Radical Rejections of Violence: Resisting Anti-Muslim Racism

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This paper argues that by expanding and critiquing the definition of violence with relation to Islamophobia, implicit manifestations of Islamophobia, anti-Muslim Racism, and structural violence can be exposed. Through the work of the Muslim Youth Collective, we frame anti-Muslim racism as structural violence, and provide considerations for how Muslim communities may actualize resistance in response.

Introduction

When considering the violent manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment, one may think of racial slurs, vigilante killings or assaults, hate crimes, or vandalism of mosques (New America, 2019). Although these individual acts are real and have been occurring more and more often, there is much more to the manifestation of anti-Muslim racism, or Islamophobia. Viewing anti-Muslim sentiment as the personality disorder of a few racists, rather than as a systemic phenomenon that permeates everything from schools, the government, culture, media, and literature, allows the violence that occurs as a result of institutionalized Islamophobia to be ignored (Hwang & Pang, 2017). Focusing simply on explicit acts, like kicking pregnant Muslim women wearing hijab or the Muslim Ban, allows for the continuation of hidden or implicit forms of violence against Muslim communities. This view of Islamophobia is consistently offered to the public by the state and the media, which allows for a narrow conception of the forms of violence that come as a result of Islamophobia. In fact, even the term "Islamophobia" is worthy of unpacking, and will be explored further later in the paper.

We argue that by expanding and critiquing the definition of violence with relation to anti-Muslim racism, the implicit manifestations of Islamophobia and violence can be exposed. We, as young Muslim organizers, are using our practice of disrupting anti-Muslim racism in our city to inform this theory and its applications to creating knowledge. Our experiences and practice of bringing to light implicit violence caused by anti-Muslim racism through examining predominant myths around Muslims, have been effective and can be used to inform further theory around structural violence. In fact, we are adamant about challenging mechanisms of knowledge making around structures of violence, like racism or Islamophobia, that focus solely on theorizing and are not rooted in the practice of the hundreds of Muslim organizers doing this work on a daily basis. Putting the practice of resistance into theory should be uplifted in academia. Making expert the experiences of those who experience violence to theorize about violence is a form a resistance. That is why writing this paper in itself is a challenge to Islamophobia, a challenge to an academia that continues to center scholarship written by non-Muslims about Muslims, a challenge to the papers with extensive literature reviews about Islamophobia only to offer suggestions of resistance at the end of their pieces that is entirely disconnected from the work on the ground. This is by no means to discredit the valuable nature of work done by, for example, Considine (2017, 2018) or Curtis (2009, 2019). These pieces often provide recommendations to Muslims to target Islamophobia on a structural level, or combat racialization of Muslim bodies— when countless Muslim justice organization, like Muslim Advocates or the Muslim Justice League are already doing this. To justify our Muslim experiences, reviewers suggest we cite non-

Muslim scholars.

It is important to move the understanding of Islamophobia from just an individual level to a systemic level so that the resistance to this violence can be better actualized (Kazi, 2017). Structural or institutional Islamophobia is defined as "distinct from the attitudinal Islamophobia of individuals in being caused by the existence of systemic, pervasive, and habitual policies and practices that have the effect of disadvantaging certain racial, religious, or ethnic groups (Larsson & Sander, 2015). Through examining predominant myths about Muslims, the multiple levels of violence caused on structural, cultural, and individual levels can be uncovered. This practice was effective among both Muslim and non-Muslims in the countless Islamophobia trainings we have conducted throughout the Midwest. In the feedback form we provide after the training, a significant amount of participants state that the biggest take away from the training was the understanding of the structural nature of anti-Muslim racism. The myths about Muslims, which include that Muslims are prone to being terrorists, Muslims are backwards and anti-West, and Muslims are monolithic, are fundamental to justifying harm and violence caused to Muslim communities. By limiting the understanding of Islamophobia and violence to explicit acts, there is an inability to either identify, target, or resist the equally violent implicit forms of harm. Opportunities to speak truth to power, particularly as Muslim organizers immersed in resistance, cultivate agency and the possibilities for societal transformation (Freire, 2002; Yamin, 2017). Understanding the underlying justifications for explicit manifestations of violence can help to identify the implicit manifestations, breakdown violence on the most intimate and implicit levels, and build community power and resistance to fight Islamophobia. It is our hope that this paper will contribute to engaging in community discussions about disrupting conventional narratives of what constitutes as Islamophobia so as to increase understanding of and collectively empower movement against Islamophobia as structural violence.

Scholar Positionality and Methods

Author 1, Umaymah Mohammad, and Author 2, Isa Naveed, are Muslim organizers based in Indianapolis, IN who work to disrupt anti-Muslim racism as a structure of violence. When this paper refers to "we" or "our," it is Mohammad and Naveed talking as Muslim organizers to the reader. Anti-Muslim racism is a system that we constantly have to navigate within our lives, experiences, organizing, and academic work. It has been responsible for multiple levels of violence towards Muslims globally, and towards the two of us personally. We continue the work of Muslim scholar activists who have come before us to speak truth to power and deconstruct systemic violence, from the internal to the institutional. Author 3, Dennis Rudnick, is a White Jewish education scholar who studies race, identity, and social movements. Rudnick writes and works in support and solidarity with Mohammad and Naveed.

In order to center the lived experiences of Muslim organizers who are actively resisting anti-Muslim racism, we have chosen auto-ethnography to analyze our work and uplift the knowledge we have gathered around resistance from our organizing. Autoethnography seeks to:

> Describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand
> cultural experience. This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research
> and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and
> socially-conscious act. A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography
> to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both

process and product, (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 1).

Our data is comprised of our experiences over the last two years conducting trainings, rallies, event, and roundtables around Islamophobia.

To understand the extent of our work over the last two years in Indianapolis, we have conducted Islamophobia trainings all over the state and have trained over 300 allies and Muslims in Indianapolis. We have also provided trainings around policing and surveillance, colonization and Palestine, bystander intervention trainings, allyship trainings, the Muslim Ban, understanding who polices violence, and much more. On average, we host one training a month, which has led us to meet Muslims across the state. We also work often with local mosque communities, to both host and offer our trainings and uplift any work that the Muslim community is working in. Any claims made in theoretical portions of this paper are based on our experiences and the stories and experiences of the hundreds of Muslims we have trained over the two years.

