

*Review*

# Impacts of "islamaphobia" on Muslim workers and their sponsors

Ahmed Talabani Kadim

School of Law, Faculty of Management and Law, Nahrain University, Baghdad, Iraq. Email: [proff.talabani@yahoo.com](mailto:proff.talabani@yahoo.com)

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The so-called "war on terrorism" that the United States has declared as a response to the 9/11 tragedy has affected Muslim-Americans, perhaps more than any other group. Many of these people are victims of what may be called "islamaphobia" the fear or suspicion of Muslims or those who appear to be of middle-eastern origin. As a result, many Muslims avoid disclosing their heritage, isolate themselves from non-Muslims, and give up pursuing many of the opportunities that are available to immigrants of other cultures. In the resulting self-segregation and isolation, many are vulnerable to victimization and exposed to anti-western indoctrination. In the current climate of suspicion Muslims have less access to helping professionals including social workers, lawyers, and immigrants rights specialists. Advocates, in turn, find that their efforts to help are thwarted by their clients' understandable apprehension and suspicion. This article offers some suggestions about how advocates might overcome these challenges and provides better services for those in need.

**Key words:** Islamaphobia, immigrant, Islam, Muslim, immigration law, legal and xenophobia.

## INTRODUCTION

### A troublesome context

A decade has not changed the way many Muslims are treated and perceived in the United States and in Europe. When, nearly a decade ago, the 9/11 terrorists were revealed to be Muslims who believed they were acting in accordance with the teachings of their specific faith, life was immediately and profoundly changed for the followers of Islam who lived in the United States. The outrage that most people in the world felt about the destruction of lives and property was directed first at those most directly involved, then at those in other nations who might have given them aid and encouragement for their act. And when people realized that direct retribution would be more complicated, costly, and prolonged than they thought, they looked elsewhere to ascribe more immediate blame. The most convenient and vulnerable focus of this anger were those who shared the geographic and cultural heritage of the terrorists. People living in America with Muslim sounding names, style of dress, ethnic appearance, language and accent, or middle Eastern documents and ideologies became suspects to a great number of Americans (Bruinius, 2001).

The initial press reports after 9/11 contributed to this view

(Audi, 2001). Television and news photos suggested that some Muslims in America, Palestine, Afghanistan, and many other countries were dancing in the streets about the news. Reports depicted some Muslim groups and individuals as cheering for the terrorists. Polls in middle-east and other Muslim nations indicated that the popularity of terrorist leader Osama bin Laden was soaring. Muslim clergymen in America were reported as rationalizing the terrorists' actions and explaining how they thought the Qur'an sometimes justifies such behavior. Some Muslim leaders told American reporters they should try to understand why the terrorists felt compelled to take such actions, implying that the answer they found would make the actions more acceptable. The backlash was swift and extensive (Rossin, 2001). Within days of the destruction, some leaders of large Christian groups were suggesting that Islam itself might foster a culture of terrorism (Harris, 2001).

Attacks on mosques, Muslim businesses and on people who appeared to be from the middle-east, were widely reported. The national anger was strong enough so there was relatively little dissent in Congress or the streets of

America when the decisions were made to attack Afghanistan and Iraq. There has been relatively little dissent at the extraordinary U.S. actions to compel thousands of Muslim men to report in for interrogation. Little has been heard from Americans against the subsequent incarceration of over a thousand of those men, many of whom were held because of the most peripheral of causes, such as having visa violations, or traffic offenses. Nothing like this response has taken place in the nation since the WWII incarceration of Japanese-Americans. The Japanese families were not found guilty of crimes and placed in internment camps because of what they had done, but because some feared they might have more allegiance for the enemy than for their country. Decades later the U.S. government apologized to the internees, paid them a token reparation for their inconvenience, and bemoaned its guilt. Implicit in this action, and sometimes explicit, was a vow to never repeat such discriminatory behavior again. Twenty years after the apology and reparation payments, Muslim-Americans fear they face a similar fate.

