

Full Program Transcript for Integrating Islam (June 2008)

From Public Radio International, I'm Elizabeth Arnold.

And I'm Ray Suarez, and this is America Abroad.

[RAY SUAREZ] The current tension between the Muslim world and the West doesn't just play out in the sands of the Middle East—the friction is often as apparent on the streets of London, Paris and Amsterdam now that over 15 million Muslims live in Europe.

Many of these immigrants have settled in nicely to life ...but some have not.

The religious practices and conservative values of many Muslim immigrants are in stark contrast to the secular and liberal European societies they live in.

Combine that with the poverty and discrimination Muslim immigrants often face, and the result can be tense and sometimes dangerous.

The threat of Islamic terrorism and the fear that Muslim immigrants will transform the secular society have caused concern throughout Europe.

These concerns have fuelled a backlash and sparked the rise of anti-immigration parties across the continent

NEWS REPORT:

Right wing MP Geert Wilders compares the Koran to Hitler's Mein Kampf...he wants to send Muslim immigrants back to their countries of origin

While there have been numerous plots and arrests in the US, America has not seen the home grown extremism evident in Europe. But there are plenty in the US wondering if or when that will change. So this hour we'll compare the situation of Muslims in Europe with that of American Muslims. We'll explore how the liberal norms of Dutch society clash with the immigrant population's Islamic faith. And we'll head to Boston and Chicago to see how Muslim immigration fits into the American melting pot—But first, Elizabeth Arnold traces the Muslim immigrant journey in Europe, from temporary guest worker to uneasy resident.

[SOUND OF BOMBS EXPLODING AND PEOPLE SCREAMING]

NEWS REPORT:

One eye-witness said it was a scene from hell, gaping holes through the twisted and charred metal, where once there were seats and people.

[ELIZABETH ARNOLD] Several deadly bombs rocked the Atocha Train station in downtown Madrid on March 11 of 2004.

These bombings were the first of a series of violent wake up calls to European officials that there were dangerous pockets of extremism within the 15 million strong Muslim-European community.

As a result, those governments have been scrambling to find ways to create a peaceful modus vivendi with their Muslim residents.

But Muslim immigrants to Europe weren't always thought of as a problem...Early on they were a solution to labor shortages in a continent decimated by World War II and trying to regain its economic footing.

NEWS REPORT:

The large influx of colored people from commonwealth countries has created several problems but Britain does not intend to call a halt...the government's attitude on the matter will remain liberal and humane as it has been all along.

Gilles Kepel is the author of *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom* and *The War from Muslim Lines*, a Professor at The Institute of Political Studies in Paris.

KEPEL:

But they were not perceived as Muslims, per se... they were called migrant workers or Gastarbeiter in German or travailleurs immigrés in French, and they came as singles. They were males. They were occupied, and they would spend a few years in Europe, making as much money as possible, sending remittances back to their country of origin and usually coming back one day and being replaced by a cousin or a relative.

The economic advantages of life in Europe turned many of these "temporary" workers into permanent residents.

But when the Europe's economies sputtered in the early 1970s the opportunities for these workers dried up.

KEPEL:

And that came a time when there was a major identity crisis because those people were unemployed. They didn't have a working-class identity anymore. They didn't unionize anymore, and they were not really feeling Algerian or Moroccan or Pakistani or Indian anymore, but they were not

yet feeling French or German or British. It's in the sort of vacuum between those previous identities that then this Islamic dimension developed.

That Islamic dimension received heightened attention in 1989 with the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. The irreverent critique of Islam sparked protests among Muslims throughout Europe and around the globe.

[SOUND OF RIOTING PEOPLE]

NEWS REPORT:

The official aim of this march is to enforce the law of blasphemy, get the satanic verses banned, and have it also put on trial.

Ayatollah Khomeini even issued a fatwa condemning Rushdie to death. It was a harbinger of increasing tension between the Muslim world and the west.

During the 1990s, radical Islamic ideologies began to gain strength among the Muslim world. Europe was not immune. It was in the German city of Hamburg that the plot to use airplanes as weapons against the United States developed. Two and a half years after 9/11, the threat of Islamic terrorism became a reality in Europe when bombs ripped through Madrid. European governments had taken steps to tackle the challenges presented by growing immigrant populations. Since the 1980s, Great Britain and the Netherlands began to carry out a policy of multiculturalism that sought to emphasize, and respect, the religious and ethnic differences of their immigrant communities.

But that strategy had problems.

In November of 2004 the controversial Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh was brutally murdered.

NEWS REPORT:

Van Gogh's most recent collaborator was Ayan Hirsi Ali, a former Muslim and now conservative Dutch MP. [sound from film]. In their short film, Submission, a veiled Muslim woman told the story of a violent marriage and rape by a relative. It caused outrage among the Muslim community.

