

**ANTI-RACISM & DECOLONIZATION NETWORK (ARDN)  
2006-2007 SPEAKER & FILM SERIES**

**SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>: REFLECTIONS  
ON RACE & RIGHTS FIVE YEARS ON**

**EDITED BY  
MALINDA S. SMITH AND RITA DHAMOON**

## **About the Anti-Racism and Decolonization Network**

The Anti-Racism and Decolonization Network (ARDN) aims to bring together people of colour and Indigenous people to share knowledge about the struggle against racism and processes of decolonization. The ARDN brings together undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and faculty from within the University of Alberta, and across the broader 'Campus Alberta'. As a Network, we aim to be attentive to the differences between and amongst various people of colour and Indigenous people. ARDN's primary mandate is to carve out spaces for people of colour and indigenous peoples who are committed to anti-racism, to human rights and equity, as well as generating ideas, policies and programs that will help ameliorate racism and decolonization in our everyday lives, communities, workspaces, and practices. The Network was set up in October 2005, and currently consists of Indigenous peoples and people of colour, as well as allies from various departments and faculties at the University and from across Campus Alberta. It is a growing Network, and it is anticipated that this growth will continue over time.

In its short history, the Network has embarked upon a number of initiatives. This panel discussion is part of an ongoing Brown Bag Lunch Series that include speakers and film discussions. This is central to the ARDN's goal of critical antiracism education through a speaker series, film discussion, workshops, and reading groups. The second initiative of the Network is a proposal to the University for a Higher Education Mentoring Program for People of Colour and Indigenous peoples. Academic and research mentoring have been identified as key to the scholarly success of people of colour and indigenous peoples, as well as other under-represented constituencies in the academy. Other ARDN long-term aims include a summer anti-racism school program open to people from other institutions; networking and alliance-building with members of the University of Alberta, the wider community, and across Alberta and Canada. As a Network based in one of Canada's premier academic institutions, the ARDN also aims to engage in the production and dissemination of knowledge.

This booklet, produced after our Monday, 11 September 2006 panel on *September 11: Reflections on Race & Rights Five Years On* is one manifestation of the overlapping goals of critical anti-racism education and knowledge production and dissemination.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

The Anti-Racism and Decolonization Network is co-coordinated by Dr. Rita Dhamoon and Dr. Malinda S. Smith.

Dr. Rita Dhamoon  
Grant Notley Postdoctoral Fellow  
Department of Political Science  
10-16 H.M. Tory Building  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2H4  
Email: [rdhamoon@ualberta.ca](mailto:rdhamoon@ualberta.ca)  
Telephone: 780.492.0322

Dr. Malinda S. Smith  
Associate Professor, Political Science  
University of Alberta  
10-16 H.M. Tory Building  
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2H4  
Email: [Malinda.smith@ualberta.ca](mailto:Malinda.smith@ualberta.ca)  
Telephone: 780.492.5380

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## Why We Reflect On Race & Rights Five Years after 9/11, 2001

**Malinda S. Smith and Rita Dhamoon**  
*Co-Coordinators, ARDN, 18 October 2006.*

The panel discussion was organized in commemoration of two historic events; the fifth anniversary of the United Nations World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances (UN WCAR), that was held in South Africa, August-September 2001; and the events that have come to symbolize September 11<sup>th</sup> (or 9/11), the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, in the United States. Five years after both of these events, we thought it was important to bring together critical scholars and activists to reflect upon race and rights, and how they have been shaped both by Durban and 9/11, and the responses (or lack thereof) to them.

We organized the panel as part of the critical anti-racism education work undertaken by the Anti-Racism and Decolonization Network (ARDN). We believe that the convening of such panels build on the important commitment by members of the Network to provide regular forums for discussion about deeply contested concepts such as, race, racialization, racism and decolonization, as well as the struggle to ameliorate all forms of racial discrimination and xenophobia. Our Network members believe that public education and facilitating constructive dialogues are important tasks for public intellectuals with a commitment to further anti-racism and decolonization work. One aspect of this critical anti-racism education is our brown bag lunch series of speakers and films.

We thought it was important, and symbolic, that our first panel of the 2006-2007 academic year be a discussion on '*September 11<sup>th</sup>: Reflections on Race and Rights Five Years On*'. We wanted the meeting to be open to ARDN members, the wider academic community, and the broader public. The panel discussion was held on Monday, 11 September at the University of Alberta. It was attended by over 100 people. It was notable that this panel turned out to be the only event organized on the University campus to commemorate either the fifth anniversary of the Durban conference or 9/11.

## **Historical Memory, September 11 and the Antiracism Struggle**

Dr. Malinda S. Smith

*Associate Professor, Political Science*

Three days after the United Nations World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances (WCAR) concluded in Durban, South Africa on 8 September, 19 young men crashed two planes into the towers of the World Trade Centre, and another into the Pentagon. For those of us who attended the WCAR, and who watched the events unfold from afar, the two events are inextricably linked. The important antiracist issues that were addressed at Durban, by the three interconnected conferences – youth (26 August), nongovernmental organization forum (27-29 August), and the intergovernmental (2-8 September) – were thrown into stark relief by the events of 9/11.

Both before and during the WCAR, the media focused almost exclusively on issues relating to Israeli-Palestinian and broader Middle East conflicts, including the decision by the United States and Israel to walkout of the conference. Left unmentioned was the fact that the U.S. and Israel chose not to participate in the previous two antiracism conferences held in Geneva in 1978 and 1983. While the media constructed the Middle East as the most important issue at Durban, this construction overshadowed historic achievements secured at Durban. It was the first UN antiracism conference held in the global South, and it was the largest, attended by some 18,000 people. It heard the subaltern voices of the Sidis, Romas, Dalits, and world indigenous peoples; it debated colonialism, slavery and apartheid as crimes against humanity; as well as drew attention to the discrimination and xenophobia faced by migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and refugees. Among Durban's most notable events was the daily testimonials heard in the Voices Special Forum, in which victims of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia told their stories and, perhaps most empowering, in their own words and for themselves. Where the media tried to polarize and over-simplify the issues, Durban focused on the complexities, and the intersectionalities, for instance, between discrimination based on race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and income inequality. Despite these achievements, and perhaps not surprisingly, Durban also reflected the objectionable, and the antiracism and social justice work that has yet to be done.

Durban was the third world antiracism conference, following the two previous ones held in Geneva in 1978 and 1983. It tried to mobilize the political will within much of the international community to create standards of accountability and benchmarks against which we could assess progress in the promotion of antiracism. Between 1973 and 2003, the United Nations designated three decades to combat racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia. The first decade (1973-83) prioritized UN instruments and the need for a global education campaign. The second decade (1983-93) prioritized national legislation, including the creation of national human rights commissions, and remedies, redress and compensatory measures for victims of racial discrimination. The third decade (1993-2003) again highlighted the centrality of antiracism education as essential to the adoption, promotion and protection of human rights, as well as civil society innovations, such as initiatives to promote human rights cities.

