

# ASSIMILATION: HOW POST-9/11 GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES HAVE HINDERED MUSLIMS FROM SOCIOECONOMIC INTEGRATION

TAHSIN MOSTOFA,  
MICHAEL MONESCALCHI (FACULTY ADVISOR)

## ✱ ABSTRACT

The devastating attacks of 9/11 left life-changing impacts on how the world viewed national security. The United States, at its epicenter, formally overhauled its government strategies and approaches in assured attempts to prevent such occurrences ever again. Thus, the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security and the implementation of policies reflected new behaviors towards individuals from certain religious or geographic backgrounds. While successfully eliminating the recurrence of terrorist attacks of such scale, these extreme approaches vociferously affected the United States' Muslim population—many of whom have immigrated in pursuit of the “American Dream”—from integrating into society.

This paper seeks to establish that post-9/11 policies have perpetuated anti-Muslim bias in the minds of the American people, thus impacting the Muslim population's ability to integrate into society, measured by sections of Milton Gordon's assimilation theory. Muslim Americans are vulnerable to unjust constraints or responsibility for the extremist few, all by a governing body established to serve the interests of all its citizens. Studying the extent to which these tactics have affected Muslim Americans highlights limitations of the justice system and reveals calls to action where adequate support should

be given. Publicly isolating people ties a negative connotation to their existence, which can cause wider society to disassociate themselves from isolated individuals.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks launched in the United States on September 11th, 2001 changed the U.S.'s perspective on national security forever. The most significant foreign attack on U.S. soil resulted in the deaths of countless individuals, as well as the destruction of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center economic hub in New York City, triggering a turning point for all Americans in U.S. history. Tighter immigration policies and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security on November 25th, 2002 ensured that the repetition of 9/11 would never happen again. However, investigations carried out within the country with the intent of securing national security have brought upon consequences and constant discrimination within society, as well as the perception of individuals affected. Minority groups—namely Muslims—entering the United States to escape violent conflict or find new opportunity face unjust obstacles in their attempts at integration. This raises the question: How have immigration tactics post-9/11 perpetuated xenophobic bias in society? Have government-launched investigations perpetuated certain perceptions and impaired Muslim-American minorities' ability to socioeconomically integrate and prosper within the United States?

This paper examines the effects of U.S. government practices on the socio-economic integration of Muslim immigrants in the United States using parts of Milton Gordon's assimilation theory, devised into four sections, including: a methodology section discussing the implementation of Gordon's theory; a literature background on the certain government practices being discussed; the implications of such government practices; and a socioeconomic analysis of the September 11th policies on Muslim populations, as well as further counters on political assimilation and research conclusions. Such discriminatory practices have had lingering effects well into the 21st century, with the war on terror only just



officially ceasing on August 30th, 2021—twenty years after its declaration. The implementation of policies introduced during this period allowed the government to carry out unchecked and oppressive behavior, creating an imbalance and vulnerability to an integral community within the U.S.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### THE "ASSIMILATION" FRAMEWORK

To avoid speculation and to properly witness if the level of social and economic integration of Muslims has been impacted by governmental practices, a theoretical framework must be established. Milton Gordon is a famous sociologist who developed the "Classic Assimilation Theory" (1964) after observing the second and third generations of early European Immigrants in the United States. His assimilation theory is also known as the "7 Stages of Assimilation" or the "Melting Pot" theory, which is why he discusses the seven general steps immigrants take before full integration is achieved. Five of the stages are process steps: Acculturation, Structural Assimilation, Intermarriage, Sense of Identity, and finally, Civic/Political Integration. Two of the stages are assumptive, meaning that they involve no prejudice or discrimination. He muses that without these two steps, full assimilation would not be possible, which is why one must assume no prejudice or discrimination is occurring when looking at the other five steps of assimilation. These two steps are often overlooked by those observing the theory, who often criticized Gordon for failing to account for things like discrimination with regard to the assimilation of other minorities. Parts of this theory will be used to measure the level of assimilation Muslim immigrants have had in the United States. According to the assimilation framework, the occurrence of discrimination and prejudice will prevent full assimilation from occurring. Thus, this paper will analyze the extent in which it was prevented for Muslims. The aim of this essay is not to argue for full assimilation, but rather to discuss the level of assimilation Muslims have or haven't been able to reach/achieve, and as such, this framework is still a viable measure.

