

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

JOURNEY INTO AMERICA: THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM

Washington, D.C.
Thursday, June 24, 2010

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. GRAND: Welcome, everyone. We are very pleased that so many of you were able to join us today, for what I think is going to be a fascinating Journey into America, to paraphrase from the book, to quote from the book. And what I hope will also be a fascinating discussion here today.

My name is Steve Grand. For those who don't know me, I'm the director of the project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World here at Brookings, and it is our great honor, along with Brookings Press, to be able to hold this book launch even today for Professor Ahmed's *Journey into America*. Copies of the book I should mention will be available for sale after this outside, and Professor Ahmed will be kind enough to sign books as people leave.

This *Journey into America* that Professor Ahmed takes us through today, will take us through today and takes us through in his book, is really a sequel. It's the second of two journeys that he's made -- he and his colleagues have made. The first was *Journey into Islam*, which I believe was Brookings best-selling book for several years, which was a post 9-11 look at what was happening in the Muslim world. Professor Ahmed traveled extensively throughout the Muslim world with several colleagues who you'll meet today, into the various countries in the Muslim world and examined the dynamic that was underway post 9-11 in these countries. Looked at how many Muslim countries, many Muslims, were reacting to the challenges of globalization, and put out a book that I think really helped educate the American public about the true nature of Islam and what was happening in many Muslim majority countries around the world and what it meant for the United States. We were very pleased as our project here to be a partner in that endeavor, and we're very pleased to have Professor Akbar Ahmed as a nonresident senior fellow with Brookings.

The second journey is into America. Professor Ahmed decided to take a

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look at America itself and sort of shine a mirror on America. And along with many of the same research colleagues set about to look at the United States and look at Islam in America. And the two are, as he'll tell you, really interchangeable, intertwined because really the story of Islam in America is the story of America and its identity and its search for identity.

Let me first introduce Professor Ahmed and our other panelists today, Imam Mohamed Magid. And then I'm going to invite Professor Ahmed to the podium to talk a little bit about the book.

Professor Akbar Ahmed is a true renaissance man who would make Jefferson proud. He is an anthropologist by training with a Ph.D. from the University of London. He was the commissioner in the Northwest frontier province of Pakistan as a young man. He was later high representative for Pakistan to the United Kingdom. He is now the Ibn Khaldun chair of Islamic Studies at American University, as well as the distinguished chair of Middle East and Islamic Studies at the U.S. Naval Academy. He has written a few plays, produced -- written a number of award-winning books, and also produced a documentary about this journey into Islam. I'm waiting for the poem to come out and the songs, but I guess that's next.

Before I invite Professor Ahmed up, let me introduce our other panelist. Imam Mohamed Magid, who I have come to know in recent years and come to think of as a dear friend. He is the executive director of the All Dulles Area Muslim Society Center, which is just down the road in Sterling, Virginia. He serves as well as the vice president of the Islamic Society of North America, which I believe according to membership is the largest Muslim organization in North America. And along with Imam Magid and Professor Ahmed, we are also going to introduce you during the course of the discussion to three of the research colleagues who accompanied Professor Ahmed through America. But let me now

turn it over to Professor Ahmed. (Applause)

MR. AHMED: Thank you, Dr. Grand. Thank you so much. It's always great to be back at Brookings, second home to me, as Dr. Grand pointed out. And thanks to him I'm a fellow, continue to be a fellow, a proud fellow of the Brookings Institution. I'm grateful to all of you for being here on this very hot day, for braving the heat this early middle of the week event. But it's a houseful, so I'm delighted and honored.

I'm honored that Imam Magid has come to join us. He is, of course, a leading light in the community in America. *Time* magazine called him "the American imam." I do have one complaint before he makes a complaint. He's not in the book. And the reason is Jonathan, Frankie, Hailey tried and tried and tried, but he's so busy. He's either in Egypt or he's in Cairo. He's in Karachi. He's impossible to get ahold of. We did try. So there's that glaring deficiency I'm warning you about.

But I'm delighted that with Dr. Grand he's joining us this morning. I'm delighted my team is here, each one of them. Dr. Grand will introduce them later, but I'm particularly thrilled that their parents have joined us. Both their parents, coming from Baltimore, Joe and Terry coming all the way from Dallas in Texas. And a lot of my friends are here, some of them coming in spite of all the other engagements they have, so I am thrilled.

Well, let me get to the crunch, the heart of the gathering this morning, the reason why we are here. To me I want you to be thinking. This is a think tank so we need to do a bit of thinking in spite of the heat outside. This book is to be looked at on several levels of engagement. On one level it's narrative. It's a travel book, and Americans love a good yarn, a good travel yarn. You know, we are traveling, we're down the road. We all grew up, at least my generation, with Jack Kerouac and sort of a motorbike and down the road and so on. It takes you into parts of America that may be familiar to you and some

parts that you may not be so familiar with, which will really surprise you.

On another level this is a serious anthropological study. This is conducted within the frame of straightforward anthropology. I am an orthodox anthropologist, trained by some of the most famous names in the discipline in Britain, mainstream orthodox anthropology. So for me some of the stuff that you'll be reading about will be standard, heavily disguised I hope with an exciting narrative. My team was very adamant about keeping the anthropology down while Steve would say where's the anthropology? So I had to balance the intellectuals with the more popular style.

But we went to 75 cities. We visited 100 mosques. We conducted questionnaires. We stayed with communities in what anthropologists call participant observation, which means we attended mosques, we prayed with Muslims, we opened the fast with them, we kept the fast with them, we woke up in the morning for sari (?). And my team would split up, the boys going off to talk to imams and the men, women going off talking to the women. And we were able to then on the basis of questionnaires, diaries, interviews, put together a picture of society. That's standard anthropology.

Now, anthropology is still a subject of discipline. You have every right to say, well, wait a minute. I don't agree with this perspective of this particular community. I see it differently. But that's your right. An anthropologist is like a camera. He takes a snapshot of society at that moment in time. You may like it, you may not like it, but it is authentic. This is a snapshot of the American world, the American society, the American communities today. With everything, warts and all. The glories, the ideals, the tensions, the dilemmas, the strengths, the weaknesses. This is it. And there's no greater tribute an anthropologist can pay a society than spending an entire year, an entire year in the field. It's very difficult. Think of it. In the great think tanks of Washington and we are sitting in probably the preeminent one. Experts are used to flying into cities. Steve and Hailey have

just come and note she's now with that particular circle of experts. They fly into a major city. They were in Alexandria recently, the top hotels, meet the top experts, fly off to another event at another city.

