talk shows and debates on international politics increased in the US and it resulted in an increased number of hate crimes against Muslims. The last quarter of 1990 witnessed 150 hate-crimes against Muslims in the USA, according to American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). It was in the same year that the Mayor of Detroit had to ask the Governor of Michigan for the deployment of National Guard Troops for the safety and security of Muslim population of Detroit. The same year, President George H.W Bush had to say that, “Death threats, physical attacks, vandalism, religious violence and discrimination against American Muslims must end.”\*\*

The case of Oklahoma City bombing presents an interesting case. Though the prime suspects of the case was Charles McVeigh, who was a white man having affiliations with the Christian Identity Movement (CIM), media chanted the slogans of anti-Muslim rhetoric. Other media reports attached middle-eastern looking men to the bombing. If we look at the government’s response to the Oklahoma City bombing, it is an eye opener. The US-Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Terrorism Act (CATA) of 1995. The bill asked for the profiling and special and thorough check of Muslims on international entry and exit points, though the perpetrators were both American born and American raised.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In his book, *A New Species of Trouble*, Kai Erikson says that there is a profound difference between the natural disasters and the disasters that are a product of man. After a natural disaster or a calamity, the people have a common ground of sympathy towards each other and there is no perpetrator or enemy but the mother-nature which cannot be avenged for her doings. In such cases, people soon start the rehabilitation and rebuilding process. There is no grudge, animosity or a bad feeling for any person, group or a community or a race. People know that they are all human beings and they are same in terms of being a victim of the fate and nature. This feeling brings the people, even of different races, religions and colors, closer and unites them together as a human race. On the contrary, in man-made disasters like oil spills, wars, genocides, artificial famines and machine

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<sup>§</sup> Dan Eggen, “FBI Taps Campus Police in Anti-Terror Operations”, Washington Post, January 25, 2003, A-1.

\*\* Dianne Carroll, “U.S. Colleges See Fewer Students from Islamic Countries”, Kansas City Star, Nov 3, 2003, A-2

failures, there is a person or a group of people easily identifiable behind the scene. So, the victims can lay claim against someone whose negligence of committing or omitting an act resulted in a certain calamity. Here, there is a natural reaction to this negligence. Here, it is important to note that what distinguishes 9/11 from man-made disasters is the sheer intent of committing the atrocities and this produces a much more powerful natural backlash not only against the people involved but also against those who share the apparent features and characteristic of the perpetrators.

### **American Muslims' Response to 9/11**

A backlash in the aftermath of any man-made disaster, terrorist attacks, has become the part of American Muslim consciousness.<sup>††</sup> Soon after 9/11, Muslims in the United States realized the threshold of a coming natural wave of violence and hate-crimes against them. Therefore, they did their best to make the American's realize that they shared the same victimhood and that the terrorists who had hijacked the planes also hijacked Islam. American Muslims wanted to avert any antagonistic reaction and thus Muslim organizations, institutes, prominent Muslim personalities and leaders issued such statements and started such campaigns as to promote the true and peaceful image of Islam.

### **Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)**

For instance: Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) started a full-fledged advertisement campaign in the leading American newspapers such as in the Washington Post. Their message stated that: "American Muslims' thoughts and prayers are with those who have been killed or injured and all Americans regardless of their religion and language stand together to promote peace and love over violence and hate."

### **Muslim Students' Association (MSA)**

Similarly, Muslim Students' Association (MSA), which has more than seven hundred offices and branches in the United States, issued several statements and press releases that showed their grief and expressed support and sympathy for the whole American community. Muslim Public Affairs' Council (MPAC) also released statements such as: "We feel that our country, the United States, is under attack. All Americans should stand together to bring the perpetrators to justice. We warn against any generalizations that will only serve to help the criminals and incriminate the innocent. We offer our resources and offer to help the victims of these intolerable acts, and we pray to God to protect and bless America."<sup>††</sup>

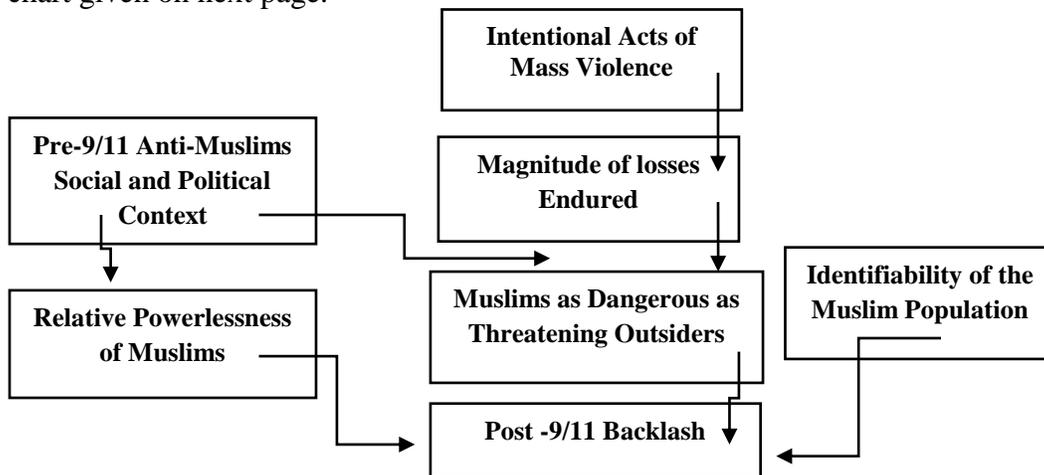
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<sup>††</sup> Lori Peek, *Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans After 9/11*, Temple University: 2011, p.24.

<sup>††</sup> Sam Howe Verhovek, "Civil Liberties: Americans Give in to Race Profiling", *New York Times*, September 23, 2001, A-1

International Muslim leaders also condemned the vicious acts of terror. In their statements, Sheikh Mahmud Tantawi of Al-Azhar mosque, President Khatemi of Iran, Yasser Arafat from Palestine and many other Muslim countries' leaders showed their grief and support to the Americans. In October 2001, Organization of Islamic countries (OIC), which comprises of fifty seven Muslim countries, condemned the 9/11 terror attacks and issued a joint statement that: "The intolerable and shameful acts of terror such as 9/11 are opposed to the peaceful message of Islam. Islam condemns aggression in any form and calls for peace, tolerance, co-existence and respect of others. Islam gives dignity to the human life and property. It strongly prohibits the killing of the innocent."<sup>§§</sup>

In addition, American Muslim leaders like Imam Siraj Wahab and Imam Hamza Yousaf appeared in news media to tell the public that violence is not permitted in Islam. Open mosque seminars, invitations to all the religious communities on Iftar dinners and the distribution of general knowledge books on Islam by Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) were some moves to show the public the reality of Islam and to avert, or may be to neutralize, the antagonistic reactions against Muslims in America in post 9/11 scenario. On September 20<sup>th</sup>, President Bush invited Imam Hamza Yousaf to Oval Office and after a private meeting they both sang 'God Bless America'. In addition, Muslim groups and organizations such as Muslims against Terrorism, Hate Free Zone, and Neighbors for Peace were setup after 9/11 to promote the peace loving image of Islam and Muslims and to reduce the feelings of animosity and revenge against Muslims in America in post 9/11 scenario. The main reasons behind the backlash of hate crimes against Muslims in America in post 9/11 scenario can be summarized in the flow chart given on next page.