## 3 LITERATURE AND IMPLEMENTED GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Scholar Dr. Ali Chaudhary (2021) discusses the discrimination Muslim Immigrant Organizations (IOs) have faced from society and the media after the government launched numerous investigations on them as "security measures." In his paper titled "Ascriptive Organizational Stigma and the Constraining of Pakistani Immigrant Organizations," he discusses how these investigations lead to a negative portrayal of organizations in the perceptions of members of society, connecting it to the theory of ascriptive stigma. Ascriptive stigma refers to a form of negative social stigma such as prejudice or stereotyping, attached to individuals based on a shared characteristic like race, gender, or religion. Dr. Chaudhary developed a sub-theory with his research, "Ascriptive Organizational Stigma (AOS)" (Chaudhary, 2021, p. 88) which describes the same phenomenon, but on the level of organizations. Both ascriptive stigma and AOS can be used as terms to explain how the government is perpetuating 'xenophobic bias'—the fear or dislike of anything someone perceives as 'foreign'—in this case, as a majority/historically Christian country (Diamant, 2023). Being Muslim is perceived as 'foreign' to white Americans, especially after 9/11. Scholars Anny Bakalian and Medhi Bozorgmehr (2009) discuss the implications of discriminatory incidents such as hate crimes in their book *Backlash 9/11: Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans Respond*. The government may have also limited individuals of Middle Eastern and Muslim origin from speaking out against these hate crimes, preventing awareness and action (p. 129), while further perpetuating the "other-ing" effect—an effect which makes individual(s) feel as if they are outcasted, objectified, or vilified by society—and discrimination. While they discuss the abstract impact of these incidents, the quantitative socioeconomic impact is showcased by scholars Neeraj Kaushal, Robert Kaestner, and Cordelia Reimers (2007) in their paper "Labor Market Effects of September 11th on Arab and Muslim Residents of the United States" and scholars Michael Wallace, Bradley Wright, and Allen Hyde (2014) in

their paper “Religious Affiliation and Hiring Discrimination in the American South: A Field Experiment.” They show this socioeconomic impact on Muslim Americans by measuring the Labor Market Effects on Arab and Muslim individuals in various time range from 2001 to 2005. The findings show quite a few economic impacts for Arab and Muslim individuals, ranging from up to a 20% decrease in wages (Kaushal et al, 2007, p. 276), to increased probability of these individuals leaving higher-paying jobs to lower-paying sectors in relation to post-9/11 (p. 299), to 38% fewer e-mails and 54% fewer phone call job offers from employers based on their religious identity (Wallace et al, 2014, p. 201).

The most significant foreign attack on U.S. soil resulted in a substantial overhaul in the government’s approach to immigration, with the introduction of several discriminatory policies. Marissa Tirona, president of Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR), highlights the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001, which “allows/facilitates mass surveillance of individuals while also allowing for the arrest, imprisonment, and deportation of noncitizens upon the orders of the Attorney General without judicial review” (Tirona, 2021). A similar program created by President George W. Bush titled the “CIA’s Detention and Interrogation Program” allowed the CIA to detain anyone determined a “continuing, serious threat,” sending them to “unmarked black sites” for interrogation methods (S. Rep. No. 113-288, 2014). This was later determined as an inhumane, degrading treatment “used by torturous regimes during the Cold War to elicit false confessions” (Feinstein, 2014) by the Senate. Furthermore, a recent 2022 *Aref v. Garland* lawsuit highlighted the creation of CMUs (Communications and Management Units) in federal prisons, designed to isolate certain “high security” prisoners. The case cited that 60-100% of inmates in CMUs were Muslim, despite making up 6% of the federal prisoner population (*Aref v. Garland*, 2022). The plaintiffs were all low-medium security prisoners with clean or near-spotless histories—leading to investigations that unearthed discriminatory practices and missing paper trails in the CMU designation process (*Aref v. Garland*, 2022). The *Long v. Pekoske* discrimination

court case in 2022 also highlighted measures such as the “No Fly List” and the “broader terrorism watch list,” which the government uses to restrict any individual they deem a risk at various airports around the world. The nature of these policies speaks to the government’s approach involving immigrants: capturing, locking up, and interrogating people that fit the loosely defined category of “suspicious,” resulting in “false/fabricated information” (Feinstein, 2014). A court ruling in 2019 resulted in the declassification of the number of individuals who are on the government’s immigration lists. The released statistics are that 81,000 people are on the No Fly List (*Nur v. Unknown CBP Officers*, 2022), and 1.1 million people are on the broader terrorism watch list (*Nur v. Unknown CBP Officers*, 2022). These immigrant minorities’ goal is to assimilate into society, and the “other-ing” perception perpetuated by the government’s investigations and tactics prevents Muslim minorities from properly socioeconomically integrating into American society. Instead, they face inherent rejection and discrimination by those around them by cause of existing.