Actualizing the Resistance: Two Muslim Organizers Against the World

Our (Authors 1 and 2) resistance began from the second we were born. To exist and survive as Muslims in America was in itself a challenge to a state built to criminalize and reject us, from surviving our personal experiences with anti-Muslim racism, the brutality of U.S. immigration, and the surveillance of our homes and communities. Although we both organized around Islamophobia separately long before, when we met more than two years ago in Indianapolis through a scholarship program in our undergrad, we launched a statewide campaign together to train community members and leaders on how to name, identify, and resist Islamophobia with support from a white ally organization. While this campaign has been successful by several measures (we moved people's understanding of anti-Muslim racism from an individual level to a structural level, according to the feedback forms), the majority of trainees were allies. About a year into the campaign, we began to realize that all this time, money, and effort we were channeling was being used to provide tools and language to non-Muslims to resist anti-Muslim racism rather than the affected community, leaving our communities still unable to identity, name, or resist Islamophobia. In response, we co-founded an organization called the Muslim Youth Collective, which seeks to empower Muslims to lead the resistance against Islamophobia, racism, and all systems of oppression. The theoretical models around violence and uncovering implicit manifestations of Islamophobia outlined in this paper has informed the ways in which we have organized Muslim communities to resist structural, individual, and internalized Islamophobia. The examples of uncovering implicit measures of Islamophobia come from the real-life experiences of ourselves and of Muslims we have met on this journey throughout our organizing.

The Muslim Youth Collective (MYC) was born out of our frustration with the constant attacks against us, our families, and our Muslim community members. We watched as explicit, implicit, structural, and internalized violence wrecked us, our livelihoods, and our communities. The weak responses to explicit structural violence, like a single rally to resist the Muslim Ban, was paramount compared to the entire lack of resistance to more hidden manifestations of Islamophobia, like the surveillance of individual Muslims and entire mosques in Indianapolis. The mission of MYC was to use the understandings of explicit violence to expose the implicit, so that the Muslim community could provide strong alternative responses to anti-Muslim racism,

which are consistent responses that frame anti-Muslim racism as a structural issue and not a "one-time" issue to reject and leave. For example, such as holding local organizations accountable consistently when they feed into Islamophobia narratives. The justified rage and anger that led to the establishment of MYC was also born out of the frustration of watching non-Muslims, particularly white women, leading both local and national resistance to Islamophobia. For example, the airport rally organized in Indianapolis to resist the Muslim Ban was led by a non-Muslim white woman, who did not center Muslim voices, and led a chanting of "USA" and singing of the national anthem (at a protest to indict the state, you would think…?). This is not to say that there isn't a place for allies in this movement—whether in scholarship or on the ground, allies are integral to liberation. What we mean to clarify is that allies should be following the lead of the affected communities and centering Muslims, rather than speaking for Muslims or "leading" communities they are not a part of to freedom. There is a tendency of allies to make expert their own voices, and their own approaches to freedom, over the voices and approaches of affected peoples.

We also watched as the main Muslim organizations in Indiana openly worked with groups that have defamed and harmed countless of Muslims who advocate for liberation (particularly around Palestine). For example, these groups tried to get me, Mohammad, expelled from my university for doing an event on campus about Palestine. When we approached these Muslim organizations and provided them with alternative groups to work with, ones that have not attacked local Muslims, they would tell us we should just "take what we can get." Time and time again, as Muslims we were treated as people who could not be experts in our narratives, that we should simply take what we can get and not challenge the status quo too much, or are considered not able to lead ourselves to freedom In fact, violence against our Muslim community remained largely ambiguous and unaddressed, even in social justice and organizing spaces. This is what allows liberal social justice organizations to still be complicit in violence rooted in racism by being pro-Israel and pro-the U.S. state, two settler colonial states which are founded on the ethnic cleansing and abuse of indigenous communities to build societies ruled by white supremacy.

This phenomenon makes it near impossible for Muslims resisting these structures to join the activism scene. We have had violent experiences being kicked out of these spaces for challenging the state. It was time to begin a new movement that uplifted Muslims, decolonized liberation work, exposed all the manifestations of violence so that we may name and identify our resistance, and hold our communities accountable to the harm we perpetuate against ourselves and other marginalized groups. Our revolutionary imaginations to envision a world in which Muslims could have the determination, opportunity, and liberty to define their lives is what led us here.

Defining and Contextualizing Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism

Although the word "Islamophobia" has gained currency in the last few decades, the phenomenon of dehumanizing and justifying violence against Muslim communities based on racist myths has existed for centuries. Since the rise of the West, racism against communities of "the East," such as the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, was used to dehumanize the Brown body as "barbaric" and "backwards" to justify violence and subjugation of these communities. Said (1979) famously captured this phenomenon as *orientalism*. This historic and ongoing "otherization" of Muslim communities created a foundation in which fear and hatred of Muslims flourishes (Said, 1979).

The same myths that are used today to justify imperialism, racist immigration policies, and violence towards Muslims, such as their "barbarity", "backwardness", hatred of the West, and inherent violence were used pre-9/11 to expand White empire and destroy civilizations of color (Kumar, 2012).

Many definitions of "Islamophobia" have emerged, with the majority centering on the fear, hatred, or rejection of Muslims and Islam (Bleich, 2012). Such narrow definitions can preference acts of Islamophobia by individuals rather than the state. Our paper and organizing work rely on a more comprehensive definition of Islamophobia that captures the structural, implicit, individual, and systemic manifestations of violence. UC Berkeley's Center for Race & Gender (2019) Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project provides such a definition:

> Islamophobia is a contrived fear or prejudice fomented by the existing Eurocentric and Orientalist global power structure. It is directed at a perceived or real Muslim threat through the maintenance and extension of existing disparities in economic, political, social and cultural relations, while rationalizing the necessity to deploy violence as a tool to achieve "civilizational rehab" of the target communities (Muslim or otherwise). Islamophobia reintroduces and reaffirms a global racial structure through which resource distribution disparities are maintained and extended (para. 5).

Some argue that using the underlying language of a "phobia" legitimizes anti-Muslim sentiment by normalizing the violence that Islamophobia creates and hides its manufactured nature. To fully resist Islamophobia, it is crucial to understand the deliberate manufacturing of hated and fear against Muslims by particular groups and people. This million-dollar industry relies on anti-Muslim sentiment to achieve political, economic, and social power (Lean, 2012). This $57 million-dollar industry is comprised of misinformation experts, such as Pamela Geller and Steven Emerson, organizations such as Stop Islamization of America and ACT!, with America having political players like Michelle Bachmann, and news media such as Rush Limbaugh, Fox News, and the Washington Times (Center for American Progress, n.d.).