We were for one year literally on the road. Very often spending nights at Hampton Inn or the other -- I would be a great advert for Hampton Inn. I had no complaints, although my team was very fed up. This is supposed to be a bad hotel. I said, look, I am from Pakistan. This is a luxury hotel. (Laughter)

It was important to understand that we were on the road so we'd sleep late, we'd interview people in mosques till 10, 11, late at night. Up six, five, and seven, eight hours drive to the next town. This was going on for one year. While collecting data, talking to people, interviewing, filming. It's not easy. Not physically easy. And when you have a young, energetic team like that, very difficult to keep up with them. And there is, of course, all kinds of anecdotes you read about in the book as to each one of us was faring.

So it's straightforward anthropology. This is the second level. To look at it as anthropology, an interesting shot or mirror of society, it's ethnicity, the tensions within the ethnic groups of the United States. Now, I know it's not politically correct to talk of race and color and so on, but to me as an outsider looking at the society, everything is about race and color. It comes up again and again and again. And it's remarkable looking at it from outside. You, of course, become blind to it because you're inside society very often. Americans growing up in the society won't see things that I as an outsider would pick up immediately.

And the challenge was I would constantly throw it at my team. I would say go and give me answers to these questions. And they would say this. They would say we haven't asked these questions because we as Americans don't ask these questions. And the questions would surprise you. For example, one question I posed to them was straightaway when we started this because I had to overnight become an expert on America

which I wasn't. I wasn't a scholar of American history or culture or society and overnight I had to. I had to read everything.

I asked them. I said why is Plymouth the symbol of America? Why not Jamestown which is older? And we spent months and months wrestling with this problem. So think about it. When we say it all began with Plymouth and the Mayflower. Why don't you actually say Jamestown? Well, if you're wondering what the answer is, read the book. (Laughter)

So on another level this book is about security issues. There are issues of security that confront us today. There is a phenomena called the "homegrown terrorist." We didn't have this two decades ago, a decade ago. And it is a threat. It's a threat not only to non-Muslims; it's a threat to everyone living in the United States of America. Each one of us, if someone blows a bomb here he's going to kill me as much as he kills you. He's a threat to all of us.

So it is in our interest to understand the threat, where it's coming from, who these young men are, and why do they want to harm their own country? This is their country, these five young men from Virginia who were sentenced this morning in Pakistan. They all got 10 years each. Why were they wanting to harm America? Or Faisal Shahzad, why does he want to blow up parts of New York? What is compelling him? We need to have these answers. What are the compulsions driving him?

And I for one, and I'm speaking in a think tank, I'm not prepared to accept the standard failed analysis of security and terror and law and order, that it's all Islam and somehow Islam is provoking them into this. Because if that was the case, then why is Islam not provoking Imam Magid to be doing these things? Why is it provoking him to do the opposite? Or people like me, or people like some of the Muslim members on my team, to go absolutely in the opposite direction, which is to create bridges, to create understanding, to

create better understanding.

So the answer is that it is all in the Qur'an and the Qur'an provokes violence to me is frankly speaking slightly absurd. It's incorrect. It's historically inaccurate, and the same argument can just as easily be applied to Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, every religion in the world. So it doesn't take us anywhere.

I would, as an anthropologist, begin to look at society. Why is a young man provoked to blowing himself up and his neighbors in his own society? He is failing his community is failing. His imam is failing. His parents are failing. Somewhere there's a massive failure in his life because when he's in trouble -- and he's in trouble. He's growing up in a post 9-11 America. It's not easy to be a Muslim and grow up in the United States of America. Please understand that. I don't want to sugarcoat this pill, but read the book. There are enough examples to tell you that however positive and warm and welcoming 90 percent of Americans may be, even 10 percent who don't make Muslims feel too welcome, who may be negative, who may say cruel things in the media -- it's not even 10 percent. Maybe it's .5 percent. But it has such power that it damages people.

And it is so pervasive and it permeates society that no one is immune. No Muslim cannot see the media and say, wait a minute; these guys don't really mean it. They are attacking the prophet of Islam. They are attacking the god of Islam. They are attacking Islamic culture, but they don't really mean it. Every Muslim feels it, I can assure you, even Imam Magid. He may be warm and wonderful and smiling, et cetera, but as a Muslim he will be feeling this.

Take the core issue of the prophet of Islam. Just as Jesus is so highly loved and symbolic to Christians and also to Muslims by the way. We love him. We love Jesus as much as Christians. The prophet of Islam is especially, an especially beloved figure in Islam. Every Muslim loves him and adores him. And read the book in terms of the

survey we took. Every Muslim we talked to -- Turk, Indonesian, Pakistani. Everyone -- woman, man, rich, poor, old, young -- would give the prophet of Islam as their number one role model.

To Iqbal, one of the greatest poets of the last century, a legendary figure. Anyone would know him from the Muslim world, Muhammad Iqbal. He said (speaking in Arabic). Is that the correct quote or I massacred it? Correct? I'm glad the little group here of Pakistanis are shaking their heads in approval, and they're shaking their heads this way and not this way which means they approve.

It means -- and listen to the translation my American friends, I want you to understand that this is the greatest poet in the Muslim world, one of the legendary poets of the Muslim world. He sums up one of his most popular poems, the Joab Ishaqua. Go online and look him up. And he's a great bridge between East and West. He's knighted by England, Sir Mohammed Iqbal. He sums up his poem by saying that telling Muslims that if you are faithful to the prophet and you love the prophet as he should be loved, the prophet of Islam, then what is this universe? Why are you striving for this universe? We will give you the secrets to the universe. We will give you the secret to knowledge itself because knowledge in Islam is supreme. It's absolutely supreme. The word "ilm" is used more often in the Qur'an than any other word except "god."

Now, this is the prophet for Muslims. The same prophet -- now, switch onto the American media -- is demonized, abused, attacked, non-stop. Now, this is a free society. I want to pause for a moment. Not for a moment am I suggesting we shouldn't attack anyone we want to. It's a free society. It's democracy. And three cheers for that. I fully applaud it, fully support it. However, I want you to begin to think. Aren't we singling out one particular community for this kind of freedom? Can we say anything to an African-American? Can we use one particular word without a storm? Can we say anything anti-

Semitic without a storm in the media? Can we say anything about any other religion without a storm rising and swallowing the person who said it, destroying careers? We see this happening again and again and again.

