

## MARCH 2, 2011 ISLAMOPHOBIA CONFERENCE

### MAYA BERRY:

--talking about the American Muslim community also the Arab American community. [UNCLEAR] It's a slightly different kind of [UNCLEAR] That is why we convened our panel today. And that is what we want to talk about. I'm going to start with Matt Duss, who is the national security editor at the Center for American Progress. We'll have comments from the speakers and then open it up to Q and A. Thanks, Matt.

### MATT DUSS:

Thank you. It's a real pleasure to be here. A really important topic. I do apologize in advance for having to leave a bit early, so I'll try to be quick here. One of the main things at the Center for American Progress and those of us working there had concerns over the past couple of years is that obviously we're in a period of intense economic difficulty here in the United States. There's the Tea Party movement and divisions within the conservative movement right now—specifically on the question of foreign policy are about as big as they have been in many decades. We saw some of the controversy in the recent CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Conference, where the opposing sides, The Tea Party and the Rand Paul-ites have real questions about America's role in the world and call for America's global engagement. And we see Islamophobia as being one of the issues that any number of more neoconservative—or those conservatives supporting a much more robust militaristic approach to world affairs are trying to paper over some of these differences [UNCLEAR] tradition. We saw the results of these efforts in the mixed-up response from a number of people on the right to events in Egypt, where you clearly had people demonstrating non-violently and in favor of freedom and democracy. And yet so many could only respond to this with these alarmist, you know, it's a Muslim Brotherhood takeover, it's an Islamist takeover of Egypt. And the Middle East is falling under a wave of radicalism.

Now, to go back a little bit, I think George W. Bush, to his credit, after 9-11, reached out to the Muslim community and was able to hold some of these tendencies in check. But with the election of a new Democratic president and one named Barack Hussein Obama, no less, I think many conservatives who've been kind of steeped in this discourse have been allowed to let their freak flag fly, so to speak. This stuff was always there. And it's really come to the fore. Now, one of the key—key parts of this argument is this creeping shariah argument. We've seen more people adopting this. The idea that shariah law, as they define it, quote, a military religious doctrine of war as it was defined in a report from the Center for Security Policy, is in and of itself a threat to the United States. We've seen, I think, over a dozen states now considering laws banning the adoption of shariah law. Whatever that would look like.

We saw a Tennessee state senate bill that would criminalize adherence to shariah. And one—I can only imagine how that might be enforced. And, you know, we've seen, also, ostensibly, a serious ordinance of the conservative politics and analysis such as *National Review*, unfortunately, marketing this stuff. People like Andy McCarthy, who make the very simple argument that it's Islam itself that's the problem. Positing in his latest book an alliance between the left and Islamic radicals and this, of course, was picked up by Glenn Beck, who's been pushing out this massive conspiracy theory. I think at last check, it's now the Muslim Brotherhood, Code Pink, the NFL, and Colonel Sanders all working together to sap America's vital essence. So, you know, just going through the quota with [UNCLEAR] Allen West, who attacked—this was a few weeks ago—attacked, you know, responded to a

[UNCLEAR] Muslim American citizen by saying that you attacked us collectively. You. It's hard to think of another group about whom this sort of collective guilt and sort of assertion would be acceptable. But unfortunately, this is the environment we see in America.

You know, so I would just go back to say that, you know, well, you know, this is obviously unfortunate. I think a lot of this—underlying a lot of this is the economic difficulty. People are very nervous. But there are some real unresolved questions about 9-11, about the nature of the danger, the nature of Islam and its role in America. So I would, you know, I kind of come back and end up on—and take responsibility for analysts like myself, my colleagues up here. It's kind of our responsibility to promote more responsible and lawful discourse throughout these questions and the events around them.

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thank you, Matt. I wanted to note that the composition of the panel is slightly different than we'd anticipated today. Both Leon Hadar from the Cato Institute and Dr. Jim Zogby from the Arab American Institute unfortunately caught the flu and both won't be able to join us. So just with that, I want to introduce Suhail Khan, who's a senior fellow at the Institute for Global Engagement. Thank you, Suhail.

**SUHAIL KHAN:**

--in their, that have grown in their ability just to get their message out there, this information, their fear-mongering. And the intensity in recent years that we've seen now, particularly on the net, and also, to give some opinions when it comes to facing this—this, what I characterize as a cottage industry of hate. Who are they? Well, as I have pointed out, we have folks like Frank Gaffney, Center for Security Policy, and people like David Horowitz, Robert Spencer, Andy McCarthy, Pam Geller. It's a real small group. But they have formed a very cohesive network. And it has gotten parceled out, different kind of chores to each kind of facet of this work. So you have Frank, of course, he's a national security expert. You have Andrew McCarthy, kind of the legal side of things. Robert Spencer, who has no training in Islam or any knowledge, comes out kind of being the expert in Islam and so in terms of [UNCLEAR] and [UNCLEAR] Islam, the faith. Pam Geller is kind of a blogger on the ground. You know, David Horowitz is the ex-communist who's now seen the light and he's come out to, you know, roll out—sound the alarm bells for communism and now the threat of Islam. So these are the individuals that are out there. And then there's some other second tier writers who write about this stuff.

They take, you know, research—and I use that phrase, that term very loosely, and it's provided by folks like Frank, who spend hundreds of thousands of dollars going into, you know, videos and tapes and statements, and cutting out pieces and trying to pull out a piece together a narrative that, you know, is very compelling on its face, but when you bother to, you know, for example, read a speech or read a statement, just the other day, there was a J Street conference that was going out here in Washington, D.C., one of these guys were out there saying that this was a pro-Hamas conference. You can have a difference of opinion on J Street and that's what's great about Washington, D.C. democracy, but to characterize J Street as somehow pro-Hamas just kind of shows the ridiculousness of these guys. You know, I was first accused of being al-Qaeda when I was serving in the White House. That didn't have any mileage. And now I'm accused of being a Saudi operative. If you can believe that. Now you hear what's going on, it means I've suddenly become Muslim Brotherhood. Wait a minute, so I do KFC, does that mean I'm fried chicken? [LAUGHTER] That's kind of—that's who they are. Now here's—and what do they do besides just going out there and trying to smear good, thoughtful Americans who are serving their country and their government or just Americans out there who are trying to serve their

communities?

What they're doing is trying to [UNCLEAR] the ability of Muslim-Americans, Arab-Americans, others to have a voice in their government. That's the end goal. That's the goal that they have. What they're not doing, though they're purported to do, is protecting our national security. What they're doing is fear-mongering. They're trying to go after an entire faith community, entire ethnic groups, they're not going after the bad guys. Not one of these guys has ever helped in the arrest or the detainment of somebody who actually was engaged in a type of extremist terrorism. We do have threats out there and we need to stop them, but that is something I hope will come out in the King hearings. That will come through a partnership with communities, whether they be faith communities, ethnic communities [UNCLEAR] depending on what the threat is. We know the threat comes from all kinds of facets of our society and Tuscon was an example of that. It happened in the Holocaust museum, there was another attack where anti-Semitism was alive and well in this country. You find religious bigotry, no matter who it's against. But these folks are not concerned about that. What they're concerned about is political in nature. That is the stuff that empowers Americans to have a voice in their own democracy. So that's what they're doing. With the exception of Andrew McCarthy, who did—was a prosecutor in the Blind Sheik trial, that was something that was of service to our country, since then, they've taken that service and tried to morph it into a business of smearing and fear-mongering against an entire community.

