San Diego Repertory Theatre

The Curious REPort

an inside look at

DISGRACED

2013 Pulitzer Prize Winning Drama

Disgraced
by Ayad Akhtar

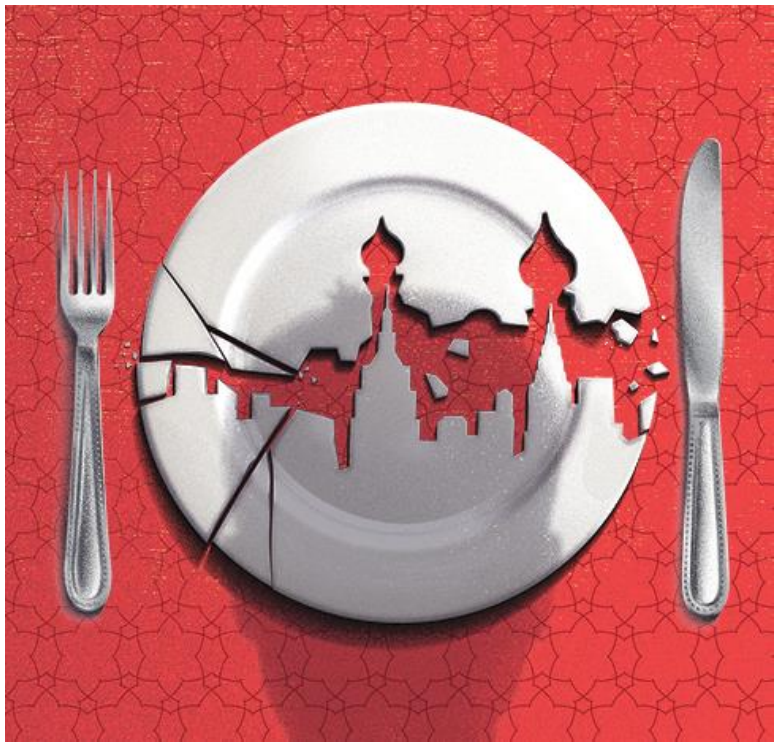
Directed by Michael Arabian

Oct 20 – Nov 13
on the Lyceum Stage

"smart…surprising… shocking…"
--*The New York Times*

"A sparkling and combustible contemporary drama"
--*Bloomberg News*

"Akhtar's riveting play thrusts us into an escalating global debate, humanizing the way we see the world."
--*LA Times*



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This In Depth Guide was prepared by Literary Manager Danielle Ward with Yi-Lin Chung, Maya Greenfield-Thong, and Melissa Hawkins.
Cover Art by Studio Conover

San Diego Repertory Theatre would like to thank and acknowledge the following for their generous ongoing support: City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, San Diego County and The National Endowment for the Arts.

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THE NOBLEST MOTIVE IS THE PUBLIC GOOD
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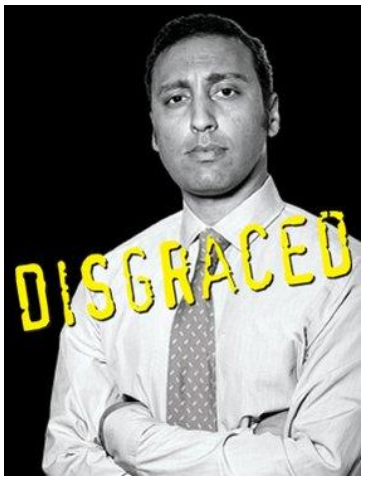
WE ARE EXCITED ABOUT…



Finally producing *Disgraced*! We have been chomping at the bit to see this play realized on the Lyceum Stage for several years. We had to wait for it to go to Broadway and then wait for the touring show to end. But it was worth it. (Of course during that time we had many internal debates about this play and its many layers and themes, intermixed with strong emotions on all sides—because that is what this play does best.) No doubt that is why it has the distinction of winning the Pulitzer Prize, being nominated for a Tony, and becoming the most produced play in America for 2015-16.

The story is set in New York. Corporate lawyer Amir Kapoor is happy, in love, and about to land the biggest career promotion of his life. But beneath the veneer, success has come at a price. When Amir and his artist wife, Emily, host an intimate dinner party at their beautiful apartment with Amir's co-worker and her art curator husband, what starts out as a friendly conversation soon escalates into something far more damaging. And by the end, we see a set of characters in their rawest form, flaws and all.

As Akhtar revealed, "There's a whole lineage of works that influenced *Disgraced*—William Faulkner's *Light in August*, Shakespeare's *Othello*, V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*—all colored male subjects who perform an act of violence on a white paramour; on a white, desired, erotic object, that has deep racial and political ramifications. There is something in that thematic field that is about shame or disgrace or disgust or self-loathing….I wanted to write a play that would have a tragic arc, that would move an audience to pity and terror—to use the classical formulation—and to do it in a way that did not preclude the audience gasping at entrances, or actions, moved both to tears and raucous laughter. A full engagement of the emotional and intellectual self of the viewer….If a story goes there, we experience something Aristotle calls catharsis. Catharsis is only possible when the full dimension of our pity and our terror are aroused by what we see. If the volume dials down to two or three you can't really have catharsis. Catharsis isn't about feeling sorry for a character or shedding a few tears. It is a very specific process having to do with identification, anticipation, pity, and terror. I just think the bigger the story, the more compelling that process can be."

The **mission of San Diego Repertory Theatre** is to produce **intimate, exotic, provocative** theatre. We promote a more inclusive community through vivid works that nourish progressive political and social values and celebrate the multiple voices of our region. San Diego Repertory Theatre **feeds the curious soul.**

We are eager to bring you our version of *Disgraced*, directed by Michael Arabian, who you might remember did a brilliant job of creating the world of Rothko in our production of John Logan's *RED* several seasons ago. Lighting designer Brian Gayle returns as well, joined by Emmy Award-winning scenic designer John Iacovelli to transport us into the Upper East Side world of Amir.

We are thrilled that Ronobir Lahiri will take on the role of Amir. You may recognize him from roles on countless television shows or maybe even from his world-renowned sitar concerts. (Watch out for a concert performance by Lahiri as one of the engagement events.) Plus, we are happy to welcome back long-time REP actress, Monique Gaffney, last scene on the Lyceum Stage in *Clybourne Park*. We also want to celebrate that four cast members are making their REP debut. That includes Ronobir, as well as Allison Spratt Pearce, who comes to us with many Broadway and Off-Broadway credits, Richard Baird, who is reprising role of Isaac after a successful run at Arizona Theater Company, and Keala Milles, Jr., who served as an understudy in last season's *Oedipus El Rey*.