The militaristic and repressive state practices that have flowed from the events of 9/11 draw attention to the social justice challenges that lie ahead. The shock and awe of buildings turned into rubble, and the trauma of witnessing lives lost in real-time all draw attention to the impact of conflict on civilian populations. For some, it also recalls to mind earlier simultaneous attacks on the U.S. embassies in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya in August 1998. Hundreds of ordinary Kenyans and Tanzanians died and were injured in those attacks, which notably go un-remembered by the international community. It also recalls to mind the ‘other’ 9/11s, including 33-years ago in Chile, when the U.S.-supported a *coup d’état* by General Augusto Pinochet against the democratically-elected government of Salvador Allende. The coup led to a 17-year dictatorship in which thousands of Chileans were killed, disappeared and brutally tortured. Some 33 later, rendition and torture have become normalized and in/excusable aspects of U.S. foreign policies, from Abu Ghraib to Guantánamo Bay.

The September 11 that perhaps offers the starkest relief against 2001 occurred 100 years ago, in Johannesburg, South Africa. Mohandas Gandhi arrived in South Africa from India to work as a lawyer. One day, after purchasing a first-class train ticket, he found himself thrown off the train for sitting in a whites-only compartment. The result, he later said, was a long night of cold and humiliation, but also one of “the most creative nights” of his life. It spawned a struggle to combat the brutality of white racism in apartheid South Africa and the prejudice with which the tens of thousands of Indians, and millions of Blacks lived. It gave birth to various institutions

of civil society – the Natal Indian Congress to fight for social justice; newspapers such as the *Indian Opinion*, to create public awareness; and legal petitions for more just laws.

On 22 August, 1906 the Transvaal government in South Africa issued a notice for a new British Empire legislation, the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance, that would require all Indians, Arabs and Turks to be registered; that all persons over 8-years old be fingerprinted and stamped with an identity mark; and that all persons from these communities, racially profiled as ‘exceptional’ in the context of white dominance, obtain and carry an identity card. Further, the new law permitted the police to enter, at its discretion, the homes of any Indian, Arab or Turk, and to treat as suspicious persons without identity cards, who could then be fined, imprisoned or deported. On 11 September 1906, some 3,000 mostly Indians and South Asians led a non-violent demonstration at the Johannesburg Empire Theatre. Gandhi argued that the law was degrading and reflected a “hatred of Indians”, and he drafted a resolution that encouraged non-compliance with the unjust law. What was born in South Africa that 9/11 was Satyagraha, what Gandhi called, “the force which is born of truth and love or nonviolence”.

Durban had tried to hear the subaltern voices in the midst of the cacophony of imperial noise. It had tried to breakdown the postwar manichean logic of insiders and outsiders. Within days of September 11, 2001 the imperial response gave rise to intensified xenophobia and new forms of racism, and physical and psychic violence barely imaginable at Durban. Unlike September 11, 1906, September 11, 2001 unleashed a politics of security that is used to legitimize racial profiling, acts of torture, renditions and globalized disappearances, and imprisonment in secret prisons without trial. 9/11, 2001 carved a political geography of the west against the off-coloured rest. It elided religion and culture. It re-legitimized the old imperial and colonial racial hierarchies and witnessed the return of dividing practices in which whole groups of people are marked as ‘the exception’, based on the colour line, ‘race’, creed, national origin and even un/familiar names. If 9/11 in 1906 gave rise to Satyagraha and the call for a politics of love and non-violence, 9/11 in 2001 gave rise to the politics of blame, fear and a western chauvinism which now questions its own liberal multicultural sensibilities. After three decades of efforts to entrench a global culture of peace and human rights, we are faced with a world – from France, to Canada, the U.S. and Britain – in which it is claimed that western civilization requires the erasure of cultural difference. 9/11, then and now; what difference 100 years can make.

## Why a Panel on Race & Rights is Significant on 9/11

**Dr. Rita Dhamoon**

*Grant Notley Memorial Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Alberta*

The panel was significant for a number of reasons. First, for many, it marks the five year anniversary of jetliners hitting the world trade centre in New York and the Pentagon outside Washington, where nearly 3000 people were killed. Since these events, the context of the ‘war on terrorism’ has impacted racialized relations and discourses, as well as the rights of various groups, specifically Muslims and Arabs. The panel was an opportunity to reflect on questions of race and rights since these events. Second, 9/11 marked a newer version of U.S. imperialism, in which the U.S. government invoked the discourse of ‘them’ and ‘us’ and entered a crusade against those marked as ‘evil doers’. This was done without addressing the racialized grievances of dignity, economic disparity, border disputes and power alignment. The panelists were asked to comment on the global, national, local context and impact of the project of imperialism. Third, the panel raised issues about the construction and significance of 9/11 as a date that has come to be seen primarily in terms of the events in the U.S. While the events in New York and Washington are personally and globally tragic and significant, these have overshadowed other reasons why 9/11 is a significant date. In particular, 9/11 commemorates various resistance movements against occupation, racism, and imperialism around the world. For instance, this year, September 11 marks the eleventh anniversary of the Gustafsen Lake Siege of 1995, when Indigenous people from the Secwepemc (Shuswap) and other nations defended their unceded rights at Ts’Peten, near Kamloops, British Columbia.<sup>1</sup> 9/11 commemorates this event and the resistance of Indigenous people to the continued colonial action of the Canadian state. In co-organizing this panel, I thought it was important for

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<sup>1</sup> The occupation at Ts’Peten followed a long history of attempts to gain recognition of Shuswap [sovereignty](#) and Indigenous rights to [unceded lands](#) in [British Columbia](#). After failed negotiations, the [Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#) launched one of the largest police operations in Canadian history, where by the end of the 31-day standoff, over 77,000 rounds of ammunition had been fired by the police. Fourteen Indigenous and four non-Indigenous people were charged following the siege, fifteen of whom were found guilty and sentenced to jail terms ranging from six months to eight years. Three of the defendants appealed the verdicts on the grounds that the Canadian courts have no jurisdiction over the lands where the Gustafsen Lake standoff took place, which they claimed remain unceded Indigenous land. The [Supreme Court of British Columbia](#) refused to hear the appeal. These details were found at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustafsen\\_Lake\\_Standoff](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustafsen_Lake_Standoff).

panelists to reflect on what 9/11 has meant to them, as intellectuals, as activists, and as members of specific communities.

## **Race & Rights Five Years after September 11**

**Dr. Yasmeen Abu-Laban**

Associate Professor, Political Science

*Panel Moderator*

In marking the fifth anniversary of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the Anti-Racism and Decolonization Network at the University of Alberta invited academics and community leaders to reflect squarely on issues relating to rights and processes of racialization. Such a focus stands in distinction to the tendency, evident in much media and academic discussion since September 11, to valorize ‘security’ above all else. Yet, the military dimension of the U.S.-led ‘war on terrorism’, most graphically evident in Afghanistan and in Iraq, has brought with it the question of whether international human rights norms ought to be sacrificed in the name of security. Since September 11 there have also been domestic policy reverberations that beg the question of whether liberal democratic norms of fair and equal treatment ought to be sacrificed in the name of security. For example, in the U.S. and in Canada, a host of new measures and policies have been introduced: anti-terrorist legislation targeting both citizens and non-citizens; revamped measures governing immigration and refugee policies, as well as the extension of visas; new practices regarding travel, especially by air; and not least examples of profiling — that is that state immigration and security officials specifically target those that are (or are perceived to be) Muslim and/or Arab.