We saw this recently with Helen Thomas who made a statement on camera. It destroyed her career. One of the oldest figures in the White House, although the sell-by date may have expired long ago. But nonetheless, the point I'm making is that in this environment, if freedom rings, and it must ring, it must ring for everyone. You can't pick up one community and say, okay, we hammer it, abuse it, call it anything. Anything. It all goes and we all look the other way. When they complain we say this is how freedom works. Well, if freedom works like this, then prepare yourselves for a reaction. And this is a warning and it's an alert. Read the book because the Muslim community is on edge. Take it from me. Whatever Imam Magid will tell you, he's bringing people together. I'm bringing people together. But the Muslim community, as we traveled the length and breadth of the United States, we found it on edge.

And we met some very inspiring people. We met these wonderful African-American imams, Muslim imams who converted to Islam. Americans. These are 100 percent Americans and yet they're Muslim. And they balance the two, their Americanness and the Islam. They will complain about this. They will complain about the media. They want the freedom. They love baseball. They love Hollywood films. But they will complain about the media and they will make you the same point that I'm making for you.

So this is the third point, security. And if we in these think tanks are needing to think ahead for this community, prevent homegrown terrorism, we need to act now. And if we need to act now, we need to understand the community. We cannot impose our own limited and incomplete and often totally wrong ideas onto the community and say they're all going crazy because they read the Qur'an. And because if you have wrong

assumptions, you're going to have wrong conclusions. You cannot have it any other way and you're seeing what's happening in the world today in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and so on.

Therefore, we need to understand the community and begin to work and plan for it. Many suggestions in the book for the young. And I'm glad some of those are being picked up independently. Steve was just telling me, for example, we suggest these five young men from Virginia. They've got energy. When you're young, you have a lot of energy. Why couldn't they go to Pakistan instead of wanting to blow up things? And join the hospital there or join a school? All right, you want to do something good for your community, go and work the whole summer. Like many Jewish friends, Stephen and I meet a lot of these young Palestinians and Israelis. There's so much work going on at that level in society. They go at that level and they're working in schools and dispensaries and so on. Why can't these young Americans do that rather than waiting to blow up things. Who is talking to them or not talking to them? What should parents be doing? What should imams be doing?

We have a survey of imams which is almost unique. There have been many studies, great studies, but no holistic study like this which puts the whole picture between one cover. Because we have also looked at the imams. We've asked questions. Where are they being trained? Do we even know how many imams there are in this country? How many from the Arab world? How many from South Asia? What sects do they belong to? Where is their education coming from? What does a Dilban (inaudible) imam have to say against a Salafi imam? Against a Wahabi imam? What impact will that have on the congregation?

So we have huge questions to be looked into. We are just raising these questions and I hope there are going to be studies along these lines. There is so much

money floating around right now in security. Securities are going to be all galloping into some ridiculous direction. We need to get back to the community where the dangers lurk. Where possibilities lurk. Where hope lurks. Where aspirations lurk. Where the American dream lurks because we met so many inspiring Muslims in America who are living the American dream. Before 9-11 this was they kept telling us the greatest place in the world to be a Muslim. They were happiest to be in America. And yet today there's a huge question mark about the future.

So security. Another level. International relations. We lived in a world a decade ago when what was happening in Africa, Asia, didn't really concern us. We were on this continent, separate world. Well, that world is over. Everything that's happening over there is having a direct impact over here and vice versa. Don't fool yourselves. Faisal Shahzad's mean logic, although I think he had a lot of psychological problems and sociological ones. I won't go into those here. But his explanation was that the drone strikes, what's happening in Afghanistan and Pakistan, drove him to do what he did, rather badly as we saw.

Here we have Faisal Shahzad responding to the world and events in his part of the world. So international affairs has to be looked at differently in the context of the Muslim community. We cannot isolate the two, which means if you flip this, this community becomes the strongest asset the United States has. These become your ambassadors. These become the bridge with the Muslim world if you flip it around. If we treat this community with suspicion, with confusion, with misunderstanding which is what's happening largely, many honorable exceptions, but largely this is what's happening, you are guaranteed to have problems. It's a small community -- 6- or 7 million. Not a big community in the context of 300 million Americans -- mainstream Americans. But because of the sensitivities of what's happening in the Muslim world, it creates special problems.

Finally, the big issues. The big theoretical issues we are raising. The biggest is how does a minority live within a majority? At one stage we were told this is a melting pot. America is a melting pot. You come here and you melt into this melting pot. Your formerly Italian background or Spanish, now you end up being American. Now people say it's more of a salad bowl. So what's happening with the Muslims in the context of a minority adjusting to the majority? Here is a huge theoretical question, and how do the two cope with each other?

This book also raises the issue of the compatibility of Islam with American. Is Islam compatible with America? And the answer will surprise you. I talked about the prophet. Do you know that the Founding Fathers -- and God bless the Founding Fathers. There's no set of visionaries, of founders of any nation who can compete with this, with this set of Founding Fathers. They're really extraordinary. If there's one takeaway from this book to U.S. Americans it is rediscover your Founding Fathers and their ideals. They will inspire you.

And let me tell you what they said about Islam. Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, all of them stretched their hand in friendship and respect to Islam. Adams called the prophet of Islam the same prophet who is today a pedophile terrorist. He's demonized, he's abused in the media here without anyone standing up and saying, wait a minute, some people may be hurt by this. There is something called religious respect for people. Something that generals like Petraeus, McChrystal, Colonel David Kilcullen constantly point out. We need to respect. We need to give dignity to these people in Iraq or Afghanistan or they're not going to like us. Simple, basic, human logic and nature and relationships.

Adams called the prophet of Islam one of the greatest figures in history on par with the greatest names of history: Confucius, Socrates, and so on. Think about it.

Jefferson, that extraordinary heroic figure, great hero of mine, great hero of my team.

Jefferson, who has statute outside the university that he created with an angel holding a tablet, 1786, says religious freedom. Just think of it, 1786. And look around the world and see what's happening. There are royal dynasties in Europe. There's tyranny in the Muslim world. There are Ottomans in the Muslim world. The moguls are about to collapse and the British are about to colonize India.

There's all sorts of turmoil in the rest of the world. And Jefferson has a vision of a society in this new land which is going to be genuinely pluralist. And it says religious freedom and here are the names on that tablet: God, Christianity; Jehovah, Judaism; Allah, Islam; Brahma, Hinduism. And when I saw it my breath was taken away. I was just so breathless looking at it. I was seeing a man in the United States of America lead the 18th century, is reaching out not -- forget Judaism and Islam, which is -- Islam would have been a very exotic foreign religion then. I'm sure there weren't very many Muslims here. He's reaching out to Hindus. That is America. That is what is the challenge. It isn't the relationship with Islam only. It is America's understanding of American. What it means to be American today.