Social workers, lawyers, and other helping professionals have first hand views of the fear and confusion that Muslim-Americans now face. Some of these professionals are finding that their efforts to help are thwarted by an understandable suspicion by members of the Muslim community. The helping professionals are often seen by the immigrants as representing the American authorities. Arab/Muslims are uncertain how much they can put their trust with them. The process of helping people enter and function productively in American society is difficult enough, but when the person is subject to scorn, fear, and constant risk, the tendency is to become isolated and seek solace only from one's own group. This paper is designed to discuss the nature of this isolation and to provide some suggestions that professionals might do to counterbalance the problem.

## **ISLAMAPHOBIA" DEFINED AND ILLUSTRATED**

"Islamaphobia" may be defined as the unreasonable fear and heightened anxiety one experiences when in the company of a Muslim or someone from a middle-east nation. The fear or anxiety one experiences when near Muslims, or those perceived to be Muslims, arises in some people through a combination of psychological and social factors. Phobias of every type are thought to be the product of both inner conflicts that may have little or nothing to do with the actual precipitating stressor (also known as the phobic stimulus), and elements in the environment that the individual has associated with some type of risk (Barker, 2003). In the typical phobic situation, the individual can become fearful of almost any object or situation that has been experienced, perceived or even imagined. Some social workers and other psychotherapists believe that many phobic individuals unconsciously identify some phobic stimulus which is not in their daily life so that they

can more easily avoid that stimulus and the resulting fear. For example a person who works as a window washer would be less likely to develop acrophobia, the fear of high places, than of another less commonly experienced fear, such as claustrophobia, the fear of enclosed spaces.

This phobia is another form of discrimination and correlated with the person's experiences with the stimulus object. These experiences may be direct or, more often, are subliminal. That is the individual may have heard about, read about, dreamed about or otherwise learned about some risk that has been associated with the stimulus object. Then ones anxieties become transferred onto that object, which is then to be avoided.

Many phobias develop and are sustained due to a type of "self-fulfilling prophecy." If one comes to believe that some bad consequence will occur if confronted by a certain phobic stimulus, there is likely to be more discomfort and anxiety when the stimulus actually presents itself. If the individual is confronted for the first time with a snarling dog, an injury from falling from a ladder, humiliation from a group of associates, he/she may be more apprehensive about subsequent encounters which may carry similar apparent risks. The resulting discomfort leads the individual to believe his/her previous belief was well-founded and the cycle continues.

In many people the effect intensifies until it emerges as a full-blown phobia. Thereafter the individual comes to expect negative consequences from encounters with the phobic stimulus and is more alert to anything that reaffirms that view. Thus, if an individual is told that many Muslims want to cause harm to non-Muslims, then the person might become more vigilant about Muslims and look for examples in which such people are behaving with malevolent intentions. Usually, the term, "islamaphobia," has been applied, not only to people of the Islamic faith, but also to those who present traits that are often associated with Muslims. Immigrants to the United States who appear to be of middle-Eastern origin are often considered to be Muslims, whether they are or not. The Arab nations have approximately fourteen million Christians currently living in their lands, especially in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. There would be more but for an ironic fact: many Christians left their homelands for the United States to avoid religious persecution from the Muslim majority, only to be confronted with feelings of antipathy by Americans who thought they were Muslims. Thus, it has been applied to non-Muslim people who have migrated to the United States from Arab regions. They have sometimes been victimized by this prejudice even though they are actually Christians or Jews. Some Islamaphobic persons have attributed criminal or anti-social behavior to those they mistakenly believed were Muslims. For example, anti-Muslim feeling grew when the Palestine immigrant, Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was convicted in the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy, even though Sirhan had always been a practicing Protestant Christian (Melanson, 1991).

