Politics of Park51:

Space, Emplacement, and Muslim Subjectivity

by

Angela Maly

B.S., Georgetown University 2005

A thesis submitted to the

Faculty of the Graduate School of the

University of Colorado in partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Religious Studies

2012

This thesis entitled:

Politics of Park51: Space, Emplacement, and Muslim Subjectivity

written by Angela Maly

has been approved for the Department of Religious Studies

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Dr. Ruth Mas

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Dr. Najeeb Jan

_____

Dr. Deborah Whitehead

Date___4/18/2012

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we

Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards

Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

IRB protocol # N/A

Maly, Angela (M.A., Department of Religious Studies)

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Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Ruth Mas

ABSTRACT

The building of a mosque in downtown Manhattan created a significant controversy in the media due to its proximity to the World Trade Center site. The discussions were produced by and have produced a certain conception of contemporary Islam within the US public sphere that recast the tradition of Islam itself as a possible threat to the security of the United States. I examine how the building of something new, a replacement of an "American" building by a mosque, directly impinges on the physical and societal boundaries of the definition of a US citizen, as understood in relation to religious identity. Since many Muslims own real estate in Manhattan, the questions that I raise are not merely about what it means to give Muslims land, but also what it means to *give up* land upon which Muslims can construct their own version of "sacred space." Furthermore, I examine how the claim to space and sacrality relies on citizenship and ask whether one can be Muslim and a US citizen? Can a Muslim claim "sacred" space in the US? Since the language of "sacrality" contributes to a normative understanding of Christianity, how does the idea of the US as a secular nation contribute to the tensions relating to Muslims in the US?

I argue that the Park51 debates are linked to the physical space of "ground zero" in such a way that the placement of the mosque within Manhattan affects the discourse surrounding the placement of Muslims in the US by claiming "ownership" of "ground zero" and its surroundings by various groups. This "ownership" is not limited to the physical space; these are also claims to

the emotions surrounding the events of 9/11. I examine how the appeal to emotion is a foundational element in this debate. I understand this in relationship to the religious language that has emerged in these debates. This language illustrates some of the major rifts in the conception of the modern nation state of the United States, and is compounded by discursive claims to "place" oneself, as an individual and as a group, within US society.

My focus is on the emergence of these discourses in the media which not only presents debates concerning Muslims in the US but shapes and molds them as well. The key terms and phrases utilized paint a specific picture of the US and who is considered a citizen and are part of the shifts in the language that I trace. I suggest that claims, legal and religious, to the specific space of "ground zero" recast the discourse surrounding Park51 into a political struggle for Muslim *emplacement* within the US. This recasting is due to the structuring and allocation of space in society which works to organize multiple layers of, and obvious stratifications between, classes in that society. I use the work of Michel Foucault to demonstrate how spatial constructions are an active part of a biopolitical framework within the contemporary US and how that framework structures the *emplacement* of Muslims.

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Introduction

The building of a mosque in downtown Manhattan created a significant controversy in the media due to its proximity to the World Trade Center site. The discussions were produced by and have produced a certain conception of contemporary Islam within the US public sphere that recast the tradition of Islam itself as a possible threat to the security of the United States. On September 8, 2010 the leadership of the Cordoba House Initiative, including Imam Feisal Rauf and Sharif El-Gamal released a statement naming the project in downtown Manhattan the Park 51 Community Project in reaction to its labeling by the media as the "Ground Zero[1] mosque." The renaming demonstrates the extent to which the media has co-opted labels being used by those opposed to its building to promote and facilitate certain ideological presuppositions. The shift in name from Cordoba Initiative to the Park 51 Community Center speaks to the need by the organizers to stress other uses, besides Muslim prayer space, including multi-faith prayer space, recreation facilities, a restaurant and a library. The press statements made by the organizers are an attempt to control the public image of the mosque in response to the commentary on the mosque and the Islamic tradition in the media. By choosing the name as the Park51 Community Center, the founders are referencing the physical location of a generic space no longer imbued with religious significance. This project seeks to examine how within the national media, Park 51 has quickly become conflated with "Ground Zero" and the "sacrality" of

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[1] Ground Zero as a proper noun already implicates the area as somewhat "sacred" to US as a nation. Capitalizing the words ground zero is to imply recognition of that space as apart in understanding the area as inhabiting a unique part of US history. I am in no way debating the significance of the space; however I am attempting to understand the discourse, not reify it. Using Ground Zero, with capitals, would be to assume the importance of the term with regard to a particular political agenda that recognizes "Ground Zero" as more than a defining event.

the site. Rather than defend the building as a mosque and thereby address concerns about Islam in the US, the founders of Park51 have maintained a conciliatory tone that does not address Islam. I argue, however, that this conciliatory tone works as a legitimizing strategy in the polarizing discourse of "good" and "bad" Muslims. This is not just about the Park51 mosque, but part of a larger discourse relating to defining Muslims in the US as "good" and "bad" Muslims.

I examine how the building of something new, a replacement of an "American" building by a mosque, directly impinges on the physical and societal boundaries of the definition of a US citizen, as understood in relation to religious identity. Since many Muslims own real estate in Manhattan, the questions that I raise are not merely about what it means to give Muslims land, but also what it means to *give up* land upon which Muslims can construct their own version of "sacred space." Furthermore, I examine how the claim to space and sacrality relies on citizenship and ask whether one can be Muslim and a US citizen? Can a Muslim claim "sacred" space in the US? Since the language of "sacrality" contributes to a normative understanding of Christianity, how does the idea of the US as a secular nation contribute to the tensions relating to Muslims in the US?

I argue that the Park51 debates are linked to the physical space of "ground zero" in such a way that the placement of the mosque within Manhattan affects the discourse surrounding the placement of Muslims in the US by claiming "ownership" of "ground zero" and its surroundings by various groups. This "ownership" is not limited to the physical space; these are also claims to the emotions surrounding the events of 9/11. I examine how the appeal to emotion is a foundational element of these debates and I understand this in relationship to the religious language that has emerged. This language illustrates some of the major rifts in the conception of

the modern nation state of the United States, and is compounded by discursive claims to "place" oneself, as an individual and as a group, within US society.

My focus is on the emergence of these discourses in the media which not only presents debates concerning Muslims in the US but shapes and molds them as well. The key terms and phrases utilized paint a specific picture of the US and who is considered a citizen and are part of the shifts in the language that I trace. I suggest that claims, legal and religious, to the specific space of "ground zero" recast the discourse surrounding Park51 into a political struggle for Muslim *emplacement* within the US. This recasting is due to the structuring and allocation of space in society which works to organize multiple layers of, and obvious stratifications between, classes in that society. I use the work of Michel Foucault to demonstrate how spatial constructions are an active part of a biopolitical framework within the contemporary US and how that framework structures the *emplacement* of Muslims.