Where Islam comes in is the compatibility with Islam. Because you'll say, but how do we -- they're terrorists. They cut our heads off. They shot people. Women walk three paces behind and all the stereotypes. Look at the ideals of the Founding Fathers and look at the ideals of Islam. The emphasis on education, on family life, on community, on signs, on opening the mind, on respect for the law, on justice. On each one of these points Islam unequivocally stands firm and would advocate. Completely compatible with this vision. That is why it was so encouraging to meet so many Muslims on this journey. And it was really encouraging for all of us; the entire team and myself were Muslims would say our role model is Thomas Jefferson.

Now, that's amazing. I'm sure you as Americans would not expected this, that a Muslim would be saying in private, in a private conversation with us; one of our great role models is Thomas Jefferson. So here we have immediately a building brick, something to build on. We also have challenges. We also have challenges because within the United States there is a debate about Jefferson himself and the Founding Fathers. Jefferson as we know was recently dropped in Texas from the list of authors to be read. I mean, he's one of the people who is no longer being read.

So here we have a challenge. America has to decide what it means to be American. Is it the vision of the Founding Fathers, which is the reason we are here? We were attracted to this America. The beacon of visionary, pluralism, and religious tolerance. That's why we're all here. Or is it going to be some other kind of America where the Founding Fathers will be eased out and new interpretations of America given to us? So it is a challenge in terms of how we understand America itself.

The bottom line of the book is, the last line in fact, America's challenge will be to become more American. Islam's challenge will be to help America become more American because Islam, too, is now caught up in its crisis: lack of justice, lack of good governance, collapse of law and order. If you look around the Muslim world the dictatorships, the tyranny, the challenges Muslims face. It's a crisis which we cannot ignore however we want to couch it in terms of interfaith, friendship, and so on. It's a crisis in the Muslim world, a crisis in relations between America and the Muslim world, and a theoretical crisis for Americans to really begin to look at themselves in a mirror. Then that is exactly what we've done in this book which is to hold a mirror as true and good friends. Here is our contribution, our dedication, and hopefully our offering to America. And that is the journey into America.

Thank you. (Applause)

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MR. GRAND: Thank you. And thank you, Professor Ahmed, for that very moving discussion of the book.

I wanted to turn to Imam Magid and give him the opportunity to comment on the book and comment on Professor Ahmed comments.

IMAM MAGID: Thank you, Mr. Grand, for your friendship and invitation. Dr. Akbar, it's always a pleasure to be with you and to give you -- sharing your, you know, great thoughts and (inaudible) Americans to think more about Islam and Muslims.

I would like to say that I read the book from the cover to the cover. The book that I have. And I'm offering my interpretation of the book, not to say it's a holy book because I'm an imam.

MR. AHMED: (inaudible).

IMAM MAGID: Yeah. But I would like to say that it is very interesting, the issue of identity. American identity. I think it is great for Muslims and Americans to read the chapters over and over again because as an American Muslim, when I come to this country I was given advice by a friend of mine. He said as a black man you need to read or to watch Eyes on the Prize videotapes about the civil rights movement. And I went to the university and watched 17 videotapes about Eyes on the Prize. And I developed a great appreciation of the struggle of people who look like me, the sacrifice they made for someone like me to be able to vote and to participate fully in society.

I think the chapter is crucial because it reminds America that American society is a diverse society, but the history of America in accepting others is not great in some aspects of it. We have this (inaudible) against African-American and Irish and Jewish and others. It seems like it's the Muslims turn now, you know, of this struggle. But it is great to remind people of the ideal of the Founding Fathers because I think America does correct itself, but it doesn't come without great struggle. African Americans didn't have it easy, nor

the Jewish Americans. You have to stand for your rights in America and to speak against each injustice and violation of civil rights of your community.

The other issue that, you know, I take on the issue of identity, it seems to me like we as American Muslims, we come also to rediscover our American identity. Many American leaders today are talking about the Founding Fathers. They give that in their lectures. Someone like Shaman Yusuf has PowerPoint presentations about the Founding Fathers and the relationship with Islam and Muslims, and has a picture of George Washington -- a drawing of George Washington, President George Washington, and a man with a turban standing next to him.

And people reading with Dr. Akbar said that Jefferson and others, great people who said great things about Islam and Muslims. The first country to recognize America is Morocco as a country. We come to know also about the contribution of Muslim Americans by looking to the American history. And an African-American young man named Amir Mohamed established a moving (inaudible) probably have met him also -- an exhibit of American Muslims where it will show you the American Muslims have been in America now for centuries.

The issue of a relationship with the American society at large after the 9-11 is a very serious issue. I think Dr. Akbar really highlighted the concerns of the Muslim community. There are many talk shows that speak for hours every day against Islam and Muslims and create misconceptions and misunderstanding about Islam and Muslims. That is very troubling to me and to the American Muslim community and to people of other faiths who are concerned about this trend of creating hatred, bigotry against Islam and Muslims in this country.

And that leads to hate crimes sometimes. And we have a mosque that was burned. After 9-11, our mosque was attacked and had all the writing all over it. (inaudible)

knows that. But as we are faced with these challenges, Muslim Americans also come to discover the compassionate America. The compassionate society. As we came to realize that there was hate words on our wall at the Adams Center, we have been visited by Christians and Jewish and Sikh community with flowers, donations, a big, you know, board signed by Jewish children, Muslim women -- Jewish women reached out to Muslim women and accompanied them in shopping, wear the scarf, head scarf. They come to discover also another side of America. And this interfaith group has guarded the Adams Center on the second anniversary of 9-11 all night long. They stayed in the parking lot, prayed together, (inaudible) together, and talked to one another until the next day in the morning. Thus the other side of the Americans was discovered -- we have discovered. It is a great side of American society.

Also, I think the relationship with government has changed and I will end that note. The Muslim community has participated in the political process before 9-11. As a matter of fact, on the 12th of September Muslim leaders were supposed to meet with President George Bush at the time. September 12th. And September 11th has taken place and that meeting was canceled. And then the relationship with Muslims, Americans, and the government became mainly around the issue of security. Dr. Akbar has highlighted that and I agree with him 100 percent. And the relationship now becomes what can we do to reach out to the Muslim community so that we don't have another 9-11?