The community—and what else is new about this, also, these guys raised tons and tons of money off this, small donations, big donations, and you see that on grass roots e-mails that go out to their mailing lists, saying, we're going to fight the Islamic threat, give us five, ten, fifteen hundred dollars. That's what it's about. Frank Gaffney, for example, makes over three hundred thousand dollars a year fighting this stuff himself. Not bad for a small, inconsequential think tank here in Washington, D.C. that has really no stroke. That's [UNCLEAR] some of these guys. The good news is, take a look at the conservative movement, they are becoming increasingly fringier and fringier and fringier. The conservative movement is recognizing them for what they are. Take, for example, Frank Gaffney, who was kicked out of the [UNCLEAR] American Tax Reform Wednesday meeting for lies going back 2001, 2002. He was reprimanded by Paul [UNCLEAR] twice for, again, promulgating these complete conspiracy theories. CNP, the Council on National Policy, a very conservative group that I'm proud to be associated with has just recently removed Frank Gaffney from their foreign policy [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] on these issues. CPAC [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] kids is that they're most obnoxious and loudest group at that and these guys are fighting and being loud because increasingly the conservative movement and the American society has rejected conspiracy theories, also fear-mongering, because they know it's not American, that's not fairness, it's against our principles of preserving liberty and freedom in the American Constitution. Now the answer in responding to these guys is free speech of the First Amendment. [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] for all Americans regardless of faith traditions. But also, [UNCLEAR] speech with honest speech and dialogue and discourse. And that, I have confidence, cause we've seen this movie before, whether it was the attacks on Jewish Americans during the Red scare or Catholics or Japanese Americans during World War Two or African Americans and so many others. Catholics went through a horrendous experience, whether Italian, Irish or others. Those times, whether long or protracted or short in duration, in the end, American society has risen above that because we are a better society. We cling to our Constitution as a cherished principled document. And I'm confident that, again, this period right now of intensity towards the Muslim American community will abate and we'll see that we're all Americans, that we do have challenges, including threats, and we're going to face those threats together as Americans and in the end we can preserve liberty. Thank you.

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thank you, Suhail. And next, we will hear from Deepa Iyer, who's executive director of the South Asian Americans Leading Together, SAALT. [UNCLEAR]

**DEEPA IYER:**

Thank you to the Arab-American Institute and MPAC for convening this important gathering. As Maya mentioned, I am with an organization called SAALT and we're a national non-partisan, non-profit organization that elevates the perspectives and voices of South Asians here in the United States. I've been asked today to speak specifically about the impact of Islamophobia on communities and in doing so, we'll draw upon our work with our forty-two partner organizations and local communities around the country. So in order to answer the question of how the industry of Islamophobia is affecting community members, I think it's important that we first place this phenomenon in a broader context that exists in our country. One of anti-immigrant sentiment, racism and xenophobia.

And it's also important to understand that the phenomenon of Islamophobia goes beyond faith and goes beyond the Muslim community. It's affecting a range of minority communities and it includes people based on their national origin, ethnicity, race, color, immigration status. So first, for our communities, in the decade following 9-11, we've been faced with a range of challenges. Community members have faced forced detentions and deportations, bullying at schools, hate crimes, more discrimination and profiling at airports and by law enforcement. Small business have closed, families have moved to other countries or back home and many communities—many community members are living in the shadows. If one adds to the layer of the post 9-11 backlash of the rising anti-immigrant sentiment that is unfolding in our country an even more complex picture emerges. The broad anti-immigrant sentiment that's sweeping across this country has many faces to it. It includes federal immigration enforcement policy, such as secure communities and 287-G. And it includes state and local policies such as Arizona's SB-1070 and similar copycat legislation. It also includes targeted policies such as special registration and others, which have used immigration law as a tool to preserve national security. In fact, around the country, at least thirty state and local lawmakers have considered policies over the past year that aim to diminish the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights of citizenship for certain U.S. born children to replicate Arizona's draconian anti-immigrant law or to ban the limitation of shariah. In a number of these states, anti-shariah policies have emerged along with broader anti-immigrant [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] impact on Muslim communities as well as communities that are perceived to be Muslim. One of the most visible layers of Islamophobia also includes a rise in racist rhetoric in political discourse and Maya alluded to some of this. In fact, in October of 2010, SAALT put out a report that examines the rise of Islamophobia in the political realm. And we found that Muslims, [UNCLEAR] Sikhs, and Arab-Americans are painted by public figures as threats to national security, political liabilities, outsiders, perpetual foreigners and unsuitable for political office. Examples of some of the political rhetoric that we documented include statements by former Senator Conrad Burns such as the United States is up against a faceless enemy of terrorists who drive taxicabs in the daytime and kill at night. To a statement by former Congressman Bill Salli in 2007 such as we not only have the Hindu prayer being offered in the Senate, we have a Muslim member of the House of Representatives now, Keith Ellison. These are changes and they are not those envisioned by the Founding Fathers.

There was a spike in such rhetoric during and after the Park 51 Center debate last summer. Representative Rene Ellmers, while she was a congressional candidate from North Carolina, said, after the Muslims conquer Jerusalem and Cordoba and Constantinople, they build victory mosques. And now they want to build a mosque by Ground Zero. And finally, Ron Ramsey, the current lieutenant governor of Tennessee said you can even argue whether being a Muslim is actually a religion or is it a

nationality, a way of a life, or a cult, whatever you want to call it. With that picture in mind, I want to specifically touch upon the impact of Islamophobia in the broader context that I referred to in three arenas. Safety in schools, the infringement on freedom of religion, and the chilling of civic or political participation. First, in terms of safety in schools, the workplace and other institutions, Muslims and those perceived to be Muslims, have endured bullying and discrimination in greater numbers over the past decade. And these experiences are getting even worse in our communities where there are clear expressions of Islamophobia in the media or from political figures. One example I wanted to point out to you is from a report by the Sikh Coalition, one of SAALT's partners. Which found that 77.5 percent of Sikh boys who go to school in the borough of Queens and some four percent of Sikh turbaned boys surveyed in California's Bay Area reported being teased or harassed on account of their religious identity. I wanted to share with you a quote from this report from a middle school student in the Bay Area whose name is Harjit Singh [PH]. Starting from the beginning of the school year, he was called a terrorist, had his [UNCLEAR] or religious article ripped off his head and was physically threatened. He says this past year, I was ten or eleven, they made fun of me all day. They were calling me a terrorist and other stuff. They asked me, were you born on 9-11 holding a rocket launcher? If I tell, they're going to hurt me. And if I don't tell, they're still going to hurt me. They're going to use vulgar words instead of hands, fists, and weapons. And that's from a middle school student.

This expression of feeling unsafe reverberated even more significantly during and after the Park 51 controversy. Community members were assaulted, including a Bangladeshi cab driver in New York City, Akhmed Sharif [PH] whose throat was slashed by a passenger who asked if he was a Muslim right before he attacked. And a turbaned Sikh convenience store employee near Seattle was punched in the head by a customer who said, you're not even American. You're al-Qaeda. Go back to your country. In fact, SAALT has documented at least twenty-three instances of fights that occurred in the immediate aftermath of the Park 51 controversy. In addition with the [UNCLEAR] of mosques in New York, Tennessee, and California, [UNCLEAR] last summer many community members feel unsafe practicing their religion in their own faith institutions. As recently as January of this year, a southern California man was arrested in a car with explosives outside one of the nation's largest mosques in Dearborn, Michigan. And finally the denial--the climate of Islamophobia in chilled civic and political participation among Muslims and other community members who are worried about being perceived as national security threats or outsiders. This could mean that community members do not feel comfortable or safe exercising their right to vote or to engage in political speech. It could mean that candidates from our community seeking public office feel that they're exposed to a higher level of scrutiny just by virtue of their ethnicity or religious affiliation.

