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Homeland Insecurities: Racial Violence the Day after September 11

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It would be naive to ignore how severely the systematic attacks of the Right since September 11 have stalled the critical project of the Left in deconstructing the current political moment. With much of the Left having abandoned its principled commitments and lined up, flags waving, in full support of the Bush administration's prosecution of the war, a reconstructive project has yet to begin. The decampment of the Left is so dire that the *Nation* recently proclaimed, without apology, the opinionating of fictional character Huey Freeman in the comic *The Boondocks* to be "the most biting and consistent critique of the war and its discontents in the nation's mass media."[1] For months we have been bracing ourselves for the next degradation; "things will get worse before they get better" seemed to be the mantra of despair. This may still be so: With Bush's threatened expansion of the war beyond Afghanistan, U.S. antipathy toward the Geneva Conventions, and the continuing detention of Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians, the crisis shows no signs of abating. But it is in exactly this moment of nationalist, nativist, and militaristic excess that we might develop greater acuity not only in our critique of prevailing politics, but in the imagined alternatives. Decentering of September 11, as Judith Butler suggests,[2] is important to understand the meaning and import of the terrorist attacks. But decentering requires not only that we expand our frame of reference to include the world before September 11, we must envision a desired world after September 11 as well.

Among the enormous violence done by the United States since the tragedies suffered on September 11 has been an unrelenting, multivalent assault on the bodies, psyches, and rights of Arab, Muslim, and South Asian immigrants. Restrictions on immigration of young men from Muslim countries, racial profiling and detention of "Muslim-looking" individuals, and an epidemic of hate violence against Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities in the wake of September 11 recall the long history of racialized U.S. immigration and immigrant policy, such as the Asian exclusion laws[3] and Japanese American internment. They also recall the more recent national heritage of racialized infringements on citizenship and belonging, most notably racial profiling of African Americans and Latinas/os. The contemporary convergence of these two narratives—of exclusion and detention on the one hand and racial profiling on the other—high-

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lights the extent to which immigration, naturalization, and citizenship have long been bound within a framework of subordination.[4] By examining the recent phenomenon of hate violence and racial profiling aimed at Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians, I seek here to situate our current moment of crisis within the multiple histories of racial oppression in the United States. But I also seek to envision what immigration, naturalization, and citizenship in the United States might look like outside a framework of subordination, and how communities of color might strive toward this imagined homeland.[5]

In an essay several years ago, Toni Morrison argued that the immigrant to the United States is not made fully American until she or he has learned and exercised racism toward African Americans.[6] Morrison's observation suggests the nonjuridical dimensions of naturalization that govern the admission and assimilation of immigrants into the United States, and their relationships with white and black Americans. In its most fundamental form, her argument is that the subordination of African Americans is inherent to being, and therefore becoming, an American. The social and cultural inroads made by multiculturalism in the past few decades notwithstanding, what we could consider naturalization law and tradition have remained largely impervious to such incursions. U.S. naturalization policy reflects an unreconstructed commitment to an assimilationist project, demanding the acquisition of majority-culture moral, civil, and political values, at the expense of homeland commitments. The inscription of racism toward African Americans in the historical and contemporary American polity determines that immigrants profess loyalty not merely to the sovereign state, but to its entrenched values of black subordination as well. Immigrants, then, become American at the expense of African Americans.

I suggest that Morrison is only partially correct in her description of the immigrant experience. Changes in immigration law in 1965 produced a dramatic shift in the composition of immigrants, transforming a largely European population to one that is now predominantly Latina/o and Asian.[7] One consequence of these demographic shifts is that immigrants today are made American not only when they learn to subordinate African Americans, but when they are racialized as subordinate as well. By this definition, Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities in the United States have in recent months become more American, and September 11 and its aftermath constituted the citizenship ceremony by which this was accomplished.