That engagement led to different -- a series of programs by the Bush Administration and now Obama Administration. The Muslim community doesn't like the relationship to be with the government mainly based on security issues. They want to be engaged in different aspects of the American political system.

And I would like just to conclude by saying that Muslim Americans are taking the issue of radicalization, violent extremism very serious. As a matter of fact, we

established now a new think tank in the Muslim community just to deal with this issue because we know that if another event takes place, the Muslim community are the first victim of it. And we have debated with Homeland Security the issue of the 14 countries that were on the list and we said this is completely straightforward racism because you're targeting people of their origin, where they were born, and they changed that.

But I would like to say that Muslims have a partnership now working with law enforcement. You have meetings with Homeland Security, FBI, and others to address this issue because we believe it is a duty of American Muslims to protect the land, this land we live in. And to contribute to the safety and security of the community at large. But also we are concerned about civil rights and civil liberties. That's why we engage in also law enforcement and the government on that issue. But the second generation might be in that. The nation gap in the American community and Dr. Akbar has highlighted that in his book.

We, as Muslim Americans, realize that the young people, like five of them now went to Pakistan, what are -- they feel isolated. Why did they feel isolated although they were born and raised in America? What made them think that by going to Pakistan would serve Islam and Muslims and serve their religion better? We come to know that it is a foreign policy and ability to relate how to resolve this issue within American system. There's this -- people are sometimes worried about speaking against government and establishment. If I were to speak about the Afghanistan War, maybe the FBI will start knocking at my door and Dennis will say that will not happen.

MR. AHMED: You don't have to look at Dennis when you say that.

IMAM MAGID: Yes. Or the Iraq War, you know, if you object to government. We are telling the Muslim community you have every right to disagree with the government, to protest the government. This is not the Mohabaraq, which is the intelligence service in Muslim countries. You have rights here. Even if somebody knocks at your door

because you have taken a political position, you should stand your ground. The alternative is not to blow yourself or go and take weapons and fight in Pakistan. You can have political discourse in the United States in this kind of situation.

I will leave it at that so that perhaps we will have more discussions about the book.

MR. GRAND: Thank you, Imam Magid.

IMAM MAGID: You're welcome.

MR. GRAND: Before I introduce your colleagues do you want to -- Professor Ahmed, do you want to respond in any way?

MR. AHMED: No. I think what the Imam said is absolutely correct. He has his finger on the pulse of the community. He himself has played a critical role in bringing people together. When I went to the Washington Hebrew congregation to address the first Abrahamic Summit with the bishop, Bishop John Chane, and my friend Rabbi Lustig, Imam Magid brought his entire Muslim community and changed the dynamic. And we used to lead the spiritual, what is called the Unity Walk on 9-11 from the synagogue to the church to the mosque down Mass Ave. And there it was such a sight. And Rabbi Lustig would tell me, he said, can you imagine these Muslim young men that Imam Magid has brought us serving water and food as we walk along? Thousands of people. That was America. That was the message going out to the world. This is the nation's capital. It's a message of healing, of friendship, of compassion. So I agree with what Imam has said. And I think I'd be keen now that the young team is given a chance to be heard.

MR. GRAND: I wanted to introduce first Jonathan Hayden, who had a lot to do with putting together this trip. And Jonathan, maybe you could give us a flavor -- maybe you could stand up and give us a quick flavor of the journey itself. How many countries did you go to? What did a typical day look like? How was the research done? A sort of, I

guess, give people a full picture of just how much went into making this trip and maybe some of the problems you encountered along the way.

MR. HAYDEN: Well, we traveled throughout the country. We started in September of 2008 and throughout the winter and the fall and spring and summer. So it was almost a year where we traveled. And it was 75 cities that we went to and over 100 mosques. So we really got to know the community. A typical day was -- well, there wasn't a typical day. It was out -- we were out in the community all the time talking to people, knocking down doors -- knocking on doors. (Laughter)

IMAM MAGID: Jonathan, you are being influenced by Dennis already. Dennis, you're having a bad affect on him. Knocking down doors.

MR. HAYDEN: But the methodology was simple in a way. It was we were out to listen. We weren't out to promote an agenda. We weren't out to promote a certain community or a certain aspect of the community. We were out to listen to people and to reflect what's going on in society. And that's the anthropological method that we learned from Ambassador Ahmed. So we were out there just listening and we would go out and split up. There was five or six of us at all times. We would split up two or three teams at a time going out and covering an entire city and we would go to -- if it was a bigger city we'd go to six or seven mosques in a five- or six-, seven-day span and talk to people. Talk to imams, talk to the community, the people that aren't listed too often.

So we were out listening and trying to understand what's going on in the community. And we also talked to non-Muslims as well. So and this is the really important part that -- most important part I think is the need to understand this community, the Muslim community. We were -- nobody knows much about this and we did a lot of research and looked and tried to find out who else is doing these types of projects. Who else is out in the community? And we didn't find much. I mean, there are some great academic projects

about, you know, a certain aspect of the community or a certain city, but not on the scale that we did. We were out doing the entire country.

So it took a long time and it took a lot of work. But one of the things that I took -- the importance is trying to overcome this level of ignorance about the community and about Islam in general. A little story to illustrate that. Frankie, Martin, and I were in Fort Myers, Florida, and we were talking to this lady. She's Christian, didn't know any Muslims, and we find this a lot. A lot of people don't know anything about Muslims or Islam. So we were talking to her and we didn't really tell her much about the project. We were just talking and listening to what she thought about America. And finally we got her on the subject of Islam and she was talking about her sweater and how it was made in Pakistan. And Frankie said, well, I've been there. And she said -- she stopped and she just looked and she said, please tell me. Do they love their children? And the priest said, of course they love their children. And she said, ah, I knew it. (Laughter)

So, I mean, I know. So, in one way that's a sweet story of an old lady assuming the best about a community or people. On another level she's essentially asking are they human beings. So, I mean, this is the level that we're working with and, unfortunately, it doesn't -- that level of ignorance does not -- it's not relegated to sweet old grandmothers. It extends and people are not understanding it. And that extends to academic who is not out there understanding the community. It extends to government who is not out there. We -- one of the things that we found when we were doing this research is that these agencies, these government agencies are not understanding the community because their charter does not allow them to do this.

You know, the FBI builds cases. They don't build relationships in the community. The National Counter Terrorism Center is analyzing intelligence. And all these agencies are doing different things, but nobody is understanding and getting to know the

community on this level. And unfortunately, I'm sorry to say the Muslim community doesn't know itself that well either. We were told by many people, national organizations, don't go to this mosque. Don't talk to these people. People shun. So we go on and on about this in the book, but you have to read that. (Laughter)

MR. GRAND: Thank you, Jonathan. I think the message here is read the book.