The term 'Islamophobia' justifies complacency because it reduces the matter to fear, which may be overcome or resolved with education. We may contrast this to our understanding and application of terms like "anti-Semitism" which implies internalized hatred (Meer & Modood, 2009; Salaita, 2012). To better conceptualize the actuality of Islamophobia, it is more effective to use a racism framework, since racism is the result of systemic and individual discrimination and harm to particular communities that are justified by stereotypes or negative beliefs about that community (Jones, 1997). In fact, "Islamophobes" constantly attempt to absolve themselves of accusations of racism when spouting anti-Muslim rhetoric by saying that they are "defending democracy and human rights" rather than being xenophobic or racist (Musharbash, 2014). As a result, some scholars have moved from using the term "Islamophobia" to "anti-Muslim racism."

For the aforementioned reasons, we will deliberately be using the term, "anti-Muslim racism" throughout the rest of the paper, unless specifically citing or talking about papers that use the word "Islamophobia." By moving away from the medical concept of phobias and placing anti-Muslim sentiment into the discourse of racism, there is a more honest capture of the racist structures that seek to cause violence to Muslims.

Racialization of Muslims

Social, political, and economic realities are key factors in the evolution and definition of racial categories and understanding racialization processes (Omi & Winant, 2014). They are also crucial to understanding the fluid, dynamic nature of racial categories, manifestations of ideological and institutional patterns of racism, and the concomitant power dynamics therein (Omi & Winant, 2014). Simply put, racialization is a process of a community being made into a racial group, and is best understood when considering why (i.e., in whose interest and by what means) said group has been racialized.

The racialization of Muslim identity is best understood in this framework, since anti-Muslim racism did not begin after the September 11 attacks. Historically, under European Christian empires, Muslims were viewed as biologically and inherently inferior (Kumar, 2012; Selod & Embric, 2013). Racialized notions of the "barbarity" and "inferiority" of the Muslim body was and is still used as justification for European and American imperialism and violence (Selod & Embrick, 2013). This must be kept in mind when assessing the effects of racialization of Muslims in America today, because historical and modern violence has been unleashed on Muslim-majority nations by the West on the basis of "biological" racist depictions of Muslims (Cainkar, 2008). It is necessary for any empire to view the people they seek to dominate through these myths, for to see them as inferior and violent is the prerequisite for their exploitation and destruction. These misconceptions don't just occur then go away, they are deliberately maintained by an Islamophobic industry that systematically builds anti-Muslim myths into America's political, social, and cultural systems in order for continued imperial and violent exploitation to occur (Lean, 2012; Meer & Modood, 2009).

To fully understand the pervasiveness of Anti-Muslim racism, it is essential to recognize how the West has hijacked the identity of Muslim people and redefined it in a way to target the community. Factions of the West, like America, Europe, or Israel can be conceptualized as "racial states," meaning that they are states that define communities or groups through racial processes in order to regulate social categories and define the boundaries of national identity (Goldberg, 2002). A racial state eventually leads to "racialized governmentality," which results in a state's institutions using these socially constructed racial categories, in this case racializing Muslim identity, to sort and decide on how to interact with these groups (Sayyid, 2014). The existence of historical racism against communities of the East by the West, or Orientalism, along with what we now understand as anti-Muslim racism, have created a "visible archetype" of what a Muslim looks like and believes (Meer & Modood, 2009). These visible archetypes have been defined by the West through skin color, name, dress, language, country of origin, and phenotypes (Naber, 2008). Systemic anti-Muslim racism is expanded by the fact that racialization has reconstructed the Muslim body as a Brown man in a beard/turban or a woman in hijab to create an "identifiable" Muslim body for the American state to police and vilify (Rana, 2007). The danger in this is that it associates a certain set of religious beliefs, an Islam defined by the West as inherently violent, with a specific and racialized look, despite the fact that not all those who are racialized as Muslim are Muslim and vice versa (Mousa, 2017). Because these visible archetypes are also associated with beliefs, looking "Muslim" stands as an indicator to the state and individuals that you may be a Muslim, or a terrorist, and that you are a potential threat to American national security. The result of racialized governmentality allows institutions, like airports, to justify racially profiling Muslims and those who are perceived to be Muslim, such as South Asians or Arabs, on the basis that their looks may provide an insight to the potentiality that

they may be Muslims who want to commit violence (Considine, 2017; Selod, 2015).

The existence of anti-Muslim racism, as something that is separate from legitimate critique of Islam is increasingly evident in the racialization of Muslims. When non-Muslims are attacked by Islamophobes who are looking to target Muslims, like Sikhs, evidence of anti-Muslim sentiment as an issue of racism is clear (Chu, 2015). On an institutional level, this same practice of racialization is apparent in racist national security programs like the National Security Entry/Exist Registration System (NSEER), which targeted people who were thought to be Muslim by registering people based on their names and national origins rather than religion (Bayoumi, 2006). Therefore, the violence and harm that anti-Muslim racism creates does not just target Muslims, but those who are perceived as Muslims due to the racialization of the Muslim body. The racialization of Muslims creates a foundation of abuse by the state and individuals against Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim (Considine, 2017).

Defining Violence: Who Has the Agency to Define Violence? Who Benefits and Who Loses?

Those who control the means of defining violence control the means of the implications of violence (Morley & Chen, 2005). The media plays an integral role in highlighting what is violent, equates Islam with violence, and perpetuates anti-Muslim racism as a result. U.S. news outlets cover attacks done by Muslims 449% more than attacks carried out by non-Muslims (Kearns, Betus, & Lemieux, 2017). This is done despite an FBI database showing that Muslims are a marginal percent (less than one percent in Europe, less than six percent in America) of those who commit violence in the United States, and that more than 90% of terrorist acts committed in the West are done by non-Muslims (Global Research, 2013; Kearns, et al, 2017). Western media perpetuate racist myths about Muslims, including through popular culture. In a study of more than 1000 films featuring Arabs or Muslims, 932 of them depicted Muslims/Arabs as violent, barbaric, backwards, and the natural enemy (Shaheen, 2014). In fact, no other race of people have been depicted so poorly in western film except for Native Americans (Shaheen, 2014). This inevitably provides the public with the notion that Muslims are more "violent" than non-Muslims, that Muslims are inherently violent, and is proof to how film and media are tools by which the perceptions of Muslims can be shaped (Wilkins, 2008).