#### 4 IMPLICATIONS OF GOVERNMENT PRACTICES

The role of the government as an institution of power is to protect and support the rights and interests of all members within their jurisdiction (Bedesky, 2009, p. 4-8). This includes members who may hail from different backgrounds, migrating into their sphere of influence to create a new life for themselves. However, members of these minorities experience targeted discrimination from institutions such as the government due to geopolitical contexts out of their control. There is a court case that shows this through the government’s utilization of lists such as the No Fly List and its placing these people under the scrutiny of border agents around the world. The plaintiff is a man named Abdulkadir Nur, and it discusses discrimination he experienced at airports for years due to his identity as a Muslim—despite being a U.S. citizen for 15 years:

Abdulkadir Nur is a 69-year-old American citizen living in northern Virginia. He is Muslim and

from Somalia, having been naturalized more than 15 years ago. And yet, every single time he lands at Dulles International Airport or anywhere else from overseas, CBP officers illegally seize any phone or laptop with him. These CBP officers do so as part of a brazen, government-wide program aimed at surveilling Mr. Nur and the Muslim community he belongs to...More than a decade ago, an FBI official imposed on Mr. Nur a status that identifies him as worthy of permanent suspicion. (*Nur v. Unknown CBP Officers*, 2022)

The policies enacted by the government perpetuate xenophobic bias in the minds of the public, as their actions cause the public to develop ascriptive stigma towards these individuals. This hampers minorities and immigrants' ability to succeed in the society they are trying to integrate into. From the legal complaint filed by the CAIR (Council on American–Islamic Relations) legal defense on behalf of Abdulkadir Nur, we gain insight into "more than a decade" of harassment he faces from border agents via "illegally seizing any phone or laptop with him". This is an example of how immigration tactics post-9/11 could potentially lead to negative bias, as Nur is repeatedly being publicly scrutinized at Dulles International Airport in order to "survey they Muslim community he belongs to", thus giving the public the impression that xenophobia towards Muslims is acceptable. The influence of government stance on public opinion is already evident by the fallout and incidents following the banning of hijabs in France and Quebec (Syed, 2013, p. 430). Isolating someone from the crowd to be searched, seizing their belongings and taking them in for questioning is another way of enforcing the "othering effect," as it puts everyone's focus on him and his status as a Muslim. This isolation could also be metaphoric, as these minorities are now isolated from the ability to be "normal" and untargeted, thus hampering their ability to integrate and achieve in society. A consequence of perpetuating the othering effect is that people will find it acceptable to further discriminate against these individuals. Individual acts of discrimination such as hate crimes become more apparent

and socially acceptable. For example, "the immediate week following 9/11 resulted in seven anti-Muslim murders and forty-nine related assaults." (Ayers, 2007, p. 188). This was just seven days after 9/11, which means at minimum, seven assaults occurred each day. Scholars Bakalian and Bozorgmehr discuss the gravity of hate crimes and how the government is in a way promoting them:

Jack McDevitt and colleagues argue that "hate crimes are inherently more harmful to the social fabric of society than comparable crimes without bias motive" (2001, 698)...Hate crime reporting was particularly problematic after 9/11. Government initiatives may have prevented persons of Middle Eastern and Muslim origin from coming forward and reporting experiences of bias to the police. (Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, 2009, p. 129)

Hate crimes are already "experiences of bias" as targeted attacks based on a difference in identity. They disrupt individuals' attempts at social integration and promote "othering," as victims are targeted for their identity. But "government initiatives... prevent[ing] persons of Middle Eastern and Muslim origin" (p. 129) from reporting this to proper authorities is another tactic further enforcing xenophobia. Further evidence lays in the discrepancy between the government's reports of hate crimes versus the reports of organizations like the Human Rights Watch. "The FBI reported that the number of anti-Muslim hate crimes rose from 28 in 2000 to 481 in 2001" (Human Rights Watch, 2002), yet "Arab and Muslim groups reported a total of two thousand hate crime incidents (Human Rights Watch n.d.)." (Ayers, 2007, p. 188). It is through keeping other parties in the dark about the true gravity of the situation that Muslim immigrants are further marginalized since there is a lack of preventative action against hate crimes, while also acting as a signal for society to continue its bias due to a lack of reprimand. Phrasing hate crimes to be "inherently [so] harmful" (Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, 2009, p. 129) that it impacts the very social fabric of society" (P. 129) implies that this type of crime should have zero tolerance due to the consequences of the message attached to the crimes. This only adds gravity to the

actions of the government, which prevents action against these Islamophobic hate crimes. It is through practices like these that the government has been able to perpetuate ascriptive stigma against persons with Arab or Muslim identities. With policies like the No Fly List, the government has warped public perception of Muslims, making them be seen as “the other.” With its tolerance of hate crimes, the government has suppressed Muslims’ attempts at integration, allowing society to develop on the path of “anti-Muslim.”