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Morrison's concern is ostensibly with the integrity of the citizenship status of immigrants, the racial costs incurred in obtaining such status, and who bears these transactional costs. But implicit in her argument that

immigrant naturalization perpetuates racial inequality for African Americans is a concern for the citizenship status of African Americans themselves. The myriad categorizations that exist within immigration law—everything from seasonal agricultural worker to "asylee" to "person residing under color of law" to legal permanent resident to naturalized citizen—reflect the multiplicity of claims on the nation-state that exist for immigrants in the United States. But even for the native-born, citizenship remains a contested notion, frequently mediated—and eroded—by race. Under the gaze of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, a third-generation Mexican American is indistinguishable from an undocumented person who recently crossed the border, just as a third-generation Chinese American and the recent immigrant from Taiwan are perceived the same. For African Americans profiled by law enforcement, there is no confusion as to their birthright, only a deep ambivalence about it, an ambivalence prefigured by economic, social, and legal histories that denied black humanity. Racial profiling and any number of other racial indignities daily challenge African American citizenship.

September 11 and its aftermath expose the precariousness of citizenship status for all people of color, immigrants and nonimmigrants alike. Naturalization for immigrants and resistance to denaturalization for African Americans are ongoing processes operating in the compromised environment of racial subordination. So long as citizenship is framed by subordination, these processes are incomplete, and the aspiration of becoming American remains deeply flawed. The hate violence and racial profiling directed against Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians and the apparent African American and Latina/o support for the profiling of these communities provide an important example of how racial positions in the United States have been reordered by September 11, and how the citizenship status of all people of color has been further degraded.

In the days and weeks following the attacks, Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities in the United States have experienced a wave of violence, the likes of which they have never seen before. At least five people were killed: Balbir Singh Sodhi, forty-nine, a Sikh Indian in Mesa, Arizona; Waqar Hasan, forty-six, a Pakistani grocer in Dallas; Adel Karas, forty-eight, an Egyptian Coptic Christian in Los Angeles; Surjit Singh Samra, sixty-nine, a Sikh Indian in Ceres, California; and Vasudev Patel, a forty-nine-year-old Indian Hindu killed near Dallas.[8]

In total, close to 1,000 separate bias incidents were reported in a period of eight weeks, and though the rate of new incidents has slowed, it continues today.[9] Incidents have included the firebombing of mosques, temples, and *gurdwaras*; attacks with fists, guns, knives, and Molotov cocktails; acts of vandalism and property destruction; and numerous instances of verbal

harassment and intimidation. These are merely the incidents that have been reported; racial shame, uncertain immigration status, and the inaccessibility of law enforcement resources to many communities of color make it certain that the actual number of bias incidents is far higher.

And this is to say nothing of the racial profiling at the airports and the "voting off" of Arab- and Muslim-looking passengers on airplanes by the pilots, flight attendants, and even the other passengers, as if the dark ones were unsuccessful contestants on the TV program *Survivor*. We might relearn from this experience the age-old lesson of the tyranny of the majority. But instead of confronting our majoritarian tendencies and committing to meaningful state intervention to correct such imbalances, we have chosen instead to characterize these as isolated incidents perpetrated by a handful of misguided individuals, who can be punished discretely without implicating a larger segment of American society. In this process, the minority is transformed into the majority, and our democratic ideals of both majority rule and protection of the minority are saved.

Further examples of racial profiling continue to emerge. For example, the Justice Department's "Absconder Apprehension Initiative" purports to identify and deport 314,000 undocumented people who have ignored court orders to leave the United States, but has begun with 6,000 immigrants from Muslim countries despite the fact that such immigrants comprise only a small percentage of "absconders."[10]

Hate violence against and racial profiling of Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians are best understood as different facets of the same social, political, and cultural phenomenon. Each is constitutive of the other: We might view hate violence as the end product of racial profiling's flawed logic (people who "look Muslim" are more likely to be terrorists, therefore if we are attacking terrorism we should attack people who "look Muslim"), just as racial profiling may be viewed as a form of violence—whether psychic or physical—flowing from bias. Our understanding of one enhances our grasp of the other, and for this reason I view the analyses of each as largely interchangeable.