At policy levels, the climate of Islamophobia can foster negative policies that will further isolate and marginalize our communities. These could range from the fashion of profiling to other initiatives that target our communities. We believe that congress has a role to play in stemming Islamophobia and xenophobia in our country and we offer a few recommendations including the importance of denouncing Islamophobia and xenophobia when it occurs, especially in a political context. And I ask you all to refer to this report that we released which is out there to see the range of comments that we've been tracking when it comes to xenophobia in political discourse. With the upcoming hearings that Maya mentioned that are being convened by Representative Peter King, it's an important opportunity for congressional members to make it clear that such a focus on one faith based community is unfair and contradicts our nation's values. [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] 9-11. Finally, implementing legislation that will [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] for all communities, including several that will hopefully be reintroduced in congress this year. Such as the Workplace Religious Freedom Act, the End Racial Profiling Act, and the Safe Schools Improvement Act is critical. For Muslims, South Asians, Sikhs, and Arab-Americans, as well as those perceived to be from these

communities, the climate in our country today poses significant problems. But we also believe that our country's fundamental values, justice, equality, freedom of expression, religion, can be preserved in this country if we push back against all forms of discrimination, wherever and whenever they occur. Thank you.

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thank you so much, Deepa. I'm going to take a moderator's break here and ask that we could perhaps take a few questions from [UNCLEAR] who actually has to leave us a bit early today. What's your question, please raise your hand, I'll call on you, identify yourself and your office. I can ask that congressional staffers go first. I know we have a mix of audience members. And if there's a question that anyone would like to pose to Matt before we lose him. I'm sorry. Go ahead, sir.

**MARK HARRIS:**

[VERY FAINT] I'm Mark Harris [UNCLEAR] what conversations have you had with Representative King about the hearings?

**MATTHEW DUSS:**

Personally, I haven't had any conversations with him. [UNCLEAR] a number of the people who he's had previously listed for his--as witnesses. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Walid Phares. And both of whom—who have [UNCLEAR] and their appropriateness for questions about Islam in America and, you know, probably—I don't want to claim credit or anything, but both of those witnesses have been dropped.

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thanks. [UNCLEAR] Does anyone else—for Matt? He gets to stay for a few more minutes. But excellent, let's move on. Our next speaker is Alejandro Beutel, who's a government and policy analyst for the Muslim Public Affairs Council. Alejandro?

**ALEJANDRO BEUTEL:**

Thank you. [UNCLEAR] Thank you very much, Maya. I'm Alejandro Beutel with the Muslim Public Affairs Council. It's a real pleasure to be here today. What I'm going to specifically talk about—now, everyone's going to expect me [UNCLEAR] of Islamophobia. And in particular, Suhail had [UNCLEAR] talked about the cottage industry. What I want to talk about in particular is the cottage industry in terms of law enforcement training. Now Deepa had also mentioned before about various policies and laws that could be implemented at the federal level. But that how does this actually work in practice on the ground of what takes place. Because at the end of the day, you need people to implement and enforce these sorts of laws. So how is that being done? Well, obviously, you need to have people who are trained to do these sorts of things. Law enforcement individuals. So in order to actually go and [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] background training and information. This is nothing new. This is just the fundamentals of any sort of good community oriented policing. Which has been around for several decades.

But the problem, though, is that in many cases, what we've been finding is that a lot of [UNCLEAR] information. Is that there has been a cottage industry that has gotten itself involved in law enforcement training and taught a very, very sort of biased curriculum and really put out a significant amount of

misinformation on Islam and Muslims so that when actual law enforcement officials are going out into communities, this sort of trust and communication that's needed to have effective policing is not going to be there because cognitive biases are already being created in the minds of police officers. And what sort of, you know, sort of existing communication gaps that need to be bridged, particularly post 9-11 [OVERLAPPING VOICES] society [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] bias in [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] law enforcement training can be counterproductive. And many times the content of it actually ends up being downright un-American. And so part of the problem is that a lot of this is also being sustained on the taxpayer dime. So what sort of curriculum is being taught to many law enforcement by this cottage industry? Really, I look at in terms of three [UNCLEAR], based on the information that's out there. The first [UNCLEAR] is really that Islam is the enemy. And so when we're talking about Islam as the enemy, we're not talking about focusing on the bad guys, focusing on violent criminals as Suhail has mentioned. What we're talking about is the demonization and politicalization of an entire American faith community here in our nation. Okay, so we're not looking at, for instance, violent extremists who are looking to do our nation harm, but instead it's people who make the argument that Islam is the enemy, is that the religion itself is inherently violent and therefore you have to be on guard against all Muslims because you never know when they're going to go jihad on you. That's essentially part of the argument that's made. And so, for instance, you have a number of trainers who will suggest--one of them is Walid Shoebat.

Walid Shoebat is a former self-described, a self-described former terrorist. And now he's a Christian convert who has suggested that Islam itself is a hate religion of, quote, the antichrist. And he implies that Muslims, quote, bear the mark of the beast. I'm not making this up. These are actual quotes. Another example is someone who's a self-styled Muslim reformer, his name is [UNCLEAR] who has claimed in the past that the Koran and the vast majority of Muslims are, quote, against any peaceful understanding and that they prefer this violent, traditional—they prefer this violent, traditional teaching of Islam. Endquote. So this is the sort of cognitive biases that are already being taught in a number of seminars around the country, so a number of these people, for instance, have claimed that they have taught at least twenty thousand law enforcement officials within five years. Out of a total of eight hundred thousand local and state law enforcement, that's a significant chunk of our law enforcement and police officers here trying to protect our country. The second—the second sort of [UNCLEAR] is looking at stealth jihad. And I know that Matt has already sort of touched upon, but really sort of looking at this idea of the creeping shariah argument. The only thing that I would really sort of add to it is that when you're looking at it in a historical perspective, is that it really parallels in many ways sort of the McCarthy-like themes of this sort of subversion. And it's really replacing, instead of the communists threat, it's not being replaced by the Muslim threat. Not even al-Qaeda violent extremists, but the Muslim threat and the implementation of so-called shariah upon our nation.