## 5 SOCIOECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES

### IMPACTS ON STRUCTURAL ASSIMILATION

The assimilation framework will be used to measure the actual socioeconomic implications of the United States government’s discriminatory practices against the immigrant Muslim minority group. While the government has perpetuated bias and rejection of Muslims in the perceptions of those in society, the framework will help see how that has impacted Muslims’ lives as they try to integrate. One of the stages of Milton Gordon’s assimilation theory is structural assimilation. Structural assimilation occurs through integration in sectors such as the labor market. Suppose they are experiencing limitations in these sectors in any form: In that case, it is reasonable to assume that the government has indeed impacted members of the Muslim community’s ability to assimilate into society. Scholar Neeraj Kaushal and colleagues begin to shed some light on this, citing that “wages and weekly earning of Arab and Muslim men were reduced by between 9-11% below what they would’ve been in the absence of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks.” (Kaushal et al, 2007, p. 304). They explain, “It is possible that greater prejudice reduced employment opportunities for Arab and Muslim men and forced them to make less desirable choices, resulting in earning decline.” (Kaushal et al, 2007, p. 289). Having one’s earnings reduced because of an unrelated event seems to show failed structural assimilation, as these men are being “other-ed” by being singled out and pun-

ished for sharing the same religion as those involved in 9/11. Furthermore, stating that “prejudice reduced [their] employment opportunities” further solidifies this notion, as these men are unable to pursue jobs in well-respected fields due to their religious identity, and “are [being] forced” into poorer livelihoods. Scholars Michael Wallace and colleagues go a step further, carrying out an experiment where they send out fictitious résumés to employers throughout the American South, with the only difference being religious identification. The results found highlighted the extent of the labor market impact the fallout of 9/11 had on Muslims:

Specific religions encountered varying amounts of employer discrimination. Muslims faced the most consistent and severe discrimination as they received 38 percent fewer e-mails and 54 percent fewer phone calls than the control group and ranked lowest in the employer preference scale. Considering that the Muslim résumés did not contain Arab-sounding names or Islamic cultural references, this finding is probably a conservative estimate of the prejudice against Muslims. (Wallace et al, 2014, p. 201)

The rejection of individuals solely based on their religious identification is prime evidence of negatively impacted structural assimilation, as this represents a failure to integrate into the market due to one’s identity. Despite having up to a 54% decrease in ‘return calls/emails’ compared to the neutral control group when applying for jobs, the scholars state that this “finding is a conservative estimate” due to the résumés not containing Muslim/Arab-sounding names. This implies that those with names like ‘Mohammad’ or ‘Ahmed’ are even less likely to be considered for employment, regardless of their qualifications. This heavily restricts their ability to assimilate and improve their financial situation, while also showing how the perpetuation of bias has reached a fundamentally dangerous level. Society’s perception of these individuals has been negatively influenced to the point where they aren’t being hired regardless of their skill or qualifications.

### IMPACTS ON IDENTIFICATION ASSIMILATION



Within the workplace, Muslims are reported to face discrimination due to their religious identity after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) stated that workplace discrimination claims against Muslims rose 153% after 9/11, while discrimination claims from other religious groups stayed the same. (Ghumman and Jackson, 2010, p.7). There have also been numerous reported discrimination claims against Hijabis— Muslim women who wear a headscarf as a sign of faith (p.7). Furthermore, as of 2012, only 2% of US employees identified as Muslim, yet they filed almost 25% of religious workplace discrimination cases submitted to the EEOC (Fournier, 2016, p. 230) These statistics show how widespread labor discrimination towards Muslims has become since 9/11, while also showcasing how another step in the assimilation process is impacted. Identification assimilation regards a shared sense of national identity, and by having to face such levels of discrimination when trying to earn a livelihood, we can infer that these individuals yet again feel discouraged, isolated and “othered” from the ‘American’ norm, thus impacting their identification assimilation.

