

“It is time now to end the destruction and the violence, not only in the streets of the ghetto but in the lives of people.”

There have been no uprisings, riots or revolts, and those under discussion in this volume as targets of hatred hail mainly from classes of society that have traditionally had social mobility. Yet there is violence aplenty: physical and psychological, targeted at individuals but sending community wide messages of hatred and exclusion. Yet, the recommendations that follow are not in essence new, either to the US or to many other countries where hate environments have arisen against Muslims and other groups. Without the cooperation of the federal government and its structures, all advocates and campaigners are often left to lobby on state levels for key policy and statutory changes. Yet this is a start that has been made, and must not be undervalued as it may continue to reap rewards. Just as lobbying, protest and advocacy in California on issues of sexual orientation eventually led to a change in attitudes across North America, there is scope.

The recommendations are targeted at distinct groups and many are sourced from previous works that speak to the same and similar challenges. They are addressed to Law and Policy Makers, the Media, Civil Society groups including Muslim groups and discuss: the Law; Media; Securitisation; Education and Community Work.

## **Media**

The media's role as an engine of hate practice has clearly been defined by respondents, and thus, this arena is highlighted first.

### *1) Denunciation*

Organisations that work on issues of anti-racism, community cohesion, faith relations and human rights need to be prepared to take a much stronger stand in speaking out against these ways of thinking

and publicly denounce those who adopt such a discourse, even if, as is increasingly the case, those who do so are speaking from a position of sound 'liberal' or 'left-wing' credentials (Kundnani, cited in Ameli et al., 2007:94). Cases in point relate not only to the operation of stereotypes and misrepresentation in news media print, audio/visual and digital, but also the reproduction of demonised discourse in film and literature.

Critiques of demonised discourse cannot exist in academia alone, and the implications of demonised representations of peoples and countries by filmmakers and writers perceived to be progressive must be denounced. Two topical cases in point at the time of writing are the Hollywood movies *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) and *Argo* (2012). The social media response to *Zero Dark Thirty* exposed by Horowitz (2013) reveal that despite claims by cast and crew that the film stayed neutral on the issues involved, notably the use of torture by US agencies, the violent implications for Muslims at the hands of co-citizens were clearly exposed as real threats of violence. Likewise, the reproduction of long held stereotypes about Iranians and the Islamic Revolution and the depiction of events around the seizing of the US embassy in Tehran during the early days of the Revolution in *Argo* were noted only in passing.

Human rights groups in particular need to own up to the idea that hate speech and hate representation must be at the very least, denounced. Arguments about free speech are not impacted by such denunciations, but the safety and security of demonised peoples is assisted. Additionally, by showing leadership on this issue, leading civil society organisations gain purchase with the targeted communities, creating alliances that are much needed if there is to be a genuine attempt to have a plural society.

## II) *Community alliances*

There ought to be stronger relationships between Muslim organisations... and groups that have campaigned against racism and prejudice in the media. Although such alliances will present challenges to both parties, they are a prerequisite to bringing about change (Kundnani cited in Ameli et al. 2007:94). This goes without saying, but much can be learned from past and ongoing campaigns. The fact that demonised discourse and hate representation repeats in cycles against different groups, as CAIR (2012) aptly coined 'Same Hate, New Target', emphasises the structural nature of the problem faced, and suggests types of approaches to change by a recognition of the systemic nature of the problem.

## III) *Monitoring of Demonised Representation in the Media*

This can and must work on a variety of levels, including in academic institutions, by community organisations and major civil society organisations (perhaps in partnership) and by media outlets themselves. This monitoring process should be done in earnest with a view to assessing the levels and ways Muslims are demonised in order to avoid innocent and negligent repetition of such tropes. As Joseph and D'Harlingue (2012), in their study on the Wall Street Journal's Op-eds, point out: "[G]iven the power of these representations on other fields, such as politics, we suggest that the *WSJ*, whether inadvertently or intentionally (investigating intentionality is not our subject), contributes to the demonization of Islam and Muslims. This is not an exercise in identifying what the *WSJ* "got wrong." Rather, the argument is that the paper's *structure of representation participates in and contributes toward the production of politics, policy, rights, and citizenship.*"

(authors' emphasis)

Monitoring needs to work towards identifying how to transform that structure from one that participates in oppression to one that challenges it. While the initial onus of this must be on broadcasters and those responsible for media representation of Muslims, local government needs to be involved in this process, commissioning studies if necessary or facilitating the requisite debate around alienation and the impact of media on the process, in the hope that this will generate more than just a superficial self-analysis by media producers (Ameli et al., 2007).

#### *IV) Community agitation for a fair media*

Many such projects already exist, and the authors emphasise that the following actions: writing letters of complaint, letters to the editor, submitting alternative op-eds and such like, are essential components of this process. However, the authors contextualise such action as important thus:

- To foster a feeling of confidence among the community.
- To empower the community and its members to interact and protest at a time when immense pressure is put on Muslims and wider dissident voices to be silent.
- To ensure that media producers are aware that they are under scrutiny and that they are not meeting standards expected from them.