The targets of these post–September 11 bias incidents have included anyone who is perceived to be Arab or Muslim. Thus non-Arabs such as Indians, Pakistanis, and other South Asians have been affected, as have non-Muslims such as Indian Sikhs and Hindus and Arab Christians. Sikh men in particular, readily identifiable by their turbans and long beards, have borne a disproportionate brunt of the violence. (Two of the five people killed were Sikh.) This violence depends on a fungibility of "Middle Eastern–looking" or "Muslim-looking" people with the individuals who committed the September 11 attacks and leaves Arabs, Muslims, and

South Asians enormously vulnerable. But the violence has also touched others who are, for lack of a better descriptor, merely brown-skinned: For example, Latinas/os in and around Los Angeles, misperceived as Arabs, have been harassed as well. What is at issue is not merely that one is Muslim or Arab, but that one is ostensibly not American, recalling the "perpetual foreigner" status frequently associated with Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and other Asian American communities.[11]

The astonishing diversity of the contemporary immigrant population notwithstanding, the post–September 11 violence reinforces the continuing coherence of the category "immigrant." As Vijay Prashad has noted, "anti-Islam is not only about Muslims, but in the United States it frequently turns into anti-immigrants of color in general."[12] The most startling example of this is the total abandonment since September 11 of previously energetic Republican-sponsored efforts to legalize hundreds of thousands of undocumented Mexicans. And it again recalls the period of Asian exclusion, when initial restrictions on Chinese laborers were gradually expanded to cover Japanese immigrants, Asian Indians, and eventually all Asian immigrants.[13]

Perversely, the events of September 11 have brought blacks and whites closer together, or so it seems. A recent *New York Times* poll found that racial differences between African Americans and whites have narrowed since September 11, now that Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians have assumed the primary position of racial scorn.[14] In this regard, African Americans have become more American at the expense of Arab, Muslim, and South Asian immigrants.

One has to wonder if we are witnessing an organic convergence of black and white interests, or a cynical manipulation of black opinion, the better to subordinate new communities of color. The headline of a front-page article in the *New York Times* two weeks after the terrorist attacks announced, "Americans Give In to Race Profiling."[15] The article begins with an interview with an African American man who states that as someone who has been racially profiled his whole life, he knows that it is wrong, and yet he finds himself supporting racial profiling of Arabs and Muslims. Next the article presents a Latino man who says essentially the same thing. Contrary to its title, the story is not that Americans have given in to racial profiling, but that black and Latina/o Americans have. And so in the course of three paragraphs, the two communities most severely affected by racial profiling in the past many years are deployed in defense of the very policy that oppressed them and continues to oppress them today. Suddenly, racial profiling is no longer racist.

Is it merely coincidence that the story fixates on these interviews with

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African American and Latino men, or was there something more to it? News accounts such as this construct cover for whites against the charge of racism. White enlistment of one community of color, and African Americans in particular, against another abets an ideology of colorblindness—a mainstay of the Rehnquist Supreme Court and a critical tool in the dismantling of civil rights gains of the 1960s—in exactly a moment when it might otherwise be refuted; whites couldn't possibly be racist if African Americans and Latinas/os are in accord. White super-citizen status is burnished through the unwitting labor of African Americans and Latinas/os.

That black and Latina/o opinion favoring racial profiling has been deployed does not address the fact that many African Americans and Latinas/os do in fact favor profiling of Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians. But we should not be surprised that communities of color, whose own sense of citizenship and belonging is compromised, choose to distance themselves from one another, or more particularly, that they attempt to elevate themselves by pushing the other down. Racial and ethnic competition among communities of color, and between African Americans and immigrants in particular, has long been a fixture of American race relations, particularly since the 1965 Immigration Act. Tension and violence between Korean and African American communities in Los Angeles in the aftermath of the Rodney King verdict, and between the same communities in New York at various times over the past two decades, are among the most prominent examples. Even tensions between African Americans and South Asians are not new, as evident from the recent charges that South Asian taxi drivers were refusing to pick up—in effect, were profiling—black passengers.