This play addresses many REP related themes including race, religion, and religious intolerance, capitalistic greed, upward mobility, assimilation, alienation, and the influence of cultural heritage. Still, Akhtar clearly stated in an interview with NPR, "the play is about how we talk about Islam, how we frame Islam, what meaning we find in it and how those conversations are actually not just theoretical conversations. They have some pretty profound emotional content for people these days." It is a topic that needs our attention.

While we admit to having grappled with concerns about the negative, even violent, portrayal of a Muslim man in this play, we felt the discussions the play sparked were very necessary given our current political/social climate. Plus, we trusted the playwright because he is so clearly aware of the complexities he is presenting us with. "No one voice can speak for American Muslims in the theater. But at the moment, there is no other….For a lot of people, to see or hear the word 'Muslim' is not too dissimilar to hearing the word 'Cancer'… But what am I gonna to do about it? Keep telling really great stories and hopefully enough people catch on, and they're like, 'You know what? It's not about that. It's about something else, like being human.'" Ultimately, we applaud Akhtar's bravery and vulnerability in exposing himself and his inner struggles in this work of art.

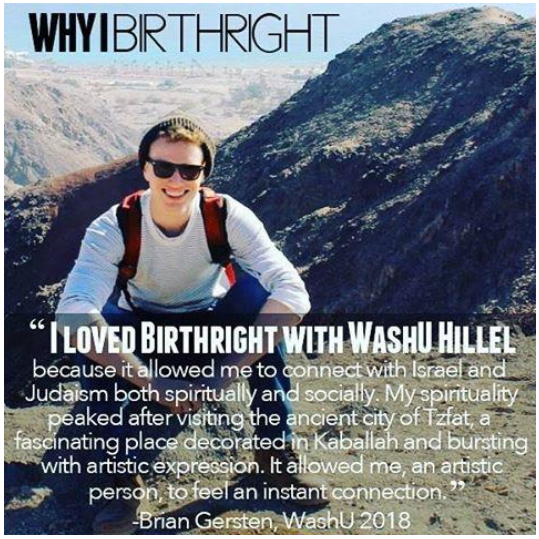
Ayad Akhtar is a Pakistani American writer, playwright, and screenwriter. His book, *American Dervish*, was published in over twenty languages worldwide and was a 2012 Best Book of the Year. His latest play, *The Who & The What*, premiered at La Jolla Playhouse in 2014. He has received commissions from Lincoln Center Theater and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Akhtar is a graduate of Brown and Columbia Universities with degrees in Theater and Film Directing.

INTERESTING TIDBITS

While Islam is currently the world's second-largest religion (after Christianity), it is the faster-growing major religion and the number of Muslims is expected to exceed the number of Christians by the end of this century.

DID YOU KNOW?

Of the 1.2 billion people in India, about 79.8% of the population consider themselves Hindu.



Jews all over the world between the ages of 18 and 26 have the opportunity to claim "birthright." This program sends Jews to Israel for free to help "strengthen Jewish identity" and provide "an opportunity to get to know Israel through its people." To find out more go to http://www.birthrightisrael.com

According to an article by Abdul Malik Mujahid, "Under the special registration program aimed at Muslim visitors to the US, the government fingerprinted and photographed 144,513 Muslims in the first run. In addition, millions of Muslim visitors to the U.S. from 24 designated Muslim countries have gone through that process. The program was finally suspended indefinitely on April 27th, 2011."

There are 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide – roughly 23% of the global population. Indonesia currently has the largest Muslim population according to Pew Research Center.

INTERESTING TIDBITS

As of May 2015, 48% of adult Hindus in America reported having a post-graduate degree.

A 2009 study by Gallup found that Muslim American women are more educated than the average American.

THE TERM "OTHERING"
It refers to the processes by which societies and groups exclude those whom they want to subordinate. Othering creates contrasting differences that involves producing narratives and images about a group of people that demonizes or dehumanizes them. It provides the justification to treat these others as inferior.

Taqiya – Denial of Religious Belief (TAA-Kiy-Yaa)

The Islamic term literally means "prudence, fear, and caution." It refers to precautionary dissimulation or denial of religious belief and practice in the face of persecution. Taqiya was initially practiced under duress by some of Muhammad's companions. The Quranic reference can be found in Sura 3:28, which says "Let not the believers take the unbelievers for protectors rather than believers; and who does this, he shall have nothing (of the guardianship of Allah), but you should guard yourself against them, guarding carefully." Ibn Kahir in the 14th century wrote, "such believers are allowed to show friendship to the disbelievers outwardly, but never inwardly." Muhammad's companion, Abu Ad-Darda' said "we smile in the face of some people although our hearts curse them."

WHAT IS AN IMAM?

An imam is an Islamic leadership position. Sunni Muslims apply the term to the worship leader of a mosque and Muslim community. For Shiite Muslims, "imam" specifically refers to "Muslim leaders of the line of Ali held by Shiites to be the divinely appointed, sinless, infallible successors of Mohammad".

1: INTERVIEW WITH AYAD AKHTAR

JEFFREY BROWN, PBSNews:
As the drama [in *Disgraced*] unfolds, Amir moves from a sharp critique of Islam to admitting feelings of sympathy into a worldview he has rejected. How much of this reflects any of your own sense of Americanness, Islam, being a Muslim, and your sense of identity?

AYAD AKHTAR: Right. It's a good question. I think it's one I'm still grappling with and still working through in a series of works that *Disgraced* is one of. And I think there's a long history of sort of post-colonial Muslim self-definition the last, I would say, 200 years, where defining oneself in opposition to the West or separate from the West has been an important part of what it means to call oneself Muslim. I think that, obviously, in the past decade or so, there has been such tremendous geopolitical upheavals that there's a way in which that's being called into question. So…

JEFFREY: At a personal level?

AYAD AKHTAR: At a personal level, at a nation-state level.

JEFFREY BROWN: Yes.

AYAD AKHTAR: It's being called into question. All of the sort of extraordinary conflicts that we see unfolding in the Middle East are part and parcel of what I'm talking about. And so the work that I'm doing, *Disgraced* included, is about exploring the various contradictions that arise because of that history and those fealties.

***Disgraced* included, is about exploring the various contradictions that arise because of that history and those fealties.**

JEFFREY BROWN: Of being a Muslim in America after 9/11?

AYAD AKHTAR: Well, in part being Muslim. Being American. What are the overlaps? What are the contradictions? Are those contradictions real? Are they

historical? Are they passed simply from parent to child, or is it something much larger? Is there an inherent conflict between Islam and the West?