And seven months later, in July of 2005, London was rocked by bombings throughout the city.

NEWS REPORT:

A new reality is setting across Britain. The reality—young men born here are turning to terrorism. Shazad Tanwir was born in Britain to Pakistani parents, educated in English schools and university...played British sports—cricket and soccer—dressed like his English friends ...but is now said by police to have been one of the London bombers.

KEPEL:

Well, the London bombings and the stabbing of Theo van Gogh...were perceived as something that questioned the political model that had made that possible, and one of the reasons the multi-culti system, which was very strong in both the UK and the Netherlands is now in deep crisis because many people to turn a blind eye on those issues now consider that multiculturalism was smashed open by terrorist practice and that terrorism could develop because multiculturalism, gave opacity to groups that would not integrate into the fold.

The French did things very differently...their goal was to integrate every immigrant into France's strictly secular society.
But that process has also been rocky.

NEWS REPORT:

The opening of school always has measure of anxiety to it, but French schools reopened with more than the usual stress and confusion, especially for some Muslim high school girls. The new law forbidding them from wearing conspicuous signs of religion like headscarves is now in effect...

But it isn't just cultural or religious differences that have impeded the integration of Europe's Muslims.
Liberty, Fraternity, and Equality may be the motto of the French Republic, but many Muslim immigrants feel they had been denied that dream.

[PEOPLE RIOTING]

NEWS REPORT:

In the high-rise housing projects outside Paris, rioters torched hundreds of cars and busses, businesses were burned, police and firefighters shot at.

In 2005 rioting exploded in France.

KEPEL:

Actually Islamists were not really very present in those riots...it was mainly something that had to do with the desire to be better integrated...to have better access to French society...

The Terrorist attacks in controversy over the 2006 Danish cartoons mocking the Prophet Muhammad has prompted European governments to reinvigorate their efforts to integrate their growing Muslim populations. The British Task Force formed after the London bombings is one example.

NEWS REPORT:

There is little more pressing for the prime minister than preventing other would-be suicide bombers getting through-hence his summit today with opposition parties, police, and Muslim leaders. Those who came to this meeting now face tough challenges; how to find ways for government and Muslims together to prevent young people turning to extremes.

At the same time, Gilles Kepel says Muslim communities have work to do.

KEPEL:

Islam can find its place on the condition that Muslim leaders and thinkers in Europe take seriously the intellectual, political and cultural dimension of Europe. They have to be European first. On the other hand, you have a number of people who consider that Europe is...sort of passive thing, which has to be conquered by jihad, and I believe this is still a minority feeling, but then the debate is raging between those two conceptions.

In recent years Holland has been on the frontline of the war for Muslim minds America Abroad's Ray Suarez takes a look at how the country's new generation of Muslims is struggling to reconcile their Islamic faith with a Dutch identity.

For America Abroad, I'm Elizabeth Arnold.

[SOUND OF BEEL TOWER]

[RAY SUAREZ] Tourists flock to Amsterdam year round. Some come for the flower markets and picture postcard streets, others for the red-light district and legalized drugs. And while it's still a city of bicycles, canals and coffee shops, in other respects it's changing rapidly. You only need to look at the local birth register to see how.

GOLYARDI:

Mohammed is the most popular name in Amsterdam. Jan, Hank, Frank is maybe four or five.

That's Farhad Golyardi, a sociologist and editor of the journal *Eutopia* – an international magazine focusing on multi-cultural issues.

GOLYARDI:

And all these small Mohammed, right now they are one, two, three years old, after 20 years they're going to be in majority here in this city. And society must deal with them. The Dutch society must accept that Islam is part of the society.

Muslim immigrants make up around one million of Holland's 16 million inhabitants, and about 13 percent of the population in the country's four major cities. Among inner city youth, that figure is close to fifty percent. Unemployment and illiteracy rates are disproportionately high in the Muslim community. But that's not the only reason Muslim immigration has become a hot button political issue.

One of the most vocal critics of Holland's Muslims is politician Geert Wilders. He summed up his views in this interview with the BBC:

WILDERS:

I believe unfortunately, that not only the Netherlands but all western societies are experiencing a clash of civilizations. There is a growing minority who is fighting against our democratic principles by using violence. But also there is a large amount of people who...have sympathy to the concept of the radical Islam. If we don't see what this kind of Islam wants to do to our Western society, we are losing our societies. We are losing our countries. If we want to fight this problem, we should stop being tolerant to the intolerant.

CLITEUR:

People like to get offended by what he says, but what offends me is that it is necessary to have such heavy protection on a Dutch politician.