I examine the explosion of discursivities around the Park51 mosque in order to illustrate the link between formations of US citizenship and the production of space. From this I argue that the construction of space is pivotal to formulating contemporary subjectivities in relation to claims of ownership and the utility of space. However, instead of understanding subjectivity as solely contingent upon space and placement, I use the term *emplacement* to signal the active process of spatial formation and subject production that establishes relationships of power. I understand the Park51 debates in terms of the negotiation of US citizenship. I focus on how Muslim subjectivity structures and is structured by certain definitions of that citizenship in order to demonstrate how the identification of the Muslim as "other" is a reification by the sovereign project of the US and its extension abroad. Raising the questions about the constitution of the contemporary Muslim subject in the US allows me to expose the hollowness of the category of

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US citizenship as all inclusive and of the notion of freedom of religion in the US. I argue that the simultaneous totalization and individualization of the Muslim subject reflects back onto the constitution of the US citizen and puts forward Muslims as a distinct category of the mechanics of population management.

Imam Rauf's recent departure from the project raises new questions with regard to "progressive" Muslims and their relation to the larger Muslim community. The Cordoba Initiative, headed by Imam Rauf, has as of January 14, 2011 officially split from the Park 51 project. One of the continuing transformations within the Park 51 project is the re-labeling of the interfaith initiative. Originally tied to the Cordoba initiative, the interfaith component has now been labeled PrayerSpace[2], which is an entirely separate program from Park 51 and an entirely separate part of the building specified for interfaith prayer. The changing leadership, however, of the Park51 project does not negate the importance or complexity of the Park51 debates. The changes in circumstance relating to Park51 including the name, the leadership, and the associated functionality are symptomatic of the complexity and relevance of the debates to the larger discourses relating to Muslims within the United States.

I am specifically interested in how the contestation of space contributed to a series of complex tensions surrounding the building of Park 51. The building of something new, a replacement of an "American" building by a mosque, directly impinges on the physical and societal boundaries of the definition of a US citizen, as understood in relation to religious identity. The boundaries have so far been constructed along religious lines, though the definition of what actually constitutes the "religious" is applied ambiguously in the national media: I will

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[2] PrayerSpace as a name for the area inside the Park51 Community Center illustrates the compromise the organizers made with regard to the function of the center. PrayerSpace avoids any association with Islam; in fact it is advertised as a "multi-faith PrayerSpace." The organizers left no space between the words "Prayer" and "Space," demonstrating the reliance on specific space for prayer, at least within religions that classify themselves as "faiths."

explore the so called boundaries between the religious and the secular, the public and the private, in this project.

Rationale

The connection between local and global communities answers the question of why the mosque in Manhattan is so important to the Muslim community. The mosque is more than just a place in which to worship: it is an orientation of the Muslim devotee in the world, and by extension an assertion of his or her place in the context of US society. Within Islam, prayer inside the mosque is necessary as a traditional way of life, a connection to Mecca and the greater Islamic community, the umma, and as a stabilizing force creating a communal identity. The Manhattan Muslim community requires a mosque for its stability and growth. To exist as part of US society, members of the Islamic tradition must establish their mosques: they must insert themselves into social spaces. I will examine the tensions being exacerbated within the physical space of Manhattan through the national media.

The US media has established a binary between modernity and tradition that defines adherents of a specific religious tradition, namely Islam, as a tradition, thereby limiting it. In order to understand the manipulation of terms such as "real Islam," "moderate Muslims," and "sacred space," I will be examining how language creates and shapes the debate surrounding Islam in the US and focus on the opposition of tradition to modernity. This language allows those of a particular tradition to be excluded from complete representation within society by requiring loyalty to the state over loyalty to tradition; the state is therefore in direct competition with the Muslim umma. The Muslim umma, a transnational community of Muslims, connects them with an identity beyond geographic boundaries of nationalism. The transnational dimension of the umma, an affiliation between Muslims beyond borders, threatens the nationalistic

allegiances of the US population. This is complicated further by those who consider the US a Christian nation, and thus view the Islamic umma as a direct threat to the US Christian community.

An example of the polemical language exemplifying the modernity/tradition binary is illustrated by one of the founders of the Cordoba Initiative, Imam Rauf, who was originally identified as a Sufi. The separation of Sufis from Muslims in many articles relating to the mosque must be problematized in part because it illustrates the presumptions about "good" and "bad" Muslims; "mystical," "moderate," and "extreme" Muslims; and the differentiation that the Sufi label reinforces. Much of the media has reinforced the labeling of Imam Rauf as a "peaceful progressive" Sufi, but how has this alignment of progressive Muslims with "good Muslims" reiterated an orientalist discourse on what constitutes a "good Muslim?" I ask, who decides what makes a "good Muslim" and how does it necessitate a disengagement from "bad Muslims?" Continuing ideas presented in Mahmood Mamdani's book: *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War and the Roots of Terror*, I question the "traditional" and "progressive" dichotomies by examining who is being excluded and included in the debates surrounding the Park 51 community center. My questions are not about *what* constitutes a "good" or "bad" Muslim, but *who* has been constituted as a "good" or "bad" Muslim and towards what end.

The debates about Islam in the US media are not necessarily theological, of one God being better than another; rather they are arguments over physical and religious space: the superiority of one tradition over another, the superiority of one religious framework over another. The United States is divided into physically distinct areas that are governed differently. These areas such as states and counties are divided along ideological and social boundaries as well as physical ones. Affiliations with the north, the south, and the mid-West belie more than

spatial divisions; these identifiers create and are determined by the people living there and the traditions associated with them. Thus, physical space and tradition are linked at basic levels of understanding of what it means to be a US citizen. US citizens view the community center as an attempt to take away *their* sacred ground. In this view, to give up space to Muslims is in some way to defile the sanctity of ground zero. As such, understanding how the World Trade Center site is constituted as sacred ground is essential to this project. Ground zero is considered sacred ground in the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001 because of its different claimants; many different groups, including Muslims, count members among the dead. Since then, it has become a hotly contested space, with competing claims to its sacredness which are exacerbated by the economic concerns around the limited real estate in Manhattan.

Though an analysis of the notion of sacred space with respect to the World Trade Center site is necessary, the management of space and the role of spatial thinking within contemporary life must be thought of outside the boundaries of the building and the city plan. Sacred space is publicly embodied through the creation of memorial space, a public manifestation of sacrality. Land is not just a governable entity, or a tradable commodity, but must be contextualized within the larger area it is distinguished by, the borders it creates, and the limits of its use. The land at the World Trade Center site is still in use, but the usage of the space, both on land and in the skyline, has changed drastically, from towers of economic stability to the footprints of their existence as a memorial. The World Trade Center towers are memorialized by their absence; the future plans for the space memorialize the footprints of the towers, shifting to an emphasis on their absence instead of their replacement. The Park 51 Community Center as a specific place in relation to the World Trade Center site is seen to infringe on that absence.