Just as a small aside, by the way, in terms of clarification of terms, is that for everyone's edification here, shariah itself is a set of broad moral principles similar to what you may find within the Judeo-Christian tradition. What I think a lot of people may have questions about is really what would better be termed as fiqh. Okay, which is really Islamic jurisprudence. And one that's been badly interpreted at that. So there's a difference there and also that a lot of Muslims themselves have been very, very concerned about this sort of extremist fiqh that al-Qaeda talks about because that ends up harming Muslims more than everyone else. [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] West Point had a study out in 2009 which showed that al-Qaeda's victims were eighty-five percent Muslim. So just to give you an idea of where the actual sort of [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] The third sort of theme really is what other people have now called lawfare. And lawfare, this is especially big—espoused a lot by Andy McCarthy from the *National Review*. Essentially, the idea, though, that Muslim organizations and Muslim communities are trying to use our democracy against itself and use the [UNCLEAR]

[CAMERA RUSTLES] against itself. Where they're trying to allegedly shut down free speech when they're filing lawsuits against discrimination or when they're advocating such things as the Workplace Religious Freedom Act. Of course the irony is that the very people who are accusing—accusing our community organizations and communities of shutting down free speech are actually advocating for the very types of policies and mindsets that would basically deny any sort of meaningful access and ability for Muslim Americans to participate in our society like any other faith-based or any other community in America. So that's a little bit about the themes. But what about the actual people who are teaching some of these things? Well, part of the other interesting thing—and here's a recent article that just came out, today actually, by the *Washington Monthly* where it looks at this cottage industry of law enforcement trainers. And one of the interesting things that they find is there is actually—the credentials of a lot of these individuals tend to be very, very spotty. And I'll just take a look at two people. The first begins to sort of return to Walid Shoebat. Now, as I mentioned before, he's claimed that he was some former jihadi who was with the PLO and that he was involved in a number of attacks and killed hundreds of people in the Middle East. But when you actually—when people start digging up his background, interestingly enough the most, one of the most interesting sort of investigations was by the conservative-leaning *Jerusalem Post*. And so this looked into one of his particular claims where he had allegedly said that he was involved in planning an attack on Israel's national bank at [UNCLEAR] But what they actually ended up finding out was that no such thing had ever actually occurred. So there seems to be a bit of a disconnect between what his actual stated credentials are and what the investigations by a lot of news reporters seem to be finding.

One other person worth looking at is John Diney [PH] who wrote a lot about terrorism in the Caucuses. Just a brief look at that. He claimed that [UNCLEAR] claimed that he had trained with Russian special forces [UNCLEAR] but again the *Washington Monthly* had actually got an interview with the officials at [UNCLEAR] special forces in Russia, they never even heard of the guy or in one case, they said, yeah, he did some training, but it was more just commercial sort of stuff. He never actually did any sort of counter-terrorism things. So what did the—to sort of conclude, what are the actual effects of this sort of training? Now, as I mentioned before it's very counterproductive. Again, when reaching out to communities, it's sews a lot of distrust and creates cognitive biases. Because when you're reaching out to communities, you have to know you can rely on them [UNCLEAR] [BUZZERS GOING OFF, CAMERA RUSTLES] but by putting out this misinformation and spreading falsehoods, that is going to undermine the necessary trust that is needed to keep our nation safe. And just a quick sort of statistic that I want to end on, our organization, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, has been tracking terrorism since 9-11 across the ideological spectrum, including looking at al-Qaeda. One of the interesting things we found is that since 9-11 [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] al-Qaeda related plots threatening the United States have been foiled with the assistance of Muslim communities. So when we're looking at things like, for instance, the Times Square bomber and the Senegalese Muslim vendor had spotted the suspicious car. Or the Virginia Five where the concerned parents had come and contacted law enforcement officials. Or even the most recent case with the so-called Oregon bomber plot. [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] – had contacted officials because the son had indicated criminal and violent intent. These are all examples of where Muslim communities have been not only willing, but very active partners on the frontlines of our nation's fate. So by sewing that distrust with these biased law enforcement trainings, we not only create unnecessary tension with these communities, but you're not even addressing the real criminal threat. Instead, you're looking at people's beliefs, which has nothing to do with getting the bad guys at the end of the day. So [UNCLEAR] Thank you.

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thank you, Alejandro. Next, we'll hear from Max Blumenthal, who's an award winning journalist and



best selling author. Max, thanks so much for being here today.

**MAX BLUMENTHAL:**

[VERY FAINT] Thanks [UNCLEAR] It is on. Can you all hear me or. . . ?

**MAN:**

Kind of low.

**MAX BLUMENTHAL:**

Is there any possible. . .hello? [UNCLEAR] Don't know if there's any possibility of getting some water up here. Going last, I kind of have a dry mouth. Is Frank Gaffney tampering with this? [LAUGHTER] [BACKGROUND VOICES] Yeah, yeah. Okay, well, anyway, thanks for—thanks to everyone for having me. It's really an honor to be on this panel, especially with Suhail, who has taken such a public stand against Islamophobia. And to anyone who's working within the conservative movement and the Republican Party to get this sort of bigotry out of the party and show that the party has actual ideas instead of just irritable mental gestures of people like Frank Gaffney. I wrote a sort of investigative piece, mostly relying on the public record, of what I consider to be a transatlantic axis of Islamophobia that spans from the extremest Israeli settlements on the West Bank—thanks a lot. To Europe, to the United States, all of a sudden, and I wanted to kind of trace this to its roots in the United States. Talk about who some of the main players are and who the funders are. Beginning, I guess, in the nineties, Steven Emerson who is a self-styled terror expert, I think one of the first people who started briefing law enforcement until he was—I mean, he's basically been discredited. I was at the *Daily Beast* when they were publishing him and Tina Brown, who no longer publishes pieces, they were just too ridiculous and also there's been a sort of scandal revealed by the *Tennessean* about how he pays himself through non-profit donations. That's really worth reading.

Emerson's documentary, *Jihad in America*, which was aired by PBS, I think the first time Americans on a widespread level were confronted with the notion that there were terrorist cells operating in their communities. And it ends with him standing in front of the World Trade Center comparing Islam to Nazism. Actually, Emerson has no expertise in Islam, no academic credentials, does not speak Arabic, is a graduate—his PhD thesis was on the rise of Nazism in Germany. Emerson falsely blamed the Oklahoma City bombing on Muslim terrorists. What this showed us is that he was looking for a spark, he's looking for a trigger to bring this campaign to a national audience. 9-11 should have been the spark. To some degree, it was. But as I'm going to demonstrate, it really was the election of Barack Obama that brought this to the fore. Let me start with some of the funders of this movement. One person is Irving Moscowitz, who funds the Center for Security Policy and Frank Gaffney—or has funded them. I asked Gaffney about why he's taking money from a bingo tycoon who exploits cheap undocumented labor in Los Angeles at his casino at the value voters convention in front of Christian evangelicals. [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] He kind of choked up and didn't really know what to say. That's what Irving—that's how Irving Moscowitz generates his money and he sends it to extremist Israeli settlements. You can see in my video from the Moscowitz Awards, he's introducing, he's funding people who actually engage in vigilante attacks in the streets of Hebron against Palestinians. And according to the non-profit human rights group [UNCLEAR] only ninety-two percent, ninety-two percent of these attacks are not prosecuted or even documented by Israeli authorities. But I interviewed some of the people he's funding and you can see the mentality in my video.

Another person—and also Moscowitz is very close to Benjamin Netanyahu, is a big funder of his campaigns and is another person that I've noticed who's at the heart of this now. He's lesser known. His name is Aubrey Chernick who operates the Fairbrook Foundation out of Los Angeles and runs a security firm called The National Center for Crisis and Continuity Coordination. It makes sense that he might want to ramp up a fear of Islamophobia if he's running this sort of consulting firm. He's a former trustee of WINEP, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy which is sort of the in—has been sort of the in-house think tank of APAC which is the arm of the Israel lobby. He's moved on to fund people like Robert Spencer, the academic—pseudo-academic voice of Islamophobia through David Horowitz, who's sort of funneled one million dollars into Spencer's Jihad Watch. And Spencer has, of course, partnered with Pamela Geller who calls me a Jewicidal Jihadi. And a capo. There's also an [UNCLEAR] called Jeffrey Goldberg, the committed Zionist and former Israeli prison guard, a Jewicidal Jihadi. So she has a lot of hate to go around. He's partnered—she's partnered with him in Stop The Islamicization of America. You can go on their website and find some great images of mushroom clouds exploding in Mecca and dismembered Iraqi civilian corpses. This is—there is actually pro-genocidal content on this website which has been documented by the website Loon Watch. It keeps great tabs on these figures.

