

# The backlash of on muslims



America is highly viewed as one of the biggest players in foreign affairs and international politics. The country has consistently pictured and seen itself as the beacon of human rights, the pioneer of freedom, and the figurehead of humanity and righteousness in the consistent fight against al-Qaida. It is, however, essential to note that the human rights and freedom that America proclaims to strictly stand for have been interfered with since the 9/11 incident.

In essence, the actual image with regard to the city upon a hill or the American Dream is slowly crumbling under the heavy weight of post-9/11 law enforcement, America's foreign policies, and public scaremongering of individuals that are perceived as Arabs.

This particular essay will examine the manner in which Muslims receive harsh treatment after the backlash of 9/11 in the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid. It will also incorporate the various themes that are exposed in the story *Grandma's Tales* and compare how the two relate. It will further discuss how the Muslims become legitimate targets and victims of negative media stereotypes, hate crimes, disappearance, physical beatings and interrogations at American airports, racial profiling, and detentions in secret places. Furthermore, the paper addresses the manner in which the above-mentioned treatment ideally shed light on the tough question of Muslim integration in the American citizenship, society, identity, multiculturalism, alienation, national affiliation, and belonging. In addition, it significantly disrupts the dominant American official discourse that portrays Muslims as what can be described as potential terrorists by linking Islam with

terror and a potential threat to the United States as well as the values of Western civilization.

The American global war on what they refer to terror has generally impacted the Muslim minorities in the Islamic world, and the entire globe to the various degrees of hardship and suffering and in the various areas of life. Muslims have, without a doubt of contradiction, been the worst affected. Their identity has affected their peace in other countries. Popular Muslim nations like Iraq and Afghanistan have significantly been consistently devastated and uprooted in the name of war on terror. Hence, the devastation experienced by Muslims in both material and human terms is somehow beyond estimation.

The popularly known and historic 9/11 episode have played a big role in negatively impacting Muslims in the West. The mentioned impact is more visible in the United States of America more than any other place or country in the entire world. The effect is to be understood and observed in negative senses (" Post -9/11 Islamophobia And The Future Of American Islam"). In essence, the aspect of Islamophobia has substantially worsened due to the result of the September 11 incident as well as the subsequent war on terror. The Islamophobia phenomenon in the United States is normally equated with some kind of a general hatred and prejudice of Muslims and Islam. It is essential to note the fact that this started being experienced in the West long before the September 11.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Hamid tends to offer some kind of a counter literary response to both the American public rhetoric as well as the

dominant literary discourses that substantially prevailed immediately after the 9/11 incident. In essence, the situation consolidated stereotypes against Muslims and Islam and further inflamed the American sentiments. The novel ideally utilizes the character Changez to render a stark warning message that the American domineering policies, harsh treatment of Muslims, and the blind war on terror might eventually force a large number of Muslims to particularly relinquish the popular American Dream and further turn into radicals, just like Changez.

The theme of discrimination has also been experienced in the Islamophobia issue. The reaction of the Americans towards the Muslims after the 9/11 attack has obviously been very indiscriminate, blind, and disproportionate to the extent that the controversial concept of multiculturalism on which the American community tends to be based is highly threatened (Considine). There are higher chances of the American community being prone to internal disintegration and fissures if they fail to stop blaming the Muslims and fail to accept others for very few isolated tragic kind of incidents, which they are not or may not be responsible for. In essence, the promotion of Islamophobia, mistreatment of Muslims, and the actual war on terror that ideally followed the 9/11 incident may potentially result in the alienation and exclusion of Muslims in America, the rise of Islam radical groups such as State of Syria and Iraq, and the disintegration of the American multicultural society.

I can describe *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as a primary and outstanding literary work after the 9/11 attacks. The novel substantially holds some kind of a magnifying glass up to the United States. It essentially views the

negative effects of racial discrimination as well as racism to the reader.

Moreover, the novel comes in handy in dismantling some of the specific Western religious biases and plays the role of effacing stereotypes towards the Muslims world and Islam (Considine). The Reluctant Fundamentalist is, however, controversially discussed as anti-American due to its ambiguity.

In essence, Islamophobia was already a part of the Western social and intellectual scene in earlier years of racism and it was particularly viewed as an obvious expression of the response of the Western individuals with regard to the Islamic world and Islam. The 9/11 incident rejuvenated the actual creation of brand new images of Muslims and Islam in the minds of the Western public (" Post -9/11 Islamophobia And The Future Of American Islam"). The negative ridiculing and stereotyping of Islam and Muslims in general became more disturbing, especially when they came from some of the respectable church leaders as well as preachers in the West.

The stubborn issue of Islamophobia has highly frustrated and angered a number of Muslims in both America and around the world. The same anger has been lively after the experience of the countless and unending invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, which can be predominantly described or defined as Muslim countries (" Post -9/11 Islamophobia and the Future of American Islam"). The above-mentioned politically charged events as well as negative phenomena have highly resulted in violent reactions from some of the more extremist-prone elements of the wide-spread Muslim communities in the West. As a result, both European and American Muslims find themselves in a situation of only bearing the brunt of the so-called extreme reactions of the various rightist groups in the Western countries.