JEFFREY BROWN: And have you figured this out, or is this what you're doing in the work?

AYAD AKHTAR: I think to have an answer would be above my pay grade.

(*LAUGHTER*)

AYAD AKHTAR: I get away with — I get away with trying to see what the various perspectives yield in terms of human lives and the solutions that individuals come up with to these questions.

JEFFREY BROWN: I wonder just how you see theater, as a kind of provocation, you know, as something that makes us think a lot.

AYAD AKHTAR: Right.

JEFFREY BROWN: This is a kind of provocative piece of writing.

AYAD AKHTAR: It is. And I think that, at its best, what the theater does is, it gathers us together. We, social herding animals, arrive together into a room, and we behold something that actually happens before us, not something mediated to us by a screen, but the presence of live performers, which hearkens back to a kind of experience of a ritual, and an experience of one mind, one body, a kind of communion that happens in the audience between audience and performers that allows us, reaches into us, where we can experience things more deeply than we can individually.

JEFFREY BROWN: Even if it's provoking questions of real identity, am I a Muslim? Am I a Jew? Am I an American? Who am I?

AYAD AKHTAR: Well, those sound like some pretty good questions for our time. So I don't mind doing that.

Read the full interview and see video here: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/disgraced-interrogates-definitions-identity-islam-america/

2: Religion 101

Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion largely centralized within the Middle East and North Africa. It has about 1.6 billion members, 23% of the world's population. An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim (not to be confused with an Arab). Muslims follow the teachings of Allah (God) through a holy scripture, the Qur'an, which was written in Arabic within 30 years of Muhammad's death. Muslims believe it contains the literal word of God.

Muslims may be Arabs, Persians, Indians, Americans, Chinese, Malaysians, Europeans, or other nationalities. Any person who adopts the Arabic language is called an Arab. The language of the Qur'an is Arabic.

According to a survey done in 2015, about 5.7 million Muslims went to Masjid al-Haram to perform hajj (the last pillar of Islam).

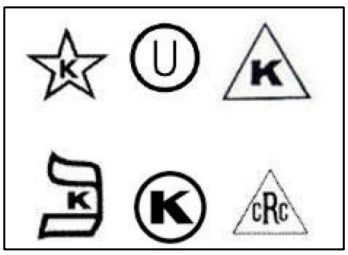
One of the core beliefs that the Qur'an lays out is the Five Pillars of Islam. The Five Pillars of Islam include shahada (faith), salat (prayer), zakāt (charity), sawm (fasting), and hajj (a pilgrimage to Mecca) and act as the foundation on which Islam is based. Islamic practices also include several holidays and rituals as well.

Judaism

DID YOU KNOW?

Many companies put symbols on their products to symbolize which are kosher or not. Next time you're in the grocery store, check it out (shown on the right).

Judaism is a monotheistic religion largely centralized within Israel and the United States. It has about 14.2 million members, 0.2% of the world's population. An adherent of Judaism is called a Jew or Israelite. Israelites follow the teachings of God through a holy scripture: the Torah.



While there is no one established formulation of principles that all branches of Judaism adhere to, many Jews devote their time to studying the Torah. The Torah contains sacred writings, laws, and traditions and acts as the main reference for Jewish traditions.

Israel: country
Jew/Israelite: practitioner
Hebrew: language
Judaism: religion

Hinduism

Hinduism is a polytheistic religion largely centralized within India and Nepal. It has about 1 billion members, 15% of the world's population. An adherent of Hinduism is called a Hindu. Hindus follow the teachings of different gods through many holy scriptures. As a collective, these scriptures are sometimes known as the Vedic Scriptures. Hinduism doesn't have one unified system of faith. Instead, the Supreme Court of India defines Hinduism as this:

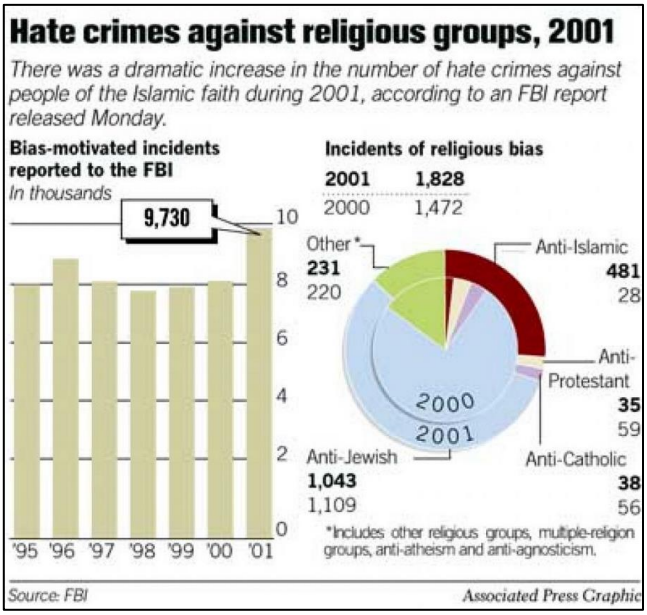
"Unlike other religions in the World, the Hindu religion does not claim any one Prophet, it does not worship any one God, it does not believe in any one philosophic concept, it does not follow any one act of religious rites or performances."

While there isn't just one way to practice Hinduism, many branches do share similar concepts, rituals, texts, and sacred sites.

No one has ever compiled a list of every major and minor god as there is no fixed number of gods and goddesses in Hinduism. However, it is estimated that there are about 330 million different deities (including different reincarnations/ forms) in Hinduism.

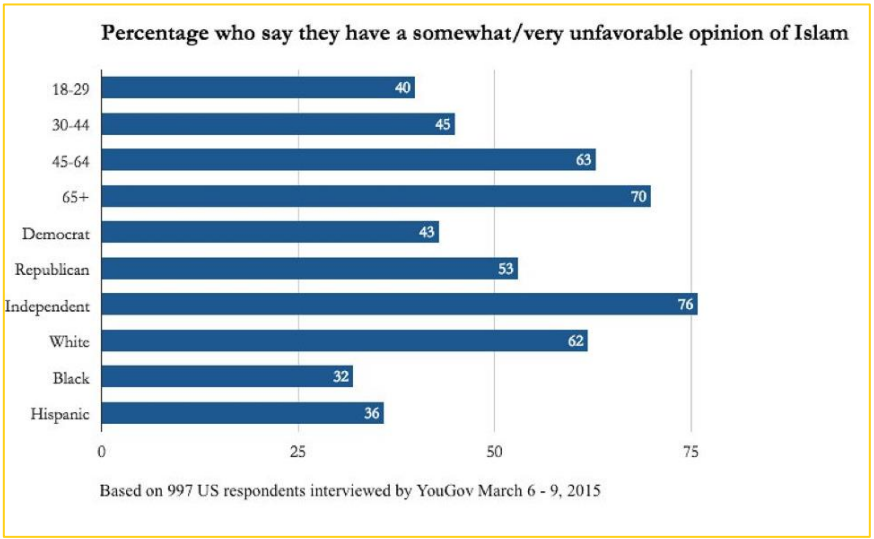
The word "Hinduism" has no real meaning because Hinduism was not founded as a religion. The word "Hindu" was given by foreigners such as the Greeks and Arabs.