Paul Cliteur is a professor of law at Leiden University.

CLITEUR:

He's walking around with security every 24 hours. We haven't seen that in years. We had in 1584, the Dutch Prince of Orange was murdered by a Catholic fanatic. That's so long ago. But now again we are in a situation of having politicians under threat by religious extremists.

And not just under threat. In the last few years, Holland has seen the assassinations of politician Pim Fortuyn and filmmaker Theo van Gogh. Former member of parliament, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, lived under government protection for two years before leaving the Netherlands for the US. All were known for their outspoken criticism of Islam.

Cliteur thinks that more recent Dutch history goes some way towards explaining the current situation:

CLITEUR:

The multiculturalists' ideology is very much responsible for the problems that we have now, if you say that democracy is a typical European phenomenon that's the same as totalitarianism and other kind of world views, you can never say which world view is better than another. That's cultural relativism. And we are constantly excusing ourselves here for having democracy. "Sorry. We have democracy. Yeah, sorry, we can't suppress Salman Rushdie and Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Theo van Gogh and all those other people." We should stand for freedom of speech, for human rights, that would be a better approach than trying to understand the murderers.

There are many factors that can lead to the radicalization of Holland's young Muslims, says Fatima Lhamkarrat. She's a social worker in Rotterdam, Holland's second largest city, and home to over 150,000 Muslims.

LHAMKARRAT:

I work in a neighborhood where 90 percent of our youngsters are foreign born, and 60 percent of them are Moroccan. They cannot express their frustration because they don't have the money or the education or the skills – so many things they lack. So they are so vulnerable to people who say, "Hey brother [salem aleikum], I have the answer", answering to Salafism or other parts of religion that are sometimes violent or extremist or other dangerous paths. And we always blame the youngsters, not the system. In my view, we have to look at the system.

Han Entzinger is a professor of sociology at Rotterdam's Erasmus University. He explains how the present system came about.

ENTZINGER:

In the early days, when the immigrants' presence here was perceived as temporary, there was no need to launch an immigration policy. And at a later stage, an integration policy was launched but it was called, interestingly, 'Integration with Retention of People's Own Cultural Identity', which is very much in line with the old Dutch tradition where the different religious communities, in the Netherlands, have their own provisions, their own infrastructure. And it was simply believed that, as a result of immigration, a few new communities had been added to this already existing patchwork. But at the same time, this served as a way of excluding the newcomers from mainstream Dutch society because they too were given their own schools and their own organizations, under the label of multiculturalism. Kind of live and let live.

Since the murders of Fortuyn and Van Gogh, things have started to change:

ENTZINGER:

These events set into motion a much more assimilative policy, there was much more stress on the need among the immigrants to learn the language, the need to participate more fully in society, to participate in the political process, etc.

And Holland's raising the bar on would-be immigrants, too – they're required to pass a language and culture test before they can apply for citizenship. To test people's openness to Holland's liberal culture applicants have to watch a film that shows topless women sunbathing, and gay couples kissing.

For Fatima Lhamkarrat, native Dutch citizens must learn to be more open, too:

LHAMKARRAT:

If we see what Dutch society knows about Islam, it's the things that come through the media right into your living room. Bombings, self-suicides in Pakistan, in Lebanon, and whatever. If you don't live in a big city where you meet Muslims, then you don't have another idea. We are not in history books. Islam is not mentioned. We are not in the businesses, we don't have journalists. So many fields in the society that Muslims are not represented, so people are only faced every time with the bad image. So of course there is Islamophobia. Sometimes I think, "Go use your head. Go and study. You have Islamic Centers everywhere. You have your neighbor. Ring a bell, come in and talk to me.

And she's trying to get people talking to one another. She took us to an event she organized at a community center in Rotterdam.

LHAMKARRAT:

We have a dialogue planned between young people and elderly people...because we see that the elderly people in our cities are white and old and sometimes they have misunderstandings and they don't understand the youth that is young and colorful – immigrants, Muslims.

Woody was one of the older Dutch people at the event:

WOODY:

That's also important that we get more understanding about each other, about the culture, about the way of thinking. When we don't do anything about it, all the people go to their own side – the Moroccans, the Muslims. It's important to understand each other.

Yessin is 17, Muslim and of Moroccan descent. He says that even though he's a citizen, the society doesn't accept him as fully Dutch.

YESSIN:

I'm born here, yes. But I surprise people, if they talk to me, they listen to me, they think, oh, his Dutch is very good. I surprise people. I can speak very good Dutch. And if I won something for Holland, then I'm a Dutchman, but if I steal, I'm Moroccan.

And the challenge of reconciling immigrant Muslim identity with a fully Dutch identity is also a problem within the Muslim community, says Mohammed Cheppih. He's Chairman of Islamica Academica and founder of Amsterdam's Polder Mosque – it's named after the Dutch consensus building political model.