In shifting to focus on rights and processes of racialization, the papers presented in this collection make it clear that a full understanding of the aftermath of September 11 must be seen in human terms. Whether in understanding the legacy of colonialism in the Middle East (Saleem Qureshi), the challenges of providing foreign aid to the Middle East since September 11 (Vanessa Ali), the pain of racism experienced by many Canadians since September 11 (Charlene Hay and Ernest Khalema) or the complex and hybrid identities that characterize many Muslim-Canadians (Evelyn Hamdon) these interventions above all remind us of our shared history and our shared humanity.

## Speakers, Topics and Bios

Dr. Saleem Qureshi.  
“The Sins of Grandfathers, the Burdens of Grandsons: 9/11 in an Historical Context”.

Vanessa Ali.  
“Funding & Development Post 9/11”.

Evelyn Hamdon.  
“False Dichotomies: On Being a Canadian Muslim Post-9/11”.

Ernest Khalema & Charlene Hay.  
“The Simmering Pot Boils Over”.

### **Dr. Saleem Qureshi**

Dr. Qureshi is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta. He is an expert in Islamic fundamentalism and contemporary Islamic movements, Middle Eastern and South Asian politics. His research interests speak to issues related to the panel, notably his interest in Islamic political culture and Islamic politics in South Asia.

### **Vanessa Ali**

Ms Ali is responsible for the operations of Humanserve International including: project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. She has been with the society since its inception in 1993 as a member of the board for the regional office of Medical Aid for Palestine - Canada (MAP), an NGO based in Montreal. From 1996 to 1999, Vanessa held the position of Vice-President and from 1999 the position of President. Her duties include developing projects, applying for provincial and federal grants, fundraising, monitoring and evaluation overseas, public engagement events and the production of Humanserve's communications and web site. Vanessa works as a graphic artist and web site designer and previously worked for over ten years as an Architectural Technologist. She operates her home-based business, Ali Cat Graphics and is a consultant to Mallennium WebVentures Ltd.

### **Eve Hamdon**

Ms Hamdon is a graduate student in the faculty of Education, whose professional work engages issues related to equity and diversity. She is also an activist with the Arab/Jewish Women's Peace Coalition and the Muslim & Jewish Dialogue Project with the Edmonton Police Service, as well as the Canadian Council of Muslim Women.

### **Charlene Hay**

Ms Hay is a former teacher who has lived and worked in other cultures, studied intercultural education, and is now the executive director of the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations. She is the author of a teachers' resource booklet and has been involved in several research projects. Currently, she is coordinating work with Education districts in the Edmonton area on ways to deal with racism in schools.

### **Ernest Khalema**

N. Ernest Khalema is a PhD Candidate, sessional instructor of sociology at the U. of Alberta and Grant MacEwan College, and a research assistant at the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research within the School of Public Health. He has worked as a research coordinator and community activist for a number of non-profit and community organizations including NAARR, EISA, Catholic Social Services, and Mennonite Center for Newcomers. His research and publication engage critical multiculturalism, social epidemiology, race theorizing, globalism, and Africana (Diaspora) studies. He is a human rights advocate, and an engaged activist and critical scholar.

## The Sins of Grandfathers: The Burdens of Grandsons: 9/11 in An Historical Perspective

Saleem Qureshi  
*Professor Emeritus, Political Science, University of Alberta*

It is human nature to perceive oneself as a victim of an outrage, not its perpetrator. Naturally Americans saw themselves, and their leaders told them that they were the innocent victims of a calculated outrage. Also, naturally, Americans did not see any connection between their victim-hood and the actions of their governments that may have contributed to this victim-hood. To them, 9/11 was a bolt out of the blue; it was totally unprovoked. But, was it entirely unprovoked? When does provoking happen? Is it when the provoker feels s/he has provoked or is it when the provoked feels s/he has been provoked?

Ever since World War II, the United States (U.S.) has played a major and dominant role in the world. But it is nowhere more so than in the Middle East where the U.S. has been the main imperial and colonial power and the main protagonist on behalf of a colonial outpost. The U.S. has been the main standard bearer and the backer of western policies and European imperialists. And even when America was not directly involved, it historically identified with the western imperialists.

It is worth considering that long before General Allenby reached Jerusalem in 1918, when the Ottoman Empire had been defeated, the United Kingdom (U.K.) and France had already decided between themselves to detach the Arab parts of the Ottoman Empire and make them into colonies. According to the Anglo-French accord, the Sykes-Picot Pact of 1916, the Arab lands were to be broken up. This accord was contrary to the understanding given to the Arabs through Sharif Husain, whose correspondence with Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Cairo, provides us with clues. The U.K. was to get the areas that are now Iraq, Jordan and Israel/Palestine. France was to get Syria, which it would go on to split between Syria and Lebanon. In addition, the U.K. made an agreement with Jews that London would work toward establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine, as the Balfour Declaration of 1917

clearly stated. In the Declaration, the Arabs who constituted more than 90% of the population are not even mentioned by name. They are mentioned only as the 'non-Jewish population'. Soon thereafter, in 1922, London decided that the Palestinians would have no right to express themselves on how their land was to be disposed of. No wonder the western talk of democracy sounds as utter hypocrisy to Arab ears. If confirmation is needed, just look to the election of the Hamas party in Palestine in 2005 and the western world's reaction to it.

It is also significant though not normally mentioned that three defeated empires, German, Austrian and Ottoman, all had European possessions. Two others, namely German and Ottoman, also had non-European possessions. The European possessions of all three defeated empires that were detached were given immediately independence, but not so the non-European possessions. We have already seen how the Arab/Muslim Middle East was parceled out between Britain and France. The German East Africa was made the British colony and South West Africa was given to the Union of South Africa – an apartheid state. This arrangement confirms that the Europeans were treated on par with the white victors, but not the Asians and Africans.

The history of relationships between the Arabs and the western countries is a long one, characterized by western deception, domination, degradation and exploitation. The U.S., though a late-comer to this area, has stepped into the western shoes. Since the essence of this relationship is colonial domination in which the interests of the colonizer predominate and they are maintained not by consent but by coercion, resistance to this domination is natural if the dominated have any spark of self-respect and the universal human desire for freedom. The colonizers call this resistance *terrorism*, which implies that the colonized must remain submissive and passive and wait for the colonial master to throw some crumbs which must be accepted gratefully. Since now all resistance is called terrorism, because violence is the unavoidable component of resistances, this resistance will go on as long as domination and humiliation persists. Merely calling this resistance 'evil' will not bring it to an end, thus we are witnessing a segment of an indefinite war.