3: Islamophobia in the US



As stated on the Muslim Public Affairs Council's website, "According to the FBI, anti-Islamic incidents were the second least reported hate crimes *prior* to 9/11, but following 9/11, they became the second highest reported among religion-bias incidents. From pre-9/11 to post-9/11, a growth of 1600% took place."

According to a poll conducted by Time Magazine, "Twenty-eight percent of voters do not believe Muslims should be eligible to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court. Nearly one-third of the country thinks adherents of Islam should be barred from running for President."



SOURCES:
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http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/08/muslims-us-islam-islamophobia-data-polls
https://votesmart.org/candidate/key-votes/54675/michele-bachmann/?p=1

Excerpts from "An Interview with Dalia Mogahed on Islamophobia"

conducted by Todd Green

<u>Todd Green:</u> Why do many non-Muslims in the West have such strong feelings about Islam even though they know very little about Islam?

<u>Dalia Mogahed:</u> What explains these strong feelings is a very deliberate campaign of misinformation. This is hardly controversial anymore. There are now many good reports documenting the fear industry or the Islamophobia industry, with specific people who receive lots of money to generate fear and hate toward Muslim citizens in the United States and Europe. While many people have really strong opinions, they are being led to those opinions by a specific, targeted campaign to tarnish and demonize Muslims.

When I was at Gallup, we did a study on American perceptions of Muslims and Islam. What we found was really interesting. On the one hand, when people said they knew a great deal about Islam, they were less likely to harbor anti-Muslim prejudice. When they said they knew nothing about Islam, they were also less likely to harbor prejudice. It was the people in the middle who said they knew something or thought they knew something that were the most likely to harbor intense prejudice against Muslims. This is good news and bad news. The good news is that Americans, left alone, totally ignorant, are not prejudiced. Prejudice is a taught state of being. Prejudice is something that people acquire. It's not simply the default state because you don't know anything about someone. Americans are as likely to know Buddhists as they are Muslims, yet they harbor virtually no prejudice against Buddhists because there is no anti-Buddhism campaign that they are being fed daily.

Left to their own devices, Americans are an embracing people. They are naturally accepting of people who are different than them. I reject the idea that people fear what they don't know. That's not true. They don't fear what they don't know. They fear what they have been *taught* to fear.

<u>TG:</u> What is the one thing you wish more people in the West knew about Islam?

DM: What I would want people to know is that from an empirical perspective, Islam does not motivate extremist behavior. That sounds like a very hard thing to prove. But when I was at Gallup, we did massive amounts of research on public opinion, specifically on public opinion of terrorism defined as deliberate attacks on civilians. We also looked at Muslim opinions of the attacks of 9/11. What we found in both cases – whether we were asking about a specific incident such as 9/11 or more broadly about terrorism – was that religiosity did not correlate with a propensity to sympathize with these actions. Religiosity in fact in many cases was linked with a rejection of terrorism among Muslims. Islam as a net influence is the reason there is so little terrorism. Islam as a net influence is the reason we don't have more hate and animosity between Muslims and the West. To blame Islam for the actions of a fringe minority is scientifically and empirically false.

TG: Are you hopeful that Muslims will face less discrimination and hostility in a generation from now?

DM: I'm always a cautious optimist, so I think it will be better, and I think it will be better because that's what history tells us. As Americans, we have always overcome our shortcomings. One very interesting timeline that I always show in my presentation slides pertains to interracial marriage in America. When Gallup first started measuring people's attitudes toward interracial marriage back in the 1950s, only 4 percent of Americans approved of it. Both blacks and whites were against it. And now around 86 percent of Americans approve of interracial marriage.

We also amazingly elected a president who is the product of an interracial marriage. When he was born, interracial marriage was illegal in Virginia, which is where I am living right now. He was the first Democratic presidential candidate to win Virginia in decades. What all of those things tell me is that we are a country that is capable of renewal. I have faith in that reality to combat this problem.

Dalia Mogahed *is Director of Research at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding in Washington, DC. Along with John Esposito, she is the co-author of "Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think" (Gallup 2007).*

Todd Green *is Associate Professor of Religion at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. His research focuses on Islamophobia, secularization, and interfaith dialogue in the West.*

For more of this interview go to: http://www.thefearofislam.com/dalia-mogahed/

4: TRUE STORIES OF THE PERSECUTION OF MUSLIMS IN AMERICA

Dr. Sami Al-Arian, the son of Palestinian refugees, University of South Florida professor, born in Kuwait, came to the U.S. in 1975. He was arrested in 2003 and charged with financing and promoting terrorism by Attorney General John Ashcroft. The arrest followed over ten years of government surveillance. Despite processing hundreds of pages of transcribed intercepted phone calls, secretly monitored videos, and dozens of government witnesses, the Department of Justice failed to produce convincing evidence to support Dr. Al-Arian's indictment. Dr. Al-Arian was found not guilty in 2005 after two years of pre-trial detention, during which his conditions were described as "gratuitously punitive" by Amnesty International.

"[T]he most disturbing part of the trial was not that the government offered my speeches, opinions, books, writings, and dreams into evidence, but that an intimidated judicial system allowed them to be admitted into evidence."

Dr. Al-Arian was expected to leave jail in 2007. Instead of being released, he was sentenced an additional 18 months in prison over new charges of refusing to testify in another trial. Dr. Al-Arian undertook a hunger strike to protest his ongoing persecution. His physical deterioration was so profound that the U.S. Marshals Service publically vowed to force-feed if his conditions continued to worsen.

In 2014, a decade after the initial arrest, all charges against Dr. Al-Arian were quietly dropped. Dr. Al-Arian left America in 2015, on a long-planned deportation to Turkey, ending his 40 years of stay in the United States, during which he spent over ten years imprisoned. **"I came to the United States for freedom, but four decades later, I am leaving to gain my freedom,"** Dr. Al-Arian told a journalist at the airport as he prepared to leave the U.S.