CHEPPIH:

This is the main entrance to the Polder Mosque. The name says it all – polder, which is something really Dutch, and a mosque. It's a Dutch mosque, an alternative mosque. Specially for the new generation.

The mosque won't open until later this year, but Cheppih showed us around the building.

CHEPPIH:

Let's go upstairs... This is the prayer hall, we call it the shoes-free hall. Another thing that makes this mosque special in Holland and Europe as well is that in this mosque there will be no separation between men and women. There will be no curtains or walls between them and Imam. That is very important to take away the barriers.

The Polder Mosque is also at the forefront of another new initiative:

CHEPPIH:

The language of the prayer hall will be Dutch. That's also very important. If you look now to our mosques, they're imported from the country of origin... There's no local policy. It can work for a lot of years but there's a moment – especially for the young generation, when it doesn't work anymore.

The Dutch government has recently started an imam-licensing program. The idea is to produce homegrown imams who speak the language and know the culture of Holland. The government wants to reduce the influence of the more radical foreign imams currently preaching in many Dutch mosques. For Cheppih, though, it's personal:

CHEPPIH:

I'm raised up here. I do speak Arabic, but I still dream in the Dutch language, which means if somebody speaks to me Dutch, I can express myself much better than I could in Arabic. And if I can't do that with my religion, it hurts. I hope this is a way to give people the space to be their selves, to be Dutch knowing they don't have to lose their religious identity. We try to make Islam compatible with society.

And that's particularly important right now, Cheppih says.

CHEPPIH:

People like Wilders they make big mistakes in looking at people like me and saying "you don't belong here". That's a joke. I do belong here. I'm part of society. I'm Dutch, more than anything else. And we should say this more and we should act more like we are part. Most of us from Muslim backgrounds, from different ethnic backgrounds, they want to be treated as part, but they don't treat themselves as part of society, and we should get away from that position.

Former Dutch parliamentarian Ayaan Hirsi Ali agrees. She credits projects like Cheppih's to Holland's recognition that its multicultural policies have failed.

Because of her security situation, she could only speak to us by phone.

ALI:

Multiculturalism creates the false promise that as a minority with deviant traditions and religious dogmas, you can successfully live and advance in a modern liberal society and that it is up to the modern liberal society to exempt you from some of the obligations that everyone else has. I think all these attempts from the side of Muslim minorities to show that they want to become Dutch, French, British is an outcome of the confrontation of worlds that we've been having. In response to that, young European Muslims have been trying to show they can be a Muslim, and they can be a European.

And try as they might, Europe's young Muslims can't have it both ways.

ALI:

Muslims can live and they can thrive in a liberal democracy on condition, of course, that they set aside some of their Islamic principles. Islam a religious philosophy, but it has a very strong political, cultural and social component. So, as liberal democracy's basic principles say the individual is free, men and women

should be treated equally before the law, church and state are separate and all of that, those principles of liberal democracy and those principles of Islam clash and are incompatible.

The challenges for Holland's moderate Muslims go beyond the theological, there are cultural obstacles too.

The Polder Mosque is in Amsterdam's Slotervaart district. Over half of its 45,000 residents are Muslim immigrants. Local stores sell Turkish and Moroccan products, and in certain areas you'll hear more Arabic and Turkish being spoken on the street than Dutch.

Ahmed Marcouch is mayor of Slotervaart, and Holland's first Muslim mayor.

MARCOUCH:

In Slotervaart we have social problems and integration problems. And what you see is the mentality of the victim. I am not the problem, the other are problem – it's the government, and the white people. That kind of story you hear. Of course there is discrimination but you have to act, you have rights but you also have responsibility, and you have to be a citizen in Holland.

And by being challenging his Muslim constituents to take responsibility, Marcouch has come under attack from some members of Holland's Muslim community

MARCOUCH:

It is not forbidden to wear a burqa. I will respect that, but I ask from the wearing of the burqas that they also respect the homosexual because it is the same freedom. And that's a mechanism that a lot of orthodox or radical Muslims don't want to understand. Of course we have to defend that right to be a Muslim but if you want society to know about Islam, the Muslims has to tell them. Talk about the issues like the position of the man and the woman in society. Talk about the hijab. Is it important, or is the job more important? Which choice to you make, and how do you make it? That kind of debate is very necessary, and the Muslims have to do it. You can't be passive and think that things organize themselves.

Holland's non-Muslims can't be passive either, Marcouch says. They have to have their own debate with the Muslim community.