These studies provide perfect examples of how the definition of what is "violent" is socially constructed, can change over time, and reflects existing power structures (Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999). There is a general social understanding that it is easy to designate what is violent and what is not, but examination of anti-Muslim racism and structural racism make evident that this is not true. People, particularly those in power, want to define violence in a way that absolves them of any blame (Baumeister, 1997). Thus, violence is a phenomenon that is socially constructed, and we (Authors 1 & 2) have used this concept to theorize and have discussions with our communities about how the definition of violence is used against us. We have spent over a year having these discussions with our communities, particularly in the context of justice for Palestine and resisting anti-Muslim racism, because of the many defamations and accusations of inciting violence against us by Zionist and white supremacist opposition in Indianapolis for our organizing. Muslim and Palestinian resistance to structural violence and colonization is deemed violent, leading to confusion (Considine, 2017; Strindberg & Wäärn, 2005). Framing resistance as violence is a tool used to silence organizers and activists like ourselves who wish to expose structural, implicit, explicit, and hidden manifestations of violence.

Social constructionism is the "process by which people come to describe, explain, or

otherwise account for the world in which they live," (Gergen, 1985, pp. 3-4). Using social constructionism to understand violence allows us to ask and think about the social, political, and economic processes by which words obtain meaning, and the implications of the resulting definitions on who benefits and who loses from these definitions (Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999). Words and their definitions, especially that of "violence," are products of the cultural, social, and historical contexts, and are not universal in their understanding or meaning (Bohan, 1996). By ways of this framework, we have conducted our own analysis and understanding of violence, and have worked with Muslim and non-Muslim communities to have discussions to conceptualize how the term "violence" is defined, who defines it, how words can be weaponized to harm Muslims and other marginalized folks, and who benefits from this definition.

White supremacy defines violence in such a way that maintains the existing balance of powers, absolves whiteness and white empire of any harm or violence it commits, and takes away the agency and legitimacy from communities to use this term to describe harm done to them (Anderson, 2016; Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Feagin & Ducey, 2019). Even when it seems that institutions are attempting to give power back to marginalized people by modifying definitions (e.g., how liberalism extends its definition of violence to explicit manifestations of violence), it is still done in such a way that maintains the marginalization and oppression of communities of color. Mainstream knowledge, buttressed by power dynamics, narrowly defines violence to exclude the vast manifestations of harm done on systemic, cultural, and individual levels and erases the multiple and complex experiences of those victim to violence (Bustamante, Jashnani, & Stoudt, 2019; Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2016). Mainstream definitions of violence focus solely on the explicit forms, which are generally institutional level policies or individual discriminatory practices (Bustamante et al., 2019; Rylko-Bauer & Farmer, 2016). Reducing violence to overt, explicit acts is in itself a form of violence. By taking away the ability to name and identify all the manifestations of violence from communities of color, it creates an inability to address or resist harm. We make all these claims based on our experiences of defamations by professors, community leaders, and other powerful white people in our city who have attempted to quell our resistance against the colonization of Palestine and anti-Muslim racism by abusing their power to define "violence" as our resistance. Similarly, the oversimplification and exaggeration of explicit violence also gives scarce language to talk about implicit violence (which can be structural, cultural, or individual) and is used to hide the manifestations that white supremacy does not want exposed. Taking away the agency of communities of color to define what causes them harm is in itself a form of violence against them.

Centering the needs and interests of marginalized communities should include challenging a central definition of violence. No matter how much research one can do, only those from that particular community can identify the multiple levels of violence they experience, because only they can expose the implicit manifestations. Therefore, this paper does not define violence so as not to replicate the hegemonic language that excludes experiences that the authors do not live and allows room for others to have agency to define the violence against them. Rather, we argue that hegemony (implicit, indirect forms of power and violence) and domination (explicit, direct forms of power and violence) must be understood in tandem (Foucault, 1975; Gramsci, 1992).

The Hypocrisy of Violence: Hiding Harm Behind Security

Based on our experiences as Muslims in America, who are immersed in the socio-political-culture of this country, we have seen that in the United States, violence is not condemned

equally. The general discourse of violence within the United States starkly favors the use of force by the American state against Muslims. The United States has long operated in the post 9/11 age under the assumption that all Muslims may not be terrorists, but they all possess a barbaric tendency to become terrorists, therefore violent policies must be utilized to prevent this transformation from occurring (Corbin, 2017). This provides a theoretical justification for violence against Muslims by painting the violence of the American state as proactive security, which is event in the bombardment of security-based language around the War on Terror keeping Americans safe (Gillum, 2018). However, it is essentially just coded bureaucratic language designed to protect Whiteness from the perceived barbarity and backwardness of the Brown and Black people of the Global South.

We have seen from our multiple trainings that discussing violence without discussing the concept of security normalizes the power of those who get to define harm, which in this case is the American State. Most of the violence committed against Muslim communities is done in the name of proactive security. For example, the American State claims the War on Terror was launched to protect Americans from terrorists. The War on Terror is defined not as violence, but as security (Zarrugh, 2019). Using the language of *terrorism* and *security*, the American State has been able to make its actions in the War on Terror seem pedagogical and benevolent, bringing security to both Americans at home and the civilians across the battlefields of the War on Terror (Gillum, 2018; Physicians for Social Responsibility, 2015). After all, in the case of terrorism there are no two sides, there is simply the terrorist and the peacekeepers. This radically simple logic both systemizes dehumanization and violence and absolves the U.S. from any possible blame or critique. Framed in this context, the U.S. military personnel that invade, occupy, and murder brown Iraqi civilians are not violent; they are heroes who protect. It is instead Brownness and Muslimness that is synonymous with terrorism and violence, and thus there is justification to abuse Brown and Black homes, lands, and bodies.

The majority of scholarship defines violence and terrorism in ways that protects the State. A widely used definition of what counts as terrorism/violence are acts committed such that:

1. Terrorists are non-state actions
2. Terrorism is always political
3. Terrorists deliberately target the innocent
4. Terrorists have no legal or ethical restrains like states do (Cronin, 2002).

Not only does this definition absolve all states, militaries, and state-sanctioned institutions of violence, but it paints them as inherently progressive and democratic, as compared to inherently, evil, regressive, and "unorganized" non-state actors. The American State has a hegemonic control over the very idea of violence and uses it to sanction atrocities from Somalia to Pakistan. The U.S. military killing over four million innocent civilians in the Middle East and North Africa since 2001, for political gain with no ethical restraints, as a result of the War on Terror is not considered terrorism or violence (Physicians for Social Responsibility, 2015). As organizers who seek to resist these racist and violent assumptions, we must question who is germinating the definitions of violence, or in this case terrorism, and how that shapes public understandings of violence.