Dr. Al-Arian's story remains one of the most high profile cases in the media, against the backdrop of America's post-9/11 "War on Terror." The Department of Justice cited the USA PATRIOT ACT as instrumental in leading to Dr. Al-Arian's arrest. The law notably lowered the bar for the FBI to conduct investigation on certain citizens via intelligence gathering on the ground of suspected terrorism.

Chaumtoli Huq, the then 42-year-old human rights lawyer, sued the NYPD after being arrested for "blocking the sidewalk" in 2014. On the afternoon of July 19, 2014, Huq had been attending a rally with her family in support of Gaza. She was waiting outside a restaurant for her husband and two children to use the restroom when at least two NYPD officers asked her to move. She told them she was waiting for her family, and one officer responded by pushing her against the wall and handcuffing her. During the arrest, one officer found out Huq had a different last name than her husband. He allegedly told her "In America, wives take the names of their husbands."

Huq brought a suit against the NYPD, which said that the incident was "characteristic of a pattern and practice of the NYPD in aggressive over policing of people of color and persons lawfully exercising their First Amendment rights." She sought monetary damages and demanded training for NYPD on Muslim and Asian communities. When the city refused to offer anything beyond monetary compensation, Huq accepted, but expressed her frustration: **"The settlement without any changes is like they paid me for injury due to an open manhole, but didn't fix that manhole."**

"COST OF WAR"

The Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs at Brown University found that since 9/11, several U.S. laws and policies have contributed to an increase in racial profiling of Muslims and people of Arab and South Asian descent.

...the incident was "characteristic of a pattern and practice of the NYPD in aggressive over-policing of people of color and persons lawfully exercising their First Amendment rights."

Racial profiling often leads to over-aggressive treatment of Muslims or persons perceived to be Muslim at airports, schools, or in public spaces such as the street. In 2016 alone, between January and April, there have been six cases of Muslims being pulled off flights, including a 26 year-old Berkley student, after speaking Arabic on the phone before takeoff. Officials are known for detaining and asking Muslim travelers invasive questions such as "Which mosques do you attend?" and "When did you become a Muslim?" Incidents like these not only subject Muslims worldwide to increased scrutiny and harassment, but potentially violate the Constitutional rights of American Muslim citizens.

5: MUSLIM AMERICANS POST 9/11: IDENTITY, CRISIS, AND ALIENATION

"ISLAM" AND "THE WEST"

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the world has seen a large wave of migration from the Islamic world to the West.

Today, the Muslim Minorities are growing populations in North America and Europe.

CAIR—the Council on American-Islamic Relations—candidly suggests that in today's contemporary reality, Islam and Muslims can no longer be viewed as "foreign." "Islam vs. the West" is an outdated frame of reference. Rather, **"Islam in the West,"** and **"Islam of the West,"** more accurately captures the experience of Muslim minorities in Europe and the United States of America.

DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS

Migration creates a sense of awareness, a so-called **"double consciousness,"** in which one sees oneself through the eye of an interiorizing other. In America, Muslim migrants bear the burden of negotiating their identities with a dominant culture that routinely misrepresent and stereotype them.

Most Americans image of "the Muslim" comes from TV, news, movies, and other popular media.

Since 9/11, the American culture has increasingly witnessed media portrayals of Muslim minorities as the enemies of democracy and of modern life, as well as terrorists.

"I'm an American Muslim.
I can be both at the same time.
I don't choose one over the other.
I am an American Muslim.
I am both. Simultaneously."

This portrayal continues to encourage the perception that Islam and Muslims are incompatible with the West. Muslim Americans face this stereotype image, especially after 9/11, and are constantly negotiating with their identity in a society that stigmatizes Islam as somehow "un-American."

CBS's Frank Luntz talked to an American Muslim focus group in 2015, asking the provocative question: "Are you Muslim first or American first?" To this, one panelist responded: "I'm an American Muslim. I can be both at the same time. I don't choose one over the other. I am an American Muslim. I am both. Simultaneously." While another participant pointed out that "American Muslims come from 77 different countries, speak over a hundred a different languages and dialects. We are lumped together a lot in the media. And largely the narrative is something of ISIS or someone else. *That's not our narrative.*"

CBS News, Muslim American focus group, 2015.12.18

ALIENATION

This stigmatization creates an identity crisis for Muslim Americans in post 9/11 United States. Studies have shown a phenomenon of alienation between generations in immigrant minorities, particularly within Asian American families, arising from differing values between these generations, especial parent/child.

Alienation between parent and child is by no means exceptional to immigrant minorities. Children of divorced parents also sometimes experience heightened sense of alienation; adolescents in general may be distancing themselves from their parents' values and cultures in the progress of developing their own identities.

However, the effects of alienation are often exacerbated in minority immigrant experience, due to a lack of support from the society to help cope with the identity crisis. Amir—the main character in *Disgraced*—deals with personal frustrations with his family and his relationships—negotiating multiple identities as a husband, a friend, a lawyer, an American, and a secular Muslim. He adapts alienation as a mechanism to manage his own identity crisis by distancing himself from what he perceives as the root of the problem: Islam. Amir's identity crisis is worsened by the narrative of the post 9/11 "War on Terror," which encourages him to further associate his negative experience with the generalized Islam. This relates back to the portrayal of Muslims in popular media as the enemies, which not only perpetuates the fear and prejudice, but has damaging psychological effects on the Muslim minority in America.

6: Muslim Women and Headscarves

For Muslim women in America, a headscarf — or hijab — is a visible sign of their faith and identity, and whether to wear one is a big decision.

"Before I wore hijab, making friends with people who weren't Muslim was a lot easier," says Maryam Adamu. Before she began wearing a headscarf three years ago, people didn't know she was Muslim — until she told them. "I, like, Trojan-horsed my Islam," she says, laughing. "Like, 'You're already my friend. I know you like me. Now you know I'm Muslim, and you're going to learn about this faith.'" Once she started wearing a headscarf, she encountered a social obstacle she hadn't seen before. "Now, I have to work a lot harder to get into people's lives who aren't Muslim," she says.

For some women, that can be a burden. Asma Uddin, born in Miami to Pakistani parents, is devout in her religious beliefs, but she stopped wearing a headscarf when it started interfering with her work as a lawyer. "I was tired of being a political spokesperson for my faith," she says. "I felt that I should be able to put that away, and wearing a headscarf in public doesn't give you that luxury. I was tired of trying to prove that Muslim women in headscarves are also empowered, 'Look at me. I'm working in a white-shoe law firm with a headscarf.'