MARCOUCH:

It's very difficult now, politically, to start this discussion because a lot of Dutch citizens don't want to restart the religion debate because they thought we finished that debate with the Protestant and the Catholic religion war in the past in Holland. But it is necessary to do it again in our time. It is the debate about Islam.

For America Abroad, I'm Ray Suarez.

[SONG IN ARABIC]

Coming up, we'll visit some Muslim communities in the US to see how the situation here differs from that in Europe. That's next in integrating Islam, from America Abroad.

[ELIZABETH ARNOLD]

I'm Elizabeth Arnold, and you're listening to Integrating Islam, from America Abroad. While European countries continue to wrestle with the best approach to integrate their Muslim immigrants, many in the US wonder whether any of the violent extremism seen there could emerge in America. There are stark differences between the Muslim immigrant populations in Europe and the US. In America, the estimated 3-8 million Muslims account for less than one percent of the population whereas five to ten percent of the French population is estimated to be Muslim. And in general, Muslims in the US are well integrated into broader society.

Wayland, Massachusetts is a postcard New England suburb. The upper middleclass town sits 15 miles west of Boston. The median household income is just over one hundred thousand dollars. More than 90% of the 13,000 residents are white. The town is home to two golf courses, the Broomstones Curling Club,

[SOUND CLIP OF GREETING IN ARABIC]

and the Islamic Center of Boston.

The Bay State, where the Pilgrims landed and Irish Catholics are an institution, might not seem like a place you'd find many Muslims. But there are an estimated 70,000 in the Boston area, and every week throngs gather in Wayland so their kids can attend Islamic Sunday School at one of the ten mosques in Massachusetts...

[CHILDREN AND ADULTS SINGING IN ARABIC]

MUHAMMED:

"My name is Tazni Muhammed, and I live in Salem, New Hampshire. I'm a high school math teacher, and I was born in Scotland. Been in the US for about 10 years. My grandfather moved to Scotland in the late fifties from Pakistan... Integration is really forced upon Muslims in the US because families tend to live in the suburbs, and there aren't as many Muslim families in the towns that they can relate to.

Between classes, children run around the lobby playing with each other and eating pizza. This Sunday is Mother's Day in the US, and people like Tazni have come from as far as New Hampshire to experience a shared sense of community.

MUHAMMED:

Integration is not as forced upon in Scotland because the communities are still tight. My mother for instance would go to her own local shops and she spoke her own language despite the fact that she lived in Britain for 20-30 years. Most of the immigrants that came to Britain came back in the '50s and '60s when Britain opened its doors to immigration, on working visas. Whereas most of the community in the US came in the '70s and came through on study visas, and they're more educated.

This is a critical dynamic that many people point to: the American Muslim population is far more educated than their counterparts in Europe. In fact, a higher percentage of foreign-born Muslims in the US have graduate level education than the American public as a whole. And the story of Muslims at this mosque is one of educated professionals from all over the world living out the American dream.

MARAJ:

My name is Noreen Maraj, I live in Shrewsbury, MA, and by education I'm a social worker. My background is Pakistani. I identify myself as American, because I really don't know any other way of life. However at home we were brought up with our Pakistani culture very much in tact. I speak Urdu fluently. My parents were on the more conservative side about what I wore and dating and things like that. Middle school was tough, it was a struggle, I can't lie about that. But as I grew up and gained confidence in who I am, I noticed it was a lot easier to be who I want to be, and practice my religion or my culture.

Hundreds of years ago, the colonists fought for the right to practice *their* religion and culture. American soldiers fighting off British rule marched along Boston Post Road where this mosque stands today.

Rema Al-Sharawi is a physician from Bahrain. She came to the US 10 years ago.

AL-SHARAWI:

I used to spend a lot of my childhood summers in Europe. As a child I would walk down the streets, and there would be people telling me "Bloody Arab." I've never had that experience in the states. My kids don't have that experience. They have friends from all over. So, I think that people here are more understanding, more accepting, then perhaps the Europeans.

And the broader religious community is accepting as well. The basement of St. Paul's Episcopal cathedral in downtown Boston is a long way from Mecca. But, for the lawyers, investment bankers, and IT managers working in the city's financial district, it's as close as they can get. That's due to the lack of a mosque downtown, and the willingness of the Episcopal church to rent out the space for Jum'ah, or Friday prayers. The PA system is on the fritz, and the subway rumbles below every few minutes, but for the 400-plus regulars here, these distractions go unnoticed.

[JU'MAH SOUND]

KALEEM:

If we look to the example of say, Muslims in Boston, one of the things we've been doing is that we've been working as part of the Greater Boston Interfaith Coalition. And if you look at the work that comes out of that, whether it's on healthcare or youth and safety. These are issues that affect not just Muslims, but others as well.