Many Americans mistakenly conclude that any man who wears a turban or any woman who wears the hijab (the cowl-like headscarf that covers the hair) or the jilbaab (the flowing outer garment that covers the entire body and head other than the eyes and hands) must be a Muslim. The assumption is invalid because people from many non-Muslim cultures are also similarly attired. In fact, many Muslim men in America do not wear the turban, considering them to be a "passé as the fez". On the other hand, many non-Muslim men in America do wear them. There are, for example, over two million turban-wearing Sikhs now living in the western world, and even though they are neither Muslim nor Arab, they have been subjected to hate crimes and widespread threats by people who mistakenly identify them with terrorism (Goodstein and Lewin, 2001). It is true that some Muslim women in the United States believe they must cover themselves almost entirely as a sign of sexual reserve and self-identification in keeping with Islamic teachings (Badawi, 2001). However some women who wear very similar clothing are not Muslims and have cultural rather than religious reasons for dressing in that fashion.

In America, women who have dressed in such attire in recent years have been discriminated against and sometimes threatened, whether or not they were actually Muslims. It can often be considered an expression of devout faith and courage for women to dress in this fashion given the current climate of animosity sometimes expressed toward those perceived to be Muslims (Cole and Ahmadi, 2003).

## ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMAPHOBIA

Antipathy toward an entire group or class of people, such as Muslims, blacks, gays, the poor, or any other group that can be distinguished, is a manifestation of bigotry, racism, or prejudice (Brewer, 1999). One type of behavior of this type is "homophobia" in which people have uncomfortable feelings about gays and lesbians. The difference might be that, in the latter terms, there is less a connotation of fear than of contempt or hostility. The similarity is that in all instances the emotional response is to an entire group, rather than an individual. The antipathy toward a specific individual is generally not because of that person's unique traits, but because he/she represents the anxiety-provoking group (Plous, 2003). Many phobias are focused on specific groups, as in "androphobia" (fear of men), "gynephobia" (women), Anglophobia (white people, English), Sinophobia (Chinese), pedophobia (children), and so on. "Islamaphobia" derives from the similar psychosocial conflicts and social reinforcement.

The 9/11 tragedy was not the first, nor last time that people identified with Muslim causes were seen as seeking to cause harm to others but it was, perhaps, the greatest single source of reinforcement for intensifying the anti-Muslim phobia yet known. Those who might have had negative feelings and fears about Muslims before 9/11 now

had more "evidence" on which to base their convictions. Within the next two years after 9/11, most of the world was confronted with alleged threats from Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, Saddam Hussein, and the suicide bombers in Palestine. Further reinforcement, if any were needed, occurred when the person primarily responsible for the DC-area sniper attacks was a Muslim convert, John Allen Muhammad and the Ft. Hood shooting in the United States.

The tragic headlines are not the only source of anti-Muslim sentiment. Muslim groups have pointed out that islamaphobia may also be the product of the widespread barrage of information that depicts Muslims and middle-easterners in unfavorable lights (Said, 1997). The media, especially in cinema, have facilitated an acceptance of Arab stereotyping that would be intolerable if the subjects were African-Americans, Jewish people, or Asians. In recent years the most common movie villains of identifiable ethnic origin have been from Arab cultures. The Walt Disney organization has been much more careful to avoid ethnic stereotyping than it once was, but when it released the cartoon movie, *Aladdin*, it shrugged off widespread protests by Arab groups. Producers who film movies about foreign terrorists most frequently depict the villain as an Arab man or woman. While the media still seems to offer more examples of negative stereotyping of middle Eastern people than any other group, improvements are being made. Fewer shows and documentaries now depict middle-easterners negatively than before. However, almost nothing is being done to offer positive views of these people.

Dramas and comedies in movies, television, and novels almost never use Arabs as heroes or sympathetic central characters. The balance is weighed so heavily against these people that it is amazing that the degree of anti-Moslem sentiment is not greater than it is.

## CONSEQUENCES OF ISLAMAPHOBIA

Victims of prejudice usually have more severe difficulties if they are in a minority and are relatively powerless. American history has many examples: the lynching of African Americans, armed attacks on religious communities, ridicule and murders of gays and lesbians, verbal abuse of people with physical handicaps, exclusion of Jewish and other ethnic groups, and so on.