And this campaign really started in the United States at Columbia University and it was over the increasing prominence of pro-Palestinian academia, like Joseph Massad and there was a campaign by the David Project, which is a pro-Israel student group run by Charles Jacobs who simultaneously ran CAMERA, which is a pro-Israel media monitoring organization funded by Chernick. Who accused Massad of intimidating Jewish students of anti-Semitism, this sort of thing. He was discredited. Massad wound up winning a very prestigious award from Columbia and Jacobs moved on into the streets of Boston. 2005, this is where an Islamic—an Islamic community center was being built in Roxbury. Which is a predominately African-American community. You got to remember that I think most Muslims in the United States are African-American, so this is actually an attack on African-Americans as well. And what Jacobs did was partner up with people like Steve Emerson and Jeff Jacobi, the neoconservative columnist for the *Boston Herald*—or is the *Boston Globe*? And actually generate a campaign of smears against the community center, accusing them of taking money from Wahabbi sources and the Muslim Brotherhood. This is one of the first times we started hearing this sort of rhetoric. They failed to stop the construction of this community center, but what they did was move into a community where people of faith, Jews and Muslims, Christians, got along pretty well. And they began to tear people apart. The community center has been built. There are no terror attacks. There's no Muslim Brotherhood there. Everything is—everybody's happy.

So they moved on into my community into Brooklyn where a woman named Debbie Almontaser who is a veteran Yemeni American educator was opening an Arabic language school called the Khalil Gibran Academy. Which was a secular school that just was willing to also teach Arabic and they began accusing her of having terrorist ties. They had a campaign called Stop The Madrassa. This is where Pam Geller came into the fray. She demonstrated through her blog a great effectiveness in bringing together extreme elements for these rallies and we started to see the signature list of people, Daniel Pipes, Frank Gaffney, and Christian Zionist figures. It was sort of a laundry list of the emerging network of Islamophobes. Petitions against the construction of the Khalil Gibran Academy, they wound up ousting Almontaser who had a great record of interfaith activism and was even working with the Anti-Defamation League and was friends with Abe Foxman, worked with law enforcement through this smear campaign. And weakened the schools—they demonstrated their capacity to do a lot of damage. At this point, this campaign began to move across the Atlantic through an alliance between Pam Geller and Anders Gravers who was running Stop The Islamicization of Europe which inspired her and Robert

Spencer's group, Stop the Islamicization of America. Gravers' motto is racism is the lowest form of human stupidity and Islamophobia is the highest form of human reason. So he's pretty militant about it. He was basically a street thug who was campaigning against mosques and intimidating Muslim immigrants in the streets of Denmark. And he had a great effect there. Another trend that I noticed was in Great Britain. Where the British National Party, which has traditionally been a whites only, far right populated, filled with soccer hooligans, neo-nazis, it was anti-Semitic. It's leader, Nick Griffin, had actually palled around with David Duke. The world's leading anti-Semite. And they saw that this wasn't really working. That they hadn't targeted Muslims, because Muslim immigrants are moving in, this is a great strategy for getting working class folks. And so the British National Party actually endorsed Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip in 2008, 2009, when they had previously been sort of anti-Israel. They began taking on a pro-Zionist—members of the British National Party and soccer, gangs of soccer thugs like Combat 18 formed the English Defense League. Which is active in cities like Manchester and Birmingham where there's a lot of ethnic strife, staging these intimidating rallies against mosques, against Muslims communities and ironically waving Israeli flags. They are endorsed by Pam Geller who's raised—attempted to raise awareness in support of them on her blog. And they are major supporters of Geert Wilders who is the world's leading Islamophobe. And the most dangerous person I'm going to talk about today because he has enormous power in the Netherlands. Where his party, the PVV, which is an open Islamophobic party and he repeatedly, routinely calls Islam a retarded religion, calls Muhammad a pedophile, has called for a head rag tax on Muslim women. This is the kind of rhetoric he's using openly. And the governing coalition meets with him every Wednesday and basically asks, what do you want us to do? Because he's commanding so much influence, grass roots influence in his country.

Wilders is a disturbing character who is completely mobbed up in this network. But he started out under someone named Fritz Ballstene [PH] at the BVD under the foreign desk and he specialized in Israel. He visited the Israeli embassy [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] started becoming suspicious and according to the Dutch magazine, *Dry Netherland* [PH], a high ranking officer in the Dutch Foreign Affairs Office was worried about the detailed questions Wilders kept asking the Foreign Affairs Office on relations with Israel and he said even though he couldn't prove it, it was obvious Wilders was being informed by the Israeli embassy. He's visited Israel over forty times, most recently to meet with the foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, where he declared his support for forcibly transferring all Palestinians from inside Israel and the West Bank to Jordan. His party's official platform is that Jordan is Palestine. A platform he helped devise with Ariel [UNCLEAR] an extremist settler who's a member of the Israeli Knesset and in a conference in Jerusalem called Facing Jihad in 2008, he met Pamela Geller who brought him to CPAC the following year and there was a lot of nervousness about his presence because he's an open racist, at CPAC, so they had to hold his event [BUZZING] in another room, a side room. I remember being there and seeing Tucker Carlson on stage, a sort of moderate bow tie Republican, a good guy, say on stage, you know, we just got demolished by Obama and the Democrats, we need something to be against. That's really how to win. We have to be against something. And he said, you know, being against Islamic extremism isn't really working so we should be against big government. And that is something that the Republicans pushed successfully, but in this off room they were saying, no, this campaign of Islamphobia can work and it can work within the Republican Party within a sort of new generation and they were looking ahead, in other words, the mid-terms and they realized that Obama has an Islamic name and this can work against him, too.

At this point, in a poll I saw I think by Rasmussen, about fifty percent of registered Republicans believe Obama is foreign. So this campaign that they've been running against him is having an effect. I think this campaign of Islamphobia, this network, really came together—it came to a zenith with the Park 51 controversy which was unfortunately endorsed by mainstream Jewish groups like the Anti-Defamation

League which is funded by Aubrey Chernick. And leading Republican candidates began to espouse the same rhetoric that we're hearing around this campaign. Of course, no one said, well, I'll move forward just with one observation on where I think it's going, one observation I have is that, you know, as someone who's covered anti-Semitic groups and covered the far right, I notice a similarity in the rhetoric between anti-Semitic groups and the Islamophobic groups. And you can look at Fritz Bolstene [PH] who I mentioned before, who is very, very renowned political figure in the Netherlands, who was Wilders' mentor. He brought Wilders into politics. And Bolstene recently declared that the Jews have no future in the Netherlands. That the Jews should all leave the Netherlands for America or Israel. And he said that's because of Muslim extremism. But of course he obviously seems to want the Jews out and is looking for some sort of precedent. And so Wilders was asked about this and he said, well, the Jews shouldn't leave. The Moroccans should leave instead. So it's sort of two sides of the same coin. Who should be demonized? Which minority religion should be demonized? And we see in the cartoons of *Der Sturmer* from the thirties, similar images that we see in the cartoons in Denmark about Muhammad. We have a new class of congressional Republicans, many of them who are at most—or the Tea Party candidates elected on an economic platform, and so they need foreign policy advice. Yeah, I'm wrapping it up right now. They need foreign policy advice. So who are they going to turn to? This is a really good issue for many of them because it has domestic implications. Sort of a prototype—archetypal candidate is, or politician, is Ilario Pantano who was recently elected from North Carolina. Based a lot of his campaign around the opposition to Park 51, hundreds of miles away, who has admitted to firing sixty bullets while he was a Marine in Iraq into the corpses of two Iraqi civilians. He was never prosecuted for it and he recently declared at CPAC that we need a Christian army for a Biblical war. And so this is a foreign policy position that has domestic, extreme domestic consequences and can only promote ethnic strife and a sort of atmosphere that I consider un-American and that's why it needs to be opposed especially by people in the faith community.