The Arabs were not the only recipients of the western imperial attention. Iran was the plaything

between imperial Britain and imperial Russia. Over the past two centuries no Iranian Shah went to his coronation without being accompanied by the British ambassador. Iranians saw their country divided into 'spheres of interest' between Russia and Britain. In 1951 the Iranians elected the National Front, a secular political party. Its leader Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh had campaigned on a program of reclaiming Iranian assets for the Iranian people and, as Prime Minister; he proceeded to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian oil company whose terms were designed by the British to essentially benefit the shareholders of the company. The British were not amused and maneuvered to impede the working of the oil company in Iranian hands. Dr. Mossadegh looked to and sought the help of America, taking American assertions of 'champion's of freedom' literally. Alas, the Americans were not what Mossadegh had thought and hoped. The British had decided to destabilize Iran and the Americans became partners in it. The Shah of Iran was pro-American, while Dr. Mossadegh was a nationalist. Their differences over the issue of the nationalization of the oil company led the Shah to dismiss Mossadegh who refused to go because he had the support of the majority of the Majles. The Shah's position became untenable and, subsequently, he fled the country. In this situation where Iran could have become a secular republic and perhaps the constitution of 1906 might have been fully restored, the American Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) mounted a covert operation – a *coup d'état* in league with the army to overthrow Mossadegh and restore the Shah to his throne. Thereafter the Shah became increasingly autocratic, but subservient to the Americans, relying on the army and Savak, the secret police, restricting individual freedoms, violating human rights and making a mockery of the democratic process. The accumulated Iranian resentment against the Americans for enabling an autocratic ruler to flaunt the aspirations of the people and suppressing their rights resulted in the massive uprising in 1978-79. This uprising brought Ayatullah Ruhollah Khomeini to power and ignited the start of very strong anti-Americanism in Iran.

Israel was established to redeem the Christian Europe's conscience after centuries of persecution of the Jews, culminating in the most barbaric holocaust at the hands of the Nazis. But it was established not at German expense, but at the expense of the Palestinians who had never done any harm to the Jews. Jews, while claiming an ancient and mythical right of return, did not treat themselves as a returning people who had to accommodate themselves to those

who were already there, but as western colonizers, much as the Europeans had treated themselves in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and Africa. They were the new colonizers who sought to empty the land of its residents in order to establish themselves as the new occupiers. Obviously, the Jews did not identify with the local populations; they identified themselves with the imperialists from whose countries they had come and, paradoxically, with those who had historically victimized the Jews as 'Christ Killers'. When Britain and France invaded Egypt in 1956 in response to Egyptian leader Gamal Abdal Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, Israel joined the European imperialists and invaded Egypt. Israel has transformed itself as a western, especially American, outpost in the midst of an 'alien' local population that needed to be kept at bay. Today, the Europeans and Americans always talk of Israel having the right to defend itself, but never of Palestinian rights. They equip Israel with the latest arms and weapons but insist that the resistance must remain unarmed and under the heels of Israel. Israel has been allowed to illegally confiscate Palestinian land and establish Jewish only colonies on Palestinian land, where the roads on the Palestinian land are reserved only for Jews – Palestinians can't go on them. And now, contrary to international law, Israel has built a wall around Palestinian West Bank, thus further confiscating Palestinian land and destroying Palestinian orchards and fields. And then the Americans are shocked and ask 'why do they hate us?'

Colonialism and racism have usually gone together. To dredge up an example from the remote past, look to Charles I, King of England, living in his palace up to the time of his execution in 1649. Contrast it with what the British did to the last Mughal emperor of India, Bahadur Shah, after the British had suppressed the anti-colonial Indian uprising in 1857, Bahadur Shah was banished to Rangoon to end his days in utter misery. Nearer to time, Slobadan Milosevich, the former president of Yugoslavia, who was being tried for war crimes at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, would be seated behind a desk, wearing a tie, and had on a clean crisp shirt. Contrast this with Saddam's trial in Baghdad: no desk, no tie; instead, he is seated inside a cage like a dangerous beast.

Talking of racism one gets the unavoidable impression that whenever an Arab or a Muslim appears on the British Broadcasting Corporation's (B.B.C.) show, Hardtalk, the interviewer

behaves as if he/she is the prosecutor and the interviewee is a criminal in the dock, something that is never seen when a European or an American is being interviewed. In September 2006 Mike Wallace of C.B.S. (Columbia Broadcasting System) interviewed the Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadenejad. Wallace kept goading Ahmadenejad and demanding simplistic responses in the form of 'Yes' or 'No' answers. Would Mike Wallace have the temerity to talk like this to U.S. president George W. Bush or British prime minister Tony Blair? Towards the end of the September 2006 Carrol Off of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (C.B.C.) interviewed Pervez Musharraf, the President of Pakistan, and accused him of not doing enough to stop the Taliban from killing Canadian soldiers, 37 of whom have died up to the end of September. However, she did not say a single word of sympathy for the 500 Pakistani soldiers who have died in the same war. These two are not exceptions because there is a long history of westerners thinking they are the imperial masters of the world; everyone should imitate them and serve them. Remember the late Oriana Fallachi, the Italian journalist, who went to interview Khomeini. She asked him if he liked Mozart. Of course Khomeini did not, but he could have asked Fallachi if she had read the Shahnama of Firdusi?

Blatant racism along with colonialism – as the two invariably go together – can be seen in Israel. Jews want to live on Palestinian land but don't want a Palestinian as neighbour. This is precisely what the white European settlers did to Native Americans, Australians, South Africans; those who did not want to leave came to be called terrorists.

And, since 9/11, colonialism and racism are being sanctified and Bush has declared a war on resisters and freedom fighters as a 'war on terrorism'. War on terror is an indefinite engagement. It is certainly keeping the military-industrial complex in business and western, especially American governments have given themselves the right of preemptive attack against any country they conclude could pose a threat to American interests anywhere in the world. Under the preemptive doctrine of the Bush Administration, the Americans already have destroyed a 7000 year old civilization in Iraq, and now they are angling to destroy another Middle Eastern civilization. The latest Israeli invasion of Lebanon was the dry run for American invasion of Iran.

The American policy of war on terror, and its preoccupation with Islamic radicals has not made the world safe for anybody, particularly for Americans, who now live in a prison of human rights violations constructed by their own governments. Is what Bush calls terrorism the manifestation of, and resistance to, decades-old degradation and humiliation? It will not be defeated by high-tech armies. It will only bankrupt those governments as a flitting shadow mobilizes a whole battalion without being caught. How do you catch a shadow?

The present generation is paying the price of what was done by their government's decades ago and future generations will pay the price of what the current generation is doing. The sins of grandfathers are the burdens of sons.

## **Funding for Aid and Development Post-9/11**

**Vanessa Ali**

*President, Humanserve International*

I am here today to talk about funding for aid and development programs post 9-11. As far as I know, there has been no ‘official’ government policy that mandates that because of what happened in America on that day, programs should be cut and that funding directed at overseas aid programs should now be excessively scrutinized. However, those of us who work in international aid and development have perceived a kind of a chill that emanates from the top of government down to all levels of the international donor agency community. I cannot say that all of the changes are ill-conceived – for example, some of them may be necessary to prevent fraud, carelessness or poor planning on the part of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs). I also will not claim that all of the changes have come about as a direct result of 9/11 – some of them may have been in the works for a long time prior to that date and then 9/11 became the impetus to rush their implementation. I will instead talk about what has happened to funding for foreign aid since 9/11 and the current climate for NGOs working in overseas development.

By and large, the reason that NGOs exist is because their volunteers, staff and elected boards believe in doing whatever we can to give back to the world and to share our good fortune with others. An extremely important side-benefit of this altruism is that humanitarian assistance programs combat the root causes of terrorism – such as poverty, hunger, political uncertainty, and social instability. Investments in aid and development programs help disadvantaged people who live in marginalized communities around the world. By increasing the level of peace, security and stability overseas, we increase our own security here at home. In this way, additional funding for foreign aid has become even more critical in the post-9/11 world.