Hailey. Hailey, you did a little sociological experiment of your own and I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about that and what it might -- what broader lessons you might have taken out from that about maybe gender roles within Islam and within America.

MS. WOLDT: Well, I don't know if you all saw the CNN article on this. We went to Arab, Alabama, which is right near Huntsville where Jonathan is from. And it's pronounced Arab, but it's spelled Arab, A-r-a-b. So we thought it would be interesting for me to dress up in an abaya and go to Arab, Alabama.

MR. GRAND: Describe an abaya.

MS. WOLDT: So it's a hijab, which is the Islamic veil and a full black dress. So I dressed up in that and the team essentially pushed me into a barbeque restaurant on a Sunday morning right after church. (Laughter) And I walked in and the whole restaurant put their forks down and their mouths were wide open. But at the same time, five seconds later, everyone went right back to eating and I didn't get a second look.

So we talked to some people and we said, you know, what do you think about Muslims? What do you think about this black dress? And they said I really have no idea. Many people, from what we found talking to Americans, was that they just don't know about Islam. It's foreign. They don't get a lot of real information in the media. It's not -- they know that there are terrorists, but they don't really know what the other billion people are doing or what they stand for or what they believe. And I think that's one really important

contribution of this project to America is that we filled that knowledge gap. We tell you what they eat, where they live, what their jobs are, where they're from. We know about the Muslim community in America like we've never known before in this book.

So as far as the gender roles in America, I was able to talk with the women a lot in the United States, the Muslim women. And they're really incredible. That's one huge bright spot in the American Muslim community, is that American Muslim women are really leading the community. They're doing incredible things. They're educated. They're using the best of Islam and the best of America. So they have education opportunities, charities. They're using Islam in different ways that they wouldn't normally in their home countries. So I think that's another thing. We have a full chapter on this and it's throughout the book about converts to Islam as well. The female converts are actually in America converting four to one more than men -- four to one women to men. So it's another interesting phenomenon, is like why American women are converting to Islam. Islam gives women a lot of different rights that we don't know about. And I think that because of the cultures in other countries it's been changed. But in America they're really able to use the religion of Islam separated from culture and they're able to do a lot more interesting and innovative things with it here. So that's yet another advantage of the book that you will have to read about, so. (Laughter)

MR. GRAND: Thank you. Thank you, Hailey.

Finally, I wanted to turn to Frankie Martin, who also was on both journeys. Frankie, we're a policy institute here at Brookings. What are the policy recommendations that you would have based on your travels for American policymakers?

MR. AHMED: He's a college and U.S. professor, Frankie Martin.

(Laughter)

MR. MARTIN: Well, thank you. I don't know about that.

But I think there are lots of policy implications for this study, and I think

Jonathan alluded to some of them. I mean, when we were going out there we realized pretty soon that no one was doing these kinds of things. And I think there really needs to be some kind of government program, whether it's some kind of religious outreach office or some kind of think tank where people can meet and discuss these things. But we really need to be out there and understand what's going on in the community because as Jonathan said, I mean, we go from agency to agency. And working with Ambassador Ahmed has been such a privilege. I mean, and he's been asked to constantly go and comment to these agencies and advise. But we asked them, you know, are you doing this? And they say, no. Our job is this. So at the end of the day we kind of, you know, we're talking to each other and say, wait a minute. So that means no one is doing this.

So I really think that there are, and I think we can get a lot of ideas from reading the book. But for me this project was really extraordinary because it allowed me to see my own country in a different way, through a different lens. And it was just incredible to travel and meet the Muslim community. They were so hospitable. They invited us into their homes, into their places of worship. We could talk about anything and everything. And the patriotism of the community also is noteworthy. I mean, this kept coming up again and again as Ambassador Ahmed said where people are saying it's the best place to be a Muslim, especially among the refugee community. There's a lot of refugees here coming from places like Somalia. And they said this -- they said this again and again. And the diversity of the community really, really struck me.

I mean, we were in St. Louis, for example. St. Louis has 60- to 70,000 Bosnian Muslims. In Houston there are 40,000 Nigerian Muslims. So the whole Muslim world is right here in America. So that was, I think, a testament to America as well. And meeting some of the converts that Hailey spoke about. I mean, the Latin converts. I mean, people don't really know that much about that, but we met many Mexican Muslims on the

west coast and Cubans in Miami. So that was really interesting.

But I was kind of shaken a little bit by some of the challenges that are facing the community that Ambassador Ahmed spoke about. Looking at mosques, and Imam Magid as well, looking at mosques that have been targeted and things. And so I really did start to think, you know, what does it mean to be American? If this stuff is happening, you know, what does that mean? And this is kind of a question that the seed for this was planted in the Muslim world. Because in the Muslim world when we were traveling we would, you know, constantly go to these events where we were speaking in front of both large audiences and small audiences. And I as an American was hit by a lot of confusion about U.S. policy, a lot of frustration. And in the beginning, you know, I thought, oh, no, you know, what are we going to do about this? This is a really serious problem. But then after talking and listening to people we all realized that there was something a little bit deeper that is not on the news and that is that Muslims feel that they have this belief in the ideals of America that they weren't seeing.

And this was underscored when we were in Pakistan, for instance and I was walking with Ambassador Ahmed near his home. We were there in Karachi. And he was talking about what America meant to him growing up in Pakistan and the ideals of JFK. And yet right near where we were there was a suicide bombing a little bit earlier. And there was broken glass on the ground as we were walking. And, you know, Ambassador Ahmed was talking about, you know, the reception that Jackie Kennedy got when she went there in the early 60s and it was just, you know, open arms.

So I really do think that led me to think about this. But then going in America as well and seeing and reading the Founding Fathers, too, as Ambassador Ahmed said. I mean, that was incredible. And so I really can say after doing the project that I feel like I can say I'm American with a pride and an awareness that I didn't have before. So, but I

completely agree with the rest of the team at this critical gap in understanding. I was flying to Denver not do one of our last events last fall and I was on a plane seat next to a woman who was a very educated woman from Washington, D.C., and we were speaking to each other and she said what do you do? And I explained the project. And she said, wait. You went to a mosque? And I said. Yeah, yeah, we visited mosques. And she said, but that's impossible because no Muslim will let a non-believer in a mosque. And I said actually I went to 100 mosques. (Laughter) And she didn't know what to say.