Examining newspaper articles, political statements, and editorials surrounding the building of the center, beginning in December of 2009, I trace the shift of the renaming of the mosque to a community center through the summer of 2011, examining the pressures to which the organizers of the mosque were acquiescing. I also examine the term "Ground Zero" itself and the labeling of it as "sacred" space within the US speaks to a version of post-Christian secularity that presupposes the sacrality of the US experience. I am not interested in addressing how to define sacred[3], or if ground zero is sacred ground, but rather the role the term sacred plays in the media; who is being excluded from the discourse and what using the term sacred allows to be said, by whom, and to what end. At stake in the Manhattan mosque issue is the anxiety around the very meaning of US citizenship and the identity of the US as a post-Christian/secular nation. I will examine how the definition of space itself is a foundational and prescriptive element to the ordering of society: that the history of the US, as written by US citizens, organizes the nation into a well-defined space. It follows then, that to allow emplacement of Muslims within or close to US sacred space is to dilute the imagined Judeo-Christian unity of the nation. Though "freedom of religion" and the notion of tolerance are much attested to in defense of Park 51, I argue that the limits of that freedom must be questioned.

Argument

The media has implied that to give Muslims land in Manhattan is to take it away from someone else; Park51 must displace something US-American with something "Muslim." It is not merely a question of giving Muslims land, since many Muslims own real estate in Manhattan.

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[3] I use the term sacred as Claude Levi-Strauss did, as an indeterminate signifier without meaning in itself and therefore a receptacle of any meaning. Claude Levi-Strauss proposed the sacred is "a value of indeterminate signification, in itself empty of meaning and therefore susceptible to reception of any meaning whatsoever" (*American Sacred Space*, 6).

Rather it is a question of giving up land upon which Muslims can construct their own version of "sacred space." If a claim to space and sacrality relies on citizenship, then the question must be asked, can one be Muslim and a US citizen? Can a Muslim claim "sacred" space in the US? As the language of "sacrality" contributes to a normative understanding of Christianity, how does the idea of the US as a secular nation contribute to the tensions relating to Muslims in the US?[4]

Talal Asad argues, in *Genealogies of Religion,* that religion has been defined in opposition to and in support of secularism. Once defined in relation to secularism, religion must be separated from politics; the two are "Siamese twins." The creation of secular space necessitates a definition of religion that is thereby separable from that so-called "secular" space. Defining secular space thus fixes religion as permanently apart from the secular. Asad questions the separation between the secular and the religious, as the two are contingent upon each other rather than derivative. As I demonstrate through discourse analysis, the secular and the religious do not have distinct boundaries of separation. The function of religion and religious language within the discourse surrounding Park 51 is the primary focus of this project. For US citizens, particular notions of religion and "freedom of religion" are assumed. I analyze arguments against Park 51 as well as what is being presumed by those defending the "rights" of Muslims.

The link between the Park51 debates and the physical space of "ground zero" means that the placement of the mosque within Manhattan is really about the emplacement of Muslims in the US. Claims to the ownership of "ground zero" and its surroundings are not limited to the physical space but extend to the discourse of the emotions surrounding the events of 9/11. I use the term "discourse" in the way that Michel Foucault defines it as a system in which thoughts, attitudes, and practices work to construct not only the subject but the worlds of which they

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[4] See G.A, Lipton's article, "Secular Sufism: Neoliberalism, Ethnoracism, and the Reformation of the Muslim Other."

speak.[5] Discourse is thus a socially given, or implicit, understanding of the relationship between the words, objects, and people about which and through which a discussion occurs. For Foucault, as well as for the purposes of this endeavor, discourse is the medium through which relations of power produce and are produced by speaking subjects as well as the truth claims with which they are associated (*The Essential Foucault*, 37). The series of discourses on Park51 are themselves very complex, circulating around building a mosque in Manhattan, close to the World Trade Center Site, but I am using the building of the mosque as a launching point from which to discuss the role of Muslims in the US as well as the role of religion in US political sphere. The appeal to emotion is a foundational element in this debate. The tension created by Muslims' establishing a physical space in Manhattan and US citizens invoking religious language illustrates some of the major rifts in the modern nation state of the United States, compounded by the necessity to "place" oneself, as an individual and as a group, within US society.

The media not only presents debates concerning Muslims in the US but shapes and molds them as well, utilizing key terms and phrases to paint a specific picture of the US and who is considered a citizen. Tracing the shifts in the language used by various authors in the national media and analyzing the background of the authors allows for the reassessment of the subtle structures of power present in the US. I suggest that claims, legal and religious, to the specific space of ground zero recast the discourse surrounding the Park 51 Community Center into a political struggle for emplacement within the US. The structuring and allocation of space in society works to organize multiple layers of society. Besides obvious stratifications between classes, spatial constructions are an active part of a biopolitical framework within contemporary

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[5] Lessa, I. "Discursive Struggles Within Social Welfare: Restaging Teen Motherhood." *British Journal of Social Work* 36.2, 2005: 283-98.

US society. I use the work of Michel Foucault to show how a biopolitical understanding of US society helps to facilitate a discussion of the emplacement of Muslims in the US.

This project is organized into three examinations of the discourse on Park 51. First, I look at the structures of power relating to the debate around the physical space in Manhattan which must include the question of the biopolitical nature of the debate. A discussion of the physical and biopolitical underpinnings of US societal structure leads to how the definition of "true" Islam is being shaped by those structures. I use the press, specifically the New York City media, to examine these societal structures. Finally, I will examine how the construction of "sacred" space and the affective language tied to the debate relates to defining "authentic Muslims" who are framed within a specific understanding of the US public and political spheres.

Chapter 1

Space and the Biopolitical Formation of US Society

Politics of Space

In his essay, "Space, Knowledge and Power," Michel Foucault writes, "One sees the development of reflection upon architecture as a function of the aims and techniques of the government of societies" (349). For Foucault, space is fundamental to the operations of power: its ordering, hierarchy, and its mode of demarcation. The city itself shifts from a "place of privilege, as an exception within a territory of fields, forests and roads to [serve instead] as the models for the governmental rationality that was to apply to the whole of the territory" (351). According to Foucault, there was a clear shift from the definition of a city as an exception to the law of the commons, to that of the epicenter of governmental rationality. He writes, "The model of the city became a matrix for the regulations that apply to the whole state" (351). The city became a model of governance as well as an example of governance. The governance of the city and the state, argues Foucault, is predicated upon the current spatial notions of society. Foucault states; "that government not only has to deal with a territory, with a domain, and with its subjects, but that it also has to deal with a complex and interdependent reality that has its own laws and mechanisms of reaction, its regulations as well as its possibilities of disturbance. This new reality is society" (352). Governance of a state had to adapt to the notion of governance of society in addition to the governance of the territory; it is no longer solely regulating place and

people, but the interaction of people and place. How space is allocated, defined and distributed is a foundational and prescriptive element to the ordering of society. Those spaces, once allocated, are then sources of competition between people. The competition over space and the inscription of significance is directly related to the tensions around Muslims in the US.