Many of us working in aid and development have perceived a lessening of support and enthusiasm from politicians and bureaucrats for the existence of small to mid-sized NGOs that work overseas. This is happening at a time when I believe, more than ever, that it is the small

to mid-sized non-governmental organizations that are often the most effective at getting things done both locally and internationally! A study done by the American-based *Urban Institute* found that 73 percent of NGO organizations were classified as ‘small’ and that only 12 percent had over \$2 million in revenues. These figures indicate that there is a large underbelly of small groups in North America that provide a diverse array of services, including providing aid to underdeveloped nations and communities in crisis overseas. In 2001, 28% of Canadian Overseas Development Aid (ODA – or, in other words, ‘foreign aid’) went to not-for-profit organizations. By 2005, that had been reduced to 12%, while ODA for the for-profit sector has been increased by 12%. This is a disturbing trend given that it is the NGOs who work with the most marginalized and disenfranchised peoples around the world, many of them struggling under the effects of colonialism, colonial legacies and globalization.

In February 2005, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) announced a review and suspension of its NGO Project Facility Fund (NPF) which was created to provide matching grants for overseas aid and development programs that are funded and delivered by small Canadian NGOs. For quite a few months, NGOs were left in the dark about what would be happening – if anything – to replace or improve the funding mechanism. Then, in June 2006, an announcement was made by CIDA that the NPF has been replaced by a new fund called the Voluntary Sector Fund which has a budget of \$20 million per year. Similarly, the Wild Rose Foundation of Alberta has undergone changes in its grant application process and this was to be expected because WR closely aligns itself with CIDA’s guidelines with respect to which projects will be approved, how they should be monitored, etc. The result of this is that there are now even more bureaucratic demands and hoops that we must go through to apply for matching grants here in Canada. Although funding from CIDA has been re-instated, the application process has changed and this results in NGOs having to take the time to get up to speed and familiarize themselves with the new rules, application forms and expectations. Small NGOs, who as a function of their size are mostly powered by volunteers and volunteer boards, tend to get buried under the weight of the mountains of application forms, budgets, cash flow projections, results-based project summary tables, capacity development tables, progress reports, final reports, technical cooperation reports, environmental impact studies, NGO self-assessment profiles, etc.

The expansion of the grant application process here has also caused an increase in the amount of work that we must ask of our overseas partners. For small NGOs such as Humanserve that do not have the resources to maintain a regional office in the developing country, we depend upon our trusted overseas partners to provide the staff and volunteers to deliver the programs in the field. In order for the Canadian-based NGOs to be able to provide data to the provincial and federal funding agencies that will prove the viability of the programs and which provides accountability for every penny spent overseas, we must make demands for lengthy reports from our partners. Of course, the need for reporting and accountability from both the Canadian NGO and the local overseas partner has always existed, and for good reason, but as I have outlined, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of data that is required since 9/11 – both in applying for grants and then in reporting during and after the delivery of the program.

Sadly, according to the *Global Policy Forum* report of August 2005, when measured as a proportion of gross national income (GNI), aid lags far behind the 0.7 percent target the United Nations set 35 years ago. The report also states that since 9/11, the idea of using development assistance as a foreign policy tool has gained more ground. In February 2002, the US Senate resolved that “United States foreign assistance programs should play an increased role in the global fight against terrorism to complement the national security objectives of the United States”. Similarly, a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) commission report from January 2004 called for greater ‘selectivity’ in U.S. foreign aid based on ‘relevance to U.S. national security’ and ‘greater aid effectiveness’. Some donors, most notably the United States, have succeeded in boosting significantly their foreign aid. However, the bulk of the new money has not gone to fighting poverty in Africa, the world’s poorest region, but to advance U.S. strategic goals in the ‘war on terror’ in Iraq, Afghanistan and a handful of other countries. Furthermore, much of the development assistance remains inefficient. Donors often accuse recipients of wasting aid funds, but part of the reason why aid does not work well lies in donor governments’ own policies. Tied aid, overpriced technical assistance, counting debt relief as development aid and including immigration-related costs in aid figures may serve donors’ interests but they do not contribute to eradicating poverty. As an ActionAid report recently put it, “If aid currently has a mixed record in terms of its impact on poverty reduction,

this is due to the fact that tackling poverty is often not what aid is designed to do”.

Tied aid is a particularly inefficient form of development assistance because it does not help poor countries develop their economies. Instead of creating new businesses and jobs in recipient countries, most of the benefits remain in the donor nations. Tied aid is also inefficient because often goods and services would be available at a lower price from local producers or world markets. To make things worse, some countries, like the U.S. and Italy, do not regularly report their figures for tied aid. It has been estimated that 70 to 80 percent of U.S. official development assistance is still tied. In my opinion, just as NGOs must be accountable to grant funding agencies, taxpayers and aid recipients, we must also ensure that aid spending by governments is also accountable and transparent. The *Make Poverty History* campaign reports on their website, “too much of Canada’s aid is currently not related to fighting poverty. Forty percent is tied to purchases of Canadian goods and services and 50% of food aid is tied. Such ties undermine the democratic processes of recipient countries, which is vital to the long term success of aid programs”.

Some good news that can be reported post 9/11 is that NGOs and humanitarian aid groups are taking the initiative to demand that our governments address the problems inherent in the way aid is currently approved and delivered. In April 2006, Dr. Mohammad Akhter, president and CEO of InterAction, the largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian NGOs, stated “InterAction believes it is critically important that charity organizations work together – and with government – to understand the successes and failures of recent efforts, discern which areas require additional attention, and establish clear guidelines ensuring transparency and expedited allocation of international care and assistance. Humanitarian development in the Muslim World is in the strategic interests of the United States. American Muslim NGOs are uniquely qualified to play an important role in providing humanitarian assistance and restoring America’s image in the Muslim World”.

In another example, KAIROS, the Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiative sent an open letter in March 2004 to then finance minister Ralph Goodale in which they asked that Canada’s military spending be frozen at its then current level in the next federal budget and that Canada cancel

the debts of poorer countries, enact just trade policies, and increase the effectiveness and quantity of development assistance, in keeping with Canada's international commitments to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Locally, the Alberta Council of Global Cooperation (ACGC) – an umbrella organization for Alberta-based NGOs working in overseas development, spearheaded a Canada-wide campaign aimed at pressuring CIDA to reinstate the funding to the NGO Project Facility that was suspended in February 2005. It is in my opinion that it was due to the work of the ACGC and the dissent voiced by Canadian NGOs that brought a positive result and the creation of the Voluntary Sector Fund to replace the NGO Project Facility. However, although this new funding structure now exists, NGOs have become wary of government granting agencies, the fickleness they show towards NGOs and the arbitrary way they put forward and then withdraw funding.

I have come to the opinion in this post 9/11 era that it may be better for everyone working in overseas aid and development to wean themselves from government funding, or at the very least, NGOs should think about decreasing their dependency on matching grants from governments. Politicians say from that they believe in the importance of providing foreign aid to help countries and communities to pull themselves out of poverty, while at the same time they do nothing to cancel so-called 'third world' debt. Even worse, many western governments interfere in and exacerbate foreign conflicts by supporting one side during times of political crisis and by facilitating the selling of armaments to warring factions which, when used, create the need for even more disaster relief and rebuilding. These realities have created a huge conundrum for those NGOs who accept funding for their projects from the very governments whose foreign policies have created some of the problems of poverty, disaster and gender inequality that the NGO's programs are trying to address.