So there's a lot of this that, you know, we can't go up. We can't approach Muslims. We can't go into a mosque. We did this. We turned up at so many places and we had nothing but the most hospitable reaction. So we need to reach out, educate ourselves, learn more about Islam, and also read our own history.

MR. AHMED: Thank you. (inaudible) your grandmother said. I think Joel will be interested.

MR. MARTIN: There was a pretty funny episode. When I was going to the Muslim world I really was worried about what my family would think. And my dad is right here. You know, it's very dangerous. And so when I was talking to my grandmother and I said, you know, I'm going to the Muslim world. And she said, well, wait. Where? Where are you going? And I said, oh, I'm going to, you know, the Middle East and Jordan and India and Pakistan. And she said, Pakistan? You're going to Pakistan? Don't go to Pakistan. Do not go to Pakistan. And I said, don't worry. I'm traveling with Ambassador Ahmed. He's from there. He knows everything about it. And she said, oh, okay.

And I came back. We all came back in one piece.

And then for this trip through America I got the same question. And she said, well, where are you going in America? And I said, oh, we're traveling and, you know, we're going to the West Coast. We're going to California. We're going to Florida. We're

going to Texas. She said, Texas? Do not go to Texas. (Laughter) Whatever you do, do not go to Texas. And I said, Oh, don't worry. I'm traveling with Ambassador Ahmed. And said he is not from Texas. (Laughter)

But then I brought up Hailey and I was like, well, Hailey is from Texas. And she was like, oh, okay. And so as you can see we escaped unscathed from Texas as well. (Applause)

Thank you.

MR. GRAND: Thank you. Thank you, Frankie.

We have a little bit of time for questions. And note that I did say questions. Unfortunately, we don't have time for a lengthy discussion, but I wanted to give an opportunity for a few questions from the audience. Let's bring the microphone up here first if we could. I would ask when people come up to just state their name and affiliation and a brief question.

SPEAKER: After the tough 9-11 there has been a very unfortunate juxtaposition of economic and religious issues. It means that the war (inaudible) is not just a war -- a political war, but a religious war. How do you cope with that? Because deep in the American society, deep in the Pakistan society and Afghan society, religion and politics have gotten mixed up completely. And this is very unfortunate for the future.

MR. GRAND: Great. Thank you. Let's take just a few more if we could. Right here and then we'll go back there. And then we'll -- on the next (inaudible).

MR. SHINO: My name is Mohamed Shino, the Voice of America.

My question to Dr. Akbar, what difference did you find between being a Muslim in America before and after September 11th?

And for Dr. Grand, how important for a new beginning with the Muslim world is the way Muslims are perceived and treated in the United States?

Thank you.

MS. FILBER: Diane Filber, unaffiliated.

Thank you. And everything you pointed to needs to be done on the part of Americans and you're making a big effort to share with America the Muslim world. But here we're kind of talking to ourselves or the choir. What can be done to get moderate Muslims on TV to counteract the talking heads to show and answer the questions that many Americans have about the treatment of women, about their feelings about radicalization, et cetera, et cetera?

MR. GRAND: Do you want to start us off?

MR. AHMED: Yeah. Again, great questions. Thank you so much. Yes, religion, culture, politics now is all mixed up. And perhaps the worst part relates to this last question, is that they are so simplified. They're so reduced, almost to a caricature in the media where you literally have 30 seconds to comment on a civilization that may be a thousand years old. That makes it very difficult for ordinary people in America or in the Muslim world to understand each other. So when you're talking through the medium of television or radio it becomes very difficult.

We need to, again, I would emphasize both as someone who has been an administrator and who is writing about events and a scholar, to step back and do exactly what we've done, which is conduct an objective study based on data. Begin to untie the strands and hopefully construct a way we can move ahead. This is what we have tried to do so we do have in Chapter 9 a set of recommendations.

In terms of the question about the media, that's a big challenge because we can't answer that. We've done something. We've written something. We are constantly extracting in the media, but unless we somehow -- I'm talking about the Muslim community - are able to break into mainstream media, perceptions are not really going to change. A

book like mine is not going to make a big dent, nor is that of other scholars of Islam. Not Muslims. There are some great scholars in America talking and writing about Islam. But they're not in the media. We've given examples. A lot of them are my colleagues. They're great scholars on Islam. You will not see them on the media.

The work Stephen is doing, for example, heading this great effort in bringing in, bridging the U.S. and the Muslim world. Again, how many people in America even know about this? So what we do know, and these are very popular shows. I'm just commenting. Switch on FOX this evening and watch Glenn Beck for an hour or so. There is no use shaking your head because millions of Americans are watching it. And that's where they're getting their information from. And that's where a lot of the shaping and influencing of images, maybe not explicitly, implicitly of Islam take place. Now, how do we challenge that? You know, I'm really perplexed and puzzled. It is a challenge.

Islam before 9-11, after 9-11. Two different worlds. This literally was -- I had been here before 9-11. The best place in the world for a Muslim. Because a Muslim had not gone through this process of immigration, the cycle that the Irish and the Jewish communities and every community had to go through which was painful. It took a century before they could be fully American. Muslims had come -- I'm talking about the immigrants, not the African Americans who had a terrible, terrible history, but the immigrants just flew in as middle class physicians, lawyers, doctors. They disappeared into society. So Americans knew them as my doctor or my lawyer and they were perfectly happy with them.

But they had no idea who these people were. They're comfortable, happy, they're doctors, professors. They didn't know who they were. 9-11 challenged everyone because suddenly Americans say who are these people? What do we know about their history and culture? And the Muslim community failed spectacularly. Muslim leadership's massive failure. All these great and good Muslims who have got huge houses in the

Potomac, huge marble houses, 10 Mercedes and expensive cars in the driveway. You go to their libraries, if they exist, there will be a big, empty room. How much do they read? How much have they produced? What contribution have they made to American society? Even today we go and talk to them, ask them about Benjamin Franklin. Ask them if they read Alex Stockwell. And they look at you blank and they'll say is that a dish or something that you're talking about? (Laughter)

They really have no -- so there has been a failure of the Muslim leadership over the last generation to explain their culture, their history, their traditions, so that Americans will have begun to understand here is something positive coming to our table. America is a very rich feast. Everyone brings their culture. The Jews have brought their wonderful ancient civilization here. The Irish have brought it. The Italians have brought it. But what do people know about Muslims except terrorism and the media? Here you've got the media again: terrorism, violence, and so on.