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thank you very much, Max. I actually can see—I opened this panel discussion with rhetoric specifically from members of congress, that the ensuing conversation has been very focused and specific. We've named names. We've given specific examples. The point of this is that that is what we need to highlight, a faith forum, a congressional audience, and a broader audience here in the United States. We need to understand this as an industry with very specific political objectives. I want to open this up at this time to questions and answers. If I can have you identify yourself and then pose the question. [UNCLEAR]

**MAN:**

[VERY FAINT, UNCLEAR] Muslim communities and [UNCLEAR] [BACKGROUND VOICES] as you said, these small groups [UNCLEAR]

**MAYA BERRY:**

Suhail?

**SUHAIL KHAN:**

I think, you know, we have the truth on our side. Though I think there are a couple of things that I think are very effective. One is getting out there and engaging, telling the story of who we are to the mass community. Second, where there are examples of people that we need to stand against, we—and when

we do that, do it vocally, you know, so that as it was pointed out by Alejandro, the majority of the terrorist plots that involved people who were doing that in the name of Islam were foiled by the help of the Muslim American community. [UNCLEAR] Christmas Day bomber. The father was the person who alerted law enforcement that my son is doing something that could be possibly violent. So that narrative needs to come out. And finally, I would say, you know, this is something that I do in my work and that is standing against religious bigotry, period. You know, I just led a delegation of faith leaders to Auschwitz and Dachau last August to stand up against anti-Semitism that is rising in Europe and here in the United States. And I think it's important that we stand on principle against religious bigotry no matter who the victims are. [UNCLEAR] people of faith, whether they're Christian, Muslim, or Jewish or other faith traditions. We need to stand together against bigotry. This is something that happened in the past, we've overcome it, and we'll overcome it again. But we need to do so together, that's the [UNCLEAR]

**DEEPA IYER:**

Well, I think that, you know—I think the most important thing that we can do as communities, as Muslim communities, communities that are affected or allied communities is to get engaged to the extent that it's possible. Everything from engaging in interfaith dialogue to community organizing to community storytelling [UNCLEAR] speaking of the media, there have been many Muslims who have been able to write letters to the editor, get them placed with respect to the upcoming King hearings that are happening. So to get engaged to the extent that it's possible is absolutely important. I also think it's important for those of us who might not be Muslim to also engage and to speak out, understanding that many of our Muslim brothers and sisters might be feeling unsafe in this political climate. And so it's absolutely important to kind of build those bridges and do what we can to step up and speak out.

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thank you, Deepa. We had another question here in front. Go ahead, sir.

**MAN:**

[VERY FAINT] [UNCLEAR] my question [UNCLEAR] live in a house [UNCLEAR] possibilities of [UNCLEAR] so my question is, why would law enforcement [UNCLEAR] with training [UNCLEAR]

**ALEJANDRO BEUTEL:**

It's a very good question. I think that the first thing that I would start off with is that law enforcement, members of the police are not—are people just like you and I. And so, lots of times, they don't know what's out there and what's, you know, separate the wheat from the chaff. To be able to distinguish between these sort of things and so they're looking for any sort of information that they can go out and there be helpful to them as possible. I think partly it's also the fact that, you know, the law enforcement, they don't know any better at times who are Muslim organizations that [UNCLEAR] is that we also need to sort of step up our game. We need to work to reach out [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] there needs to be more input into this sort of process in looking at curriculum development outreach to law enforcement and there is, right now, specifically on the training issue as well and I think that's where our voice really needs to be felt. Because, again, I agree, the foundation of the house of trust that we're trying to build right now is indeed quite shaky when, you know, we're basically building it on, you know, [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] misinformation as opposed to anything solid which would be the truth and build sort of understanding.

**MAN:**

At the border security, I just want to know if you followed this, this happened, the Center for Security Policy's [UNCLEAR] called a powwow, international Islamic jihadist Muslim businessmen [UNCLEAR] street gangs are working together to ruin America or something like that. Of course, the only thing they're missing is KFC.

**MAX BLUMENTHAL:**

I mean sooner or later you have to figure that the people who are working for the border patrol [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] are going to look at this and say [UNCLEAR] you know, it's a matter of time before that happens. And we just have to amplify the voices of experts from the law enforcement [UNCLEAR]

**SUHAIL KHAN:**

Let me also add that that's exactly right. One of the things when these temper tantrums started was, you know, when I was serving in the Bush Administration, the Bush Administration, Karl Rove and others had made it clear to Frank Gaffney, the CSP were not welcome at the White House, not welcome in the Pentagon. So they were working outside the law enforcement community, but really kind of going around members of congress and trying to kind of purport to be national security experts. But it became obvious to even members of congress that this was completely, you know, a false image. And people like Bobby Jindal, when he was in congress, immediately dropped off of Frank's board. Doug [UNCLEAR] most recently asked to be removed from Frank Gaffney's board. This is an example of somebody like that. And that, again, shows up within even the conservative circles there is an increasing realization that these people are on the fringe, on the margin, you know, one of the people that we haven't talked about is David Yerushalmi. One of Frank's senior advisers and counselors and this guy doesn't believe that—well, let me be accurate, he raised the question on whether black [UNCLEAR] should vote. And he, you know, look at him. He has all these kinds of racial—crazy racial theories about the hierarchy of races and things like that and of course, you know, Muslims are at the bottom of the heap. And this is the guy that's advising Frank on his world view when it comes to Islam. And he's, Frank always [UNCLEAR] he's my shariah expert.

So these are the kind of theories that increasingly members of congress staff are realizing are on the fringe and it's just as Max said, it really is what I call anti-Semitism on training wheels. I remember a column that Cal Thomas wrote. President Bush gave a speech about the Abrahamic traditions going back to Abraham and Judaism and Christianity and Islam and trying to [UNCLEAR] Americans of these faith traditions and say, look, we have a common father in Abraham. And Cal Thomas immediately launched into this column and he was saying lines about how this was ridiculous and how Muslims don't accept Jesus and therefore how can you say that, unless you accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior, this is a complete fallacy, etceteras, etceteras. The whole time I'm reading it, I'm thinking he's trying to [UNCLEAR] why the Muslims got it, but at the same time inadvertently elbowing his Jewish friends in the face as well by trying to point out the differences when it comes to Jesus. I happen to work in a Christian think tank myself, an evangelical Christian think tank, and I recognize that there's differences. But in the end, these are differences of faith, but when it comes down to our purposes, we're Americans and we care about the Constitution, we care about religious liberty. So these are just some of the things that come to mind and increasingly policy-makers and lawmakers and staff are realizing these guys are on the fringe, that they have developed a market out of the grass

roots of fear, they're really making money and aggrandizing their own wallets and stirring up fear and really causing our country to be less safe because they're not going after the bad guys, who are demonizing an entire faith community.