<sup>§§</sup> Erik C Nesbit and James Shannon, "The Media and Society Research Group Special Report: Restriction of Civil Liberties, Views of Islam, and Muslim Americans" (report, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 2004).

**Model: Post 9/11 Backlash of Hate Crimes against Muslims in America: Contributing Factors<sup>\*\*\*</sup>**

9/11 occurred in 2001 and after more than a decade time passed, many people in the world have forgotten that there was any violent backlash of hate crimes against Muslims in America in post 9/11 scenario. Some even do not know about this. Even in academic circles, people either tend to avoid answering such questions or they are unaware of it. To give a little proof of the validity of the hate crimes, against Muslims that occurred soon after 9/11, there are some facts that must be mentioned here. First of all, the American government had the prior knowledge, due to repeated experience of the past, that Muslim communities living in America would be hit and therefore to protect the American Muslim the American Congress passed a resolution on 12 September, 2001. The resolution stated that:

*‘Be it resolved that Congress (1)declares that in the quest to identify, bring to justice, and punish the perpetrators and sponsors of the terrorist attacks, on the United States, of September 11, 2001, that the civil rights and the civil liberties of all Americans including Arab Americans, American Muslims and American Muslims from south Asia, should be protected and (2) condemns any act of violence or discrimination against any Americans, including Arab Americans, American Muslims and American Muslims from south Asia.’*

On the same lines, on 13 September, 2001, the US Justice Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division (CRD) said in a press release that:

*“Any threats of violation and discrimination against Arab or Muslim Americans of South Asian decent are not just wrong and un-American, but also are unlawful and will be treated as such.”*

In the coming days, the Justice Department also created the ‘Initiative to Combat Post 9/11 Discriminatory Backlash’. Its main objective was to reduce the hate crime incidents and to bring the perpetrators of post 9/11 hate crimes to justice.<sup>†††</sup>

Secretary of Education Rod Paige also issued such statement and sent a letter to all the schools in the United States stating clearly that preventive measures against the hate crimes of anti-Muslim nature be taken and he also called such incidents as ‘unconditionally wrong’ and intolerable in the US schools and colleges.

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<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Lori Peek, Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans After 9/11, Temple University: 2011, p.229.

<sup>†††</sup> US Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, “Initiative to Combat Post 9/11 Retaliatory Backlash”,2008, available at [www.usdoj.gov/crt/legalinfo/nordwg\\_mission.php](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/legalinfo/nordwg_mission.php). (Accessed September, 2014)

Soon after 9/11, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) started issuing a fact sheet for the employers and the employees telling them the work ethics and minority workers' rights in an organization. Besides this, the EEOC also launched a section to note down and counter the bias motivated employment discrimination against Muslims.<sup>+++</sup>

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR) made a hotline available for the report of hate crimes on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2001. This hotline received more than seventy calls per hour in its peak days.<sup>§§§</sup>

Six days after the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers, President Bush visited an Islamic center in Washington D.C and said that, "Islam is peace." He further said that,

"America counts millions of Muslims amongst us. They are doctors, lawyer, professors, members of the military, entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, businessmen and moms and dads. They need to be treated with respect. Those who feel like they can intimidate our fellow citizens to take out their anger don't represent the best of America. They represent the worst of humankind, and they should be ashamed of that kind of behavior."<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup>

All this said, it proves that the government also had a prior threat of the coming backlash against the American Muslims. The first murder committed in the wave of anti-Muslim hate crimes in post 9/11 scenario was not that of an American Muslim but that of a Sikh man who apparently looked like a Muslim. The victim had a beard and wore a turban which misled the killer that he might be of the same faith and place as that Osama bin Laden. Balbir Singh was shot five times in front of his house on 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2001 in Arizona by Frank Roque who also shot and injured a Lebanese American clerk at a gas station. The killer shouted, "I am an American and I stand all the way for Americans. Go ahead and arrest me and let those terrorists run wild."

On the same day, a Pakistani Muslim was also shot and killed while he was making hamburgers in front of a store in Texas. His killer Mark Stroman had also killed Vasudev Patel and Raees ud Din. On his arrest the killer said that he did what every American should do but they did not have the nerves to do so. On

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<sup>+++</sup> Alana Samuels, 'Workplace Bias Against Muslims, Arabs on Rise, Advocate Say', Los Angeles Times, October 3, 2006, available at [www.articles.latimes.com/2006/Oct/03/business/fi-eeoc3](http://www.articles.latimes.com/2006/Oct/03/business/fi-eeoc3) (Accessed on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2014)

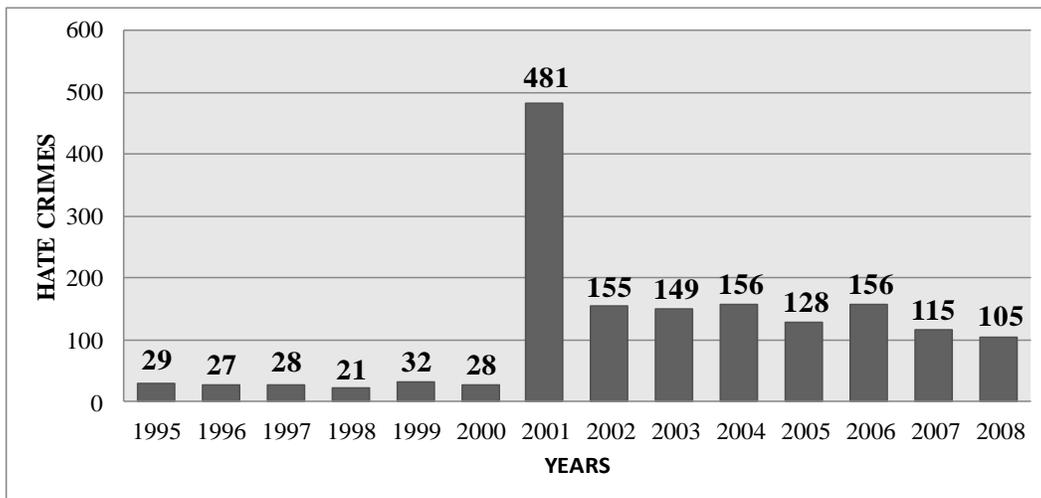
<sup>§§§</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, 'Ragging Against the Other: September Terrorist Strikes Trigger a Violent Outbreak of American Xenophobia', Intelligent Report, 2001, available at [www.splcentr.org/intel/intelreport/articles.jsp?aid=159](http://www.splcentr.org/intel/intelreport/articles.jsp?aid=159) (Accessed on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2014)

<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> US Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 'Remarks of President George W. Bush at the Islamic Center, September 17, 2001. Available at: [www.usdog.gov/crt/legalinfo/bushremarks.html](http://www.usdog.gov/crt/legalinfo/bushremarks.html) (Accessed on 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2014.