Foucault uses discussions on the importance of architecture to make a larger point about liberty; for him, "Liberty is a practice" (354). Liberty can never be established by a project itself, instead "The liberty of men is never assured by the institutions and laws intended to guarantee them" (354). Thinking of liberty as a practice and not a project allows for the malleability of laws and institutions since liberty "is what must be exercised." For Foucault, a study of the spatial distribution of people or place cannot be separated from the practices of freedom by those people or their social relations. He states, "I think it is somewhat arbitrary to try to dissociate the effective practice of freedom by people, the practice of social relations, and the spatial distributions in which they find themselves. If they are separated, they become impossible to understand. Each can only be understood through the other" (356). It is the interconnection between social practices and spatial distributions that is of interest, not their individual importance.

If one considers New York City as one of the primary cultural crossroads of the modern world, what are the ramifications of that designation? New York City stands apart in the media and in the world as a symbol of the current discourses around identifying as a Muslim that are permeating the nation. The controversy surrounding the placement of a mosque near the site of ground zero can be extrapolated to the discourse of the placement of Muslims within the US more broadly. The politics of space incorporates the importance of a specific physical place in addition to its significance as something considered sacred to a certain group.

Looking specifically at Manhattan, the importance of the skyscraper and its extension into the skies, the complexity of space and power becomes focused on the upward mobility of buildings especially due to the horizontal constraints of Manhattan. Foucault writes, "I think there are a few simple and exceptional examples in which the architectural means reproduce, with more or less emphasis, the social hierarchies" ("Space, Knowledge and Power," 363). Foucault elaborates through an example of a military boot camp which maps the barracks in regard to rank. Though this is an exceptional example, one cannot completely disassociate the pyramid of power from certain architectural instances. The link between the World Trade Center towers, their subsequent absence, the buildings to be built where they once stood, and the Park 51 Community center exemplify the complex structures of power present in the US. These two sites marked competing claims to a space within Manhattan, of which the boundaries are unclear. The lack of definition of what marks "sacred space" near the World Trade Center site, allows for the Park 51 community center to infringe on a claim to "sacred space" that can encompass whichever land is most convenient.[6]

The Grid

Manhattan functions and exists in a unique environment, limited by water on all sides: there is no room for expansion. The Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, in his seminal work *Delirious New York*, writes of Manhattan as 2028 blocks of an unchangeable grid. To Koolhaas, the grid of Manhattan is,

> A matrix that captures …all remaining territory and all future activity on the island …. In fact, it is the most courageous act of prediction in Western civilization: the land it divides, unoccupied; the population it describes,

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[6] For further discussion on the question of power, space, and the upward "mobility" of architectural structures see Louis Marin's essay, "Classical, Baroque: Versailles, of the Architecture of the Prince."

conjectural; the buildings it locates, phantoms; the activities it frames, non-existent. (13)

The grid underpins and supersedes every structure within Manhattan, from the skyscraper to the daily life of the individual. The grid of Manhattan dictates how an individual inhabitant commutes to work, school, or place of worship as well as the size of that structure.[7] All of the construction within the city is limited by the grid physically and communally. On such a small island, each block houses a different neighborhood; a few feet can separate entire areas, from China Town to Little Italy. Two blocks for Manhattanites can be worlds apart. As the Community Center is located two blocks from ground zero, one must question the differences between the local and the national discourse. At the local level, Sharif al-Gamal said in a *Beliefnet* interview, "We are not at Ground Zero. In fact we're as close to City Hall as we are to Ground Zero. Lower Manhattan is pretty small. You can't see Ground Zero from our current building." Manhattan has embraced the building on the community center more so than the rest of the nation. Petitions in favor of its building have been filed, and New York Neighbors for American Values released a press statement in support of Park 51 with signatures from the ACLU, several Jewish organizations and Theological unions and seminaries all located in Manhattan. Individual signatures come from university presidents, World Trade Center victim's families and many religious leaders throughout the city. The tensions occur at a national level in a more extreme form: for a non-New Yorker, two blocks is a small distance to cover and quickly became conflated with ground zero. The national discourse has overtaken the building of the community center, causing the board of directors to respond in reasserting the actual name of the center and what its function will be, but in the eyes of some US citizens, building a Muslim community center close to ground zero infringes on US sacred space.

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[7] For example, how far they are from their church, mosque etc. will dictate how often they go, and the grid will also determine the size of that building. Also, the Zoning law of 1916 limited new buildings to certain shapes and sizes.

Koolhaas writes of the necessity to tear down or build upon existing structures within Manhattan,

> Since Manhattan is finite and the number of its blocks forever fixed, the city cannot grow in any conventional manner... It follows that one form of human occupancy can only be established at the expense of another. The city becomes a mosaic of episodes, each with its own particular lifespan, that contest each other through the medium of the Grid. (*Delirious New York*, 15)

Manhattan is as much a product of its buildings as the people within them. The building and replacement of something "American" by something "Islamic" interrupts the physical and social limits that the dominant discourses have created between "us" and "them." The specific architecture of the city, the constraining and defining grid system acts as a limiting foundation squeezing the discourse of otherness in Manhattan and the United States in general. There is no block untouched, no piece of land to be built upon without a preexisting structure. The US, as a melting pot, expects assimilation, a departure from traditional ways and a jump on the "freedom" bandwagon. Thus, as Muslims remain faithful to Islam and build mosques to practice their tradition, they collide with US American's self definition as loyal to the US, a community based around the notion of liberty and allegiance to the flag.

For Koolhaas, the buildings themselves are at war with each other, not just the people within them: "That is the prophetic claim that unleashes one of Manhattanism's most insistent themes: from now on each new building of the mutant kind strives to be a City within a City. This truculent ambition makes the Metropolis a collection of architectural city states, all potentially at war with each other" (*Delirious New York*, 73). This is not just an argument of architectural superiority, but of continuity, stability and emplacement.