As critical race scholars have suggested, people of color do not merely learn the subordinating behavior of the white majority, they internalize their own subordination.[16] The felt inadequacy, incompleteness, and dispossession created by white supremacy is mitigated through the rendering of others still more inadequate, incomplete, and dispossessed. We might think of the resulting racial hierarchy as a citizenship exchange market in which the relative belonging of any one racial or ethnic community fluctuates in accordance with prevailing social and political pressures. What is more, communities of color learn the *imperative* of subordination of others. Racial subordination has enabled the acquisition and maintenance of white social, political, and economic power. Immigrants' and African Americans' adoption of the very strategies for self-advancement that have oppressed them is the predictable outcome of white supremacy. We are witnessing the latest chapter in what Mari Matsuda has called the "long, cold history of subordinated status generating subordinating impulses."[17]

The result is a sophisticated dividing and conquering—Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians abandoning African Americans and Latinas/os when racial profiling was their issue, African Americans and Latinas/os abandoning Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians now that it no longer is—that further ensconces white supremacy, and leaves the potential for community of color coalition in ruins. At the same time, the felt need of African Americans and Latinas/os to enhance their own belonging in the nation-state at the expense of Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians serves to underscore their own unperfected citizenship status from which this need flows.

The response to the five hate killings from the public and the government has been muted, to say the least. Anyone who thinks otherwise might consider why it is that Matthew Shepard, the young man killed in Laramie, Wyoming, is a household name for antigay violence, but that the only thing Waqar Hasan conjures up is the vague image of a terrorist. The nation's empathy gap with respect to the victims of post–September 11 hate violence seems a consequence of our overprivileging of the immense grief felt by the nation not merely for the victims of September 11, but for itself. By attaching most favored nation status to our own sorrow, we have inured ourselves to the suffering of others, consistent with a long history of American exceptionalism. The result has been for the United States to express similarly compromised and inadequate levels of grief for the victims of hate violence as for the untold numbers of civilian casualties in Afghanistan.[18] The similar treatment of victims of hate violence and Afghan civilians—collateral damage, regretted but not dwelled upon—places Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities outside the nation-state, their juridical immigration status notwithstanding. Such casual removal of these communities from the American polity echoes the government's systematic targeting and deportation of Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians and illuminates the permanent foreignness inscribed on the palimpsest of their citizenship.

Although the five killings since September 11 have been popularly described and in some instances legally defined as "hate crimes," they have been treated differently from other hate crime killings in recent memory—Matthew Shepard, James Byrd, the African American dragged to death in Texas, the children shot at the North Valley Jewish Community Center outside of Los Angeles, or Joseph Ileto, the Filipino postman killed during the same rampage in L.A. Unlike those cases, the prosecutions of the post–September 11 killings have received scant media attention, merely one more casualty of the Bush administration's programmatic exclusion of dissenting voices and experiences in the wake of the terrorist attacks and the national press's complicity in it. The crimes have been condemned, but the condemnation has been different in kind than in the other cases; as

much as we might in legal terms categorize all these crimes the same way, we understand them differently. The killings of people like James Byrd and Matthew Shepard were deemed incomprehensible. In contrast, the killings of Balbir Singh Sodhi, Waqar Hasan, and the others, while deplored as wrong, have been understood as the result of a displaced anger, that underlying anger being one with which the vast majority of Americans sympathize and agree. The perpetrators of these crimes, then, were guilty not of malicious intent, but of expressing a socially appropriate emotion in socially inappropriate ways. To borrow from criminal law, the hate crime killings before September 11 were viewed as crimes of moral depravity, while the hate killings since September 11 have been understood as crimes of passion.