September 12, 2001, an angry mob in Chicago marched to the central mosque in Chicago and chanted hate filled slogans like ‘kill the Muslims’ and ‘kill the Arabs’. The police was called. Even then they broke some glasses and could have caused more damage if the police were not there. It is said that some people in that mob had weapons and sticks in their hands. The next night, similar march was taken out to the same mosque. It was feared that the mob could cause a probable damage to the adjoining Muslim population. The police had to sit there for three days forming a human barricade.

In the spring of 2003, a man named Larme Prince went on a shooting spree and shot at five men. He finally went to the police for voluntary arrest and told them that he had tried to avenge the 9/11. Only one of his victims was Muslim. The rest were from Russia, Guyana and India. Bigger cities with larger Muslim populations were more prone to anti-Muslim hate crimes. For instance, in Chicago and Los Angeles, it was reported that hate crimes against Muslims increased fifteen times soon after 9/11 as compared to the preceding year. Phoenix police recorded forty six hate crimes against Muslims soon after 9/11. Someone wrote ‘Jesus is the Lord and Allah is the Devil’ and vicious comments like that in front of a mosque in Conejos Valley, California. Many Islamic centers were rammed in and bricks with hate messages wrapped on them were thrown at their windows.

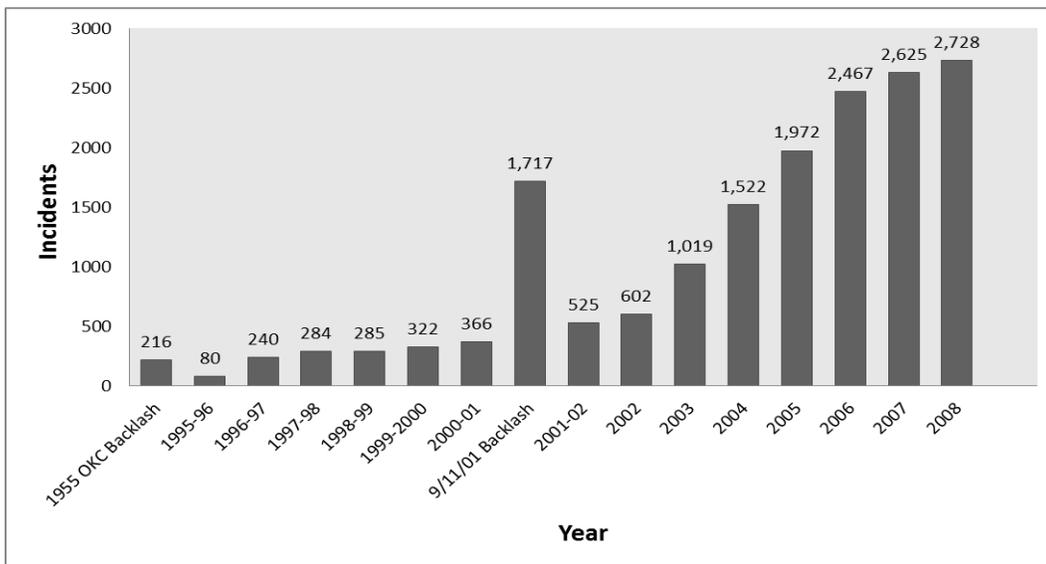
The FBI recorded the highest levels of anti-Muslim hate crimes following the terror attacks of 9/11. The following graph is based on the data collected by the American FBI. Hate crime can be defined as any of various crimes, like assault or defacement of person or property, when motivated by hostility to the victim as a member of a certain ethnic, racial or linguistic group. It can also be based upon color, creed, gender, religion or sexual orientation.



Graph: Anti-Islamic Hate Crimes, 1995-2008. (Source: FBI: Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "Hate Crime Statistics, 2008, "www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm#hate, accessed January 23, 2010.)<sup>††††</sup>

But, it is not even the tip of the iceberg because the FBI has certain standards on which if a case is up to, FBI calls it a hate crime. Minor hate crimes like staring, hate filled gazes, mockery, calling names and verbal harassment make up an uncountable number of hate crimes.

CAIR, on somewhat similar lines issued a report which shows the intensity of hate crimes as below.



Seeking Full Inclusion”, Washington, D.C., 2009.)<sup>††††</sup>

### Government’s Steps which severed the Anti-Muslim Discrimination

In the previous paragraphs we have seen how the American Muslims had a prior threat of a backlash after 9/11. Media rhetoric and biased reporting added to the difficulties faced by American Muslims in their daily lives. Influential personalities and even American law makers appeared to be very biased against the American Muslim community. For example, soon after 9/11, Congressman Peter King said in a radio interview that vast majority of the American Muslims has links to terrorists and that they are providing safe havens to the terrorists to hide and operate. He also said that no American Muslim has cooperated in the War on Terror campaign and they are ‘enemy living amongst us.’

<sup>††††</sup> Available at [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov) Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2014.

<sup>††††</sup> Available at [www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com). Accessed on 13 July, 2014.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the Bush's administration took some serious steps towards the national wide cleanup of suspicious persons and the supporters of terrorists. Two such steps were the formation of Total Intelligence Program (TIPS) and Total Information Awareness (TIA). These legislations allowed the security and intelligence agencies to monitor the personal lives of all Americans and non-nationals in every way. Some surveys were conducted which showed that American public disliked these initiatives but they were strongly convinced that these legislations should be directed on the American Muslim community. Such steps on the part of the government further juxtaposed the already simmering image of the American Muslims. The government issued such statements and adopted some strategies to counter the intensity and number of such hate crimes but meanwhile the government also took such steps which further strengthened the threat for the American Muslims. For example, after the passage of the US PATRIOTIC Act, FBI was given more powers to investigate and even spy on public places and pick up any person who they deem fit in a terrorist profile.

In 2006, the US government passed the Military Commission Act (MCA). It allows indefinite imprisonment and secret trials of the US citizens and foreigners on the basis of mere suspicion. Almost 5000 Muslims were rounded up and imprisoned soon after the 9/11 terror attacks. They were not only subjected to physical and verbal abuse but also their identities were not revealed. They were also not given access to any lawyer or open trial. Some of them were punished on minor immigration and violations and deported. It is interesting to note that none of them was charged with any terror related activity.

ADC researched on the American newspapers and found that only 700 violent attacks were reported against American Muslims in the wake of 9/11. Similarly, South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow (SAALT) also researched on newspapers and found that only 645 incidents of hate crimes against Muslims in America in post 9/11 scenario were reported. Not only this, in the wake of 9/11, Islamic charities, businesses and organizations were raided and assets and private properties were seized till the investigations completed. In the end of 2001 and start of 2002, American secret service agencies prepared a questionnaire to be filled by some Muslims residing in America, especially those who were living on residence permits and student visas. Some eight thousand Muslims living in America had to fill those questionnaires but, none of them was found to have any links with any terror related activity or with any such group. In December, 2002 more than seven hundred men were arrested at Immigrations and Naturalization Service offices under the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System

(NSEERS).<sup>§§§§</sup> After this incident dozens of Muslim families across the United States took refuge in Canada. Though NSEERS registration system was eventually packed up on the pressure of civil rights and liberties groups, it was targeting people on the basis of color, nationality and religion.