I would like to leave you with a personal example of the catch-22 that I believe many NGOs are facing. I spent the past summer in Lebanon and while I was there, I was monitoring and evaluating Humanserve's current project which is to lay a network of pipes to bring fresh potable water from a well that we dug last year to each individual house in Sikkeh refugee

camp in Sidon, a coastal city south of Beirut. When the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon was well underway and they starting running out of bombs towards the third week of July, the United States government rushed a huge shipment of missiles to Israel to restock their supply. At the same time, they announced that a humanitarian crisis was developing in Lebanon and they were going to send a shipment of essential food supplies in order to ameliorate the situation. For me, this was the first time that I was a potential 'beneficiary' of foreign aid in the middle of a war and the irony for me was so strong: that on the one hand, the U.S. was building and delivering the missiles that were going to be used to bomb the hell out of Lebanon and at the same time, they were sending food to the victims of the bombardment!

For myself, as well as for every Lebanese national who survived the attack last summer, I can tell you that we could not believe how insane this was and we wished that the U.S. would make up its mind. If you hate us enough that you are sending bombs to kill us, why on earth are you sending food to keep us alive? But if you love us enough that you want to assist us during a time of disaster, then why are you rushing more bombs over to kill us?? In a post 9/11 world where so many false dichotomies have been reinforced and many new ones have arisen out of the smoke and ashes of that day, western NGOs who work in overseas aid and development and who use government funding to deliver their programs must wrestle with these kind of moral dilemmas and be ready to answer the tough questions of their donors, overseas partners and beneficiary communities.

## False Dichotomies: Muslim Vs. The West – On Being a Canadian Muslim Post-9/11

**Evelyn Hamdon**

*Canadian Council of Muslim Women*

Since September 11, 2001, Muslims in North America, as elsewhere in the world, find themselves caught in the cross hairs of various weapons – both literal and figurative - trained upon the ‘global terrorist threat’. The weapons, designed to keep ‘you’ safe from ‘us’ include, but are not limited to: the kidnapping and detention of alleged ‘terrorist suspects’ in secret detention centers – done with no legal charges being laid and no access to legal council. They include domestic anti-terrorist laws that allow for alleged Canadian terrorists to be held without charge. As well, they entail the generation of new language and discourses used by academics, politicians and media, which have helped to establish, in the ‘Western’ mind, the ‘essentially’ hostile nature of the Muslim psyche (shaped by Islamic ‘fascism’). In addition, there are the military weapons, bombs and guns, with which to more directly address so-called ‘Islamic Jihadists’ in Iraq, Afghanistan, and by proxy in Lebanon and Palestine. New forms of racial profiling have emerged, in contexts ranging from airport and border security to the monitoring of communications such as telephone calls and email. And, there is the invoking of the ancient Occident/Orient binary and refining it into a western/Muslim binary.

That these acts continue unabated and with increasing fervor and public support is, at least in part, due to the conceptualization that *all Muslims* pose a potential threat to both western civilization as a whole and to the life and limb of individual western citizens. This threat exists, according to some/many in the west, due to Muslims adherence to a faith that is seen as inherently hostile to ‘western’ values including the value of human life. This social construction of difference, essentializes both Muslims and non-Muslim and situates us as inevitably fitting into ‘us’ and ‘them’ camps, or in George W. Bush’s words, as either ‘good’ or ‘evil’.

### *False Dichotomies*

This ‘western’/‘eastern’ or Western/Muslim dichotomy is, I believe false, just as I believe all such constructs are whether they are gendered, raced or based on sexual orientation. Such dichotomies are premised on the notion that identity is fixed, and that identity categories exist outside of individual lived realities which are, in fact, complex and contextual. This relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ also carries with it the implication that ‘we’ are superior to ‘them’. Those who subscribe to such a worldview feel comfortable applying a predictable set of values and behaviors which derive from, in this particular instance, being Muslim or being ‘western’.

According to the late Palestinian intellectual Edward Said, the *occident*, or the west, stands in for civilization and reason while the *orient* or in this particular case the Muslim world is associated with barbarism and a lack of capacity for higher forms of reasoning and morality. It is my belief that when our actions are premised on this view of the world it forecloses, for all of us, any way out of a violent cycle of hatred and enmity. Increasingly, this view is not a fringe point of view, but seems to be the basis upon which both foreign and domestic policies are developed and, even more sadly, the basis for individual (in both the east and the west) conceptualization of ‘the Other.’ This worldview normalizes, and makes appear reasonable acts which would, in other times, have been recognized and appropriately labeled as racist, bigoted and discriminatory.

### *Implications for Canadian Muslims*

As a contemporary Canadian Muslim this dichotomy presents an existential dilemma for it suggests that, to quote Nulifer Gole, if one is “...modern you cannot be Muslim and if you are Muslim you cannot, by this view of the world be modern”. If society tells me I cannot be both, and if I refuse to be reduced to a one-dimensional human being, then where does it leave me and other Muslims like me, both within and outside of the west? For one thing, it leaves us vulnerable to the policies that are so blunt edged (and, I might add intentionally so) that they

cannot discern between those who intend violence and harm and those who could just as easily be the victims of terrorist violence. This dichotomy breeds fear and deepens our respective feelings of alienation through individual and structural practices that feed on it. In the last short while the following disturbing incidents attest to this:

- Fox News and later the popular program, The McLaughlin Group gave discussion time to the notion of a Muslim-only line up at airport security. This discussion was not necessarily to critique it on ethical or civil rights grounds, but to endorse its efficacy.
- Passengers on a flight returning from Spain to Britain refused to fly with two ‘suspicious’ looking young men. The men were deemed suspicious because they were wearing jackets and ‘appeared’ to be speaking Arabic. The police were called, the young men were taken off, the plane was searched and then the flight continued – without the young men. They were, of course innocent.
- In the month of August 2006, a doctor returning from a conference in the U.S. was asked to disembark from a plane after fellow passengers said that he made them nervous. What made them nervous? Dr. Ahmad Farooq was reciting his evening prayers and this was interpreted by one passenger as activity that was ‘suspicious’.
- A British Pilot living and flying out of the U.S. for a commercial airline was asked to leave the plane because American authorities deemed him to be a risk. The pilot (Amar Ashraf) commented: “I felt very demoralized when I had to get off. I must have met the profile on the day. I have an Arabic name, I am a Muslim, I’m from Britain and I know how to fly”.

For those of us who have not felt the direct sting of this conceptualization of who is ‘us’ and who is ‘them’, I believe we can no longer delude ourselves that we are immune. I have come to the disturbing conclusion that I am not protected by my citizenship, by my ‘modernity’ (whatever that means), by the fact that I am a second generation Canadian (whatever that means), by the fact that I always have and will continue to work against war and violence, and have not and do not condone or support it in any context – that in spite of all of this I know that the persistent and pernicious dichotomy that marks me as ‘them’ also makes me equally vulnerable to its effects. History is replete with examples of people, great people – not ordinary people – whose greatness could not save them. I am reminded of the injustice heaped upon the

great Paul Robeson, despite the fact that he was beloved by many in and outside of the United States. But that could not save him from racism and injustice.