Another dimension of the hypocrisy of violence is that the resistance of Muslim and other marginalized communities to state violence, or in White supremacy's term to *security measures* (e.g., via police, prisons, the military, imperialism) are seen as terrorist or inherently violent or to

the well-being of society (Khan-Cullors & Bandele, 2018). Any resistance to the War on Terror, a security measure that has left millions of Brown and Black people in its wake, is seen as terrorist activity, regardless of the sexual, physical, institutional, and psychological abuse done to the many communities its mutilated (Considine, 2017). For example, the National Counterterrorism Center lists "concerns about foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan" and "Israel's treatment of Palestinians" are indicators for terrorism by government agencies (Patel & Koushik, 2017, p. 15). Once the resistance threatens the means of the state, communities of color are deemed too violent and overstepping their Constitutional rights. We can see this in the vilification of Brown, Black, and Muslim activists and organizers like Ilhan Omar, Angela Davis, Linda Sarsour, and so many others including ourselves by both the state and its people. Because White supremacy determined the definition of violence, it also chooses whose resistance is acceptable. One impact is the potential justification of increasing violence against those engaging in means of resistance. This is a reality for thousands of Muslims, who due to their activism around state violence, are put on watch lists, are deported, consistently surveilled, or subject to FBI harassment. Another indicator of terrorism by government agencies is "concerns about anti-Muslim discrimination," (Patel & Koushik, 2017, p. 15). Although there is not a lot of research on this, the phenomenon is so evident when watching the massive smear campaigns around Linda Sarsour, Rashida Tlaib, and Ilhan Omar, all Muslims activists, organizers, and congresswomen who are being defamed and threatened with violence for speaking out against structural violence against their communities (Corbett, 2019).

By examining dominant myths used to justify anti-Muslim racism, one can identify both explicit and implicit forms of violence that result. Because of the social construction of the definition of violence, MYC has attempted to return agency to the Muslim community to define what is violence to them through this framework. The point of our analysis is not to "myth" bust—we are operating from the assumption that anti-Muslim racism, and all its racist myths about Muslims, are falsified and manufactured. Rather, we are using these dominant myths about Muslims as a means to uncover implicit violence. We have practiced this very method in our anti-Muslim racism trainings among both Muslim and non-Muslim communities, and have found that it becomes easier to understand and identify implicit and internalized violence when beginning with explicit myths and manifestations of violence, since they are more readily identifiable and understandable. There is power in identifying implicit forms of violence that white supremacy deliberately hides, because the first step to resistance and liberation is to identify the complete manifestations of violence to which there needs to be an end.

Myth 1: Muslims Are Terrorists / Prone to Being Terrorists

The myth that Muslims are terrorists or prone to be terrorists is always the first myth identified by our participants in our anti-Muslim racism trainings, indicating that it is the most prevalent myth in Western society. As discussed earlier, the American State institutes policies that assume Muslims have exceptional sympathetic tendencies to violence, which can possibly manifest into terrorism. This myth plays a dual role for the American state. Internationally, it produces campaigns like War on Terror. Domestically, it justifies racist policies such as the Muslim Ban, Muslim Registries (such as the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System), surveillance of Muslim communities through programs like Countering Violent Extremism, racial profiling at airports, and general anti-Muslim rhetoric from individuals, TV personalities, and politicians (Considine, 2017; Gillum, 2018; Gonzalez, 2017). These forms of violence have varying degrees

of interpretations amongst American Muslims, with some manifestations of violence being more readily condemned than others. Identifying the explicit and implicit forms of anti-Muslim violence will showcase the differing levels of harm associated with anti-Muslim racism, and how often times fixation on only the explicit or obvious forms of violence obscures the totality of violence that Muslims in America face.

The explicit violence of anti-Muslim racism is primarily seen through the rhetoric of prominent public Islamophobes in America. Outward racist rhetoric is always the easiest to condemn, as Islamophobic rhetoric can quickly polarize the nation into binaries, particularly along party lines. Republican and conservatives are associated with more explicit forms of violence against Muslims, while the liberal or Democratic party is seen as the equitable alternative (Braunstein, 2018). Yet the more digestible and friendly language of liberals is used to ignore the longstanding structural Anti-Muslim racism of the Democratic party and absolve them of this violence. The Obama administration greatly expanded the Countering Violent Extremism program in 2011, a form of surveillance and racial profiling against the Muslim community (Beydoun, 2016). More so, Obama intensified the conflicts of the War on Terror by waging three new imperialist wars in the predominantly Muslim countries of Libya, Syria, and Yemen during his tenure in office, adding immensely to the numbers of Muslim refugees.

The idea of surveilling Muslim communities is embraced as a logical and reasonable request by the state according to both liberal and conservative parties. The Democratic and Republican parties unilaterally agree that Muslims should not object to these policies, simply because if they are not terrorists, what is there to hide? Further, if there were terrorists in Muslim spaces, whether here or elsewhere, would they not want to work together with the state to make sure they root out the "bad guys?" The violence that comes from surveillance and the War on Terror, living in constant fear, and policing oneself and one's community as a safety measure—is for some reason not paralleled with the violence of Trump's Muslim registry or Muslim Ban that liberals panicked about in 2016 (ignorant that a Muslim registry already existed in the form of NSEER) (Aziz, 2017). This provides clear evidence that those in power leverage a particular definition of violence to absolve themselves of any blame. The implicit strategies of Anti-Muslim racism practiced by the American state, such as mass surveillance and imperialism, are untouchable and not up for debate, leading to Muslims being subject to policies that entrap them in perpetual racial violence.