Arrests, detentions, murders and hate crimes against Muslims in America in post 9/11 scenario sent a message of fear and feeling of insecurity in the entire Muslim community not only of America but of the whole world. In Pakistan, we were told many stories of hate crimes and bias in America. After 9/11, the trend to go to America, from Pakistan, for study purposes also declined

In the above paragraphs a quantitative picture of the hate crimes is given. Some facts and figures are mentioned but they include only those incidents which were reported and which full filled the so called criteria of the FBI and the CAIR or the American news media. Their criteria of classifying a crime as a hate crime seem quite loose and flexible which makes many stories go unreported. Some reasons for such crimes' going unreported is the fear of reaction, feeling of guilt and helplessness in a foreign land, fear of being highlighted and untrustworthy system. We cannot quantify the actual number of hate crimes that occurred against Muslims after 9/11. The numbers and graphs presented can never depict what the actual number was and what the hate crimes looked like or felt like. We can only have an understanding of crimes by having a closer, subjective and detailed qualitative analysis which can be done only through hearing the stories and sad voices of the victims.

In the paragraphs below black white form is given to the experiences of some Muslims living in America at the time of 9/11 or after it. They suffered hate crimes in one form or another. A thorough research was conducted on such stories by Lori Peek in her book 'Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans After 9/11'. Some stories have been taken from her book and some are personally collected by me through direct face to face interviews and via online video call based interviews which were arranged by some friends, acquaintances and contacts in Pakistan and America.

It is clear from earlier researches and literature on race and ethnic relations and prejudice and stereotyping that racial and ethnic prejudice can be demonstrated in its different forms. Some forms that can be noticed are: verbal harassment and intimidation, nonverbal harassment like hate stares and apprehensive looks, denial of access to specific forums and opportunities and discrimination in education and employment and violence. It is clear that there is no doubt in that there existed a

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<sup>§§§§</sup> Ariane Chebel d'Appollonia, "Researching the Civil Rights and Liberties of Western Muslims" (Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) Vol. 46, No. 2 (Winter 2012), pp. 200-215

prejudice against Muslims in pre 9/11 America. The association of 9/11 atrocity to Islam and jihadists further magnified that prejudice and brought it in the form of a visible backlash. Here, it is pointed out who were the victims of this backlash. It is pertinent to mention here that those who have a visible membership of a marginalized group or a minority are more vulnerable to ethnic bias motivated hate crimes as compared to those who are less visible to be the member of that group.\*\*\*\*\* The word ‘visible’ means the apparent outlooks that clearly tell that a person belongs to a particular faith or community. For Muslims, the key markers of their visibility are:

- Beard
- Turban
- Shalwar Kameez
- Scarf/ Naqab/ Hijab
- Mosque
- Peoples’ association with the mosque
- Ethnic sounding names like Mohammad, Ahmed and Khan.

Persons career of such symbols were easily identifiable as Muslims and thus, they were more targeted. Besides this, persons with dark and brown complexion and dark hair were also vulnerable as they fitted the “look like” frame of stereotype.

### **Verbal Harassment**

Lori Peek, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Coordinator of the Centre for Disaster and Risk Analysis at Colorado State University, has conducted a broad study on the said subject. She found that nearly eighty percent of her case studies reported of being personally harassed, ridiculed at or hit in the aftermath of 9/11. She noted that derogatory words such as; camel jockey, dirty Muslim, terrorist, dirty Arab, rag head, towel head, sand roach and sand nigger etc were called upon to tell the victims that everybody knew that they were behind the attacks of 9/11 and that ‘we (Americans) hate you’.†††††

In their study, Joe Feagin and Melvin Sikes note that public places and street especially represent some of the least protected sites in the American society. Some participant told them that they were called Taliban, Osama, Osama’s goats and words like that on the streets in post 9/11 America. Muslim immigrants

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\*\*\*\*\* Adalberto Aguirre, Jr., and Jonathan H. Turner, *American Ethnicity: The Dynamics and Consequences of Discrimination*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Mc Graw Hill Higher Education, 2009).

††††† Lori Peek, ‘Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11’, Temple University Press 2011, p.63.

usually heard the words ‘F\*\*\* Pakistan’ and ‘F\*\*\*ing Arab’.<sup>†††††</sup> These hateful words and name calling was not only painful for the victims but also threatened them that this verbal attack could any time change into physical violence.

Some media persons were in the front line to propagate the negative image of Islam and Muslims. For example: Christian Broadcasting Network’s (CBN) Pat Robertson said, “Our immigration policies are so loose towards Middle East and other Muslim countries and too away from Europe that we have introduced these people into our midst and there is no doubt in that there are terrorists cells all over them. They want to coexist until they can control, dominate and destroy.”<sup>§§§§§</sup> On similar lines, in November 2001, William S. Lind, Director of the Centre for Cultural Conservatism (CCC) at the Free Congress Foundation (FCF) said, “There is no such thing as peaceful Islam. Islamics (sics) cannot fit into an America in which the first loyalty is towards the state constitution. They should be encouraged to leave. They are nothing but a fifth column in this country.”<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup> Similarly a columnist, Stanley Crouch of the New York Daily News (NYDN) wrote that, “We have had war declared on us by a spider at the centre of terrorist cells. Followers of that spider are hiding in Arab American community. No one doubts this. No one In fact, it should bother all of us that if a moratorium was not declared on immigration from the Middle East after the 1993 attack on Twin Towers, especially since most of those identified with 9/11 arrived here after that time. If more Americans are murdered by people who are part of the terrorist web from Middle East and successfully hiding out in a certain community, the response is going to have less to do with any kind of bigotry than with the icy nature of war.”<sup>†††††††</sup>

Such was the nature of derisive speech on the popular American news media which also worked as oil on fire in post 9/11 America. A national survey was conducted soon after 9/11 which shows that 60 percent of the Americans favored reducing the number of Muslim immigrant by encouraging them to leave the country.<sup>†††††††</sup> Some other surveys also depicted such feelings against Muslims and

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<sup>†††††</sup> Joe R. Feagin and Melvin Sikes, *Living with Racism: The Black Middle Class Experience* (Boston: Beacon Press 1994)

<sup>§§§§§</sup> CAIR, “American Muslims: One Year After 9/11” (report: CAIR research centre, Washington DC, 2002), 25.

<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup> CAIR, “The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States: Stereotypes and Civil Liberties” (report: CAIR research centre, Washington DC, 2002), 22.

<sup>†††††††</sup> Stanley Crouch, “Drawing the line on Racial Profiling”, *Daily News*, October 4, 2001, 41.