The very establishment of sacred space is related to the political conquest of a geographic space.[8] Sacred space is powerful because it must be possessed, and as the rhetoric within the US media suggests, it must be a possession of US citizens: "Ground Zero" cannot be claimed in any way by Muslims, regardless of citizenship. In their book *American Sacred Space*, Edward Linenthal and David Chidester write,

> Power is asserted and resisted in any production of space, and especially in the production of sacred space. Since no sacred space is merely "given" in the world, its ownership will always be at stake. In this respect, a sacred space is not merely discovered, or founded, or construed, it is claimed, owned and operated by people advancing specific interests. (5)

The construction of space is a foundational and prescriptive element to the ordering of society. Linenthal and Chidester write, "Power and purity are not inherent in sacred space. Power is always at stake in the symbolic, yet also material, struggles over appropriation and dispossession. Purity is always at stake in struggles over inclusion and exclusion" (American Sacred Space, 18). At stake in Manhattan is the very definition of a US citizen and the US as a Christian/secular nation. The ordering of space and time by the nation and the individual structures the worldview of the nation and the individual. To place other religions, especially in New York City, is to dilute the religious unity of the nation as a nation built on Christian foundations. Moreover, as the physical foundation of New York City, the grid has determined allocation of physical space; it is a symptom and a creator of societal separations. Class, race, and ethnicity, among other identifiers, are contingent upon and upon which are contingent the separation of buildings, streets, and neighborhoods as well as the world views they structure. These building blocks, so to

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[8] The example of Jerusalem stands out; all three Abrahamic traditions claim Jerusalem as sacred ground, leading to endless war and conflict. Varying claims of sacrality to the same land create tensions on the basis of superior sacrality. Also, the idea of presence within the sacred site is not necessary; a site can be sacred from afar.

speak, underpin contemporary societal relationships, from class structures to the organization of human life.

Foucault and Biopolitics

One way of understanding how power functions in society is to use Michel Foucault's conception of biopolitics. Foucault defines biopolitics as "the endeavor, begun in the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population" ("Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth," 73). One comes to understand how the ever increasing commentary on the individual and his or her affiliations is linked to increasing governance of the specifics of life, including education, health, longevity, and race, for example. The replication and idolization of individual life become a normative function of society and offers reasons to govern in ever increasing circles of justification for deployment of power. Biopower, or the power over life that develops in conjunction with forms of discipline, becomes the internal mechanism of this normative liberal ideology in which the individual life is held in the highest regard and yet subsumed by the governance of those individuals as part of a larger "species." The notion of the importance of individual life as such masks a logic of violent exclusion, a logic which comes to light in the Park51 debates.

The reactions to Park51 are determined by and determinate of a specific understanding of what it means to be a US citizen and they highlight an underlying biopolitical framework at work in contemporary US society. The discourse around Park51 revolves around what it means to be a "true" Muslim as much as it revolves around what it means to be a "true" US American, creating a narrative in which the compatibility of being a US citizen and a Muslim is questioned. Muslims are being "radicalized" by the discourse surrounding them, not just into the obvious descriptor of

violent extremism, but towards a redefinition of Muslim-American identity as assimilated to US values above all others. As I will demonstrate, the media promotes an image of the US and of "American-ness" in which one is free to practice religion, so long as religious affiliation does not affect the political policies of the United States. The shift towards calling Park51 a community center rather than a mosque speaks to an attempt to appease the US population of non-Muslims, and as a way to situate Muslims within the greater US body-politic and to disassociate them from the political sphere in which Muslims are viewed as a threat to US security. These disassociations rely on an assumption that religious affiliation is independent of political association and thus on the mutual exclusion between religious and political spheres, and private and public spheres. Sharif el-Gamal, lead developer of Park51 stated in a July 2010 interview that, "Park51 is not a political organization. We do not have a political agenda." He clearly differentiates between the religious agenda of Park51 and a political agenda, thereby bringing himself into alliance with the assumptions of secularity.

The community's need to organize within the system, to place themselves as Muslims within the populous is a symptom of the biopolitical nature of US society in which the state ingratiates itself as a way to govern certain spaces associated with its subjects, which has slowly transformed into governance over the population including their associated space. The establishment of modern secular society has necessitated new forms of population management. The governance of the city and the state is predicated upon the development of the current spatial notions of society, everything from road systems to water management. The state controls the quality of life for individual citizens by guaranteeing access to systems of support, all of which rely on state control over geographic space. Foucault writes that with the development of modern society, the government has to redefine itself as well: "government not only has to deal with a

territory, with a domain, and with its subjects, but … it also has to deal with a complex and interdependent reality that has its own laws and mechanisms of reaction, its regulations as well as its possibilities of disturbance" ("Space, Knowledge, and Power," 352). Governance by a state subsumes more than just the governance of the territory, inserting itself into the governance of society and thus citizens in complex ways. The state no longer regulates only people and place; the state also regulates the interaction of people. However the management of populations requires management of their environment, specifically the relation of the population, as a group of individuals, and their relation to space.

According to Foucault, the biopolitical is contingent upon the treatment of the ""population" as a mass of living and coexisting beings who present particular biological and pathological traits and who thus come under specific knowledge and technologies" ("Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth," 71). This power of life develops in discussion of norms as acceptable forms of behavior for members of the population. How did this shift towards the biopolitical become central to mechanisms of governance? In regulating US citizens as a population, in what way is the population defined? The question is not just one of who is being included and excluded, but a question of what the mechanisms of regulation are and their justifications. Foucault states that biopolitics is as much a function of population as of its management; "the genesis of a political knowledge that was to place at the center of its concerns the notion of population and the mechanisms capable of ensuring its regulation" (*The History of Sexuality*, 67). Foucault states that race is the element which allowed biopower to exercise its sovereign side. The racial divisions between groups were a main divider between sovereigns and their subjects especially in the early years of the United States. In the US, the line is between white and non-white. Muslims have been associated with the non-white segment of society long before

the events of 9/11. The conflation of race and religious identity is key to understanding the tensions surrounding the Muslim community as this conflation works on both sides of the racial divide. White is associated with a Judeo-Christian identity, and non-white includes all other religions. The need to produce a religio-racial division within the body-politic of the US citizen speaks to the way in which Christian identity, that is to say religion, has been subsumed within biopolitical logic. Foucault elaborates in his 1976 lectures that the vehicle that allows the politics of death (thanatopolitics) to coincide with biopolitics is racism; or that which "allows biopower to mark caesuras in the biological continuum of the human species, thus reintroducing a principle of war into the system of "making live"" (*Society must Be Defended*, 277). Foucault would argue the construction of race is a function of biopower creating a need to produce a religious divide that is conflated and intertwined with race (Arabs) in irretrievable ways. Though he was not discussing this specific racial difference, the question of race cannot be ignored when discussing Muslims in the US. When determining what constitutes a US citizen: race must be included as part of the identity of the US political and individual body.