Asra Nomani, who describes herself as a Muslim reformer, co-wrote a provocative op-ed in the Washington Post asking non-Muslim women not to wear headscarves, even in solidarity, because in her judgment it stands for "an interpretation of Islam we reject." "The headscarf has become a political symbol for an ideology of Islam that is exported to the world by the theocracies of the governments of Iran and Saudi Arabia." The commentary provoked an outcry among "hijabi" Muslim women in the United States, many of whom bristled at the suggestion that wearing a headscarf signals their submission to a conservative Islamic ideology.

"I support women who choose to wear it [and] who choose not to," says Yasmin Elhady, a civil rights attorney who was born in Egypt and raised in Alabama. "I don't believe that anyone should comment on why women should or shouldn't wear it. I think that if women want to ... we should be supportive."

Dalia Mogahed, born in Wisconsin to parents from Egypt, didn't even like the question "Do Non-Muslims Help or Hurt Women by Wearing Hijabs?" As research director of the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, she focuses on the American Muslim community. "Some Muslim women wear hijab, some don't, and it's just not an issue," she says. "It's a non-issue. But then you have one person write an engaging article, and suddenly it's a debate that we're supposed to be having, [a debate] that we are not having."

Source: "American Muslim Women Explain Why They Do-Or Don't Cover" by Tom Gjelten of NPR.org

Excerpt from the *New York Times* article, "Muslim Women on the Veil" by Hanna Ingber, May 27, 2015:

To some, a Muslim head scarf represents patriarchal oppression in a backward society. To others, it symbolizes modesty, identity and respect for a higher being.

Sadiya Patel: "I chose to start wearing the veil three years ago, even though the girls in my family don't. I chose to wear it myself after I studied Islam and thought it was a beautiful way to express my love for my religion and nothing more… I believe it's wrong to force anyone to wear it as well as to force anyone to remove it. You're taking away an individual's right to her religious freedom... It's a piece of cloth for God's sake. What harm does it cause anyone? Only narrow-minded and uninformed views cause harm to a society."

Safiya: The one thing I don't understand is why people assume hijab/niqab is a symbol of oppression. Never once in my life have I been told to wear the hijab. For me it has always been part of my life growing up… When I wear my hijab it makes me feel confident, I feel like myself, this is how I have always been. But this isn't how the majority of the world looks upon the hijab. We live in a strange society where walking around half naked is acceptable but being modest and covering up is frowned upon… the fact that forcing a woman to not wear what she likes is OK, when clearly it is oppression itself. "

Shanonda: I am a Muslim woman who has chosen to stop wearing my hijab after having worn it for 10 years (beginning at age 15). I chose to stop wearing my hijab as I did not feel that a piece of fabric made me any more or less pious. During those formative teenage years, I immersed myself in my religion. I wore my hijab by choice, as my parents always gave me the option. Having that choice made me feel empowered. Key word: CHOICE. Taking this choice out of women's hands is, essentially, taking away their power to control how they present themselves to the world.

BB: "…The head covering is a sociocultural influence that has existed for centuries and was acquired by the religion. The head scarf is more an expression of culture and nationality, but has erroneously become a religious symbol."

Kadidja: "…I do not wear the veil. I have seen the women in my family wearing the veil or not wearing it. For me, it's a personal decision, and I think those who decide to wear the veil should have their decision respected. Telling Muslim women to take off their veil excludes them and prevents assimilation. And we all know what happens when people are excluded. Extremists tend to take advantage of that exclusion. Plus, telling a woman not to wear the veil in my opinion is policing what women wear. Why not tell us not to wear shorts, skirts, dresses?"

7: Who's Who?

A guide to the people mentioned in *Disgraced.*

Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi was a philosopher, poet, and spiritual teacher born in Murica, Spain, in 1165. Well known for his writing and impact on the Islamic world, he focused on divine reality and the human experience of it. Though he has written over 800 works, his best known works are, "The Meccan Illuminations" and "The Ringstones of Wisdom." They focus on mystical philosophy, practices, mystical beliefs, and his teachings.

Mulla Sadra was a philosopher and scholar born in Shiraz, Iran in 1571 or 1572. Many of his ideas focused on existentialism, existence as reality, causation, and truth. He's best known for leading the Iranian cultural renaissance in the 17th century. His best known work is a 'philosophical encyclopedia' known as, "The Transcendent Theosophy in the Four Journeys of the Intellect," otherwise known as the "Four Journeys."

Rumi was a poet, Islamic scholar, and theologian born in Vakhsh, Tajikistan in 1207. A current best-seller poet in the United States, Rumi was well known for his writings (poetry and prose). His best known works are "Spiritual Couplets" and "The Works of Shams of Tabriz." Rumi's works cover a wide variety of topics such as love, the source of creation, God, and death.

Martin Amis is a novelist and professor born in Swansea, Wales, United Kingdom in 1949. Amis is best known for the "London Trilogy" which consists of three novels "Money," "London Fields," and "The Information." He has also written on the subjects of nuclear proliferation, Islam and radical Islamism, terrorism, and other various socio-political topics.

Christopher Hitchens was an author, religious/literary critic, and journalist born in Portsmouth, Hampshire, United Kingdom in 1949. An author, co-author, editor or co-editor of over 30 books he is best known for his book "God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything" and his work at *The Atlantic* and *Vanity Fair* magazine. He interests included (criticizing) the Iraq War, religion, and certain public figures such as George W. Bush, Pope Benedict XVI, Bill Clinton, and other socio political topics.

Henry Kissinger is an American diplomat, author, political scientist, Nobel Peace Prize winner, and acted as the United State's Secretary of State for two

different presidents. Born in 1923 in Fürth, Bavaria, Germany he's known for his role in the Vietnam War and his books on politics and international relations such as "Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy," "American Foreign Policy: Three Essays," and "Diplomacy".

Mahmoud Ahmadinajad is an Iranian politician and the main political leader of the Alliance of Builders of Islamic Iran. Born in 1956 in Aradan, Iran Ahmadinajad was the 6th president of Iran between 2005 and 2013. Ahmadinajad went under fire during both terms over alleged corruption, economic policies, and alleged disregard for human rights. He became the first president of Iran to be summoned by the Islamic parliament to answer questions regarding his actions as president.

Jerry Saltz is an art critic, Pulitzer Prize nominee, and author born in Illinois, United States in 1951. He is known for his books, "Seeing Out Loud: The Village Voice Art Columns" and "Seeing Out Louder" both of which include collection of columns he's written over his career. Saltz has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in criticism two times for his art critiques in 2001 and 2006.