<sup>†††††††</sup> Louise Cainkar, “No Longer Invisible: Arab and Muslim Exclusion after September 11”, *Middle East Report* 32, no.3 (2002): 22-29

especially Arabs. In a survey almost 43 percent respondents showed that they are suspicious of the Arabs living in America.<sup>§§§§§§</sup>

Below is an account of a very limited number of verbal harassment incidents against Muslims in USA.

Maya, a nineteen year old girl from New York described that when 9/11 attacks occurred, she was at her school. The environment suddenly became as such that she felt trapped. The trains had stopped running. The gates were closed. There were murmurings about other attacks in New York. Telephones went out of service. Transport services were shut down and she had to stay in the school but there she heard that some Muslims had done this and there is going to be a war and there will be a retaliation to punish those Muslims. She ran to the MSA office and found that other girls were also there and they were told not to leave the office as there was danger roaming all around. After eight hours' waiting some Muslim students agreed to help her get home. On the way, she felt the hateful stares of the people as if she was behind 9/11. She encountered a mob which was shouting: "Retaliation, retaliation we are going to kill them all." Those men surrounded Maya and her fellows from the four sides. Due to the presence of police nearby they could not harm them but they had scared her indeed.<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup>

Salman was born in Kabul. When he went to America, he was asked somewhere where he belonged to. When he told them that he was from Afghanistan, a lady said, "Oh my God! We have Bin Laden in the house."<sup>†††††††</sup>

Sometimes it happened that people were cursed at from passing by cars. A respondent described his experience to Lori Peek in these words:

"Once I picked my sister. I was walking my sister back home. She was wearing head scarf that Muslim women mostly wear. Perhaps due to this, a man passing by in a car stopped and said that, 'Get out of here you f\*\*\*ing Arabs.' I was like that's funny because nobody there was an Arab. It was just his ignorance."<sup>†††††††</sup>

An Arab American woman, describing her experience, told that while she was walking down the street from her work place, some kids stuck their head out of a car and called her a terrorist. Then they turned the corner and ran away.

Not only this, as American public became more and more suspicious due to the role of American media they started such straight and harsh questions and hostile

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<sup>§§§§§§</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, "The Impacts of Attacks on America", Gallup, 2001, available at [www.gallup.com/poll4894/Impact-Attacks-America.asp](http://www.gallup.com/poll4894/Impact-Attacks-America.asp) (Accessed March, 2014)

<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup> Lori Peek, 'Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11', Temple University Press 2011, p.60.

<sup>†††††††</sup> Ibid.

<sup>†††††††</sup> Ibid.

inquires that their Muslim fellows and neighbors felt as if they are labeled as terrorists. Some respondents reported that some people were like: “You know how it happened? Are you happy it happened? How do you feel about the whole thing? Are you happy?” and then they left the message: “God bless America.”§§§§§§§§

In many incidents, hate crimes were inflicted in the garb of American patriotism. For example: Sarah described her experience in such words: “I was wearing hijab while travelling in subway. There stood a white tall guy in front of me. He noticed my hijab and he knew that I am a Muslim. He started singing the American anthem in a loud voice. I felt as if he was singing it to me to show me that he really loved America. He was using American patriotism as a cover for his anti-Muslim bigotry. When people say it to me that they love America, I feel as if they are saying to me that they hate Muslims”.\*\*\*\*\*

In post 9/11 America, not only aircrafts but also busses, public places, large building, bridges, trains, subways and ports were declared as a potential target and thus, a ‘stay alert’ syndrome spread in the cities. In such a scenario, it was common that Muslims who were easily identifiable due to their appearance became the targets of suspicion, ridicule and even verbal harassment. Such people faced comments like mentioned below.

Thana who is a second generation Pakistani was born and raised up in America. She speaks in a fluent American accent but her skin color and attire shows that she is a Muslim. Soon after 9/11, when she was dining in a restaurant she noticed a group of people sitting nearby. The group started talking in a loud voice so that she might hear. They were talking about Islam, Muslims, Osama and the Islamic bombs. They were like bashing Islam and Muslims and it was intentional so that Thana may hear it.

A young Muslim woman told Lori Peek that while she was entering the subway in New York, a man asked said to her, “If you are going to blow up that train tell me so that I can get my ass out of here.” She looked at him and she was embarrassed.††††††††

Another woman told the researcher that while she was returning her home on summer vacations, a guy on the bus stared at her and then he said in a very loud voice so that everyone on the bus could hear. He said, “Oh my God! There is going to be a bomb on the bus.”

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§§§§§§§§ Ibid.

\*\*\*\*\* Survey research confirmed that after 9/11 high levels of patriotism was used as a negative evaluation of Muslims and Arabs. See Darren W. Davis, *Negative Liberty: Public Opinion and the Terrorist Attack on America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007), 210.

†††††††† Opcit. p.68.

Several respondents told the researcher that they had such friends, relatives and such contacts who were harassed in the aftermath of 9/11 because they were thought to be Muslim, though they were not. Hamida told that, "It was simply ignorance on the part of those who did so. My neighbor is an Indian. She is a follower of Hinduism. A man rushed at her and called her names and then he asked her to look at what her f\*\*\*ing people had done to his country.

Nasir described his friends experience in these words: "My friend Karan worked at a restaurant. When he was going to work early in the morning a car came and stopped in front of him. He was surprised. A white man came out of the car and spit on his face and exclaimed, 'Dirty Muslim'.

### **Nonverbal Harassment**

In post 9/11 America, American Muslims also faced non-verbal harassment and hostility which included body language and stares of different types. Those stares can be classified as hate stares, suspicious looks, apprehensive looks and intimidation looks. It is pertinent to note here that the following instances took place in public settings. Some victims were so scared that they started to avoid public settings altogether. These body gestures and hate stares of fellow Americans made American Muslims feel like isolated, secluded and disrespected. Hate gazes were made at mostly those who were easily identifiable as Muslim.

### **Hate Stares.**

Women who cover their heads with scarf are easily recognizable and make a very small number in America. Below a qualitative analysis of how these hate stares looked like and felt like is presented. Most of the respondents said that prior to 9/11 they were used to gazes and curious looks because of their attire and appearance but that after 9/11 their curiosity changed into hate, fear and suspicion. Maria, a second generation Pakistani living in America told that: "In our neighborhood everybody respected me. I had good relations with my neighbors but after 9/11 things changed. A guy living nearby used to give me extreme looks as if I was behind the 9/11 attack. Because of him I changed my route to the bus stop and my grocery store."