As a Muslim who subscribes to theories of identity that favour hybridity, a poststructural complexity and contestedness, I have long given up trying to determine my essential self – as a Muslim, as a woman, as a Canadian, and so on. My identity, which includes being a Muslim – in all of that messy complexity – is an ongoing work in progress, and the result of reflexive and reflective practices in the context of my lived reality. On the basis of this worldview, I believe the way forward is to leave behind dichotomous understandings of one another, and to resist essentializing. I believe the way forward requires us to reject the essentializing view that we are, by nature, so different that we cannot cohabit on this planet. It is important to resist the claim that among ‘them’, there is ‘no one to talk to’; that ‘them/we Muslims’ are so barbaric, so alien, that we are out of touch with ‘your’ values such that the only way to engage with us is by monitoring our every move, imprisoning us, or killing us.

If we (Muslims, Christians, Jews, Athiests, Hindus etc.) cannot shed our primitive and simplistic dichotomies then I think we *all* lose. I think if we disengage from essentialism and open up space for the messiness of identity – a space for possibility rather than eternal certainty – that this will usher in a true age of global civilization. I also think that unless and until we all stop categorizing the peoples of the world according to our own limited understanding of ‘Others’, that we are doomed to continue to create an (evil) enemy as the counterpoint to our goodness.

I invite you to consider how your worldview structures our relationships with one another and whether it leaves us room to engage in our shared humanity or whether it dooms us to be forever enemies.

## **The Simmering Pot Boils Over**

**Nene Ernest Khalema**

*PhD (Candidate), Department of Sociology & School of Public Health*  
and

**Charlene Hay**

*Executive Director, Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations*

**Nene Ernest Khalema**

Thank you all for being here and I commend the organizers for inviting me to be part of this distinguished panel. I will try to use my time effectively. I would like to take half a minute of my time to take a moment in silence to remember the innocent victims of 9/11 in 2001. As most of us know, there has been a great deal of pain and suffering in the world before 9/11 in 2001. I remember one of the first 9/11s in my country of birth, South Africa, in which a stalwart of anti-oppression and colonialism stood side by-side with his African brothers and sisters to challenge apartheid and colonialism. Mahatma Gandhi's first public protest occurred on September 11, 1906, in Johannesburg, South Africa, and it may be appropriate for us to remember this benchmark event, especially since much of what Gandhi was protesting has striking parallels in contemporary U.S. society today. We are meant to believe that the world stood still after 9/11 in 2001, but for most of the oppressed, humiliated, and dehumanized citizens of the world, there have been a number of 9/11s, in which the world stood still and, in some cases, is still standing still as the ugly head of imperialism and colonialism persists, and is resurgent.

I want to present the findings of a community-based project that I was involved in as the principal investigator together with my colleagues Dr. Jenny Wannas and Ms Charlene Hay. The project was conducted in Edmonton between December 2001 and April 2002. The main objective of this project was to mobilize the Edmonton religious and ethnic communities to identify issues, concerns, and experiences and to work together to build a more understanding anti-racist environment as a result of September 11. At that time, there were a plethora of

reports in the media that suggested a potentially volatile situation, one in which fellow Canadians were targeted solely because of their religion. We felt that it was imperative that a community organization such as the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR) take a proactive role in challenging the backlash post 9/11.

The project aimed to raise the public's awareness about the growing 'anti-' – Muslim, Arab, African, Asian bias – directly stemming from the September 11 events and, specifically, how the events and the backlash impacted these communities. Though the project identified the state of race relations within the context of a particular time period (after September 11), it was not limited to experiences in that time period. The project also examined the way communities were dealing with racism post-September 11. The research methodology adopted in this project was a participatory action research (PAR) approach that allowed people to draw on their own experiences to achieve tangible and applicable outcomes. PAR allows for review, discussion, modification, approval, initiation, and utilization of research activities by community members in ways that specifically will benefit their community (Van Manen, 1997). Thus, the goals of the project were to engage in action that challenges racism and bias, empowers those affected, and ultimately transforms their lives and those around them.

Eighteen community meetings took place, involving approximately 100 participants. A diverse cross-section of Edmonton's ethnocultural and religious communities participated in this research, including community leaders, immigrant counselors, religious leaders, and ordinary people. Our research and conversations with the participants made it clear to us that racism was, and continues to be, a problem in society independent of the specific events of September 11. This racism intensified and became more overt after 9/11.

Various participants acknowledged some form of bias against people of certain cultural and racialized minority groups, especially Arab-Canadians, African-Canadians, and South Asians, and against religious minorities, particularly Muslim women, and Sikhs. The participants also indicated that this bias became more overt after September 11. A theme emerged in our conversations with the participants that the events of September 11 embolden certain people to commit discriminatory acts. Thus, the terrorist attacks brought submerged biases and racist

tendencies to the surface, and that the tolerance Canadians pride themselves on was shown to be ephemeral. We heard stories of resilience, pain, and resistance. Almost all the people we talked to expressed their horror at the events of September 11, and yet the majority gave a thought provoking critique of the U.S. foreign policy, Canadian multiculturalism, systemic racism, and most importantly, the role of the media in perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing cultural biases.

Questions that came to mind included: Why are Arab-Canadians and/or Muslims being blamed for what happened in East Asia? Most participants also wondered about how they are viewed in Canada, whether they are perceived as 'not Canadian enough'. What is a Canadian? From the conversations with the participants, it was clear that racism towards Arabs, Muslims, and people 'who look Middle Eastern' is widespread. Muslims and those perceived as Muslims struggle against racism before September 11 and these experiences were further exacerbated by the events of September 11. When emotions are so raw and the general population seems inconsolable, the participants wondered what it would take to keep others from developing an unbridled hatred.

The aftermath of September 11 validated what they already knew and had been experiencing in terms of employment discrimination, housing bias, and media misrepresentation. Some participants voiced their opinions about the dishonesty in the immigration process, stating that prior to leaving their countries of origin, they were promised employment commensurate with their educational experience. Once they arrived in Canada, these conditions never materialized. The participants acknowledged that September 11 had some significance in that racism became overt, and people expressed their bigotry openly. According to the majority of the participants, people of colour, including Aboriginal peoples, continue to struggle with racism everyday of their lives.

One point of contention that the participants highlighted was the role of western media. The majority of participants described how media representation is accepted uncritically as truth. Most participants felt there is a double standard in the media. As well, most respondents offered a critique of the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, known for its uncritical support

of the state of Israel, as well as for numerous repressive Arab regimes (e.g. Egypt, Saudi Arabia), and for its inattentiveness to the possibility of dialogue with secular movements and people who have valid grievances against these regimes.

Specifically, most participants critiqued the mainstream media's use of anti-Islam/Arab terminology, negative portrayal of minorities in general, and biases in reporting against Arabs and Muslims in particular. According to the research's participants, the media creates the distorted perception that Islam or Muslims condone and encourage violence. It leads to anxiety among Canadians.