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thanks. We've got about fifteen minutes left, so I'm going to ask for fairly quick questions and fairly quick answers from our panelists. Go right ahead.

**MAN:**

[VERY FAINT] Yes. [UNCLEAR] my question [UNCLEAR]

**SUHAIL KHAN:**

Well, I've tried to have a civilized conversation with David Horowitz a few years ago. He published an attack piece by Frank Gaffney on his website and so, you know, going with Horowitz's word, I [UNCLEAR] and that's one thing about all these guys, they never call you to say, do you—are you beating your wife? You know. [LAUGHTER] Don't let the facts get in the way of a good story. So I e-mailed and I called David and I just said that, hey, you know, I'd love to talk to you, you're saying some pretty crazy outlandish stuff. Let's talk about it. I'm happy to answer any questions. And he immediately forwarded the e-mail to Frank Gaffney and then I got caught in this weird e-mail exchange with Frank, who I also knew from my time on the Hill, who, by the way, would call me when I was at the White House—this is kind of stupid stuff—he would call me to get into the White House. And Karl and other people would say, you want to let that freak in, that's your problem. You know, I was in the weird situation of having to defend Frank before he started going after me, you know. And same thing with David. I tried to have this reasonable conversation, but then I just got caught up in this, you know, you're a Muslim, all Muslims lie type of thing and then I just realized there's no rational discussion with people like Frank or with David Horowitz. So I just decided to just disengage.

**MATTHEW DUSS:**

[EXTREMELY FAINT] I engaged with David Horowitz on a number of occasions. Many of them are on video. [LAUGHTER] And one of them is this Islamofascism Awareness Week. An event that he put on at Columbia University where I asked him about a passage in his book, the second memoir, where he compared his own father [UNCLEAR] to Mohammad Atta. Who slammed the plane into the World Trade Center. And I thought he would back away from the statement that he had made, instead [UNCLEAR] terrorist. So, I mean, that's [UNCLEAR] But, you know, I praise his intellectual honesty. [UNCLEAR]

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thank you, Matt. Another question? Yes.

**WOMAN:**

[EXTREMELY FAINT] [UNCLEAR] were a number of Americans that said [UNCLEAR] about Islam, they're not [UNCLEAR] can you talk about some of the [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES]

**MAYA BERRY:**

That's a very good question. I'll allow the panelists to start.

**DEEPA IYER:**

It's interesting because there's also a poll that came out by the Pew Research Center in August of 2010, kind of around the same time as the Park 51 Center controversy and in that poll they found that fifty-five percent of those surveyed said they didn't really know anything about Islam. But thirty-five, thirty-eight percent still had unfavorable views about the religion, you know, though they didn't really know much about it. So I think that, you know, what we're seeing—I was going to make this point a little bit later, but I think I might make it now. That I know that we talk about this being sort of a fringe industry or cottage industry, but it's actually having real life consequences, whether it's in terms of the general public and what they are thinking about Muslims or Islam and also on actual community members as I laid out when I was speaking. I think that we really have a collective responsibility to make sure that the fringe doesn't command more influence. And we need to ask ourselves, all of us, really how we're going to do that. Because it's not just about educating people about the religion, it's actually calling these folks to task as I think many folks are doing here, but also making sure that at all levels of the political process and with the media and with grass roots community organizations, that we're kind of sending that same message over and over again. Because what we're seeing on the ground is that that fringe message is having a really devastating impact in communities.

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thank you, Deepa. The other point that I would make that I think is important to insert here, the reason we do the polling, the reason that we do the projects and the educational things that we're doing on these issues is that while these elements may be the fringe elements that are perhaps doing this research and have a very specific political agenda and knowing that they do it, as Deepa said, the implications are fairly broad. The problem, though, separate from the way general Americans may or may not understand the faith, may or may not understand the foreign policy issues that Max has talked about, all of these are complicated. The problem, though, that we're dealing with now and the reason we're on the Hill is that you have policymakers, what I opened up with were quotes from policymakers, people who have constituents that are American Muslims and Arab-Americans. So that's a different type of problem that we're having to deal with and that's why understanding it in this context is really important. There's a great deal of education that needs to happen in general, but it's very, very clear that there are policymakers that we could look to, to help fight this trend, because at its roots, it's incredibly un-American, are the ones that are actually engaging in it. So that I want to mention. Let's take another question from the audience. Right here in the front.

**MAN:**

[UNCLEAR] from the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] what do you think the role is of strong civil rights enforcement in combating Islamophobia and do you think, you know, the work that we've done specifically in the area of hate crimes, enforcing [UNCLEAR] and other actions that we've taken have made a difference?

**DEEPA IYER:**

Sure. Let me start with that. Having worked for the Civil Rights Division in [UNCLEAR] L.A., I will



say that I think that the division's work in combating the post 9-11 backlash has been extremely important. I think that a number of the prosecutions that have occurred really sent a message to the general public that we're not going to tolerate these sorts of incidents, we're not going to tolerate this sort of violence. I think that we need more. You know, I mentioned the End Racial Profiling Act, which is a really critical piece of legislation. We are also looking to the Department of Justice to clarify their racial profiling guidance, to fill some of the loopholes that are in it and we are also looking to see the department take—actually, we need more public statements as these prosecutions are developing to speak out against Islamophobia, to speak out, very clearly, about the civil rights protections that community members have. So I think that a lot has been done that has been extremely useful and that we know that communities rely upon. But we still need more in the form of outreach, in the form of legislation, in the form of guidance, administrative guidance. They can really ensure that our communities feel protected and can enforce their rights to the fullest if they turn to government, which oftentimes, as you know, they're afraid to do at this point.

**ALEJANDRO BEUTEL:**

[FAINT] Sure. So I think civil rights forms an extremely important, really [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] society that reminds us of our principles. Particularly when we're in a climate of fear sometimes what I've noticed is that at times looking at like the statements in the cottage industry and all these folks is that sometimes when we're reading some of the past mistakes and the civil rights division is there to help us not repeat some of those mistakes by relying on us and helping to make sure that our country is living by its principles and that American Muslims can be integrated here into this society as any other sort of community. The other thing that I think is also extremely helpful is with the community relations service as well. Where not just in the enforcement of statutes and laws but also in terms of helping to resolve conflict at times between various parties. Because this is a good opportunity where there can be dialogue and communication and having CRS there [UNCLEAR] [CAMERA RUSTLES] extremely important asset as well.