Sarah who used to cover her head said explained her experience in these words: "This is the time when patience of the Muslims is being tested. We are not supposed to react as we want to. I got starred by a cop. I have never been stared down like this. I don't mean to say racism or anything like that. May be he was from a place where he did not interact with minorities or some ethnic backgrounds. I took that into account. He looked at me a couple of times. People looked back to see who is he looking at. I was very scared, embarrassed and ashamed. I thought why the surrounding people were looking at me. I asked the

cop, 'Is, everything is ok?' He said, 'Yes'. 'If I would have time, I had shown him my ID card and told him that I am an American just as you are.'<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup>

In America, such hate stares are used against the black Americans since eighteenth century.<sup>§§§§§§§§</sup> In 1950, John Howard, a social scientist arranged an experiment. He colored his skin in black so that he could be recognized as a black American. Then he travelled in the Southern United States. He detailed his experiences in his book *Black like Me*. He describes how a hate stare looks like in these words: "Taking care to pitch, my voice to politeness, I asked about the next bus to Hattiesburg. The old woman looked at me with such anger and loath that I knew I was receiving what Negroes call 'the hate stare'. It was my first experience with it. It was far more hateful than the look of disapproval that one usually gets. It was so exaggeratedly hateful that I would have been amused if I had not been so surprised."<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup> In post 9/11 era, Muslims from South Asia and Middle East also came under the shadow of this hate stare. Some encounters of American Muslims are described in their own words below.

"One of my friends wears hijab. After 9/11 she went to give volunteer services at the site of the terrorist attacks. She was helping. She was distributing water and helping the rescuers. When returning home, she was covered with blood and dust. Almost everybody looked her with hate and anger. She did not ask for recognition or some reward but, at least she did not deserve this."<sup>†††††††††</sup>

"I own a convenience store in New York. After 9/11 it became really hard to face the gazes that were filled with hate and anger for us. Even so much so that now I do not look into the eyes of the customers. I just mind my own business."

### **Suspicious Looks.**

Media rhetoric and biased reporting added to the difficulties faced by American Muslims in their daily lives. Influential personalities and even American law makers appeared to be very biased against the American Muslim community. For example, soon after 9/11 Congressman Peter King said in a radio interview that vast majority of the American Muslims has links to terrorists and that they are providing safe havens to the terrorists to hide and operate. He also said that no American Muslim has cooperated in the War on Terror campaign and they are 'enemy living amongst us.' In the aftermath of 9/11, the Bush's administration took some serious steps towards the national wide cleanup of suspicious persons

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<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup> Lori Peek, 'Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11', Temple University Press 2011, p.72.

<sup>§§§§§§§§</sup> Feagin and Sikes, 'Living with Racism.'

<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup> John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me* (New York: Signet, 1961)

<sup>†††††††††</sup> Lori Peek, 'Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11', Temple University Press 2011, p75.

and the supporters of terrorists. Two such steps were the formation of Total Intelligence Program (TIPS) and Total Information Awareness (TIA). These legislations allowed the security and intelligence agencies to monitor the personal lives of all Americans and non-nationals in every way. Some surveys were conducted which showed that American public disliked these initiatives but they were strongly convinced that these legislations should be directed on the American Muslim community. Such steps on the part of the government further juxtaposed the already simmering image of the American Muslims. The American public looked at the Muslim Americans with suspicion. The respondents told that they felt as if their all words and acts were being closely observed and that they were seen from a specific security lens. One respondent said: "Right after 9/11, I was scared of looking into the peoples' eyes. That is why I look down. I don't want to see that they are staring at me with suspicion. They look at my bag and at my hands like I am carrying a bomb. When I am in the class, my class fellows look at what I am studying especially when I am studying chemical engineering they look at my books as if it is my bomb manual. When I look at their faces they don't feel ashamed and continue looking at what I am reading."

Another respondent told Lori Peek that: "It is just the suspicion and you feel it when you look into peoples' eyes. Their looks suggest what you are really doing here? Are you here really to buy something or you are scouting a bomb here? It's the most negative thing. It is not something tangible but very subtle- you can feel it in their looks."

### **Apprehensive Looks.**

Governments confusing statements and anti-Muslim policies exacerbated the anti-Muslim bias. For example, a respondent told that in one of his speeches President Bush said that the Americans should respect the Muslims and Islam as a religion but in the same breathe he said that we must go to war with the Arab and Muslim threats and that Islamic terrorism is a threat to peace and civilization. It is confusing as how can we tell who is a regular and innocent Muslim and who is a terrorist.

Even people having long and deep relations with the American Muslims were also apprehensive of them. Zoya, a Pakistani migrant told that her neighbor Lilly and she had good relations before 9/11 but, after it whenever she said hi to Lilly; she felt threatened and tried to avoid her.

Malik an immigrant from Kabul described his experience; he told that he was in the super store for grocery. A little kid was standing near him. When her mother saw Malik near the kid, she ran to him, picked him up and ran in another direction as if Malik was a terrorist.

### **Violent Confrontations**

A wave of nationwide violent hate crimes was seen in the aftermath of 9/11. It included arson, robberies, mob beating, scarf snatching, stabbings, rapes, killings, damage to mosques and Islamic centers, showing in the subway and physical assaults. Though only ten percent of the respondents to Lori Peeks' research told that they were physically victimized, everyone in the research knew a friend, relative or an acquaintance that was assaulted. Though every member of the American Muslim community knew about the post 9/11 hate crimes against Muslims through email messages and news media, they avoided discussing this topic publicly. American Muslims talked about these serious incident in the family settings, in the peers and relatives as this wave of hate crimes was a very commonly talked about topic in those days. It was found that nine out ten of her respondents who had been physically victimized did not report the hate crimes. It was due to the fear of retaliation, lack of evidence or due to their belief that incidents were not so serious to be reported. CAIR and ADC collected information on 2400 violent incidents while FBI tallied 481 hate crimes in the last quarter of 2001. Many of these incidents involved serious bodily harm resulting in hospitalization and also serious damage to mosques and Muslim owned businesses and homes.\*\*\*\*\* But the media and the government agencies tried their best to avert public attention from this reality. Hate crimes were either not reported or under reported. A respondent Jafar told, "The media lied and hid the cases. The FBI says it investigated forty out of 150 cases reported. Come on! I personally know more than 40 cases of hate crimes occurred against Muslims soon after 9/11. These cases were beaten, harassed and hit. There are thousands of cases."\*\*\*\*\*

A respondent told that he was out for shopping in New York. While he was sitting in his car, he saw an Afro-American throwing a lighted cigarette towards her wife who was sitting on the front seat. The man went to him and scolded him and threatened him that he will call the police. At first the black man was denying that he threw the cigarette and afterwards he was like: "I am sorry. It was not intentional."

A man from Colorado told an altercation that took place between his friend and two cops. The cops stopped him on a dark street and started conversing in foul language. They called him names and asked him: "Can you fly an airplane?" and then they proceeded to beat him. He resisted for which he was thrown behind the bars.

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\*\*\*\*\* Hussein, "Report on Hate Crimes and Discrimination against Arab Americans: The Post September 11 Backlash (ADC, Washington DC: 2003), 130.

\*\*\*\*\* Lori Peek, 'Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11', Temple University Press 2011, p97.

Islamic centers and mosques were a common target. Soon after 9/11, Islamic Center of Greater Toledo was hit by a sniper shot. In the same way, Islamic Center of Norfolk was hit by bricks and its windows were broken. In Louisville, Kentucky, someone wrote hateful graffiti on a mosque wall. In Tacoma and Tallahassee many such incidents were reported. A respondent from Colorado told that someone made the symbol of Swastika in front of his door and wrote shameful comments on the mosque wall. A man from Michigan told that, "Our mosque was vandalized several time and some people threw nails in front of the main entrance and sometimes threw dirt in front of the main gate. It is all intentional to cause pain and to puncture the tires of mosque goers. It is in retaliation of 9/11."