The US-American body itself is becoming sacred with a renewed significance of the need to demarcate the other in the construction of the US American self. The individual body that belongs to the US has become the locus of the definition of US citizenship as it is upon the individual body, though not solely, that the law operates. Presenting the individual as the important factor in governance of the state places a new emphasis of the importance of the body of the individual. Biopower as power over life means effectively a regulative power exercised over the living body. The body, as the body of the individual, has become a primary location for state power. The individual body then merges with territory, or space, as a place for power to take hold. In the US, the establishment of power over space and the individual body has been

complicated by a Christian notion of the sacrality of the human body. The sacrality of space as a point where physical bodies can seek heavenly bodies has shifted from one specific space to the individual Christian body as a locus of sacrality. If the body is understood as sacred, what then constitutes the most perfect form of that body? In the US, sacrality is embodied, at least in part, through race with a historical affiliation between "white" and a more perfect human body.[9] Race, as a modifier of the body, exemplifies a system of "making live" in a very visual way. Race is a symptom of the biopolitical because it is a clear divider as much as a visual reminder of otherness. Defining oneself racially, as white, black, Hispanic, middle-Eastern, maintains the US population as a population, as a group of "Americans" modified by their racial identity in addition to and as part of their religious identity.

The biopolitical notion to "make live and let die" espouses the value of individual life only insofar as it is life as a citizen, or an element of the population, creating a simultaneous individualization and totalization within that population. The importance of the individual, the "self," has become a significant trope in the press and US society. How have individual Muslims, then, become identified only with their religious tradition and not as individual lives? There is a disconnect between the prevailing discourse of individuality and the disregard for the individual identity of Muslims. The valuation of individual life is determining the path of this discourse, which asks if the life of a Muslim in the US is just as valuable as a Christian one. Foucault stipulates that the historical importance of the concepts of individualism and the self lies in the pre-biopolitical power structures of what he calls "pastoral power." In his discussion of "pastoral power," Foucault emblematizes it with the shepherd in which the shepherd has dominion over his flock. The shepherd's power is not in the acquisition of territory, rather the

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[9] The discussion of race and sacrality is much more complex and needs to be further studied. One must question how race has affected and been affected by notions of the sacred throughout the world.

shepherd's power "is exercised not so much over a fixed territory as over a multitude in movement toward a goal" ("Security, Territory and Population," 68). The goal towards which the flock is being moved must be questioned. The importance of the notion of pastoral power and the development of the shepherd as leader, for Foucault, is the validation of the importance of each individual sheep. The concept of the importance of the individual led to a distinctly Christian development, in which according to Foucault "the government of souls was constituted in the Christian Church as a central, knowledge-based activity indispensable for the salvation of each and every one" ("Security, Territory and Population," 68). Each sheep had to attain salvation; each sheep had to conform to Christendom. The emergence of Christendom and individual salvation led to "new types of relations between pastor and flock; but also inquiries concerning the right to "govern" children, a family, a domain, a principality" ("Security, Territory and Population," 68). As the salvation of each individual, or sheep, was now of utmost importance, the key to that salvation was to be explored in daily life and was to be implemented to assure that salvation. The "governance of souls" meant that the governance of each soul, beginning at birth and continuing to the highest level of governance including the state level. Foucault's analysis of pastoral power and the governance of the individual soul raises questions regarding the claim to secularity so highly esteemed by the United States government as well as the importance of Christian individuals over non-Christians.

Since the founding of the United States, a shift has occurred whereby secularization has affected the normative discourse of government. This shift towards a secular government claiming a separation between church and state makes no *de jure* acknowledgement of any Christian foundations. Since the US now considers itself a secular nation, it does not want to acknowledge that any religious tradition has roots that continue to underlie social governance.

This is not an argument that can be reduced to a Christian versus Muslim crusade, but in order to understand the complex tensions surrounding Muslim emplacement in the US, one must explore the claims about secularity that are being made in the US. Asad argues, in *Formations of the Secular* that debates about the justification of secular forms of government do not question the definition of secularism itself, especially with respect to the religious. Asad writes, "The secular is neither singular in origin nor stable in its historical identity, although it works through a series of particular oppositions" (25). The secular is not a continuation of the religious nor a break from it, but is contingent upon it. The binary of religious/secular functions as a justification for power relations in which violence is used to assert the superiority of one tradition over the other. By using a biopolitical framework to understand the contemporary United States, the importance of the claim to secularity as well as the valuation of the individual becomes apparent as both these notions contribute to the tensions surrounding Muslim emplacement.

The constitution of a Christian citizen, understood in relation to the idea of the shepherd competes with the constitution of Muslims who may not understand the individual in the same way, perhaps relating more to the Islamic umma than the Christian pastoral. An example of this complexity is visible in debates between New York City Muslims, such as the immigrant/native debates. Black Muslims have been in New York City and the United States for over 200 years but have been seemingly ignored in the larger scheme of the Park51 debates. The internal debates within the Muslim community between immigrant and black Muslims are heated but have gone unnoticed because they complicate the issue of Muslim citizenship. Muslims in the US are not necessarily a people without a land, but their claim to US space is being questioned because they are a group with an allegiance outside of the norm, outside of the idealized US, an allegiance that is assumed to be towards Mecca and the umma.

Conclusion

In 1978, Koolhaas wrote as if he could predict the future complications that would arise in Manhattan:

> Manhattan is a theater of progress. Its protagonists are the exterminating principles which, with constantly augmenting force, would never cease to act. Its plot is: barbarism giving way to refinement. ... It can only be the cyclic restatement of a single theme: creation and destruction irrevocably interlocked, endlessly re-enacted. The only suspense in the spectacle comes from the constantly escalating intensity of the performance. (*Delirious New York*, 11)

9/11 dramatically escalated the intensity of the discussion, creating a visceral enemy for the US in identifying the terrorists as specifically Islamic.

"Ground Zero" is a controversial space because of its different claimants, and at stake in Manhattan is the issue of emplacement[10] and ownership. It is through a process of ownership of space that groups define themselves. The physical space of the mosque is understood by the media and many US citizens as a way for Muslims to place themselves in a space outside of the modern nation state, the US, and within a tradition originating in Mecca. Many Muslims, themselves a diverse community living in an incredibly diverse space like Manhattan, see the need to insert themselves into the social space in order to disassociate themselves from the events of 9/11 and present themselves as "good" Muslims. This emplacement of Muslims into the physical space of Manhattan speaks to a need to show the population of the US that it is possible to claim space for Muslims by Muslims.

Many different groups, including Muslims, count members among the dead from the events of 9/11; as Linenthal notes, the issue of ownership of the land surrounding those events

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[10] I use the term emplacement as a word implying not only physical placement of a group but a word that makes reference to structures of power that are involved in that placement. Emplacement refers to this system of placement which functions in bi-directionally and affects more than one group. I use emplacement because it infers an active participation in the process of placement that can refer to the actions of all groups mentioned.

becomes one of, "what space was appropriately "owned" by what group, who was at home in certain space, and who was a visitor in another person's memorial place" (*American Sacred Space*, 238). The mosque is depicted as a space that allows the community to situate themselves in a space "outside" of the modern nation state, the US, and within a tradition originating in Mecca.