Most often these people have been victimized by zealous individuals or unofficial groups. In recent months, especially in the wake of 9/11, there have been many reports of Muslim/Arab appearing people being subjected to discrimination (Paulson, 2003). The FBI Uniform Crime Reports (2002) indicates that in the year following 9/11 the number of hate crimes committed against Muslims/Arabs in the United States increased by 1600%. Incidents included at least three murders, numerous physical assaults, vandalism, verbal harassment, profiling by law authorities, and other crimes. Examples in which Muslims alleged

discrimination have appeared regularly in the nation's media. Recently, for example, Muslim hotel workers in the New York Plaza Hotel reported that their employers called them "terrorists" and accused them of disloyalty to the nation (Padgett, 2003).

An EEOC Press Release (2003) describes how a Muslim airline pilot who had a middle-eastern appearance was fired a week after 9/11 despite a good record. Muslim workers in a Stockton, California, plant were harassed out of their jobs by their supervisors; they successfully sued the company for over a million dollars action (Silicon Valley/ San Jose Business Journal (2003). Other examples of overt discrimination and intimidation appear regularly in the nation's newspapers. While one might regrettably expect that some individuals and groups would act negatively toward Muslim/Arab in the current climate, it is more surprising to observe the U.S. government engaging in such policies, even when its leaders decry anti-Muslim behaviors. Since 9/11 various entities of the United States government, including the President (Bush, 2001) and the U.S. Attorney General (Ashcroft, 2001), have issued declarations to indicate that there should be no discrimination against Muslims, and that immigrants from middle east nations will continue to be afforded the same rights as any other group. However, other government entities, notably the U.S. Justice Department and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security have taken actions that seem to contradict these declarations.

For example, with little public notice outside the immigrant community, the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security have notified all men over 16 who have immigrated legally from specified Muslim nations to report for interviews; after over 80,000 men reported in as required, the government took actions to deport over 13,000 of them, usually for reasons that had nothing to do with terrorism (Aizenman and Walsh, 2003.) The U.S. Patriot Act, which allows the Justice Department to deviate from some traditional legal rights in order to address the terrorist threat, was used to justify incarcerating large numbers of Arab/Muslim immigrants and holding them in unduly harsh conditions for months while conducting investigations (Shehon, 2003). The New York Times reported that the Justice Department made little effort to distinguish legitimate terror suspects from others (Shehon, 2003).

Many immigrants were in this situation, not because of any wrongdoing or even the suspicion of wrongdoing, but because their papers had been lost in bureaucratic shuffles during the government's changeover in 2003 from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (Engler and Sarkar, 2003).

## **TOWARD SOLUTIONS**

The complete elimination of prejudice and unequal

treatment in this nation remains an elusive goal, but it is not unreasonable to expect a significant reduction in the degree to which Americans experience islamaphobia. The current anti-Muslim sentiment may already be decreasing as the passage of time cools some of the 9/11 outrage, and as more people come to realize that terrorism and Islam are not synonymous. Negative feelings can also diminish as more Muslims interact with other Americans and show that they are at least as productive, peaceful, and loyal as any other group in the nation. Studies consistently reveal that hostility toward individuals who represent a group diminish when there is more mutual interaction (Fiske, 2000). Studies also reveal that prejudice is reduced when organized groups, such as Muslims and Christians, or Arab-Americans and other Americans, work together to achieve common goals (Pettigrew and Trapp, 2002).

The opportunity for interaction between Arab/Muslims and other Americans will increase greatly in the next few years if current immigration trends are maintained. Despite islamaphobia, despite tightening immigration policies, and despite the government's recent draconian efforts to expel large numbers of Muslim immigrants, their numbers are increasing dramatically. If current immigration policies remain unchanged, over a million immigrants from Muslim/Arab nations are expected within the next decade and Muslims will be a major political and economic force in the nation (Camarota, 2002). However, there is a strong movement to change this policy and reduce immigration from all nations until full security measures are in place against terrorism (Krikorian, 2002). Anti-Muslim feeling in the United States might be further assuaged as more people from this community are shown to be the productive, industrious, affluent, and responsible people that they are. Muslim organizations in the United States claim their people have among the highest rates of education in the nation, including a high concentration of employment in entrepreneurship and the professions, particularly in medicine, computer technology, and engineering. They are also among the most affluent of immigrant groups with a median household income of \$69,000 per year in 2000 (Pipes, 2000).