At the same time, it is important that community groups and organisations that run such campaigns also become familiar with and raise awareness of the structural issues that surround the media and its problematic role. They must not inadvertently foster an idea that the media is structurally sound and it is

solely the lack of Muslim voices or interaction with the media that causes misrepresentation of Muslims to occur.

It is essential to understand the long history of media representation as a generator of societal hatreds, as Gonzalez and Torres (2011) have indicated. A related recommendation to civil society is to interact and seek training from organisations and academics that have a shared understanding about the structural issues involved.

It is also important that organisations and activists target the way politicians, the judiciary and security and law enforcement agencies use the media (see recommendation (vi) below).

#### *V) Dealing with Personnel and Product*

Representation in the media is both an issue of the substance of how and what is reported, whether fictionalised or variously portrayed, and as a matter of the demographic profile of those who work in the media.

These issues do impact each other as the Kerner Report (1967), which will be quoted here in part, identified as an issue of personnel and product. As has been noted elsewhere, at times the issue is portrayed as something that would be remedied if only there were a representative 'amount' of minority faces working within media organisations, without looking at how such measures can simply reproduce the same problem.

The Kerner Report's (1967) recommendations are used as a basis for this report's recommendations below, in part because they still apply as Gonzalez and Torres (2011) state with respect to the subject of racist representation and its impact in general in the US. Moreover, the racialisation of Muslims makes these recommendations pertinent to communities like Muslims in the US.

The media needs to:

- (Adapted from Kerner, 1967) Expand coverage of Muslim community affairs and of race and Islamophobia problems through permanent assignment of reporters familiar with the issues around these affairs, and through establishment of more and better links with the Muslim community. The Muslim community is a diverse one, and the media needs to engage with that diversity and not promote or rely on sensationalist or apologetic voices that simply help propagate deeply held negative ideas.
- Integrate Muslims and Muslim activities into all aspects of coverage and content, including newspaper articles and television programming. The news media must publish newspapers and produce programmes that recognise the existence and activities of Muslims as a group within the community and as a part of the larger community (adapted from Kerner, 1967). Ameli et al (2004a and 2007) emphasise the idea that a dual space for minorities is essential for any society to foster a sense of citizenship among minorities. To do this, a space for minorities to call their own is essential and a media that is supported in the conceptual sense by dominant society is essentially a part of that. Likewise, the mainstream media must also show as a norm that Muslims are an integral part of society.
- Recruit more Muslims into journalism and broadcasting and promote those who are qualified to positions of significant responsibility. Recruitment should begin in high schools and continue through college; where necessary, aid for training should be provided.
- Accelerate efforts to ensure accurate and responsible reporting of news concerning Muslims

and all minorities, through adoption by all news gathering organisations of stringent internal staff guidelines.

- Cooperate in the establishment of and promotion of any existing privately organised and funded independent institute(s) to train and educate journalists in Muslim affairs, recruit and train more Muslim journalists, develop methods for improving police-press relations, review coverage of Muslim related issues, and support continuing research in these fields.

*VI) Cultural change in the use of media by politicians, the judiciary and security and law enforcement agencies.*

It is essential that the culture of politicians (Ameli et al., 2007), the judiciary and security and law enforcement agencies changes in the way that they utilise media. The media often gives a less than critical platform to all of the above when the issues under discussion are related to Islam, Muslims, immigrants or peoples of colour.

It is crucial to have a cultural change in the way the politicians (etc.) utilise the media and in the way that they deal with minorities. Due to disparity of access to media political comments, this cannot be countered and debated in a way that includes minority groups. As such the media becomes a destructive force and a blunt instrument to force minorities into certain positions, thus, creating demonisation between the majority and the minorities (Ameli et al., 2007). Organisations already involved in lobbying and interacting with the media need to make this a key call for change both in their interaction with media producers but also sympathetic figures in the other institutions who may be able to make the case for change within these institutions—or at the very least speak truth to power.

*VII) Dealing with Problematic Content*

The authors of this volume diverge from their recommendations in the IHRC 2007 work on the media (Ameli et al, 2007). Those recommendations apply to the media in the UK where there is more unity of law and a limited number of major media providers. Additionally, access to local media producers for civil society organisation though often times difficult is not comparably difficult to the US. This is because of the US's geography, the divergence between state and federal laws and apparatus, and extreme levels of political, social and economic exclusion (with and without minority communities), makes it exceptionally hard to organise campaigns .

Previous recommendations looked at the creation of effective watchdogs, accountability under the law for misrepresentation and the recognition of and criminalisation of hate speech. The authors argue here, that instead in the US a political movement is required around this issue and must involve a broad coalition of civil society organisations (as recommended by Kundnani quoted above), academics and like-minded figures and institutions that look at the working of media demonisation in news media (whether, print, digital or audio / visual), or filmic or literary representation. There needs to be an urgent evaluation of how all forms of media play into violent and immoral foreign policy agendas and justify domestic violence (physical, structural, emotional and psychological) against peoples of various backgrounds in the US. Much has been done already on this in various dissenting circles, but there continues to be reification between the voices involved in this critique, and the need for solidarity despite difference is urgent if any of the critique is to evolve into a transformative process.