So far it has been shown how the government’s tactics post 9/11 have indirectly perpetuated ascriptive stigma and bias throughout American society, thereby hindering the Muslim community’s ability to socioeconomically assimilate. However, there could also be a direct, deliberate discrimination for a possible ulterior motive beyond simply ‘desiring the country’s safety’. Dr. Ali Chaudhary highlights an interview he conducted with a Muslim IO leader on their role after terrorist attacks such as 9/11. In that interview, the leader offers an explanation as to why the government may have fostered this perception and discrimination:

[E]very time there is a terrorist attack or some investigation of a Muslim organization, we have to defend ourselves and show people that we are not some kind of terrorist support organization. So instead of getting people out to protest the government’s policies on housing or racism, we are wasting our time responding to some terrorist attack and telling everyone that...I think the racism directed towards Pakistanis and Muslims

in general, from the media and politicians, is designed to keep us down and out of politics. The more we have to defend our community and our organization, the less time we can be planning demonstrations and, more importantly, getting people out to the polls to vote. (Chaudhary, 2021, p. 98)

Because of the warped perception of the Muslim community fostered by the government, every time a new investigation of a Muslim organization is launched, they “have to defend [them]selves” (p. 98) against xenophobic and racist labels, to try and break said perception. “Every time” (p. 98) would indicate a frequent occurrence, which indicates that their attempts at breaking racist perspectives are not working. With society refusing to look at them as fellow humans and not terrorists, they are made to feel like an “other.” This “othering” feeling also impacts identification, as alienation would prevent Muslims from desiring to identify themselves with the society that shuns them. One way this can change is if there is political mobilization: the last and final step towards full assimilation. However, the IO leader thinks “the racism directed towards Pakistanis and Muslims in general, from the media and politicians, is designed to keep us down and out of politics.” (Chaudhary, 2021, p. 98) The media and politicians are powerful entities, by stating that these entities intricately “designed” (p. 98) deliberate methods to keep Muslims “out of politics” (p. 98) through controlling the public’s perception, this attaches a much larger significance to the government’s discriminatory policies and actions. It’s as if it was deliberately done to prevent the political mobilization of an Arab and Muslim immigrant population—redirecting them to a cycle of “defend[ing] their community and organizations” (p. 98)—at a time when the US was heavily involved with their home countries. The idea that the government may have purposefully perpetuated discrimination with an ulterior motive of society’s approval of their military actions in Middle Eastern countries means that they have total disregard for the Muslim population they are meant to support. The community is facing rejection by its society and is being used by the government as a tool. This is the true extent of

the damage done to Muslims' assimilation process. The true level of suppression this community is facing, and the true extent of the damages done to their ability to socioeconomically achieve and integrate into American society.

## 6 THE COUNTER OF POLITICAL ASSIMILATION

The discrimination and bias that the government has perpetuated in the minds of the public through their post-9/11 tactics/investigations, has limited Muslims' ability to socioeconomically integrate by impacting their steps in the assimilation process. However, scholars Bakalian and Bozorgmehr claim that this bias that the government has perpetuated has actually positively influenced a few of the steps of the assimilation process, particularly in political mobilization. The scholars state,

We agree with Ismael Ahmed, co-founder and executive director of ACCESS, that 9/11 "created a sense of urgency about continuing on the path toward integration and reaffirming the community's validity and its loyalty to the nation.....[There was] unprecedented political vigor.....The shadow of suspicion that fell over the community [was] converted into commitment to the political issues of civil rights and immigration policy. (Bakalian & Bozorgmehr, 2009, p. 235)

The events of 9/11 had caused Muslims as a whole to be blamed, discriminated against, and treated as "other." However, the scholars argue that discriminatory treatment increased assimilation, evident through stating it "created a sense of urgency" (p. 235) to try harder "on the path [of] integration." (p. 235) This progression can be seen as the community is "reaffirming [their] validity and loyalty" (p. 235) to being U.S. American, showing a strengthened sense of identification (the fourth step). Using those words to describe their relationship to the nation implies a strong bond and sense of patriotism, which strengthens identification. The cultivation of fear and distrust is shown by describing a "shadow of suspicion" (p. 235) inhabiting the community. However, instead of it being a limiting factor as