Government and business organizations have been striving in recent years to remedy past shortcomings. The Presidents since 1990 have publicly recognized and congratulated Muslims during their holidays. Beginning in 1997 the star and crescent has been placed beside the national Christmas tree and a Hannakkah menorah every December in the White House Ellipse. The U.S. armed forces now commission Muslim chaplains, offer halal meals to Muslim troops, and make special exemptions of training requirements during Ramadan. Many businesses and schools, even public ones, have accommodated Muslims with times and places to conduct prayers. Many businesses no longer object to their Muslim workers wearing beards, turbans, hijabs or jalaabeeb (plural for jilbaab). No doubt some of this turnaround was inspired by lawsuits in which Muslims successfully sued their

employers for not making such accommodations (Pipes, 2002).

It remains to be seen if these trends toward more approbation and accommodation for Muslims will continue and be even more widespread. And it remains to be seen if the efforts by business and government leaders will result in greater acceptance by the general public. However, this nation has a strong tradition of accepting immigrants, appreciating diversity, and striving for fairness for all. In such an environment, the opportunities for Muslim Americans can be as great, eventually, as for any other group.

## GETTING HELP TO MUSLIM CLIENTS

To the individual Muslim in America who has immediate problems, it may not matter much that the long-term prognosis for his people is good. The effort to establish a productive life in a climate of anxiety and hostility is a significant challenge. For many of the Muslim individuals who face discrimination, economic hardship, legal problems, and emotional problems, there is little recourse but to endure the difficulties and try to resolve whatever problems can be surmounted. And, like others, when those problems are beyond the individual capacities to solve, turning to others for help is the only recourse. However, for many in the Muslim community there are overwhelming barriers to getting the kind of help that they might need.

When people who leave their homelands and communities and try to make better lives in a strange and often hostile land, where the cultural norms are unfamiliar, where opportunities for employment are limited, where prejudice is pervasive, and where the familiar support systems are thousands of miles away, it is predictable that many of their number would suffer severe psychological, economic and legal problems. Muslims in America have at least as many psychosocial problems as any other immigrant group, but they have another obstacle that isn't shared by others to the same extent. For Muslim immigrants, perhaps more than any other group at the present time, there are daunting obstacles that prevent a high proportion of them from getting help.

The obstacles include, of course, the same ones that keep large numbers of other groups away from helping professionals too, such as lack of money, transportation, knowledge about where to go for help, language barriers, and long waiting lines because of insufficient resources by the helping community. Most lawyers, social workers, and other helping professionals do what they can to minimize these barriers to accessibility but recognize that there are many more people in need of their services than professionals and agencies who can serve them.

Many Muslims face an even more formidable barrier. While it is not unique to them, it may be more difficult for them to overcome than for any other group. It is that part of their own culture that finds it exceedingly difficult to seek

help from non-Muslims, or even admit easily to the need for help from anyone. Added to this is their understandable and now reasonable fear that the professional person may represent the very government that has dealt with them harshly. It is a culture that compels individuals to seek help from their family members first, and then members of their community. To seek help from an outsider, a stranger, a possible representative of the authority structure of the new environment is almost intolerable, no how desperate the situation. Because of these obstacles the vast majority of newer Muslims immigrants get to the helping professional reluctantly or with immense resistance (Nadir and Dziegielewski, 2001). Most typically they come because they are compelled to do so. Generally they are required to go for "help" because of a judge's or law authority's order, or because it is seen as necessary to avoid some greater trouble.