Most of the participants felt that criticizing American foreign policy need not be based on a hatred or envy of the West. Rather, it is based on what they, their families and friends have witnessed and experienced in the Middle East. The media was seen as an accomplice in the misrepresentation of the motivations and actions of people from the Middle East and, in fact, most participants accused the media of sensationalizing pain and suffering throughout the world. Narrative of media disinformation, distortion, one-sidedness, and lack of historical context were seen as problems in media reporting and as damaging to race relations in Canada. The media was seen as steering a pot that has been simmering for a long time. I would say that the pot is still simmering, every time there is a war in East Asia (or Middle East), every time a young Muslim brother or sister is dehumanized on the streets of Edmonton/Toronto or in the class room, a new ingredient based on hate is added to the simmering pot. We must be vigilant and educate ourselves about racism and how it permeates our lives in a variety of ways.

Viewing the world through in the lens of the participants in this study was certainly a learning experience, one that we can each learn from. As we reflect about the causes of, and responses to, 9/11 we must be critical of simple explanations. When U.S. president George W. Bush says that 9/11 was caused by those who 'hate us for our freedoms', we must ask very critical questions. When did the U.S. begin to champion freedom for all? Such nonsensical statements collapse with the slightest historical survey or rational analysis; they negate the structural violence happening in the Middle East as well as in Canada. The fact of a matter is that most people around the world do not hate the West because of an abstract sense of 'freedom'

legislated in western constitutions. To the contrary, Canada-based Muslims live here because they love Canada and the west. They love the fact that they can worship as they choose. Muslims in Canada, as elsewhere, advocate for this freedom in the Middle East, and often it is western policies in the region that serve to undermine the local struggles for democracy and freedom. Thus, the problem is not the pursuit of an abstract freedom or democracy. Part of the problem is the longstanding policies that often are unpublicized and reinforce U.S. global dominance. The participants in the study indicate that western unilateralism and hypocrisy in foreign policy often are unacknowledged aspects of the problem.

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**Charlene Hay**

The Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relation's (NAARR's) research just after 9-11 indicated that racism was prevalent before this date. The only change after 9-11 was that this racism became more open and blatant. Since 2001, a series of events in the world and bias in media reporting have ensured that there has been no improvement in this situation and that racism and racial discrimination are likely to intensify rather than abate. War in Afghanistan, more activities categorized as 'terrorism' around world, war in Iraq, ongoing 'unrest' in Palestine and, most recently, war between Israel and Hezbollah on Lebanon's soil lead to ongoing frenzied news reports. Much of this media coverage feeds uncertainty, fear, and racism toward Arab and Muslim peoples, as well as against those who are perceived to be Arab and/or Muslim..

Seventeen young men, who are Canadians of Arab and/or Muslim descent, were arrested in Ontario on June 2, 2006. The reaction of the Canadian media was to print and broadcast a

plethora of reports, most of which implied that all Arab and Muslim peoples should be under suspicion. Many reports were extremely biased and fed into already existing stereotypes about Arab and Muslim people. The overwhelming impression given by the media – regardless of positions on fairness in reporting and the rule of law’s assumption of innocent until proven guilty – was that all the young men who were arrested were guilty, although all had been arrested, not convicted.

One example was two evenings of coverage on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s (C.B.C.) National News called “The Terror Within” that was aired at least twice. Multiculturalism and immigration policies came under attack, with the implication that the reason these arrests (not convictions) occurred was that Canada allowed people who are Muslim and Arab into Canada in the first place. This perspective was illustrated with interviews of Muslim people in France and England who were accused of ‘segregating’ themselves and of hating the rest of British society. It is possible to envision how fear or distrust of Canadians who happen to be of Muslim or Arab descent would easily have become irrational panic after watching these very biased reports. It is horrific that a publicly funded national television would air such programming, that easily could create or reinforce hatred against an entire ethnocultural group of our population.

For the purposes of comparison, similar kinds of coverage do not occur when a person of European descent is actually convicted of terrorism, as was the case of Timothy McVeigh following his role in the April 19, 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. This terrorist act claimed 168 lives. It was the deadliest terrorist attack on United States soil prior to September 11, 2001. All news coverage was about McVeigh as an individual, not McVeigh as a representative of all white people or even all white males. There was never any commentary that would lead to the suspicion of all men of European descent.

This kind of coverage is **racial profiling**. It is common in Canadian media that if a person from a visible minority group is involved or even suspected of being involved, in something deemed dangerous, that they are depicted as representative of their entire community. Following suspicion of a group of people belonging to a minority community, all members of this group

fall under suspicion. There is no recognition that, in fact, most Arab and Muslim people have no idea what motivates a terrorist; like most Canadians they are people, contributing to all of our society in positive ways.

One damaging consequence of biased reporting is that many Canadians become even less respectful, less tolerant and less trusting of Arab and/or Muslim people and, as our research indicates, feel that they then have permission to openly and blatantly express their prejudices toward any member of this community. Many Canadians of Arab and/or Muslim descent are made to feel less welcomed after every round of anti-Muslim reporting. As our post 9-11 research indicated, after Sept 11, 2001, *the pot boiled over. The pot has not stopped boiling over, and it continues to do so.*

Such bias in news reporting is likely to continue as the United States seems prepared to move toward intensified conflict with Iran. George W. Bush recently has stated that the 'Muslim world' is planning to form one huge 'caliphate' (political united jurisdiction) to unite the forces of 'Islamofascism' from the Middle East to North Africa. In U.S. foreign policy discourse, the 'Muslim world' has been clearly defined as the new evil empire. The media's racially and culturally biased reporting require us to be highly critical of the dominant media coverage, and to work to create a more complex, fair and 'balanced view' of our Arab and Muslim brothers and sisters.

## Anti-Racism Resources

University of Alberta Office of Human Rights: <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/humanrights/>

Aboriginal Canada Portal: <http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/en/index.html/>

Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission: <http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/>

Amnesty International: <http://www.amnesty.ca/>

Anti-Racist Action Canada: <http://edibleballott.tao.ca/>

Anti-Racism Net: <http://www.antiracism.net/>

Artists Against Racism: <http://artistagainstracism.com/remodeling.html>

Canadian Ethnocultural Council: <http://www.ethnocultural.ca/>

Canadian Human Rights Commission: <http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/>

Canadian Race Relations Foundation: <http://www.crr.ca/>

Center for Anti-Oppressive Education: <http://www.antioppressiveeducation.org/>

Committee on Race Relations and Cross Cultural Understanding: <http://www.crrccu.org/>

Crosspoint Anti-Racism Canada: <http://www.magenta.nl/crosspoint/cnd.html/>

Culture Canada: <http://www.culture.ca/>

Diversity Now: <http://www.diversitynow.ca/index.jsp/>

Equality Today: <http://www.equalitytoday.org/>

I Care – Internet Centre Anti-Racism Europe: <http://www.icare.to/>

National Anti-Racism Council: <http://www.narc.freesevers.com/index.html/>

Ontario Black Anti-Racist Research Institute: <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2381/>

Stop the Hate: <http://www.stop-the-hate.org/>

United Nations World Conference against Racism (UN WCAR): <http://www.un.org/WCAR/>

Youth Forums Against Racism: <http://www.unac.org/yfar/splash.htm/>

Youth R.O.A.R. (Reach Out Against Racism): <http://www.youthroar.ca/>