The actual strength of Hamid's great and outstanding narration in the novel lies in effectively connecting his developing human characters with symbolism. The mentioned author successfully manages to narrate his story through the main character by the name Changez. The character ideally addresses the author's story in the actual form of a dramatic kind of monologue to an individual who is only referred to as the American. It is essential to note that the American individual remains a silent listener in the entire story, despite his infrequent interruptions. Hamid tactfully narrates his story in the form of a one-sided conversation that exists between an American and an Arab. Humid utilizes the one-sided conversation to achieve and accomplish two things. First of all, he symbolically makes it possible for America to literally hear the other side of the story. The author, secondly, puts his audience or readers into the actual shoes of the American. Doing these enables Humid to somehow force the reader to categorically make a personal decision on what to make with the controversial narration. In other words, the reader is left to decide on their own whether the American is an undercover agent or harmless. The reader is also left to decide whether Changez is a normal individual or a fundamentalist terrorist.

The reader's and American prejudices and stereotypes as well as the clichés of Muslims and Arabs are efficiently mirrored to the reader. As a reader, I got a chance to evaluate and reflect my own individual stance with regard to the aspect of Islamophobia. The author of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* essentially plays with the above-described stereotypical images in his narration but regularly dismantles each of them for purposes of countering

Western biases. In essence, the beard and ethnicity of the character Changez in the novel stereotype him as a religious extremist.

According to my analysis of Hamid's work, I reached a conclusion that Changez is neither an extremist nor religious. He is just revealed as an academic and a secular person. On the other hand, the American is exposed as a personification of post-9/11 paranoia of the American citizen, who significantly distrusts Changez as well as other Arabs in the novel. The American character is likely to carry a weapon, sits with his back to a wall, and keenly watches his surroundings. The American is, thus, turned to what can be described as a reluctant fundamentalist by the author. In essence, Hamid characterizes him as substantially western in nature through his beliefs and biases.

Besides, the fear of Muslims and Islam has significantly resulted in the authorization of random detentions, discrimination, and deportation of countless Muslims and Arabs. This kind of public hysteria as well as the incorporation of propagandist media has substantially played the negative role of increasing the already pre-existing mean stereotypes of Muslims and Arabs. I, therefore, argue without a doubt of contradiction that Muslims and Arabs have lately become the newest American folk devil through elite-engineered moral panic and hyper-Orientalized media representation (Christine 106). The mentioned aspects have highly primed retaliatory and hostile public attitudes that have, in turn, legitimized random law enforcement, including public harassment and hostility, random profiling, and police surveillance.

There exist a very dangerous spiral wave of counter reactions and negative reactions that has the potential of threatening the security and lives of Muslims who reside in the West. The fear has led to the formation of Islamic and Muslim movements in America that advocate for better treatment of the Muslims and the protection of their religion (“ Post -9/11 Islamophobia And The Future Of American Islam”). The constitution of the United States clearly states that every individual in the country has a right to religion and worship. It, therefore, becomes hypocritical when some Americans mistreat Muslims for the assumption that they are terrorists in nature. The assumption does not seem to be sensible at all. In essence, one cannot judge a book by its cover. Being a Muslim or practicing Islam does not make one a terrorist. In essence, terrorists are individuals who merely hide in the Islamic religion. Anyone from any religion around the world can be a threat to the security of other individuals in the society. It is unfortunate and uncalled for that Muslims are the only ones subjected to harassment and mistreatment because of the religion they chose.

Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* specifically renders some kind of a warning message to readers and the American society at large. In essence the American international and domestic policies towards the Islamic world and Muslims after 9/11 have the potential of turning the ordinary Muslims into radicals if not changed (Williams 146). It further adds that violence is most likely to breed violence. The novel also exposes the fact that the American blind war on terror and their domineering policies have the potential of forcing countless ordinary Muslims to significantly relinquish the



popular American Dream and later convert them into radicals, just like Changez.

The pressing situation has forced the American Muslim society to essentially respond to the above-mentioned and described challenges of Islamophobia in different ways. The American Muslims have created various new alliances and alignments with countless non-Muslim American groups around the country in their tireless effort to potentially strengthen their actual and strategic position to effectively and efficiently counter the above-described damaging onslaught of Islamophobia in the United States and beyond (“ Post -9/11 Islamophobia And The Future Of American Islam”). In essence, their consistent effort in the described direction or channel is substantially visible in quite a number of areas. The alliances are formed to encourage Americans to appreciate the existence of cultural differences and promote peaceful coexistence among Americans and Muslims.

In conclusion, there exist a lot of activities in the ideal area of the interfaith dialogue that highly involve the followers and members of Christianity as well as Judaism. Besides, the political arena has significantly experienced some kind of a growing Muslim activism which comes in handy in assisting them to strategically position their actual influence in both her Democratic and Republican parties in America. The primary goal of the mentioned activism incorporates assisting them to effectively influence the American foreign policy. Furthermore, the Muslim professors and students in the United States have established and developed strong alliances with most of their non-Muslim friends and colleagues in the colleges and universities in pursuit of the common objective and goal of social freedom and justice.

It is essential to note the fact that Hamid uses his novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to essentially bring out the message that a lot of Muslims wish to live in dignity, peace, and prosperity, just like any other human being around the globe. *Grandma's Tales* also come in handy in exposing the above-mentioned and described themes in relation to Hamid's novel. In essence, this is the right time for the entire world to find a way of facilitating such a healthy and conducive environment for them when it is still early. In simpler terms, not all Muslims are terrorists and you cannot judge an entire population for the mistake of a single one of them. It is not fair at all. There is need for the entire world to embrace Muslims and treat them like any other human being (Andrew). Making the world a better place incorporates standing for the truth and avoiding propaganda. The media is expected to be the mirror of the society and to report the truth.