This particular myth others Muslims as enemies of the state—they are not simply inferior, but are those who wish to destroy the fabric of Western civilization. This phenomenon is somehow more haunting then just being a minority, as Muslim identity is increasingly viewed as inherently counter to Americanness. Understanding this opens another dimension of implicit forms of violence that are self-inflicted by Muslims who internalize the myth. Internalized anti-Muslim racism, such as internalized racism, is a form of intellectual colonization in which the affected person, often subconsciously, accepts the dehumanization, myths, and negative stereotypes of their social identity group (Suleiman, 2017). When subjugation towards a community has existed for centuries, and the dominant power has continuously perpetuated the narrative that Muslim communities are inferior, and those same people grow up in a society that endorses these racist narratives, such messages become internalized. When anti-Muslim sentiment is embedded in the core of the state's national identity and every system upholds it, then it is inescapable if it is not identified and consciously objected. The most famous example of internalized racism was a study done in 1947, which found that both Black and White children associated positive themes and beauty with White dolls (Clark, 1947). This experiment inspired a

"doll" test to analyze internalized oppression/anti-Muslim racism among Muslim children between ages 5-9 and found disturbing results (Aaser, 2016). Due to insecurities about their Muslim identity, children developed two different personalities in an attempt to blend in, or assimilate, as much as possible. These children would separate their American identity from their Muslim identity because they felt they always had to choose one or the other, which captures the dominant Western rhetoric that the two cannot coexist because they are enemies. The study found that one-sixth of Muslim children sometimes pretend they are not Muslim, one-third of children never wanted to share with others that they were Muslim, and half of them did not know if they could be both Muslim and American (Aaser, 2016).

To counter allegations of terrorism, infiltration, or "enemy-status," Muslim communities internalize the responsibility to constantly condemn terror attacks. There is a clear racialized aspect to this phenomenon, since white men are not constantly apologizing on behalf of their race or gender, despite them being responsible for the majority of global violence (Bell, 2019). Muslims often face the pressure to condemn terrorist attacks lest they themselves are perceived as terrorists (Ghaffar-Kucher & El-Haj, 2018). This practice is exhausting, and dehumanizes, monolithizes, and takes away the agency of Muslims to define themselves and exist without having to justify their existence.

Myth 2: Muslims are Monolithic: Internalizing Racialization Violence

The racialization of Muslims is a form of violence is internalized by non-Muslims in the West to rationalize the dehumanization of Muslims—or those perceived to be Muslims—but we have also seen it to be internalized by Muslim communities. We believe this internalization is manifested by Muslims through the normalization of the mass killing of Muslims in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. These claims, once again, are coming from our lived experience as Muslims in America, and Muslim organizers who are confronting anti-Muslim racism on a daily basis. We made the critical observation that we saw more Muslims, within our own communities and those outside of Indianapolis, mourn the bodies of the French people who died in the November 2015 Paris attacks than they have for the millions of Muslims who were slaughtered in the War on Terror or are victim to terrorism themselves. For example, we remember so many of our Muslim friends change their Facebook profile picture to the French flag as a way to show solidarity to those who died. And yet, as Palestinians were being killed the days before and after by Israel, or another U.S. bomb or drone killed a Muslim in Pakistan or Iraq, yet no Muslim Facebook profile pictures were changed to the flags of these Brown nations. Similarly, this normalization and internalization of racialization is evident when the media refuses to show the mutilated bodies of White victims (such as the victims of the 2015 France terror attacks), but consistently proliferate the photos of dead, mutilated, bombed bodies of Brown people as trophies because Muslims are so dehumanized that they do not deserve the respect to die in peace (Hardy, Mughal, & Markiewicz, 2017). Internalizing the normalization of death is so pervasive that many Muslims are accepting these photos as normal reporting. It is an unexplainable form of violence to be so dehumanized, that there is no reason to mourn for the unjust deaths of your people. It is an enraging form of violence, but one so implicit, so hidden and normalized by Western hegemony that it often goes unnoticed.

Just as Black youth make distinctions between levels of "Blackness," Muslims do the same for "Muslimness." Muslims are internalizing racist myths about their communities in a way that informs their faith. Young Muslims feel that they have to continuously prove their

"Americanness," and that it is an exhausting process (Suleiman, 2017). The inability to see the identity of Muslim and American as compatible leads to an isolation of the Muslim identity as a way to assimilate into the more safe "American" or Western identity. This was especially relevant for young Muslim women in hijab who believed their life would be much easier if they took off their hijabs and abandoned their religious identity just so society would stop alienating them (Suleiman, 2017). We have connected this research to what we have seen on the ground in our communities. These very findings are compatible with the patterns of hyper-patriotism found among our Muslim communities, like the famous Shepard Fairey poster of the Muslim woman wearing an American flag hijab as the collective symbol of American Muslims, or uplifting Muslims who have served in the U.S. imperial military. In fact, in our trainings, we have received severe pushback from Muslims about our critiques of the state as they recommend us to instead uplift Muslims who have served in the U.S. military, even if they themselves are perpetuating the dehumanizing of their own selves. To be clear, we are not conflating patriotism with internalized self-hate; however, our experiences have shown that there is cultural pressure placed on Muslims to "prove" their love for America as a way to denounce their "terrorist tendencies." Hyper patriotism can be a reaction and attempt to combat the myth that Muslims are enemies to the state by feeling the necessity to constantly prove your patriotism, pride, and love for the American state, despite its violence against Muslims.

Lastly, another important aspect of the racialization of the Muslim body is the complete and deliberate erasure of Blackness and Black Muslims. This is not to say that Black Muslims are not victim to Islamophobic attacks—in fact, they are standing at an even more dangerous intersection than non-black Muslims (sadly, we can point to the experience of Ilhan Omar here as well). But the use of power by the West to craft a Muslim body that excludes Blackness not only does harm and erases Black Muslims, but creates a social framework for anti-Blackness to foster among Muslim communities, effectively harming themselves.

Internalizing anti-Muslim racism creates a world in which Muslims struggle with forming an identity because a Western hegemony defines who they are in ways they did not consent to. This makes Muslims feel unsafe and unwelcome in their Muslimness and more likely to reject themselves as Muslims (Suleiman, 2017). Being forced to reject your identity is a form of violence. Having the agency taken away to define your identity is violence. Feeling forced to prove your patriotism to a racist state to avoid marginality is a form of violence. Yet, for the reason of this manifestation of anti-Muslim racism being more implicit and hidden, is not held to the same level of severity as explicit violence like the Muslim Ban. This contradiction is in itself an injustice and a violence to Muslims, because it is not being equally resisted, or condemned.

