

# Muslim stereotypes in the media assignment



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Our views and pinions are often shaped by the media - the news, TV shows, movies, magazines and newspapers. Many people take the views depicted in these and claim them as their own without thinking or researching it more. Cultural Theorist Stuart Hall states that the messages in media, "intersect with the deep semantic codes of a culture and take on additional, more active ideological dimensions." This means that they build on the cultural and social anxieties of a given time and also reflect them back into the culture, therefore reinforcing them and adding to them.

The problem with this is that the media almost always leaves bits and pieces out and portray only the parts they think we want to see to meet our expectations. The kids movie, "Aladdin" is one which gives a skewed view of Muslim people. In the opening scenes of the theatrical release, the theme song states that Aladdin hails "from a faraway place, where the caravan camels roam, where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face. It's barbaric, but hey, it's home. Throughout the movie Muslims are repeatedly depicted as scheming, mystical, violent, stupid or greedy Arabs. Everything from costuming to voice tones, facial features and references to Allah build a very stereotypical and false image of Muslims. One of the reasons why this is an incorrect stereotype is that most Muslims are not even Arabic with only about 18% of the 1.6 billion Muslims being Arabic. So why do we as westerners make this assumption that all Muslims are Arabic?

I think this is because we don't look into the figures and information for ourselves we just assume that these negative stereotypes are the truth and by doing this it has become our reality. In the case of Aladdin, this fairytale is viewed by children from such a young age that it becomes a part of their

subconscious without them even realizing they have been fed a stereotype. More modern TV shows such as “ Homeland” represent Muslims as fanatic Arab terrorists posing a threat to countries and nations around the world.

This is mainly a western representation and is a typical negative stereotype of Muslims that most people believe and accept as the truth. Although this may be an accurate representation of a small minority of the Muslim population, in my opinion this is a false stereotype of the majority of the population. The media has generalized their opinion based on a small minority to all of the Muslim population and sensationalists it to heighten cultural anxieties.

This opinion and stereotype has caused much tension between westerners and the general Muslim population in the The media reports involving Muslims and Islam in general have become more frequent, with the racist, stereotype images and remarks becoming more and more accepted as normal, especially in the news, entertainment and social media. The media has been targeting religion and more specifically Islam since the events of the 9/11 planted a seed of fear for terrorists and religion in general.