shown earlier in the essay, the authors state that it serves as fuel to political involvement on "issues of civil rights and immigration policy." (p. 235) Describing Muslims' political involvement as "vigor[ous]" (p. 235) further emphasizes positive progression and mobilization, thus showing how the consequence of the government's actions resulted in stronger assimilation. Recent statistics do seem to back up this claim, with Jetpac Resource Center and CAIR releasing a final count of "82 local, state legislative, statewide, judicial, and federal American Muslim electoral victories" (Allison, 2022) in the 2022 mid-term elections. There are currently 3 Muslims serving in Congress (Diamant, 2023). In 2001, "79 percent of Muslims polled were registered to vote" (Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, 2009, p. 234). In 2022, this percentage has jumped to 81% of Muslims (Statistica Research Department, 2023), which is a significant increase considering the overall population was best estimated at 1,886,000 in the year 2000 (Smith, 2002), while it sits at 3,450,000 in 2017 (Mohamed, 2018). These voters have been pivotal in election results, such as in 2006, "100% of the 25 U.S. House members who voted [in accordance with Muslim voter views]...won re-election" (Bakalian and Bozorgmehr, 2009, p. 234-235), and "82 percent of 'candidates endorsed by Arab American community leaders' won." (p. 235). However, while there has been an increased political presence, especially recently, the scholars have missed the main point regarding this mobilization. They fail to account for the reason why there is political mobilization despite the other steps of assimilation not occurring: as they have been oppressed in every other step of assimilation, they have no other option but to turn to the political sphere.

To understand why only political mobilization is occurring from Gordon's theory, we can look at a similar political history that the—now prolific Muslim community went through in the UK. The British Nationality Act of 1948 allowed any person in the former British Commonwealth to immigrate to the UK, which resulted in a huge influx of immigration from the Caribbean and South Asia—including a significantly large population of Muslim South Asians.

These “New Commonwealth” individuals were initially encouraged to come to help with post-war labor shortages, but new Immigration Acts in the 60s restricted these individuals from emigrating to the UK. Scholar Narayan discusses the subsequent consequences of having this huge influx of racially different individuals in a previously predominantly white society in his paper *‘British Black Power: The Anti-Imperialism of Political Blackness and the Problem of Nativist Socialism’*:

New Commonwealth citizens often occupied the bottom rung of the labour market, regardless of their previous class trajectory, as white male workers moved into higher paying skilled manual roles that informally discriminated to keep non-white labour out of such jobs. British society’s insidious racism against its non-white citizens had also resulted in...racial discrimination in housing and policing. This economic discrimination was accompanied with violence against migrant communities...forced New Commonwealth communities into pursuing a more radical political response to racial oppression. (Narayan, 2019, p. 948-949)

Regardless of what socioeconomic status these New Commonwealth citizens had in their previous country, after immigrating to the UK, they worked the jobs described as “bottom-rung,” (p. 948) which gives insight into their new (horrible) income and living conditions. Promotions were also extremely rare, discrimination “keep[ing] non-white labor out of such jobs,” (p. 948) which in turn prevented structural assimilation. Narayan described the racism occurring as “insidious” (p. 948) with “accompanying violence” (p. 948), thus implying the occurrence of hate crimes, which would significantly impact the step of identification. All this together paints the picture that the lives of these New Commonwealth citizens were bleak, horrible, and oppressive. In response to this discrimination, these minorities were forced to make a radical decision: banding together to create a common political identity in the pursuit of justice and change. Known as “Political Blackness,” it is an umbrella identity for any non-white person—though typically Caribbean or South Asian—which emerged due to the sheer

political mobilization occurring to implement change (Narayan, 2019, p. 949). As a result, while their ability to fulfill some of the steps of Gordon’s assimilation model—be economically or structurally assimilated—was further dampened by the government, this did not stop the political engagement of these communities from being very high: indeed, the current prime minister is South Asian. This historical situation is parallel to what is occurring to Muslims now—The community has been forced into a corner by the government’s discriminatory practices, forced to break the typical assimilation sequence and move to the final step: political mobilization in order to allow the development of everything else. They are inhabiting a “politically black” identity position to try and enact change: to combat discrimination and create an environment where there is a possibility of acceptance. That is the point that Bakalian and Bozorgmehr missed: the effect the government has had on the assimilation process of the Muslim community.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

Government practices post-9/11 have resulted in the perpetuation of ascriptive stigma, bias and discrimination against the immigrant Muslim minority. The use of No-Fly lists and the tolerance of hate crimes are instances of the government directly perpetuating discrimination against the Muslim-American community. Through Milton Gordon’s assimilation framework, the impact of this discrimination is evident, limiting the ability to socioeconomically integrate into society. Economically, Muslims suffer wage reductions, and within the labor sector, job search yields were slim due to visible ties to religious identity.