Myth 3: Muslims are Backwards and Anti-West

Another prevalent and dominant myth we use in our anti-Muslim racism trainings to uncover implicit and internalized violence is the myth that Muslims are "backwards" and "anti-West." The evidence that this myth is internalized by liberals and conservatives is proven by their bipartisan support for counter terrorism measures and mass surveillance efforts against Muslims (Gillum, 2018). Both of these government programs rely on the myth that Muslims are "backwards" and "anti-West" being true (Gillum, 2018). Although liberals are likely to quickly condemn the statement that all Muslims are terrorists, they are less likely to condemn the statement that Muslims are backwards. The media frequently upholds this myth by deliberately exploiting existing homophobia and misogyny in communities of color to justify war and

surveillance and normalize the rejection of Muslims in the West (Considine, 2017).

Because of the bipartisan internalization of this myth, massive structural impacts occur. In the contemporary epoch, the myth that Muslims are inherently barbaric has been essential to launch the War on Terror, which was authorized by congress (in bipartisan fashion) in 2001 under the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists (Public Law 107–40). The authorization fixated on a poorly defined definition of "terrorist" which is most readily (and intentionally) conflated with "Muslim." By equating terrorism, a form of indiscriminate political violence, so naturally and effortlessly with Muslim people in predominantly Muslim countries, the United States has cultivated a cultural habit of repeated intervention amongst Muslim countries. This interventionist culture and the labeling of Muslims as terrorists is not random, rather it rests on old colonial and Orientalist perceptions of the East, which claims the people of these lands contain within them a strain of backwardness and a yearning for panacea (Said, 1979). In this particular case the Muslim identity, whether in Iraq or Waziristan, has a barbaric tendency to produce and harbor groups such as Al-Qaeda or the Taliban, and therefore the violence that the American state unleashes on these countries and regions is pedagogical and enlightening, in that it will show the backwards Muslim world good from bad. This understanding does not vary between liberals and conservatives, on structural or individual levels, as both collaborate in the cycle of imperialism and have a stake in maintaining the binary that Muslims represent backwardness and the American armed forces represent progress. The backwards Muslims being so readily represented in American war movies, as Jack Shaheen (2014) documented extensively, is at odds with the rational and moderate West is not surprising, as the Western defined tenets of Islam (terror and autocracy), naturally contradict to the tenets of the West (peace and freedom) from both the liberal and conservative points of view.

More specifically, liberal anti-Muslim racism creates a more easily digestible form of anti-Muslim racism that still upholds all forms of violence against the affected community. When liberals institutionalize the myth that Muslims are backwards and anti-West, they do not call all Muslims terrorists, rather they accuse them of being more homophobic and more misogynistic than any other society. This is seen in the way the liberal media is obsessed with reporting on abusive instances of women and queer Muslims abroad and tokenize their experiences of coming to the West to find safety. In fact, during the War on Terror liberals exhausted the idea that the military was helping Iraqi women, when in fact they were indiscriminately bombing their homes and neighborhoods (Selden, 2007). In fact, the U.S. invasion of Iraq created violent conditions that disproportionately affected Iraqi women (Green & Ward, 2009; Kandiyoti, 2007). Liberal anti-Muslim racism continued to justify ongoing violence to Muslim communities through its support for Israel as the only democracy and safe place for LGBTQ people in the Middle East while simultaneously colonizing a Muslim majority nation, which affects women and queer people (Shulman, 2011). Notice how the hypocrisy of violence still holds. Even though Muslim woman and queer people suffer under Israeli apartheid and settler colonization, that is not considered violence. Why is misogyny from another Brown person considered more violent than a colonial force stripping you of your rights, jailing under aged children, forcibly evicting civilians, indiscriminately killing civilians, and cutting off water supplies to an indigenous community (Amnesty International, 2018)?

What we have noticed as organizers is that the labeling of the Muslim identity as backwards makes confronting actual problems and bigotries in the Muslim community difficult, if not impossible. Trying to germinate serious discussions surrounding questions of misogyny and homophobia in Muslim spaces are quickly shut down, as people fear if they confront such

realities they are allowing anti-Muslim racism to enter. By addressing such bigotries, some Muslims might argue that you are doing the work of Islamophobes for them by validating that the problems exist. This disruption of being able to hold our own communities accountable, for us as organizers, is a manifestation of violence by anti-Muslim racism because it disrupts bottom-up organizing efforts. Muslims need space to confront these issues without being forced into Islamophobic narratives. The problems within the Muslim community are not somehow exceptional to the Muslim community. That is to say, it is not because we are backwards that we find such oppression in our spaces. Oppression such as patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, and anti-Blackness exist in our spaces because it exits in global society, of which global Muslims are a part of. Muslim struggle against such bigotry is no different than the struggles other communities in America or the world are waging against such discrimination and oppression.

The internalization of this myth also has far reaching consequences. Similar to internalizing the myth that all Muslims are terrorists, when Muslims internalize that they are backwards they also want to reject not just their Muslimness, but their identity as Brown or Black people (even white Muslims are racialized as other). It is a rejection of culture, names, food, clothes. To exist in a society that was systematically built to make Muslims reject their own skin is a form of violence. Truthfully, uncovering the ways in which Muslims have internalized false accusations of "backwards" has been one of the most emotional parts of organizing with Muslims. After going through how explicit violence arises from this myth, Muslims can then begin to reflect and identify how they have internalized it themselves. We heard stories of Muslims rejecting their parents, who they see as backwards, destroying ties with a family that can be their only support system. Muslims told us that they deliberately memorized particular ayahs, or lines, from the Qur'an so as to defend themselves when someone called them backwards. Even more painful, we heard from Muslims who shared how they have rejected their religion because they believed Western media on how Islam hates women and queer people rather than looking for Muslim sources that say otherwise. This shared pain is so violent to our hearts, so violent to our identities, and so largely ignored by the world.

Lastly, as Muslims running a faith and justice based organization, we have seen that increasingly in interfaith and liberal spaces, Muslims are constantly attempting to humanize themselves and make themselves look "Western" for public consumption. Videos from Buzzfeed feature Muslims declaring "I'm Muslim, but I'm not…" which placed Muslims as objects in the Western eye to denounce that they are not "angry," "forced to wear hijab," or other racist tropes (Nazim, 2015). Whatever the intention, this process dehumanizes and forces Muslims to create an identity that is not for them, but for consumption of a system that rejects them or accepts them conditionally. Without self-determination to choose your identity, how to express it, or feel you have to reject yourself to be accepted; this is an implicit but significant form of violence that the Muslim community constantly wrestles with.