Michele Bachmann is an American republican politician and former member of the United States House of Representatives. Born in Waterloo, Iowa, United States in 1956 she is a member of the Tea Party and founder of the House Tea Party Caucus. The first republican woman to represent the state in Congress, during her time as congresswoman Bachmann has voted against the 'College Cost Reduction and Access Act,' 'Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013,' and introduced the 'No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act.'

Anderson Cooper is an American journalist, author, Pulitzer Prize winner, and news anchor born in New York City, New York, United States in 1967. He has worked for ABC, Channel One, and CBS' "60 Minutes," but he is best known for his position as the main news anchor on CNN. He has conducted interviews and covered a wide array of stories on topics such as Chicago police brutality, the crisis and aftermath in Haiti, famine in Somalia, and violence against Muslims.

Benjamin Netanyahu is the current Prime Minister of Israel and a member of the Sayeret Matkal special forces unit (Israeli military) born in Tel Aviv, Israel in 1949. He is known for his role within Palestinian-Israeli negotiations-relations, work on preventing terrorism, and successful economic reforms. When he finishes his term in 2019, Netanyahu will be the longest serving Prime Minister in Israel's history.

8: Art in *Disgraced*

Painted by Spanish artist Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez in 1650, ***Portrait of Juan de Pareja*** (right) was groundbreaking because it was of a slave. A slave as the subject in a work of art was something that was extremely unusual, especially since he was of Moorish decent. *Portrait of Juan de Pareja* implies that Velázquez maintained a level of respect for Pareja that was not typical in master-slave relationships. Years later, after being freed, de Pareja became a painter. Velázquez used very precise brush strokes to make the subject of the painting look real while being done quickly. This portrait is on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

John Constable was an English Romantic painter. His work is primarily landscaping paintings of the Dead Vale region where he lived. This region is now known as "Constable Country" after him. Although his work is highly sought after and valuable today, Constable did not receive much recognition for his work until he was in his fifties when he was elected to the Royal Institution. *Dedham Vale 1802* (left) is one of his most famous paintings. Constable's use of texture and minute detail is what has created such a hype surrounding his work.

Vincent Van Gogh was a self-taught Dutch artist. He drew and painted. After moving to Paris in 1886, Van Gogh met many impressionist painters including Monet. He tried to imitate the Impressionist style of painting but was unsuccessful in replicating the style. Instead, he developed his own style. Van Gogh used deep colors and left visible brush strokes. Van Gogh's most famous painting is *Starry Nights* (right).

Pierre Bonnard has been described as "the most thoroughly idiosyncratic of all the great twentieth-century painters," and the unusual vantage points of his compositions rely less on traditional modes of pictorial structure than voluptuous color, poetic allusions, and visual wit. Identified as a late practitioner of Impressionism, Bonnard has since been recognized for his unique use of color and his complex imagery. Bonnard was fascinated with perspective and with the tricks of perspective. In some of his work he used color to create spatial movement. He also made use of overlapping planes of color. Bonnard also developed furniture and textile patterns; this aspect of his practice reflects that period's interest in the decorative as a way to unify the environment through largely abstract means.

Hanif Saeed is a fictional sculptor. The name "Hanif" means "true believer." Hanif refers to one who, according to Islamic belief, maintained the pure monotheism of the patriarch Abraham. More specifically, according to Islamic thought, are the people who, during the period known as the Pre-Islamic period, were seen to have rejected idolatry and retained the tenents of the religion of Abraham, which was "submission to God" in its purist form. Idolatry is the deification or worship of anyone or anything other than the singular God, Allah. Literally, it means ascribing, or the establishment of, "partners" placed beside God, including the worship of wealth and other material objects. The name "Saeed" means "fortunate, blissful."

9: ISLAMIC ART

Excerpt of essay by Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis

The Dome of the Rock, the Taj Mahal, a Mina'i ware bowl, a silk carpet, a Qur'an—all of these are examples of Islamic art. But what is Islamic art? It is a modern concept created by art historians in the 19th century to facilitate categorization and study of the material first produced under the Islamic peoples that emerged from Arabia in the seventh century.

Today, the term Islamic art describes all of the arts that were produced in the lands where Islam was the dominant religion or the religion of those who ruled. Unlike the terms Christian art, Jewish art, and Buddhist art—which refer only to religious art of these faiths—the term Islamic art is not used merely to describe religious art or architecture, but applies to all art forms produced in the Islamic world.

Thus, the term Islamic art refers not only to works created by Muslim artists, artisans, and architects or for Muslim patrons. It encompasses works created by Muslim artists for patrons of any faith, including—Christians, Jews, or Hindus—and the works created by Jews, Christians, and others living in Islamic lands for patrons, Muslim and otherwise.

One of the most famous monuments of Islamic art is the Taj Mahal, a royal mausoleum, located in Agra, India. Hinduism is the majority religion in India; however, because Muslim rulers, most famously the Mughals, dominated large areas of modern-day India for centuries, India has a vast range of Islamic art and architecture. The Great Mosque of Xian, China is one of the oldest and best preserved mosques in China. First constructed in 742 CE, the mosque's current form dates to the 15th century CE and follows the plan and architecture of a contemporary Buddhist temple. In fact, much Islamic art and architecture was—and still is—created through a synthesis of local traditions and more global ideas.

Islamic art is not a monolithic style or movement; it spans 1,300 years of history and has incredible geographic diversity—Islamic empires and dynasties controlled territory from Spain to western China at various points in history. However, few, if any, of these various countries or Muslim empires would

have referred to their art as Islamic. An artisan in Damascus thought of his work as Syrian or Damascene—not as Islamic.

As a result of thinking about the problems of calling such art Islamic, certain scholars and major museums, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, have decided to omit the term Islamic when they renamed their new galleries of Islamic art. Instead, they are called “Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia,” thereby stressing the regional styles and individual cultures. Thus, when using the phrase, Islamic art, one should know that it is a useful, but artificial, concept.

In some ways, Islamic art is a bit like referring to the Italian Renaissance. During the Renaissance, there was no unified Italy; it was a land of independent city-states. No one would have thought of themselves as an Italian, or of the art they produced as Italian. Rather, a person would have self-identified as a Roman, a Florentine, or a Venetian. Each city developed a highly local, remarkable style. At the same time, there are certain underlying themes or similarities that unify the art and architecture of these cities and allow scholars to speak of an Italian Renaissance.

Similarly, there are themes and types of objects that link the arts of the Islamic world together. **Calligraphy** is a very important art form in the Islamic world. The Qur’an, written in elegant scripts, represents Allah’s—or God’s—

divine word, which Muhammad received directly from Allah during his visions. Quranic verses, executed in calligraphy, are found on many different forms of art and architecture. Likewise, poetry can be found on everything from ceramic bowls to the walls of houses. Calligraphy’s omnipresence underscores the value that is placed on language, specifically Arabic.