This “othering” also impacts identification, as alienation would prevent Muslims from desiring to identify themselves with the society that shuns them, signifying the importance of political mobilization, the last and final step towards assimilation. Through personal insights of leaders in various Muslim organizations, Muslims receive constant harassment from media and politicians whenever the government launches an investigation on someone with ties to Islam. In doing so, Muslim organizations are



often thwarted in being able to unite and mobilize politically. Despite this, political assimilation did eventually occur, with multiple Muslims in elected positions today. However, this does not mean the government did not impact assimilation. Mobilization is a result of the sheer discrimination the community has faced. By looking at the history of the UK Muslim population, we learn that, when socioeconomically cornered, they unified to try and change their situation politically. This is why the U.S. Muslim community is entering politics: facing oppression from all sides, they are trying to change these outcomes through politics. While full assimilation has not been reached, attempts at achieving progress is occurring through mobilization.

But what is the extent of change Muslim politicians were able to create? Have there been steps of assimilation that are now seeing positive growth, but have not been documented due to the recent timing of the change? Considering the many reports showcasing the structural assimilation and labor incorporation has been impacted after 9/11, there is a gap in archives and statistics regarding the Muslim experience during that period. Further research should be done on how employment—perpetuated by discrimination—has changed the way members of the Muslim community conduct their lives. 9/11 is a very significant event in the recent history of the United States, and the fallout has changed attitudes towards Muslims forever. Studying these circumstances is important, as recognition is the first step in eliminating discrimination ■

## 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Dr. Michael Monescalchi for your unwavering support and review while I wrote this research paper. Making time whenever I had questions and providing feedback on how to improve my analysis and critique really propelled my drive to finish this project. Without you, the completion of this research paper would never have been imaginable.

## 9 REFERENCES

- [1] Allison, I. (2022, November 10). *CAIR, Jetpac Resource Center Welcome Record Breaking 82 Muslim electoral victories in local, state, federal elections - including 38 state legislative wins*. CAIR. [HTTPS://WWW.CAIR.COM/PRESS\\_RELEASES/CAIR-JETPAC-RESOURCE-CENTER-WELCOME-RECORD-BREAKING-82-MUSLIM-ELECTORAL-VICTORIES-IN-LOCAL-STATE-FEDERAL-ELECTIONS-INCLUDING-38-STATE-LEGISLATIVE-WINS/](https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-jetpac-resource-center-welcome-record-breaking-82-muslim-electoral-victories-in-local-state-federal-elections-including-38-state-legislative-wins/)
- [2] Aref v. Garland, No. 20-5368 (D.C. Cir. Feb. 25, 2022). [HTTPS://CASETEXT.COM/CASE/AREF-V-GARLAND](https://casetext.com/case/aref-v-garland)
- [3] Ayers, J. W. (2007). Changing Sides: 9/11 and the American Muslim Voter. *Review of Religious Research*, 49(2), 187-198. [HTTP://WWW.JSTOR.ORG/STABLE/20447488](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20447488)
- [4] Bakalian, Anny, & Bozorgmehr, Medhi. (2009). *Backlash 9/11: Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans Respond*. (1st ed.). University of California Press.
- [5] Bedesky, B. (2009). *What is a government*. Crabtree Pub Co.
- [6] Chaudhary, A. R. (2021). Ascriptive Organizational Stigma and the Constraining of Pakistani Immigrant Organizations. *International Migration Review*, 55(1), 84-107. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1177/0197918320920563](https://doi.org/10.1177/0197918320920563)
- [7] Diamant, J. (2023, January 3). *Faith on the Hill*. Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. [HTTPS://WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG/RELIGION/2023/01/03/FAITH-ON-THE-HILL-2023/](https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/01/03/faith-on-the-hill-2023/)
- [8] Feinstein, Dianne. (2014). *Senate intelligence committee study on CIA detention and interrogation program*. United States Senator for California: Dianne Feinstein. [HTTPS://WWW.FEINSTEIN.SENATE.GOV/PUBLIC/INDEX.CFM/SENATE-INTELLIGENCE-COMMITTEE-STUDY-ON-CIA-DETENTION-AND-INTERROGATION-PROGRAM](https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/senate-intelligence-committee-study-on-cia-detention-and-interrogation-program)
- [9] Fournier, Christopher (2016) "Faith in the Workplace: Striking a Balance Between Market Productivity and Modern Religiosity," *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*: Vol. 15: Iss. 1, Article 14. [HTTPS://DIGITALCOMMONS.LAW.SEATTLEU.EDU/SJSJ/VOL15/ISS1/14](https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/sjsj/vol15/iss1/14)
- [10] Ghuman, S. and Jackson, L. (2010), The downside of religious attire: The Muslim headscarf and expectations of obtaining employment. *J. Organiz. Behav.*, 31: 4-23. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1002/JOB.601](https://doi.org/10.1002/job.601)
- [11] Gordon, Milton M. (1964). *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*. Oxford University Press.