Just as in the archetypal crime of passion—the enraged, loyal, humiliated husband killing his wife's lover upon discovering him in the marital bed—the crimes here are categorized as a type of murder, but with mitigating circumstances. The passion in question is love of nation, the crimes a visceral reaction born out of patriotic fervor. And so while we deplore the post–September 11 killings as social transgressions, our condemnation of the killers is mitigated by our sympathy and shared love for our country; we don't like that this has happened, but we understand why it did, because we, too, have been loyal, we, too, have been humiliated. We might even be able to imagine acting out such violence ourselves. The violence being done, while not wholly sanctioned, escapes the fullness of moral condemnation one would otherwise expect, and offers the perpetrators a kind of solace, even a form of encouragement.

That the present racial violence has occurred at a time of surging patriotism is hardly surprising. In the first days after the terrorist attacks, our patriotism helped many to grieve collectively for what had been a collective blow. But very soon after that, and predictably so, this coping mechanism gave way to an unreflective national fervor and a caustic nativism that was then expressed in violence. When the killer of Balbir Singh Sodhi, the Sikh gas station owner in Mesa, Arizona, was arrested, he stated, "I'm a patriot. I'm a damn American all the way."[19] A man who tried to run over a Pakistani woman with his car yelled that she was "destroying my country."[20]

All too often, the Left has been accused of being ruled by passion rather than reason. In the months since September 11, however, we have seen the Right not only ruled by emotion, but governing by it as well. While we have all been hurt by the attacks, the Right has chosen to externalize its grief as violence, unthinking patriotism, and militarism, recalling Freud's supposition that the opposite of melancholia is mania. The crime of passion archetype reveals how deeply masculinized this mania has been

in all its expressions. The hate violence, our national fervor, and our over-reliance on military solutions are all unquestionably gendered male.

The reliance on misogyny and homophobia in public depictions of the enemy highlights how gendered our nationalism has been. For example, flyers circulating in New York depicted Osama bin Laden being sodomized by the World Trade Center, with the caption "You like sky-scrapers, bitch?"[21] The Associated Press distributed a picture of a bomb intended for Afghanistan on which an American sailor had written, "Hijack this, faggots!"[22] As Eliza Byard notes, "The language and mind-set that our country uses to steel itself for conflict reminds women and queers that they are not assumed to be part of the national community."[23] Such deeply masculinized nationalism thus threatens the citizenship not only of immigrants and communities of color, but of all marginalized people.

Feminist legal critiques of the "heat of passion defense" further reveal the gendered dimensions of the hate violence. The heat of passion defense provides partial justification for murder motivated by the killer's sense of a humiliation. That humiliation is distinctly male; the "violation" of "his woman" is an attack on his masculinity. The killer "attacks not only to retaliate against the one who has harmed him; he attacks in order to undo the harm done to him. The act of violence restores his sense of self, transcends his feelings of deep humiliation, and thus becomes an act of self-protection."[24] Substituting the feminized nation for the killer's lover, the hate violence, and indeed our militarized nationalism, can be similarly understood as a masculinized attempt to restore a violated honor. We might think of the five murders since September 11 as homegrown honor killings. The mitigation offered by the heat of passion defense validates underlying sexist constructions of humiliation and honor in individual hate crimes and in our collective response to the attacks of September 11.

The gendered nature of the hate violence bears additional scrutiny, as women and men have experienced the violence differently. On college campuses across the country, Muslim women have reported their head scarves being violently torn off. Here, then, is the veil as a site for confrontation with the perceived evils of Arabs, Muslims, and Islam. Indeed, much of the violence being done can be understood as a forced unveiling of Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities. (The same sentiment has been expressed in the violent removal of turbans from the heads of Sikh men.) Frequently viewed as simply evidence of the oppression of women in Muslim societies, the veil is subject to multiple narratives, as Leila Ahmed and others have written.[25] For some Muslim women, the decision to veil is one of defiance, an expression of nationalism, a rejection of Westernization; for others it is a mode of defense against sexual harass-

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ment and violence, a religious invocation of shame to repel would-be perpetrators; for others still the veil is quite literally an article of faith. A complicated, varied, and frequently nuanced expression of personal politics, political commitments, and religious beliefs, the veil in the American context is reduced to a symbol of foreignness and clandestine terror.