I want to just make one point here. This has come up again and again that Islam remains somewhat of a blank for most Americans. We don't really understand it. The phrase argues in the book. I've quoted Churchill, who had a beautiful turn of phrases, you know. He is one of the great writers of the English language. You know that? Is that a yes or a no? (Laughter)

SPEAKER: He's a professor here.

MR. AHMED: I always get nervous with a Muslim audience.

Churchill said about Russia, remember when the Iron Curtain came down? He made a very famous speech. That was his phrase, the Iron Curtain. And he said Russia is like a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. And Muslims are very much like that for Americans. It's like a riddle inside an enigma inside a mystery. I mean, they don't really understand it. It is up to the Muslim leadership. I come back to Imam (inaudible) business

colleagues to begin to unravel it for Americans, to help explain what is Islam and how do we relate to America? Where do we meet? Where do we have problems? Where do we need to talk?

On this point, we have got a documentary. There's a documentary that accompanies this project. It's called Journey into America also. It's very widely seen as being in film festivals and so on. And the Berkeley Center has an interactive website set up. Again, so there are various ways we are trying -- we are trying valiantly. And here I must, as the head of the project and initiator, must acknowledge my team. They have been incredible for their dedication, for their passion for this project, for what they have achieved. In the book you'll see their lives and how they are growing. For me as the professor, two of them are my honor students. And Jonathan has been with me since he came as a young man from Alabama several years back.

IMAM MAGID: (inaudible)

MR. AHMED: How they're growing. How they're growing as adults into adulthood and as Americans. And as scholars and as human beings. So you will see that. And it gives me great pride to see that commitment and passion for something that all Americans should be feeling, Muslim and non-Muslim. So their contribution has to be acknowledged.

And the press itself. Brookings Press has been incredible with this book. I mean, the patience they've show, especially the saintly Janet Walker who is sitting there because I know we drove her almost crazy to the last minute where Frankie would ring up and say we want this line of Thomas Jefferson. It has to be in. And I said, well, Frankie, it's about to go to the press this afternoon. And Janet would say, okay, I'll put it in. So they have been incredible. Thank you, Janet, and Chris and Susan Sullivan and Anthony. I think most of the team are here. And of course, the director, Stephen. So thank you very, very

much from us to Brookings Press and the institution.

SPEAKER: (inaudible) moderate Islam. What is moderate Islam? It means that (inaudible) that Islam is something that is undesirable except in moderate terms. And this has become very generally (inaudible).

MR. AHMED: Just repeat it in the mic (inaudible). Repeat it in the mic.

SPEAKER: It's a very unfortunate term called "moderate Islam" has crept up. What is moderate Islam? It is something very unpalatable called Islam which has crept in and it's good only in moderate (inaudible). And I think it is a very unfortunate term.

IMAM MAGID: If I may, I guess the issue of the relationship with the Muslim community or the American society at large after 9-11. I do agree with Dr. Ahmed that there is a shift there. But even the man who has cars in his driveway, he believes he has contributed to American society by doing business or being a doctor or, you know, he doesn't have to prove himself as being American. 9-11 has challenged the identity of Muslims. And that's why Muslims engage now in dialogue with their neighbors and people around them. In Northern Virginia alone there were six continuous dialogues I know of: one in McLean, one in Annandale, one in Reston, you know, there are so many -- those are the group of people who sit and talk every two months about issues that concern the community.

Terminologists. The issue for radicalization. What do you mean by being radical? Moderate Muslims. Who is moderate Muslim versus what? Muslims are part of America. In America you have Jewish Americans who are reformed, orthodox, conservative. You have evangelical Christians; you have liberal Christians, and so forth and so on. Why when it comes to Islam and Muslims you want them to be one type to be accepted? That's one of the issues.

As for where are the Muslims speaking against terrorism, I can tell you I've

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been interviewed in *The Washington Post* alone 36 times. You can check. Google my name. And 36 times I said that Islam has turned against terrorism. Again, it's taking innocent life. We have fatwa being issued. People have been speaking about this in the mosque. But I agree that maybe we need to do more on that. But we have three-hour talk shows that speak against Islam and Muslims and I have been given three minutes to speak on FOX News or two minutes. Not only that, let me be frank with you, Osama Bin Laden could issue a videotape and CNN will play 10 minutes of it. Al Jazeera will play all of it almost. But I will be given half a minute to respond to the tape of Bin Laden. How fair is that?

There is an issue here that I will not be given the same opportunity to respond. Those events I'm talking to you about Jewish Americans and Muslim Americans, we have two of our branches of our mosque in the synagogue: one in Reston, one in Ashburn. How much of that have you heard in the news? When is the last times you heard Muslims and Christians and Jewish feeding the homeless? You don't hear about that. There are so many things taking place in America, positive things. Really. After 9-11 many people have come together, but those don't make the headline news in America, unfortunately.

MR. AHMED: We have a discussion in the book about definitions and terminology. It's a serious discussion because if a community is not able to define itself it is then defined by others. And this is exactly what's happening with the Muslims. The Muslim success, as Imam has pointed to, Muslims made a great contribution to America. They are very successful doctors, lawyers, and so on, businessmen, but they're a failure in terms of intellectual activity. I would challenge the Imam, if he can give me a list, a dozen names of titles written by Muslims that have made an impact in America by American Muslims. And maybe he can come up with five or six names maximum. That is a failure on the part of the

community because I repeat this. Islam places the highest emphasis on knowledge and learning. Do you agree with that?

IMAM MAGID: I agree with that.

MR. AHMED: Therefore, this failure is now costing the Muslims. Other people are defining it. So if you said terrorist, Muslim equals terrorist equals violence. A lot of people would say we don't have an alternative definition. This must be correct. These terms like fundamentalist terrorism, moderate. To me they make no sense at all. As an anthropologist we have come up with our own definitions and we have given the definitions, which are neutral. They're analytic. We have called these three types of Muslim communities the mystics, the modernists, and the literalists. They're value neutral. They're not good, bad. They're just as they are. But if you say moderate it implies -- I'm asked very often. You're a great Muslim. We love you. You're a moderate. Where are the other moderates? And I say what do you mean I'm a moderate? I believe in Islam. I believe in the Qur'an. I believe in my tradition. According to your definition I should be a fundamentalist and yet you're defining me as a moderate. So we have to start sharpening up our own definitions of these terms in order to understand the community.

MR. GRAND: Thank you, Professor Ahmed. Thank you, Imam Magid. Thank you to Hailey and Frankie and Jonathan. And thank you to all of us -- to all of you for joining us today. Book will be available out front if you're interested.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

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