- [12] Human Rights Watch. (2002). *V. the September 11 backlash*. Human Rights Watch.  
[HTTPS://WWW.HRW.ORG/REPORTS/2002/USA-HATE/USA1102-04.HTM#P332\\_54474](https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/usa-hate/usa1102-04.htm#P332_54474)
- [13] Kaushal, N., Kaestner, R., & Reimers, C. (2007). Labor Market Effects of September 11th on Arab and Muslim Residents of the United States. *The Journal of Human Resources*, XLII(2), 275-308.  
[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.3368/JHR.XLII.2.275](https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.XLII.2.275)
- [14] Long v. Pecoske, 38 F. 4th 417 (4th Cir. 2022).  
[HTTPS://WWW.CA4.USCOURTS.GOV/OPINIONS/201406.P.PDF](https://www.ca4.uscourts.gov/opinions/201406.P.PDF)
- [15] Marissa, T. (2021, September 13). Resistance, resilience, and Solidarity: Islamophobia, the U.S. Immigration System, and the impact on BAMEMSA communities. Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees.  
[HTTP://WWW.GCIR.ORG/NEWS/RESISTANCE-RESILIENCE-AND-SOLIDARITY-ISLAMOPHOBIA-US-IMMIGRATION-SYSTEM-AND-IMPACT-BAMEMSA](http://www.gcir.org/news/resistance-resilience-and-solidarity-islamophobia-us-immigration-system-and-impact-bamemsa)
- [16] Mohamed, B. (2018, January 3). *New estimates show U.S. Muslim population continues to grow*. Pew Research Center.  
[HTTPS://WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG/SHORT-READS/2018/01/03/NEW-ESTIMATES-SHOW-U-S-MUSLIM-POPULATION-CONTINUES-TO-GROW/](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/01/03/new-estimates-show-u-s-muslim-population-continues-to-grow/)
- [17] Narayan, J. (2019). British Black Power: The Anti-Imperialism of Political Blackness and the Problem of Nativist Socialism. *The Sociological Review* (Keele), 67(5), 945-967.  
[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1177/0038026119845550](https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026119845550)
- [18] Nur v. Unknown CBP Officers, 1:22-cv-169 (AJT/JFA) (E.D. Va. Nov. 7, 2022)  
[HTTPS://CBPABUSESTEST2.FILES.WORDPRESS.COM/2022/04/2022-02-17-NUR-V-UNKNOWN-CBP-OFFICERS-CMPLT.PDF](https://cbpabusestest2.files.wordpress.com/2022/04/2022-02-17-nur-v-unknown-cbp-officers-cmplt.pdf)
- [19] Senate. Report No. 113-288 (2014).  
[HTTPS://WWW.INTELLIGENCE.SENATE.GOV/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/PUBLICATIONS/CRPT-113SRPT288.PDF](https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/publications/crpt-113srpt288.pdf)
- [20] Statistica Research Department. (2023, January 9). *Share of people registered to vote in the United States in 2022, by faith* [Chart]. Statistica.  
[HTTPS://WWW.STATISTA.COM/STATISTICS/713921/SHARE-AMERICANS-REGISTERED-VOTE-FAITH/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/713921/share-americans-registered-vote-faith/)
- [21] Syed, Iffath U. B. (2013). Forced assimilation is an unhealthy policy intervention: the case of the hijab ban in France and Quebec, Canada. *International Journal of Human Rights*, 17(3), 428-440.  
[HTTPS://HEINONLINE.ORG/HOL/P?H=HEIN.JOURNALS/IN-LLH17&I=427](https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/inllh17&i=427)
- [22] Wallace, M., Wright, B. R. E., & Hyde, A. (2014). Religious Affiliation and Hiring Discrimination in the American South: A Field Experiment. *Social Currents*, 1(2), 189-207.  
[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1177/2329496514524541](https://doi.org/10.1177/2329496514524541)



Tahsin Mostofa is an undergraduate student at the Honors College of Rutgers-New Brunswick, studying in the School of Arts and Sciences. He is also the Treasurer for the Honors College Residence Hall (RHA) Association. Arriving to study from the country of Bangladesh, he intends to complete a Major in Economics with a Minor in Business Administration. Graduating from high school with Higher Honors and an International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma, that experience has propelled him to pursue knowledge and research connections between real-world situations. Being from a foreign country, he has always had a fascination with the United States' approach to immigration, taking a class on Immigration during his first semester in college. The knowledge gained from that class aided in his desire and approach to writing this research paper. He currently is continuing his pursuit of a bachelor's degree in Economics.