For many Muslim women, the only means of protecting against such physical violence was to stay at home. The press has largely congratulated non-Muslims for their acts of charity—offering to escort Muslim neighbors to the grocery store or to do their shopping for them—and congratulated itself for covering such good deeds, constructing local Good Samaritan tales resonant with the national propagandistic narrative that the war in Afghanistan is aimed to liberate Muslim women. At home and abroad, it seems that everyone from Laura Bush on down has taken up the plight of Muslim women. But in the same moment that we decry the Taliban's cruel restrictions on the mobility of Afghan women,[26] our racial oppression confines women in the United States to their homes as well. We have engaged in our own form of purdah.

Stripped of their own modes of personal and cultural definition, Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities have been left naked in the face of continued attacks. But something peculiar has happened since. Amid all the flag-waving, the nativist fervor, and the growing anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant sentiment, Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities have engaged in a strategic adaptation, a cultural and political accommodation. Many of them have seized the American flag as their own, waving it more fervently, and indeed, preemptively, embracing the flag as a shield. A recent issue of the *New Yorker* demonstrates this phenomenon. It shows a Sikh taxi driver cowering behind the wheel of his car, which is plastered with American flags.[27]

Certainly, many Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians might have put up American flags even if there had been no attacks on them or if the terrorists had not been Arab or Muslim. But the embrace of the American flag by these communities now hardly seems voluntary. Rather, it is a forced reveiling of the community, perhaps less given to personal interpretation than the decision of Muslim women to wear a head scarf. The interchange of these two overdetermined symbols—the veil on the one hand and the flag on the other—bludgeons the multiple histories of each and demands that both conform to a narrowly defined narrative of belonging.

Embrace of the flag is clearly an effort to assimilate with the white population, to spurn one's own marginality rather than oppose the forces that have created it. But this is not the only choice. A better choice, though certainly a more difficult one, would be to engage the position of the subordinate, something most Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians

(though certainly not all) have never had to do. The events since September 11 have proven the attempt of Arab and South Asian elites to escape the debasement of race by way of class to be the impossibility that those in the working class have always known it to be. Now that the computer consultant on an American Airlines flight has been subject to the same subordinating forces as the sales clerk in a dingy mini-mart, Arab and South Asian communities have reached consensus on a previously unconceded point: We are not white. This class consensus on the salience of race for Arabs and South Asians replicates similar phenomena and suggests similar class complications among other communities of color.

While profiling has affected all classes of Arabs and South Asians, it has not affected all classes equally; the computer consultant has been told to leave his flight, but the mini-mart clerk has been shot in the head. Just as racial profiling in the African American community assumed new levels of importance when upper-class blacks—the lawyers, the doctors, the businessmen—were stopped by the police, so, too, did racial profiling among Arabs and South Asians gain attention when their upper classes were implicated. It is, then, not enough for these communities to appreciate that race matters if they do not also appreciate how it matters more for some than for others.

Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities bear a special responsibility in this moment in American history. The enduring struggle against racial subordination has now been visited upon them. On issues like racial profiling and immigration policy, issues on which, by political necessity, many African Americans, Latinas/os, and progressive people of all colors have been forced into positions of silence, Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities have an opportunity to maintain the fight for all communities of color, just as others—African Americans, Latinas/os, Japanese Americans and other Asian American communities—have done before. At some point in the future, this national crisis will subside, and we will look again at the issue of racial profiling of African Americans and Latinas/os on the Jersey Turnpike, or the question of easing restrictions on immigration from Latin America, or the vigor with which hate crimes should be prosecuted. What happens now with regard to Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians will have everything to do with what happens then. I wish that the Arab and South Asian communities had had the foresight to stand with the African American and Latina/o communities in opposition to racial profiling when the question was driving while black or brown instead of flying while Muslim. While a relative few have, most have not. Had they done so, we might be differently positioned, as communities of color and as progressives, to deal with the challenges of today. Still, the opportunity is there for these communities to forge necessary coalitions now, that they

might endure beyond the period of immediate self-interest, and begin to imagine a shared citizenship outside the bounds of subordination.