Rem Koolhaas, looking at Manhattan post 9/11 writes, "New York will be marked by a massive representation of hurt that projects only the overbearing self-pity of the powerful. Instead of the confident beginning of the next chapter, it captures the stumped fundamentalism of the superpower" ("Delirious No More," 1). The creation of a large memorial at ground zero, for Koolhaas, is regressive because of what it memorializes. It manages to capture the city of Manhattan at both its worst and its best. The competing spaces of the massive memorial building planned and the smaller mosque in its close proximity will battle it out for decades to come until the US public accepts and defends Islam as an American religion too and allows Muslims to practice as Muslims within the US.

Chapter 2

Defining "True" Islam

Defining Islam and "Authentic" Muslims

In a December 2009 *New York Times* article, Sharif al-Gamal is quoted as saying "What happened that day was not Islam." One must ask then, how are he and the rhetoric surrounding the events of 9/11 defining Islam? The terrorists were reading the Qur'an, were citing Sunna, so skeptics might ask what part of what happened was not Islamic? The question cannot be about the legitimacy of violence itself, as violence cannot be condemned by the state that itself uses violence. Rather, al-Gamal, among others condemns the acts of 9/11 as non-Islamic because they were enacted against the United States by a non-national group. Instead of an act of war by a nation-state, the actions of 9/11 were performed by people attesting to an allegiance with Islam. Terrorism, as a modern act tied to the foundation of the nation state, relies on the lack of allegiance to a recognized nation. Terrorist acts are therefore not an inevitable part or progression of the existence of Islam or any religious tradition. Terrorism is a result of the modern biopolitical situation in which attacks on individual US bodies are viewed as a direct assault on the very body of the nation state, a government of the population of the US. Islam is being defined against what happened on 9/11, illustrating a need to form a corrective to the form of Islam, which has been construed as violent. Foucault writes that "the new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not

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by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus" (*The History of Sexuality*, 89). It is the subjugation to the norms of the population in which legitimate violence can only be state sponsored that is determining what a "true" and therefore "good" Muslim is and their relationship to US citizens and US citizenship.

As head of the state, the US president, Barak Obama, directly affects what constitutes a US citizen, legally and discursively. Obama has been vocal about Park51 and the role of Muslims in the US. He values the life of a Muslim, especially as standing reserve in the military. So long as Muslims fight for the US and not against her, the president sees value in their citizenship. Surrounding the term and the notion of citizenship is a development of the notion of the individual as a productive member of the population, one whose allegiance is to the nation state above all other loyalties. In a daily press briefing on August 10, 2010 President Obama stated, "Part of honoring their [Muslim American service members] service is making sure that they understand that we don't differentiate between them and us. It's just us." However, earlier in the same statement he said,

> We are not at war against Islam. We are at war against terrorist organizations that have distorted Islam or falsely used the banner of Islam to engage in their destructive acts. The overwhelming majority of Muslims around the world are peace-loving, are interested in the same things that you and I are interested in. And so from a national security interest, we want to be clear about who the enemy is here. It's a handful, a tiny minority of people who are engaging in horrific acts, and have killed Muslims more than anybody else.

President Obama insinuates that he, as a Christian sovereign knows what "real" Islam is and therefore who has corrupted it and for what purposes. Obama must differentiate between those Muslims that can be utilized by the state and those that attacked the state so as to maintain the population of the US as inclusive towards Muslims, but only "good" Muslims, who are peace-

loving, and non-destructive. He specifically states, "The majority of Muslims … are interested in the same things that you and I are interested in." This sentence structure implies a distance between the president and his audience, on the one hand, and Muslims, on the other. Though meant to address Muslims as well, the press briefing illustrates a divide between the body politic of the US and Muslims.

The modern US Muslim is a new object around which a new constellation of power relations emerge with the media exposing the assumptions of those relations of power as well as contributing to them. For Foucault there are three apexes to the triangle of governmentality; sovereignty, discipline and security. These three apexes rotate as to which is more visible, but all are needed to reinforce societal norms, which become appropriated through the subjectivization of the modern subject. Muslims in the US are appropriating the good/bad binary presented in the media for an understanding of own religion. Representative Rick Lazio from New York has publicly stated, "There are good Muslims in America. This Imam Rauf is not one of them because of his opinions on Hamas as well as the role of the US foreign policy in the 9/11 attacks" (factcheck.org). He emphasizes the existence of "good" Muslims as those not associated with political issues and therefore the existence of "bad" and politically motivated Muslims. Good Muslims cannot speak out against the US. In an attempt to reassert their own place as good Muslims and therefore welcome in the US, Muslims are appropriating the discourse of "good/bad" Muslim instead of questioning how these notions of good and bad have developed and who determines them.

One function of the turn towards a biopolitical understanding of governance is to dissolve the definition of people simply as human. In becoming something else, "bad" Muslims or "good" citizens, their humanity is expunged in favor of something to be disciplined, able to be punished,

something less than human. Identifying as Muslim becomes the prime modifier of a Muslim person in the US. Muslim subjectivity has overtaken the entirety of these subjects and produced a homogenizing effect on their constitution as they are identified as Muslims over any other signifier including individual or citizen. Identified as a Muslim or an US-American, the necessity of belonging has become part of being an individual. To be an individual is to identify with certain groups. In the US specifically, the individual citizen is no longer tied to sovereignty but rather to national security; the security of the individual is now promised through the security of the group. In *Security, Territory, and Population,* Foucault says,

> The law prohibits and discipline prescribes, and the essential function of security, without prohibiting or prescribing, but possibly making use of some instruments of prescription and prohibition, is to respond to a reality in such a way that this response cancels out the reality to which it responds – nullifies it, or limits, checks, or regulates it. (47)

The implementation of security, namely national security, facilitates a discussion of the freedoms being defended in the defense of the nation while limiting those so-called freedoms. Foucault's work demonstrates a historical shift in the modality of power: from sovereignty to biopower, or the shift from "to make die and let live" to "make live and let die." According to Foucault, there is no escape from structures of power, no final liberation or complete freedom, just a "self" defined through processes and structures of power at work on the self's construction. The state operates in such a way as to enact laws that enable the "individualization" of current society, in order for the individual to then be subsumed within the state and reify state power.

With increasing interference by the state into everyday life, from population management to urban development to the practice of religion, the "authentic" adherent is being determined in large part through religious qualifications. The Park51 debate has ignited nationwide dialogue not only about what it means to be a "real" Muslim, what it means to be a

Muslim in the US and how the larger population understands the place of Islam in the US public sphere, but also about how to define "true" Islam. This discourse is actively shaping the Muslim community as well as who constitutes a US citizen and thus what type of Muslim subject is able to be both a Muslim and a US citizen. As the debate defines a particular group of Muslims as "real" Muslims who practice "authentic" Islam, I ask, who is being excluded from the group of "real" Muslims and how does this division affect what it means to be a US Muslim? The debate is determined by a specific understanding of what it means to be a US citizen and an "authentic" Muslim.