The health implications of anti-Muslim racism and internalized anti-Muslim racism are not fully understood but are only beginning to be explored. The aforementioned myths about Muslims and the structural, individual, and internalized forms of violence they create place Muslims as outsiders in their own homes, and this structural and political oppression has been linked as a risk factor for poor physical and mental health (Samari, 2016). Systematic profiling and targeting, social stress, discrimination, and negative stigma are all determinants for adverse health and have been tied to higher levels of suicide, cardiovascular disease, and problems with mental health (anxiety, depression, psychological distress, and substance abuse) (Neblett, 2019). After 9/11, both Christian and Muslim Arabs in Detroit reported having high anxiety about being

victims of hate crimes, increased psychological distress, poor perceptions of health status, and lower levels of happiness (Haque, Tubbs, Kahumoku-Fessler, & Brown, 2018; Samari, 2016). But it's not just on an individual level: Anti-Muslim racism also impacts access to health and resources for Muslim communities (Samari, 2016).

In conclusion, there are much more insidious manifestations of anti-Muslim racism, those who are hidden and internalized, that need to be immediately addressed in our movements for justice. These are often just as violent and harmful as explicit forms of violence, and deserve a similar rigor or resistance and attention. Addressing internalized Islamophobia need only to begin with providing a safe space for community members to begin to reflect on their experiences, have a space to share pain in, and only then can we begin to take steps to reverse the harm and fight Islamophobia—whether it is within us or against us.

Actualizing the Resistance Continued: The Work Goes On

One of our primary goals of MYC was to provide political education to Muslims that would move the understanding of anti-Muslim racism from an individual level analysis to a systemic level. This was important because our community did not recognize structural level violence beyond the Muslim Ban and felt that education would solve racist remarks made to Muslims. By focusing only on these explicit, individual acts, the violence that systemic anti-Muslim racism creates is lost. Thus, we made connections with local mosques to conduct trainings on how to identify and resist anti-Muslim racism for the Muslim community. Just as we do in the paper, we used the identification of three to five predominant myths around Muslims to understand how violence is created towards our communities when these myths are internalized by other individuals, institutions, the state, and ourselves. Although we did similar trainings for allies during the aforementioned training campaign, it was an entirely new experience that revealed so much more when done with just Muslims. During these trainings, we were able to have painful conversations about how internalizing anti-Muslim racism has caused us harm and connect our struggles with one another to begin to build community resistance. It was only within the Muslim community that we were able to expose implicit forms of violence caused by internalized anti-Muslim racism. We witnessed and shared the stories of Muslim women who internalized the backwardness of Islam and rejected their mothers and faith as feminist icons to subscribe to white feminism, and how the relationship is taking years to rebuild. We witnessed stories of Muslims who specifically memorized certain passages from the Holy Qur'an so that when someone called them a terrorist, they can prove that they are peaceful. Although it is painful to expose how we have internalized anti-Muslim racism to cause harm to ourselves, there is a liberation in naming this harm because only then can consciously begin to undo it.

It is important to note that it is not always an easy task to bring conversations that explore state violence into mosques. MYC expanded from conducting trainings only about resisting anti-Muslim racism to conducting more specific trainings about resisting surveillance and understanding state and international violence caused to our communities. It is not easy because Muslim leaders are typically aware of FBI surveillance, since they are usually targeted by the state, forced to meet with the FBI, and thus reject political activity in Muslim community spaces (Alimahomed-Wilson, 2018; Deflem & McDonough, 2015). Muslims are actively policing themselves and refusing to engage in conversations about surveillance or state violence, because they are afraid of the repercussions since they suspect they are being watched. Both our conversations with Muslim leaders and community members have revealed this, as well as a

study by Pew Research Center in 2017. This study found that 70% of Muslim women believe that it is very likely that their calls and emails are being monitored by the government compared to 48% of Muslim men who have that belief (Pew Research Center, 2017). Relatedly, 41% of Muslim women are very worried about government surveillance due to their religion compared to 38% of Muslim men (Pew Research Center, 2017). The responses to this survey include Muslims being concerned about in-group informants, feeling the need to self-censor, feeling a constant state of nervousness, and feeling constantly threatened for existing in the West (Pew Research Center, 2017). How can Muslims live their lives, from going to school to traveling, when mass surveillance and the fear of it exists? The fear is absolutely justified and continues to hinder our community from achieving liberation by immobilizing us in the face of violence.

One of MYC's biggest challenges is to begin conversations about state violence and expose that we are doing more harm to our community by keeping silent rather than addressing systemic anti-Muslim racism. It is a form of violence to constantly have to watch what you say in places of worship or everyday life for fear of what the state will do to you or your community. It is violence to be afraid of being criminalized for exposing your own oppression. For this reason, MYC spent a year conducting focus groups, conversations, and trainings on the use of state, local, and individual levels of surveillance that target the local Muslim community. Although it is risky, because in the mosque we conduct these trainings in we know there are FBI informants (which was exposed in a meeting with our Congressman), we make the point that we must expose this violence or the state will continue to get away with this injustice.

Over the last two years, we have seen a significant shift in Muslim thinking around the state. Mosque leaders who openly worked with state factions, like the police and FBI, became more critical of these relationships. We have also seen Muslim youth move their understanding of anti-Muslim racism from something that can simply be solved by education to understanding the manufactured nature of this phenomenon. One thing we contribute this general shift in thinking in our communities is through MYCs work to make knowledge around anti-Muslim racism, resistance, and white supremacy accessible to our communities in a way that popular books by scholars like Deepa Iyer and Asalan Ifitkhar are not always. The biggest impact MYC has had on our communities is empowering Muslim youth, who before joining MYC were never active, to take consistent stands against injustice and feel they have the agency to resist white supremacy. Indianapolis went from having two locally active young Muslim organizers (Authors 1 and 2), to over ten young Muslim activists who have an ethical framing around justice and are dedicated to fighting anti-Muslim racism. The joy and strength we have seen MYC provide to Muslims through uplifting community resistance has been beautiful and emotional.

Despite the challenges, despite the never-ending violence, the never-ending struggle to decolonize our minds, we continue to fight our way for survival in this world and that is a form of resistance. Writing this paper, as Muslim scholars and organizers, who have been told by professors that as Muslims we will never be considered reliable or accurate researchers about our communities, is an act of resistance. Exposing implicit forms of violence and organizing to target them, is resistance. This paper is meant to not just uplift us as Muslim organizers, but to show Muslims that they are experts in their "Muslimness" and as such have the ability to take control of the narrative. Anti-Muslim racism is not unbeatable, and Muslims are no longer interested in being afraid.

Author Note

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