**SUHAIL KHAN:**

[UNCLEAR] the law enforcement side and that is a lot of these, you know, blogs and e-mails that go around and these websites have consequences. They do. They have real consequences. As was pointed out, there was the attempt in Michigan to bomb a mosque there. There was another attempt to bomb a couple of centers in Pinellas, Florida a few years ago. One of the people that Frank usually sends his screeds to is a woman named Debbie Schlusel out of Michigan, who's known in circles there [UNCLEAR] equal opportunity attacker of Republicans and Democrats, anybody she doesn't like, she's been on the Howard Stern show. That tells you the caliber of her intellect, I suppose. But she went after Darrell Issa. Hard. Saying that he was, you know, cause he's Lebanese, so therefore he must be Hezbollah. She started calling him Jihad Darrell. And sure enough, there was an attempt to bomb, kill Darrell Issa. And when the FBI raided the guys that were plotting to kill Darrell Issa and bomb his congressional office in California, they found Debbie Schlusel's columns. So they were ginned up by her columns and, you know, if you take these columns—if you take these attacks on the net as real, that people are subversives, that they're terrorists, that they're here to destroy America from within, it's not an illogical next step for a good, patriotic American to say this is something we need to stop and doing so violently we'll take matters into our own hands. And, you know, add to that mental issues a la Arizona or the attack on the Holocaust Museum last year, you know, you have a very deadly combination. So these words, again, I think the answer is more speech and freedom of speech to respond with the truth. But the justice component and the enforcement is important on that front. Because you do—when these columns are published, you start getting the death threats and the e-mails

saying I'm coming after you and it's important to notify law enforcement about that. I know Jim Zogby has had that experience, I'm increasingly having that experience, I'm not afraid of the truth, because I know the truth that I'm a loyal American as everybody else on this panel, but it really is something to be cognizant of and that the American Muslim community, like other faith communities that have been targeted, have to work with law enforcement to combat these threats.

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thanks, Suhail. We've got time for one more question [UNCLEAR]

**MAN:**

[UNCLEAR] I was curious as to what you [UNCLEAR] yesterday that [UNCLEAR] troubled history with CAIR. You know, a lot of these allegations certainly come from, sort of, you know, on the fringe sources [UNCLEAR] history of the organization [UNCLEAR] to not work directly with CAIR.

**MAYA BERRY:**

I'm afraid I'm actually not aware of that specific statement from yesterday. So I wouldn't be able to comment. I don't know if anyone else here has seen it. Sorry.

**MAN:**

There's also been letters written to congress about it, too. About not working with CAIR. The FBI [UNCLEAR]

**MAYA BERRY:**

Right. I mean, there's certainly—I think folks are aware that CAIR is one of the organizations that receives a great deal of attention from some of these groups. But I'm not familiar with those specific statements that you're making and I wouldn't want to speak to it. In some ways, I think it's a distraction for this talk and I only have a few minutes left. Are there any other questions, quickly, before I ask for their closing comments?

**MAN:**

[VERY FAINT] Hi, [UNCLEAR] Middle East for the last month and a half. [UNCLEAR] just wondering what your take is on that.

**MAYA BERRY:**

I'm afraid I'm going to say that is also a bit of a foreign policy angle I don't want to get into it on our last few moments, but I really do appreciate the questions and the conversation we've had today. I want to end on time, cause I—Eric really thinks it's important to be punctual. It's the American part of the Arab-American. We convened today under the headline that Islamophobia poses a challenge to American pluralism. And that it impacts both [UNCLEAR] and people. That was the point of being here today. Suhail, when you spoke, you specifically said that the objective that they bring to this, in terms of the folks that have organized this industry, referring to it, is that they're stopping the empowerment of Americans to have a voice in their own democracy. Deepa, you added that there are

these ramifications, whether we're perpetual foreigners, whether we're a threat to national security. She also noted it has a potential for having a chilling effect on civic and political participation. I would ask very briefly for each of you to just close with that thought given where we are today. How do you engage civic policymakers, members of congress, to better address this issue in terms of the civic and political implications that we have?

**DEEPA IYER:**

So I think as we've all mentioned, the cottage industry that you all talked about so well is having an impact not just on community members and what the general public is thinking about Muslims or those perceived to be Muslims, but it's also having an impact on how many of our policymakers and elected officials and candidates for office are talking about the communities. And that in turn is creating, it could create a chilling effect in terms of how our communities feel empowered to participate in the civic and political process. In order to stem back, I think that, you know, first and foremost, we need to make sure that we are denouncing and calling out these sorts of statements and this sort of rhetoric when it happens. We cannot let it slide. It's important to do the research, fill out the reports, make sure that we have a range of leaders, community leaders, that are speaking out and calling those who are making these statements to task. That's absolutely important. I think, additionally, when it comes to the community itself, it's important to engage in civic and political participation still. To become familiar with your congressional members and your representatives. To do meetings, to make sure that our voices are representative in the media, etceteras. So there's so many steps that we need to take as community members as well as thought leaders in order to stem this tide that we're seeing because again, it's really having a direct impact real people's lives in so many different ways.

**SUHAIL KHAN:**

I think the answer is just not to back down, to just be armed with the truth. To continue engaging. This is something that is meant to cower and cause fear in various communities, including the Muslim Arab American community, we just need to not back down on that. I'm a proud conservative. I'm proud to serve my country. And I have always been very vocal in standing up for what I believe in because it's not just about me as an individual. It's never just about me. It's about people, about Americans and others who have their rights and attacks on their rights. That's something that I stand strongly—that I need to stand up for. We have to be very, very strong and vocal in standing up to hate. That is no matter—again, no matter who it's directed against. We have to believe in the Constitution, we have to believe in the American people. My grandfather fought against the Nazis and the fascists in World War Two. My parents were anti-communist. And I think that this is something that we have to take up as a mantle, to fight hate no matter who it is. We have the Constitution. You know, and we have examples of people that can help us in overcoming this type of hate. You know, I mean, I got into politics as a proud conservative who was inspired by people like Jefferson and by people like Johnny Cash and [UNCLEAR] and these are the people that kind of kept me going and that's something that continues. When you have arguments like this that are based on hate and fear that we need to stand up as cheerful warriors, as Ronald Reagan said, and being armed with the truth. And again, the American people are a fair one, we are an exceptional country. And we're an exceptional country because we are an open, inclusive country of people of various ethnicities, religions and practice and thought. And that's why, again, I'll cling to the Constitution and the First Amendment. I think that is the answer.

**MAX BLUMENTHAL:**

[FAINT] I think we can go back to [UNCLEAR] Washington or Jefferson or the treaty of Tripoli which

declared the United States has no hostility against Muslims, but we can also, I can take great inspiration from the Godfather of Soul, James Brown, who said, if you're going to tell a lie about me, I'm going to tell the truth about you. But that's exactly what we need to do is expose them for what they are. Which is liars, hucksters, and bigots and let the public then make up their mind.

**ALEJANDRO BEUTEL:**

I'd echo I think what everyone said. Not backing down. Really believing in free speech and America and our nation and its principles. Because I think at the end of the day, our diversity is its strength. So, Suhail, for instance, had—has had a very patriotic family history. Fighting the Nazis. Myself, I am the Muslim son of a Jewish father and a Catholic mother. And for me, I stand by and live by America's first freedom, religious liberty and free speech every single day. And if my family can coexist together as one family despite being [UNCLEAR] [LAUGHTER] I think that, you know, the rest of our nation can do it and knowing that, you know, that we've gone through ebbs and flows in terms of our tolerance at times here in this country, I know that at the end of the day, the marketplace of ideas, especially when all communities of moral conscience and faith speak up and speak out the truth will overcome the fear and at the end of the day, I participate in freedom and truth over fear.

**MAYA BERRY:**

Thank you again to all our panelists. Again, on behalf of the Arab American Institute of America—I'm sorry, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, I thank you for being with us today. We will be releasing a report of the transcript of today's proceedings should you want to share it with additional folks on the day of Chairman King's hearings, which I understand now are March 10<sup>th</sup>. Thanks again for being here.