[CONTINUED SOUND]

Bilal Kaleem is leading today's sermon.

[SOUND UP]

The 28-year-old MIT graduate is the executive director of the Boston chapter of the Muslim American Society—an organization with a mission to foster civic engagement in the diverse Muslim community.

KALEEM:

In terms of ethnicity, I see everyone here, Nigerians, someone from Mauritania, East Africa, Indonesia, the Far East, the Indian Subcontinent, a lot of the Arab countries, a lot of African Americans, whites, so it's very mixed.

That's also reflected in a 2007 Pew Research Center study on Muslims in America. 65% of the Muslim population is immigrant, and despite the common perception that the majority of Muslims in the US are Arab, they account for only 37% of the Muslim immigrant population. 77% of all Muslims in the US are American citizens, and they originate from 86 different countries.

Bilal Kaleem is a native of India—people from south Asia make up 27% of the Muslim immigrant population in the US. Bilal acknowledges that many Muslims are engaged in professional trades—medicine, law, finance—but they can be reluctant to dive into the public sphere.

KALEEM:

I tend to give sermons that try to blend both themes of civic engagement, as well as themes of spirituality and character, because our organization, and myself included really sees those three as the balanced understanding of Islam. Which is that your faith and your spirituality informs and motivates you to be a positive engaged citizen.

And the Muslim American Society is involved in a number of initiatives to mobilize political action in the Muslim community. Recently, MAS worked with the Massachusetts Council of Churches to oppose legalization of casino gambling in the state. It's one of the examples of how the Muslim community is becoming more politically and civically engaged. Some see that as a relief valve not readily available to Muslims in Europe—the ability to channel energy into non-violent political activism. And many point to another relief valve that prevents the frustration seen in Europe from boiling over in the US.

PATEL:

America is a religious country.

Eeboo Patel is founder of the Interfaith Youth Corps, an international NGO based out of Chicago. He's a Muslim who was born in Bombay, India, but grew up in America.

PATEL:

Our rate of belief in God, attendance at worship is significantly higher than Europe, in some cases 2,3,4 times higher. And so when I'm in Europe and I say it's prayer time, people look at me like I'm an alien. When I'm in America and I say it's prayer time, people might look at me cross-eyed in the way I pray, but they understand what prayer time means. And I think that has allowed Muslims in America who are defined as a religious community a bridge into civic culture here.

SKERRY:

America's a very dynamic and absorptive society and that's changing Muslims in lots of different ways.

Peter Skerry is a professor of political science at Boston College and researches Muslim immigration in America.

SKERRY:

Muslims are adapting to American society like you would think they would based on what's happened to other immigrant groups. But at the same time, they're not entirely like other immigrant groups... Muslims do come here as part of a very distinctive world religion that for much of its history has sought to fend off or

keep at arm's length or oppose non-Muslim religions. There are many tendencies today among Muslims here, even now after 9/11, I think, to either withdraw into their own communities and institutions or to be disdainful or leery of involvement in the wider society.

According to the 2007 Pew survey, 32% of Muslims in America say there is a conflict between being Muslim and living in a modern society, while 63% say one can be a devout Muslim in a country like America. 26% say that new immigrants should maintain a distinct identity separate from American society.

SKERRY:

I think today there are legitimate questions to ask. Muslims in America and throughout the world speak of the Umah, the worldwide community of Muslims, and that has a powerful impact on how Muslims see the world. Muslim Americans will tell you that they don't believe American troops should be on the soil of Muslim countries. There are ties, and they don't necessarily and always rise to the level of disloyalty that some few observers charge Muslims in America with, but there are definitely conflicting ties and loyalties here, and the result is a lot of recrimination and unfair characterization of Muslims.

But while some of the characterizations might be unfair, those who fear the spread of violent or radical Islam do point to a number of facts. Osama bin Laden routinely calls on Muslims in the US to declare Jihad against America. In 2002, the FBI arrested six men of Yemeni descent in Lackawanna, New York. They trained in camps in Afghanistan and pled guilty to providing support to Al Qaeda. All of them are US citizens. For decades the Saudi Arabian government has spent millions, even billions of dollars funding mosques and publishing literature teaching ultra-conservative Islam. Critics charge that the Saudis have been trying to take over the mosques of America and spread a radical, hate-fueled agenda.

SKERRY:

It's quite clear that a lot of foreign money has poured into Muslim institutions over the years. A lot of it Saudi money. That's been going on for a long time, certainly at various points our government has encouraged it, maybe not since 9/11 but before.

Whether or not the Saudis are succeeding in spreading radicalism in the US, there are signs that they are having an effect on the practice of Islam in America.

[CAR SOUND]

Aminah McCloud is professor of Islamic studies in the department of religious studies, at DePaul University in Chicago. She specializes in Islam in America and converted to Islam herself in the 1960s.