We might start this important process by honoring the subterranean histories of cross-racial solidarity that exist in pockets across the country. In Los Angeles, for example, AGENDA (Action for Grassroots Empowerment and Neighborhood Development Alternatives) has committed to organizing African Americans and Latinas/os in the many multiracial neighborhoods of South L.A. around issues of economic development. The newly formed Garment Worker Center has elevated cross-racial solidarity as one of its principal goals in organizing Asian and Latina/o garment workers in Los Angeles sweatshops, and KIWA (Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates) has pioneered multiethnic, multilingual organizing of Korean and Latina/o workers in Los Angeles's Koreatown restaurants. And in New York, groups like South Asians against Police Brutality and Asians for Mumia have advanced a similar vision of solidarity, taking up issues like driving while black or brown and systemic failures of our criminal justice system at a time when these issues were presumed irrelevant to the mainstream South Asian community.

In the months since September 11, new coalitions have begun to emerge. Communities of color in Seattle have launched a Hate Free Zone Campaign,[28] while a multiracial group launched a "Circle of Peace" around a mosque in Chicago, bearing messages of solidarity in Arabic, English, and Spanish.[29] In Washington, D.C., only a few weeks after September 11, Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities joined with Japanese American and other Asian American leaders in front of the National Japanese American Memorial to invoke explicitly the living memory of the internment experience.

Coalitions such as these begin their work squarely within a framework of subordination inflected not only by race and immigration status, but by gender, class, and sexual orientation as well. Our ability to emerge from the terror of September 11, and all the terrors since, depends on our ability to appreciate these histories without being constrained by them. The price we pay to become American, the cost we exact from one another, is too great to bear, and the advantage we gain too compromised. It is time to imagine something we can all share, and it is time to build.

Notes

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1. John Nichols, "Huey Freeman: American Hero," *Nation*, January 28, 2002, 11.

2. Judith Butler, "Explanation and Exoneration, or What We Can Hear," *Theory and Event* 5 (January 2002), reprinted in this issue.

3. See n. 11 below.

4. Not surprisingly, the months since September 11 have seen a dramatic rise in immigrants' applications for formal citizenship. Applications in November 2001 were 99 percent higher that the same period in 2000, suggesting the vulnerability that many immigrants have experienced since September 11. As one immigration lawyer assisting with citizenship applications in Houston stated, "We are getting a lot of people who think they have become suspects. They feel that getting their citizenship will give them more protection" (Kris Axtman, "A Boom in Citizenship Requests," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 11, 2002).

5. I borrow the idea of an imagined homeland from Salman Rushdie's "Imaginary Homelands," in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* (New York: Granta, 1991).

6. Toni Morrison, "On the Backs of Blacks," in *Arguing Immigration: The Debate over the Changing Face of America*, ed. Nicolaus Mills (New York: Touchstone, 1994), 97–100.

7. The Immigration Act of 1965 abolished the national origins quota system that had previously favored immigrants from northern and western Europe.

8. The exact number of backlash killings since September 11 is a matter of some dispute. The U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division has identified nine killings as "possible hate crimes," the Council on American-Islamic Relations eight, and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee six. Still others have disputed whether more than one or two of the killings were motivated by anti-Arab or anti-Muslim sentiment. See Alan Cooperman, "Sept. 11 Backlash Murder and the State of 'Hate': Between Families and Police, a Gulf on Victim Count," *Washington Post*, January 20, 2002.

9. See "South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow," *American Backlash: Terrorists Bring War Home in More Ways Than One* (2001), www.saalt.org. Additional information is available at the Web site of the Council on American Islamic Affairs, www.cair-net.org.