Geometric and vegetative motifs are very popular throughout the lands where Islam was once or still is a major religion and cultural force, appearing in the private palaces of buildings such as the Alhambra, in Spain, as well as in the detailed metal work of Safavid Iran. Likewise, **certain building types appear throughout the Islamic world**: mosques with their minarets, mausolea, gardens, and madrasas—religious schools—are all common. However, their forms vary greatly.

Islamic tiling traditions are geometric patterns created with individual tiles that are cut into geometric shapes and placed in intricate patterns. These designs typically adorn Islamic architecture, but are also used on a number of decorative items. Tiling dates back to the Ancient Greeks and Romans, but is often associated with Islam. The Great Mosque of Heret in Heret, Afghanistan, was built in the 15th century and is decorated in Islamic tiling.

10: LOOKING AT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

What is Intimate Partner Violence?

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the emotional abuse, and physical and/or emotional violence between two people in a committed relationship. It often affects not only the persons directly involved in the violence, but the children and other family members.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), there are more than 20,000 phone calls placed to domestic violence hotlines in the United States on a typical day. Statistically, **1 in 5 women** and **1 in 7 men** have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. During one year, this number equates to more than 10 million women and men who experience violence in an intimate relationship.

Who is Affected?

Although no one demographic group is immune, certain sub-populations in the U.S. are more affected by intimate partner violence. Women, in particular, are disproportionally affected.

The percentage of women who are the victims of domestic violence is higher in many Muslim countries than the U.S. (22%). The following are the percentages of victims of domestic violence in several countries: Afghanistan (90%), Iran (66%), Pakistan (80%), and Turkey (80%).

Women experience a higher rate of violence in relationships compared to their male counterparts, and are more likely to die of intimate partner violence. For instance, a 2014 study found that over 77% of the intimate partner homicide victims were female.

Racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to experience intimate partner violence in their lifetimes. Low income, rural, LGBT, and immigrant populations are also at higher risk of intimate partner violence, showing a correlation between economic and social disadvantages and vulnerability towards violence in intimate relationships.

IF YOU NEED HELP:
CALL National Domestic Violence 24/7 Confidential Hotline: **1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**

Timeline: The Jewish- Muslim Conflict

The relationship between Muslim and Jewish followers has been rocky dating back as far as biblical times. According to the Bible, Jews and Muslims are descendants of a set of brothers; the sons of Abraham. Both religions are considered Abrahamic religions. The dispute of the brothers is believed to be the beginning of Jewish-Muslim conflict. This conflict has grown into a much larger issue of land and religion. Many wars have been fought over land, power, and religious freedom. Much of the conflict occurs between Israel and Palestine, although Palestine is only one of many Muslim regions.

1250 B.C.—333 B.C.
Moses led the Hebrew people out of Egypt. They created their own kingdom around 1020 B.C.

640 A.D.
Muslim Arabs captured Palestine. This region was declared Muslim.

1897 Zionism was founded.
It is a Jewish movement whose goal is to create a safe "homeland" for the Jewish people in Palestine; a primarily Muslim region.

1917 The fall of the Ottoman Empire
Britain gained control over Palestine and agreeing with the Zionist movement, elected to create a home for Jews. This caused uproar and backlash because Muslims felt this decision was unfair.

1929
In August 1929, Palestinians allegedly killed 133 Jews and 110 Palestinians were killed by British law enforcement. This added to the already increasing animosity between the groups. Jews began to migrate to Europe to escape the chaos.

1947

The British handed over the responsibility of the Zionist-Muslim dispute to the UN. The UN voted to divide Palestine into separate states for the Muslims and Jews. 55% of the land west of the Jordan River was declared Jewish. The Muslims did not agree with this outcome.

1948

The State of Israel declared its independence. This declaration sparked an invasion by Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq, and Lebanon. Israel held its own. In 1949, Israel established its borders.

THE PALESTINE POST

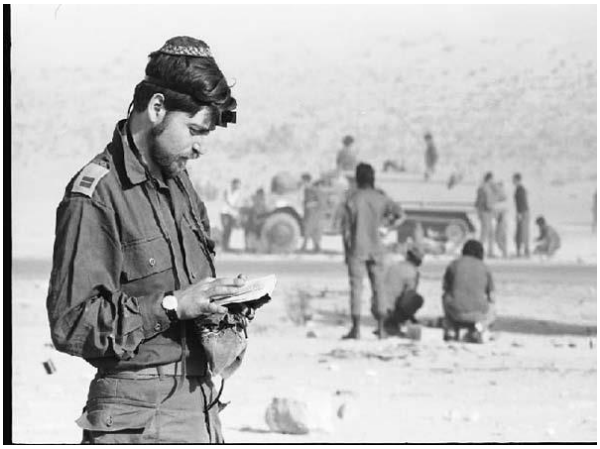
STATE OF ISRAEL IS BORN

1967 The Six-Day War

Tension between Israel and its Arab neighbors led to six days of hostility; June 5-11. Israel's victory indicated a new level of confidence and optimism.

1973

Egypt and Syria launched attacks against Israel on Yom Kippur, the Jewish festival day of Atonement. The United States, Soviet Union, and United Nations intervened to settle for a ceasefire.



1979

Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty. The Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt.

1993

Negotiations between Israeli and Muslim leaders led to peace between Palestine and Israel. Palestinian self-rule was agreed upon and Palestine gained control over more of the region that it previously had.

1999-the present

Violence continues on both sides after many failed attempts at negotiating for peace.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. A central issue of this piece is related to racial stereotyping. How did you connect to this issue on a personal level? Do you ever catch yourself judging others by their appearance before you meet them? How do you police yourself when you catch yourself stereotyping?

2. The play begins with Emily painting a portrait of Amir and ends with Amir regarding that painting. Think of that final moment of the play, the expression on Amir's face. What do you think was he thinking and/or feeling?

3. Playwright Ayad Akhtar said: "The productive processing of rage is the central question of our time." Think about that quote in light of what you've seen: are there moments where rage drove the characters' actions? What was the source of that rage? How could things have gone differently?

4. Consider the position that Amir was in at the beginning of the play. Have you ever willingly hidden or denied your identity from others due to fear of negative reactions or repercussions?

5. What do you think this play is saying about the American Dream and the assumption tied to that dream that regardless of ethnicity, gender, class, or religion, if you work hard you will eventually succeed and move up the social ladder?