McCLOUD:

We are on the southeast side of Chicago, heading towards the southwest. My class is mapping the masjid in Chicago.

The masajid are the mosques. Chicago is home to an estimated 400,000 Muslims, hailing from all over the world. While there are certain neighborhoods with large concentrations of Muslims, the population is widely dispersed across the city. That makes mapping the mosques a daunting task. DePaul student Sara Neville is navigating while her professor drives through the South Side Streets looking for masajids.

[MORE CAR SOUNDS]

McCLOUD:

They're doing some work over there. The Al Faatir Mosque. It's probably one of the few masjid on the south side of Chicago, which is built from the ground up. The original folk who negotiated this were from Elijah Muhammad's family. Since then, it has passed into a combination of ownership between some of the children of that family, and I'm not sure if they're from Egypt, they're Arab. And it has gone from being a being a wonderful place that everyone loved to come to. It has gone from that to a very closed place where women are not welcome, children are not welcome.

Aminah McCloud believes that the influence of the Salafi movement whether it is coming from Saudi Arabia or elsewhere is transforming the practice of Islam in the US.

McCLOUD:

The way it has come is in the bodies of imams who have been sent to teach. It's come in the form of literature, which Koran you pick up, that kind of stuff. Its influence is seen largely internally, not in a hatred of westerners or non-Muslims. But internally with regard to what you can't do. Islam became a religion of what you can't do, with regard to the women wearing veils down to the floor, gender segregation, women not working, and not being educated, even here in America. So, its influence has been exceptionally destructive internally.

But, isn't it possible that this internal dynamic could turn into something more outwardly destructive? Could America's young Muslims follow the path of some of their European counterparts?

McCLOUD:

I want to say that they wouldn't, but I also know that there's always a chance for anything. I don't think they could ever emerge on the scale that they are in Europe. There are non-Muslims here who don't particularly care about Muslims, but they care about freedom of speech. They care about opportunities for everybody. There are also that indigenous groups of Muslims who say, no you're not going to bomb the street on which my mom lives, because then you won't have to worry about the US, you'll have to worry about me.

SKERRY:

There have been some indications, particularly of Muslim youth who were rather alienated and showing some tendency to get involved in some extremist activities but that's very small and not at all to the degree we've seen in Western Europe.

Peter Skerry

SKERRY:

Another important consideration is simply the fact we have a very different history and tradition in the United States. We are a nation of immigrants in a way that few other countries are, certainly compared to Western Europe, and we're much better at absorbing and assimilating newcomers.

For America Abroad, I'm Elizabeth Arnold.

[RAY SUAREZ]

I'm Ray Suarez. We want to drilldown deeper on the question of whether the frustration and even dangerous radicalism of some of the Muslim population in Europe could spread to the U.S. Joining me now to discuss this, Shireen Hunter is a visiting scholar at The Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University. Amaney Jamal is an assistant professor of politics at Princeton University, who specializes in the study of Muslim Americans. And Robert Leiken is director of the Immigration and National Security Program at The Nixon Center and author of the forthcoming book, *Europe's Angry Muslims*.

Professor Jamal, let's start with you. Why is the profile among American Muslims so different? Why are the challenges here a world apart from what we're seeing in many of the angry ethnic enclaves of Western Europe?

AMANEY JAMAL:

Well, primarily if we look at the socioeconomic assimilation patterns of Muslim Americans what we see when we compare those patterns to those of the Muslim community in Europe is that the American Muslim community has done so much better. This community can succeed, work hard and progress in this society. Whereas in Europe it seems that the Muslim community is consistently facing certain ceilings or they're facing certain barriers to their mobilization.

Professor Hunter, how do you see it?

SHIREEN HUNTER:

I think that the root problem of the Muslims in Europe is the pattern of immigration and the reasons that they went there. Most of those were poor, unskilled workers which were imported over time, and when in the 1970s the European economic downturn came and most of these workers became unemployed. Consequently, you saw that this pattern of poverty and ghettoization became kind of like a vicious circle.

Well, Robert Leiken, does this mean America simply won't see what Europe has seen among Muslim populations?

ROBERT LEIKEN:

Well, the problem is that the radicals in Europe, many of them, are not particularly poor. Some of them are quite well integrated, and usually they're not immigrants. They're usually second generation, post-migrants. So, I don't think you could simply extrapolate from the social and economic characteristics what kind of movement you're going to have in the United States among Muslims. It is true that we're a country of immigration as opposed to Europe, but integration isn't always – or lack of integration hasn't always been the reason why European Muslims have become radicals.