10. Dan Eggan, "Deportee Sweep Will Start with Mideast Focus," *Washington Post*, February 8, 2002.

11. Leti Volpp has described this phenomenon as the consolidation of a new identity category—"Middle Eastern, or Muslim-looking"—and argues that the use of the "Arab terrorist" stereotype constitutes the redeployment of Orientalist tropes. See Leti Volpp, "The Citizen and the Terrorist," *UCLA Law Review* 49 (2002): 1575.

12. Vijay Prashad, "Nothing Good Comes from Terror," *Z Magazine*, n.d., www.zmag.org/ZNET.htm.

13. Starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Congress began a decades-long prohibition of Asian immigration. Concerns about Japanese immigration led to the "Gentlemen's Agreement" of 1907–8, under which the Japanese government refused to allow laborers to immigrate to the United States. Growing Indian immigration led to prohibitions on nearly all immigration from Asia and the creation of the Asiatic Barred Zone. These restrictions on Asian immigration were accompanied by a variety of state and federal laws restricting the rights of Asian immigrants in the United States. For a discussion of this history, see Gabriel J. Chin, "Segregation's Last Stronghold: Race Discrimination and the Constitutional Law of Immigration," *UCLA Law Review* 46.1 (1996): 12–15.

14. Somini Sengupta, "September 11 Attack Narrows Racial Divide," *New York Times*, October 10, 2001.

15. Sam Howe Verhovek, "Americans Give In to Race Profiling," *New York Times*, September 23, 2001.

16. Charles R. Lawrence III et al., introduction to *Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment*, ed. Charles R. Lawrence III et al. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993), 13.

17. Mari J. Matsuda, "Pragmatism Modified and the False Consciousness Problem," *Southern California Law Review* 63 (1990): 1763, 1777.

18. An article in the *New York Times* reports that estimates on the numbers of Afghan civilians killed in the bombings ranges from the hundreds to the thousands, with one researcher putting it at nearly 4,000. The range is so broad as to be virtually meaningless. The U.S. government has not released any numbers itself. See Barry Bearak, "Uncertain Toll in the Fog of War: Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, February 10, 2002.

19. Laurie Goodstein and Tamar Lewin, "Victims of Mistaken Identity, Sikhs Pay a Price for Turbans," *New York Times*, September 19, 2001.

20. Stuart Millar, "Attack on America: Violent Attacks on Arab Americans," *Guardian*, September 14, 2001.

21. Eliza Byard, "Queerly Un-American," *Feminist News: The Newsletter of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender* 20 (January 2002): 6.

22. Ibid. The picture was withdrawn from circulation after protests from U.S. gay rights groups.

23. Ibid.

24. Donna A. Coker, "Heat of Passion and Wife Killing: Men Who Batter/Men Who Kill," *Southern California Review of Law and Women's Studies* 2 (1992): 71, 108. Coker provides an extended analysis not only of how partial justification in law for crimes of passion reinforces gender stereotypes, but also of the frequency with which the defense is raised in cases of men battering and killing their wives and the gender consequences of such cases.

25. See Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992).

26. The newfound American concern for the plight of women in Afghanistan is particularly troubling for its ahistoricism. The dominant narrative ignores European colonial culpability for conditions in the region: "One of the important elements missing from this picture is the fact that many women in Afghanistan are starving and faced with violence and harm on a daily basis not only due to the

Taliban regime but also due in large part to a long history of European colonialism and conflict in the region" (Paola Bacchetta et al., "Transnational Feminist Practices against War," 2001, action-tank.org/pfp/fem.html). Moreover, the sudden preoccupation with the Taliban neglects past U.S. investment in the regime. See Leti Volpp, "Feminism v. Multiculturalism," *Columbia Law Review* 101 (2001): 1181, 1206–7.

27. *New Yorker*, November 5, 2001.

28. See Samantha Chanse, "Hate Free in Washington," *ColorLines* (December 2001): 9.

29. See Hatem Abudayyeh, "Chicagoans in Defense of Arabs, Muslims," *ColorLines* (December 2001): 11.