Sofia, who was a student at a university in Manhattan, told that after 9/11 when MSA office placed a condolence board in the campus, some students would pull them down. Some wrote comments as: "Let's nuke the Middle East, let's kill all the Muslims, get them all, and throw them out of the country." At one of the universities in Colorado vandal scrawled, "Go home Arabs, bomb Afghanistan and go home sand niggers."

Sometimes it was difficult for the victims to ascribe the crime as inspired by bias and hate. For example: Khalid, a university student when exited from a hospital after visiting his friend saw that all the tires of his car were punctured. He shared it with his father who advised him to shave his oddly grown beard. His father thought maybe it was because his son had grown a beard.

Another respondent told that his car's windows were all smashed because an Islamic symbol was hanging inside the car.

Natasha, a student, majoring in journalism was asked by her teacher to write a report on hate crimes against American Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11. On 13th September, 2001 she traveled to Brooklyn to visit an Islamic center which was targeted. She reported that: "That day after the attack or perhaps during the attack they had thrown pork chops in the Islamic centre, bloody pork chops and rocks."

### **Discrimination against Muslims in America in Post 9/11 Scenario: Incidents**

In post 9/11 scenario, there was not only a backlash of violent hate crimes, verbal and non-verbal harassment but also discrimination against Muslims in America. Three major sectors where discrimination was most visible were education, employment and housing. Incidents of discrimination occurred more usually where the victim had a Muslim name, Muslim appearance or any affiliation with any Islamic organization.

### **Discrimination in Employment**

In 2004, Discrimination Research Center (DRC) conducted a research which aimed at finding out whether the concerns of the American Muslims were true or not. The center sent 6000 mock resumes and job applications to different employments companies. The resumes contained 6 names which indicated six applicants of different religious and ethnic backgrounds. It was found that the Muslim name Abdul Aziz Mansur got the lowest response and the name Heidi McKenzie got the highest response. All the resumes were equivalent in age, qualification and skills. The difference in resumes was only in the names of the applicants and their ethnic and religious backgrounds.\*\*\*\*\* Same researches conducted in UK, Canada and other European countries showed almost the similar results in which European sounding names were more likely and Muslim sounding names were less likely to be invited for interview. The problem with such type of discrimination is that the applicant does not exactly know why he was not given a chance. Here, the applicant may regard his failure to his own loopholes and limitations. Therefore, such invisible form of discrimination in employment is very difficult to document. Some interviews regarding this problem were conducted. The respondents' views in their own words are as below.

*“When I was looking for a job it was really hard. I didn't think it would be, because I have never had a hard time in getting a job. I knew the economy was down at that time. I am not suggesting that people discriminate me. I have always disliked people blaming their shortcomings on discrimination. So, I did not really like to look at that for months. My career counselor was the one who brought it up. She said, “Why you did not get a job yet?” I have graduated with a 3.9 GPA and I have a lot of good things on my record. She said that I should have gotten a job before the other people she was helping. There were companies I think may have discriminated against me because I am a female. One was asking if I had kids. All three of the places where I interviewed asked about my religion and what country I was from.”††††††††††*

**Arianna, a Cambodian Muslim immigrant told her experience as such:**

*“I did a telephone interview and the woman liked me very much. She asked about my resume, and she asked me to come in. She said I needed to do some tests. I came in and I said my name to the receptionist. The receptionist asked for my resume. Then she said, “Okay, we will contact you.” I asked if could talk to the woman whom I talked with on phone. She said no. They never called me back.*

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\*\*\*\*\* Alana Samuels, “Work Place Bias against Muslims, Arabs on the Rise, Advocates Say”, Los Angeles Times, October 3, 2006, C-1.

†††††††††† Lori Peek, ‘Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11’, Temple University Press 2011, p79

*Perhaps it was because of the scarf I was wearing when I went to their office.”\*\*\*\*\**

Though Arianna was not very certain whether this denial was due to her Muslim appearance or due to neglect on the part of the receptionist, many other women had the similar experience. Many a woman told that their telephonic interviews were great but when they went for tests and face to face interviews, they were rejected due to their Muslim appearances, especially their scarf.

A respondent told that in any interaction he tried to avoid telling people that he was Muslim and belonged to Pakistan. He said, “*Why is it so that in any interview and in any formal and informal setting, when it comes to my introduction, I am hesitant about my religious and national affiliation? I keep Islam and Pakistan my last priorities to tell anyone. It means that there is something wrong. There is a very bad stereotype. I remember last time when I was asked about my religion and my country. The interviewers were visibly very uncomfortable with it that I am a Muslim and I belong to Pakistan.*”

Soon after 9/11 those Muslims who were doing part time jobs or full time job were harassed by their coworkers in one way or another. A respondent, Shaheen told that she received hateful remarks about the Muslims and Afghanistan. She also received some hate filled e-mail messages and text messages on her phone. She told that once she went to the inventory to check some store items. There she observed that some of her colleagues were making wrong comments about Islam and Muslims. They were like: “*They must be all killed. We must be get rid of all of them. Afghanistan must be nuked once and for all.*” Shaheen talked to the General Manager of the chain and he issued a letter to all the stores that discrimination and harassment on the basis of color, ethnicity and religion will not be tolerated. And after that hostile comments and remarks subsided.

Most of the Muslim immigrants to the United States are employed in the services sector. Part time jobs like on the gas stations, food chains, delivery services, convenience stores and on restaurants are mostly hold by south Asian and Middle Eastern Americans. It is estimated that before 9/11, 85 percent of the New York taxi drivers were Muslims. In the post 9/11 New York, these drivers suffered a visible decrease in their incomes. A survey told that Muslim taxi drivers were very afraid of the customers.\*\*\*\*\* A Pakistani respondent expressed his view in these words:

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\*\*\*\*\* Ibid. p80.

\*\*\*\*\* Monisha Das Gupta, “On Hardship and Hostility: The Impact of 9/11 on New York Taxi Drivers”, in *Wounded City: The Social Impact of 9/11*, ed. Nancy Forner (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005), 208-241.

*“I know a lot of Muslim taxi drivers in New York. Soon after 9/11 they were afraid of their windows getting bashed by the angry customers. They had very little number of customers after 9/11.”*

Another person who was a taxi driver in New York told that, “Most of the passenger that got on my taxi was curious about my Muslim name and where I came from. They used to ask such questions. And when I told them about my country and religion they get uneasy. Some even looked at me with anger. I got afraid because they could get violent any time.”

A person who worked in a cab service office told that many customers insisted not to send any Muslim driver. Thus, there was a decreased demand of the Muslim drivers. In consequence the company needed very little number of Muslim drivers.

A woman from Washington reported that before 9/11 she used to cover her head with a scarf. But, after 9/11 things changed and her parents told her not use any type of scarf. It was because her parents did not want any unwanted incident to take place with their daughter.