SHIREEN HUNTER:

Although that point is well taken and certainly there is some evidence to prove that, integration, of course, also has the other levels. I mean, one of them is, for example, political integration. Muslims must integrate, and part of that is internalizing some of the ethos of countries that they have integrated to.

I was interviewing the leader of a Midwestern mosque, a Palestinian pediatrician in a lovely three-piece suit, and he said, "Let me introduce you to my son." And he brought over a young fellow with a beard down to his mid-chest, a jilbab and a skullcap, and these were all things that he took on after September 11th.

SHIREEN HUNTER:

This is where I think that I share with Bob Leiken a feeling that one cannot be completely relaxed about it because there is a development and expansion of a

more strict and literalist type of interpretation of Islam which is becoming, unfortunately, spreading very rapidly both in Middle East and also among the immigrant communities. You can see that also in Morocco, which you didn't see it 20 years ago. You see it now Algeria. It's not just directly linked to 9/11, but let's face it; it is really related to the growing influence of the Salafi tendencies.

ROBERT LEIKEN:

Yeah. I think your illustration of the Palestinian and his son I think reflects something else too, which is it has been in the second generation that Muslim radicalism occurs, certainly in Europe, and it's often as part of a generational conflict. The second generation, the third generation often rejects the parents' Islam as being too traditional, smacking of the old country kind of stain they want to get away from, but what they adopt is not an Islam of Britain or France but a kind of international Islam. They're looking for an identity, and the way they channel their rejection of their parents is into this kind of radicalism.

I don't think that means it's going to happen here. I think there are a lot of differences here, but it could happen here.

SHIREEN HUNTER:

It is a particular Salafi interpretation that have people that are propagating it everywhere in Middle East, Southeast Asia and Europe.

Professor Jamal, is there not that same rigorous, strict Saudi strand of Islam showing its face here in the United States?

AMANEY JAMAL:

Are there these radical strains of Wahabism, Salafism, yes, they exist. But they exist at such a minute level I would hate to not focus on 98 percent of what's happening in the Muslim community and look for the 2 percent who may be espousing these viewpoints. I mean, at least if we look at Hizb-ut-Tahrir in the United States we know their influence has dwindled drastically in the last 15 years.

Professor Hunter, you seem to think it's more significant than Professor Jamal does.

SHIREEN HUNTER:

I think it's much more significant because both in my travels in the Middle East and in Europe five years ago when I went to a mall in areas that there were a lot of Muslim population I never saw any Muslim woman with a niqāb or this almost incredible covering which almost dehumanizes it. But this is now something you see spreading, as I said, in Egypt, for instance, even a few years ago you didn't have this. And here in Virginia, that's what I'm increasingly seeing just Arlington or Falls Church or whatever who has large Muslim community more and more I

see woman with this kind of cover. That to me, frankly, it's very disturbing trend. I'm not being alarmist, but in general this is spreading like wild fire.

But is that synonymous with radicalism? Is that synonymous with an alienation from the mainstream of the United States?

ROBERT LEIKEN:

Well, I think it is synonymous with alienation from the mainstream of the United States but not with radicalism, not necessarily. There are plenty of even Salafist tendencies, which are apolitical, pietist, separatist, but they even reject any kind of political participation, still less violent political participation. And I think by and large in Europe, for example, in England where you see a lot of women with veils from head to foot, and there there has been a connection, according to public opinion polls and according to the number of people arrested on jihadi plots – there has been a connection with radicalism, but it isn't necessarily one.

Well, that leads me to a final question to Professor Jamal. It's certainly a difference, but is it a strength that, unlike an Algerian mosque in Marseilles and a Turkish mosque in Hamburg and a Pakistani mosque in Bradford when you go to an American mosque there isn't one dominant ethnic group or there's less likely to be one dominant national origin group?

AMANEY JAMAL:

If we look at mosques in United States most mosques are dominated, if you may, by one ethnicity. But nevertheless, mosques are more likely to be mixed than they are in Europe. The multicultural situation in a place like Holland and Britain is that you almost have, "Yes, you know the Muslims are here. They're part of our country, but they're not equal, and they should remain on the margins." We haven't seen that segregation here in the United States.

Second, also, if we look at here in the United States, we've had an indigenous Muslim community for a very long time. The African America community, 30 percent of the Muslim community in this country has been here for decades and decades and decades, so it's not only about an immigrant type of religion. But in general, if we're going to make some general comparisons between Europe and the United States, the Muslim community in the United States has not been subjected to this type of treatment. There is some bigotry. There is some intolerance. There is some discrimination. But when we compare it to what the Muslim community in Europe faces, it's a different story.

Amaney Jamal, thanks for talking with us. Robert Leiken, thanks for joining us. Shireen Hunter, good to speak with you.

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