Sometimes they are referred by school authorities, immigration personnel, or physicians. Helping professionals know well how difficult it is to provide useful service for non-motivated clients, and even more so for resistant clients (Leahy, 2001). And when there are communications barriers, lack of mutual knowledge about the other's customs, the task becomes even more daunting. Just getting someone into the office of a helping professional is challenging enough, but then there is the problem of actually getting help. The client is going to be suspicious, and will be prideful. He/she will likely minimize the severity of the problem, or exaggerate his/own resources to deal with the problem. So, what can the concerned competent professional do to help? Since most professionals working with disadvantaged populations have more than enough to do to serve needy, motivated clients who do not have such cultural barriers, the question doesn't even need to be asked. But there will always be situations in which some professionals will have the opportunity and challenge of working with Muslim immigrant clients.

Professionals who are in this position, especially those who are not themselves Muslim, or those who do not speak the client's language, or know much about their unique histories and cultures can prepare themselves for this work. If possible, they should recognize their limitations and get as much advice from Muslim colleagues as available. They should also get to know what resources exist in the community for Muslims in need. Professionals who work with Muslims should develop a data base of these resources in their community to be used in making useful referrals. A good model for this database is a resource guide primarily for Muslims in the United States and Canada entitled the "North American Muslim Resource Guide" by Muhammad Nimer (2002). The book contains a useful introduction toward understanding Muslim culture followed by chapters on different Muslim population groups, Islamic schools, community groups, ethnic associations, social service and charity organizations and a well organized directory of organizations that help Muslim individuals and families. When the professional who

does not speak the Arabic language or have familiarity with Muslim customs cannot make appropriate referrals for the Muslim client in need, help can still be provided using the same culturally-sensitive professional skills and knowledge that is used with all other client groups.

The similarities between different ethnic groups far outweigh the differences. Nevertheless, the conscientious professional might do well to seek additional training or read the available literature on helping Muslim clients. Unfortunately, the literature on this subject that is available in English and other western languages remains extremely limited. Some worthwhile books and articles have been prepared by Somayya (2003), Rizvi (1988), Khan (1982), Daneshpour (1998), Kobeisy (1994) and Al-Issay (2000).

### **SOME GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH MUSLIM CLIENTS**

In communicating with many Muslim/Arab immigrants, one realizes that to be effective with these clients some modifications in the interview process is necessary. Here are some of the most important factors to consider when a non-Muslim conducts interviews with Muslim individuals or families:

1. The interviewer should begin the session by explaining clearly the purpose of the meetings, what will be done during the time of the meeting, and what is to be expected thereafter as a result. Beginning the session with questions of the client, such as "what brings you here?" would usually be ineffective. The Muslim client, more than most, will be so apprehensive and uncertain of what the outcome is likely to be that little communication can take place until these questions are resolved.
2. Don't be influenced by the client's intensified need to please. In the initial phase of the first meeting clients may be more interested in pleasing the interviewers, telling them what they want to hear, and giving them excessive flattery. They may even offer small gratuities or promise to do special favors for the interviewer. For many Muslim/Arabs, such behavior is the norm and has been the social lubricant of their cultures. The interviewer should not interpret this as inappropriate behavior, and should decline any offers with respect for the client.
3. Allow some time in the beginning for phatic communion (small talk), to enable the client to gradually engage in the process. Without this essential component of social interaction for Muslim/Arab peoples, the meeting will seem abrupt, rude, and disrespectful.
4. The interviewer should appear deferential to the client, especially if it is an older person, a man, or a parent in the presence of the children (Daneshpour, 1998). It is difficult enough for such clients to have to acknowledge to their dependents that they have to go to outsiders for help (Hodge, 2002). Some of this sense of humiliation can be mitigated if the interviewer allows this client to seem in more in control. It is useful, for example, for the interviewer to reveal his/her own lack of knowledge about the customs of the clients' culture and to ask the "alpha client" about it.
5. Proceed through the interview(s) at a slower, less confrontational, pace than the western professional might prefer. Usually the clients will describe themselves, their families, and their circumstances, in less linear ways, using nuance, flowery language, hyperbole, and implied statements. Culturally these clients people may need to express themselves in a more circuitous ways than is usual for Westerners, and they might withdraw or become reticent to talk when the long process of engagement is occurring. If the interview tries too hard for "getting to the point" the clients will probably become more resistant.
6. Do not misinterpret verbal communications. The Arabic language is rich in its use of flowery expressions, dramatic descriptions, mixed and sometimes contradictory-seeming phrases. It would be easy but unwise for the interviewer to understand this form of expression as being literally true. For most of these clients it is a normal part of communication it should not be interpreted particularly as a manifestation of anxiety, evasiveness, or emotional disorder, but as a product of a culture which values such interactions.
7. Do not misinterpret non-verbal communications. Professional interviewers know that people communicate with more than their words. However, the gestures, body-language, proxemics, and facial expressions don't necessarily mean the same things when expressed by Arab/Muslims as by people from other cultures. Muslim/Arabs, for example, will want to sit closer to the interviewer, face-to-face, and look deeply into the interviewer's eyes. While this may be disconcerting to the interviewer, pulling back may be seen as rude and distancing to the client. Exaggerated hand and face gestures may have less significance in the client than it might for a western client.
8. The intervention strategy should strive, initially at least, toward solving immediate problems that involve tangible, explicit goals (Rizvi, 1988). Any successes should come in the form of incremental improvements rather than dramatic long term changes than dramatic change. Perhaps the insight-oriented approach may be useful after awhile, after the interviewer and client have come to know and trust one another, but using it in the early stages of the intervention is likely to be counterproductive (Somayya, 2003). Muslim psychologist Abid Bilal, editor of the Pakistani monthly, "Nafsiyat Aur Zindagi" (Psychology and Life), points out that "Islam teaches its followers, 'Don't tell anybody about your sins and evil activities, but ask God for forgiveness and then leave it on God'" (Murray, 2002).
9. Interviewers will be more effective if confrontational behaviors are minimized. If, for example, the client is obviously describing something inaccurately or untruthfully, a direct challenge is unwarranted. Usually the client is seeking a face-saving explanation rather than trying to mislead the interviewer (Jackson, 1995). These clients usually have a much stronger sense of shame for

perceived misconduct and need their own time to be open about it. Moreover, many of these clients will believe that their intentions are more meaningful than their overt actions. Their idea, though never expressed this directly is: "My behavior was shameful but, because I am a devout Muslim and a good person, the act wasn't so bad".

10. Be professional. It is more important that the interviewer use the knowledge and skills that are applicable for all clients than to make accommodations for the Muslim/Arab client that would negate those talents. While Muslim clients have some distinctive characteristics and unique social pressures, they have many more features in common with all other people. This means that the interviewer must use professional judgment in every instance when questioning its value with the particular Muslim client. The interviewer would, as with any other client, try to learn as much about the client group as possible, be culturally-sensitive, know the resources in the community that are available to the client, and consult with more knowledgeable peers when in doubt (Nadir and Dziegielewski, 2001).

If the client introduces spirituality into the sessions, as is quite possible, the interviewer may seek to defer this part of the work to someone more knowledgeable about the client's perspective and needs (Khan, 1982). Otherwise, the professional non-Muslim interviewer can provide valuable assistance for the Muslim client and find a richly rewarding experience in so doing.

## CONCLUSION

The great majority of immigrants to the United States from the Arab/Muslim world have a great deal of offer and will be an asset to this nation. All immigrant groups have had their difficulties in assimilating and retaining their own cultural uniqueness, and many are still engaged in this process. However, because of circumstances in the world over which most Arab/Muslims have no control, they face even more hardships. Compounding their difficulties is the fact that it is alien to their culture, for the most part, to seek help, especially for emotional or social relationship problems, and especially from non-Muslims. This means many of them are isolated, or have isolated themselves from the resources outside their own community. The challenge for helping professionals to serve them is great, and the degree to which professionals are effective in helping these clients, will go far in helping to resolve an international, social, and psychological problem that must be resolved if the world is to know peace within the next century.

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