### **Discrimination in Housing Sector.**

In the wake of 9/11, FBI had issued a warning to the house owners and land lords that terrorist might rent houses in the buildings that they want to blow up. It was therefore advised that house owners must confirm who they are giving their house.\*\*\*\*\*

In the search for a house, discrimination occurred mostly with those who were not the permanent residents in the US. They included mostly students and workers who were on a visa or a residence permit. In some cases the respondents were not only blatantly denied housing but also shouted at. Khalid a Masters student at Columbia University was in search of an apartment for himself. For weeks he could not find one. At first, he ascribed the problem to the high rents but afterwards he admitted that there was a bias in the renters. They were very cautious about to whom they were renting a house. Khalid was from Turkey and he was on a residence permit for the study purpose. When he went to an owner of a house, the owner observed his Muslim name and his heavy Turkish accent and then he asked him if he was working on terrorism at Columbia University. When Khalid asked his name, he replied, “Why you want to know my name? You want o blow me up?”

Khalid’s Muslim identity left him vulnerable to discrimination in post 9/11 America. He expressed his sentiments as under:

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\*\*\*\*\* Arab American Institute, “Healing the Nation: the Arab American Experience after 9/11” (Report: Arab American Institute Foundation, Washington DC. 2002)

“Before I came to the US, I was always thinking of staying here permanently as I had heard that one can live here as one likes but, after 9/11 I changed my plan. Being a Muslim or being a foreigner in the United States is not an easy thing.”

Here, it is important to note that there was a difference in discrimination with those Muslims who were American born and American raised and discrimination with those who had newly arrived here or who were not the permanent residents. The permanent residents knew “how the system works.” It means that they knew very well how to respond to the perpetrator, how to complain the discrimination and thus, the intensity of the discrimination against them was not that high.

Lori Peek reported that some of the women recorded in her study were asked by their landlords to abandon wearing the scarf. A respondent, Karori, told Lori Peek that:

*“I am Japanese. I converted to Islam and now I wear a scarf. My landlords were really nice people before 9/11. But, after it whenever they saw me, they just beg me not use the head scarf. They said, ‘Please take it off because we do not want any Muslim woman living in our apartment.’ It hurts me but they are my landlords and they are saying these things.”*+++++++

### **Discrimination in Education.**

Colleges and universities and other institutes of higher learning depict bastions of tolerance but after 9/11, there is a lot of proof to prove that religious motivated discrimination occurred in the American colleges and universities. In November 2001, the Review of Higher Education estimated that at least one million bias motivated incidents occur in American colleges and universities each year. ++++++

Foreign students not only contribute more than \$ 15 billion to the American economy each year but also serve the American nation in different fields like medicine, engineering, teaching etc. after 9/11 these contributions were over shadowed by the bias motivated hate crimes. By the fall of 2002 Middle Eastern students attending the American universities had fallen by ten percent. In addition, many American institutes reported a huge decline in the number of Muslim students from countries like Pakistan, India, Indonesia, UAE and Saudi Arabia. §§§§§§§§§§ Most of the hijackers of the 9/11 tragedy had entered the United States on student visas therefore it brought a heavy scrutiny by the immigration

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+++++++ Lori Peek, ‘Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11’, Temple University Press 2011, p.86.

+++++++ Jack Levin, “ Hate Crimes Revisited: America’s War on Those who are Different” (Boulder, CO: West view Press, 2002)

§§§§§§§§§§ Diana Carroll, “U.S. Colleges See Fewer Students from Islamic Countries”, Kansas City Star, November 3, 2003, A-2.

related departments. In 2003, department of Homeland Security implemented a vast electronic tracking system to monitor the activities of foreign students. This system was called as The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). It required the institutions to send the security agencies all required information about their foreign students. The information included their daily activities and their grade points too.\*\*\*\*\* Soon after 9/11 the federal authorities also appointed campus police officers. Their duty was to work for the domestic War on Terror and to gain better access to the communities of Muslim origins.††††††††††

In 2002, CAIR and ADC reported more than 200 cases of physical violence, threats and harassment against the Muslims students. A Muslim student of Arizona State University was pelted with eggs. Muslim students at California University received death threats and hate mails. Anti-Muslim signs were posted at Indiana University. Windows of MSA offices at different campuses were smashed. In University of North Carolina, a Lebanese student was beaten in the public. The mob yelled, “Go home Muslim Terrorists.” Muslim children at elementary and secondary schools faced similar problems. Muslims teachers and professors were also harassed and in some cases they were illegally dismissed from their jobs.

Some students became the victims of discrimination at the hands of their teachers. Muslim students were subjected to hostile comments and wrong narration of Islam and jihad in the class rooms. Most of the students did not say anything because they believed that their grades depended on a good relation with the teacher.

A respondent told that her teacher had made a lot of wrong comments about Muslims and their faith in the weeks following the 9/11. She received a C grade in her examination. She was surprised. Her sentiments were like:

*“I don’t understand why I got a C grade in the examination. I had gone through all the books she had recommended and I did well in the exam but I don’t know why it happened. Perhaps it was because she thought I am a Muslim. She had made some wrong remarks about Muslims and Islam in her class several times. Perhaps it was religion motivated.”*

In some cases the teacher made such a class room environment where Islam was negatively portrayed. Respondents to this study reported many such instances where the teachers encouraged other students to openly speak against Islam

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\*\*\*\*\* Diana Jean Schemo, “Electronic Tracking System Monitors Foreign Students”, New York Times, February 17, 2003, A-11.

†††††††††† Dan Eggen, “FBI Taps Campus Police in Anti-Terror Operations”, Washington Post, January 25, 2003, A-1.

without having even a basic knowledge of Islam and Muslims. Some comments that were told by the respondents are as under.

*“Muslim parents teach their children to become terrorists. It’s in their book. It’s like a commandment to kill all the pagans (kafirs).”*

*“We should seriously take into account their deportation because once they grow up among us, they will destroy us.”*

*“These Muslims believe in something they call jihad. Their women carry bombs in the loose clothes they do in. that’s why they wear such loose rags.”*

### **Conclusion**

By looking at the above mentioned qualitative and quantitative evidence of discrimination against Muslims in the United States in post 9/11 scenario, one can satisfactorily say that hypothesis that incidents of hate crimes, verbal and nonverbal harassment and stereotyping against Muslims in post 9/11 America occurred was proven correct. This wave of discrimination increased through the ignorant and deliberately wrong interpretation of Islam. The contributing factors which strengthened this backlash were the pre 9/11 anti-Muslim bias in social and political context, symbolic visibility of the American Muslim community and their relative powerlessness. Hate filled speeches of some government officials and media rhetoric were also the contributing factors. Verbal and non-verbal harassment crimes against the American Muslims were committed in the wake of 9/11 considering them as responsible for the tragic event. Non-verbal harassment encompassed hate stares, suspicious looks, apprehensive looks and violent confrontations while discrimination occurred in almost every dimension of social life including housing, employment and education.