If we examine the two main forms of determining what constitutes the authentic, one defined in reference to origins and one defined in reference to an internal, emotive influence, one can see the parallels within the Park51 discourse. Both forms are being utilized by those in the public sphere to define who is a Muslim; however, these forms are competing with each other to declare an authentic form of Islam. The origin-ary form of authentic Islam uses its foundations, the Qur'an and Muhammad, to define "real Muslims." On the emotive side are the peaceful, emotional Sufis who are attempting to portray themselves as the good "authentic" Muslims without direct reference to these origins. These competing categories of "authentic" Muslims belie the competing notions of the authentic present in US society. The Park51 debate is the perfectly packaged controversy in which the compatibility of Islamic views with perceptions of what it means to be US American is brought under the microscope through a comparison of Islamic values to US American values of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The discourse around Park51 revolves around what it means to be a "true" Muslim as much as it revolves around what it means to be a "true" US American.

In an article published in *Time* magazine, foreign affairs correspondent Romesh Ratesnar writes, "America's post 9/11 obsession with terrorism, the belief that we are locked in an epic ideological struggle with radical Islam, has stretched our resources to the limit and distracted us from higher order priorities. National myopia poses a bigger challenge to the US's long-term stability than terrorism ever will" (3). The outright fear and hatred created in the Park51 debate towards "bad" Muslims and the discrepancy about what makes good and bad Muslims, blinds the US media to other societal problems and speaks to the problem of identity within and from outside the US. Who belongs to the nation, and therefore is defendable and valuable as a citizen? When an entire group, millions of people, can be talked about in such a way as to discredit their citizenship, the fundamental ideals on which the US has been founded are questioned, and perhaps they should be. As Giorgio Agamben cautions in *Homo Sacer,*

> It would be more honest and, above all, more useful to investigate carefully the juridical procedures and deployments of power by which human beings could be so completely deprived of their rights and prerogatives that no act committed against them could appear any longer as a crime. (171)

Discrediting the humanity of an entire group of people leads down a dangerous road of prejudice and disenfranchisement with no end in sight. In order to stem the tide of their own subjugation, Muslims in the US have accepted the terminology and descriptors of some Muslims as "bad" and violent in order to imbue themselves with the opposite signifiers and thus affiliate themselves with the US population as "American Muslims."

Imam Rauf has reified the debate around the good/bad Muslim binary using the language of extremism. For Rauf, bad Muslims are extreme and radical as well as violent. In a letter he has written on the Park51 website, he states,

> We are not the extremists. We are the vast majority of Muslims who stand up
> against extremism and provide a voice in response to the radical rhetoric. Our
> mission is to interweave America's Muslim population into mainstream society.
> We are a Muslim American force for promoting the universal values of justice
> and peaceful coexistence in which all good people believe. American Muslims
> want to be both good Americans and good Muslims. (Rauf, Park51.org)

In using both signifiers, "Muslim-American" and "American-Muslim," Rauf illustrates that one

identifier must inevitably be superior to the other; one must choose which to identify with first.

Rauf, instead of choosing the most powerful modifier, is refusing the categorization itself. Even

reducing it down to which signifier comes first, Muslim or American demonstrates a relationship

of power between the individual's association with the nation state and their religious affiliation.

In order to form a cohesive, stable body of US subjects, Muslims are being defined as those

within and outside of the body, the separate section which must be left apart to form a more

unified body of Christian/Jewish Americans. Muslims are instrumental in showcasing the

freedom of religion in the US, as any individual Muslim can be persecuted as Muslim and Islam

in general is "tolerated[11]" within the US. The definition of Muslims as a group within and

without the greater population is another example of the de-individualization and therefore de-

humanizing aspect of this discourse.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault writes,

> The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so
> deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that
> constrains us, on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret
> nature "demands" only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a
> constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weights it down and it can
> finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation. (60)

The need for self-expression is a manifestation of this deeply engrained notion within society to

"authenticate" one's "self," a self that is deeply connected to one's religious affiliation. It is not

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[11] Toleration is a problematic term which reinforces a direct hierarchy of power where one religion, one people or
one state tolerates, or allows, another to live in its territory.

necessarily that Muslims are being told to confess their inner Muslim-ness; rather the "truth" to being Muslim is being questioned. As religion has been relegated to the sphere of private choice, Muslims are more easily criticized and assailed as to their choice to practice a religion that is portrayed as not always compatible with American values. Foucault asserts that the irony lies in the belief that "our "liberation" is in the balance" (*The History of Sexuality*, 159), that by escaping identification of religious adherence or violence, the individual is liberated from an oppressive institution, such as "bad" Islam. Since the individual can be liberated from this bad Islam, into a kinder, gentler version of it, he or she can then be assimilated into the US population where freedom is not questioned.

It is simplistic to split the debate surrounding the building of Park 51 into those for and against, those who vilify all Muslims and those who speak of Islam as a religion of peace. Reducing all Muslims to a simple good/bad binary ignores the complexity of the situation and allows for the oversimplification of all Muslims into an us/them discourse. The extremes on both ends are those who see Islam as a violent hateful religion that has no place in the US and those who react by only speaking of Islam as loving and peaceful, negating all violent attacks as those by extremists. The discourse in the US media envelops how to define a citizen of the US, how to define a religious adherent and how one of the founding principles of the US, the freedom of religion should be applied, if at all.

Muslims are reacting to the discourse about themselves in fairly subtle ways. There is little public outcry from the Muslim community; the majority of published articles and press statements are not written by Muslims. The lack of Muslim response is evidence of the power of the discourse surrounding Muslims in the US. To speak out and assert their place in the US public sphere entails a certain amount of public backlash against Muslims, enough so as to

dissuade any sizeable Muslim response. It also speaks to the internal differences within the Muslim community. Due to differences between Muslims, the problem of presenting one unified Muslim front is much harder from inside than from outside.

Emotion and Sensitivity

In December 2009, an article appeared in the *New York Times* entitled "Muslim Prayers and Renewal Near Ground Zero," one of the first mainstream articles about the mosque being built near the "most hallowed piece of land" in New York City. Beginning with an emotional link to September 11th and the building as it was before the attack, the authors invoke the emotion tied to 9/11 in juxtaposition to the Muslims who pray inside while "facing Mecca in prayer and listening to their imam read in Arabic from the Koran." In the first few sentences of the piece, the authors, Ralph Blumenthal and Sharaf Mowjood, are situating Muslims outside of an US identity, explaining their actions in terms of a far-off land, a different language, and a book other than the Bible. They then begin to quote Imam Rauf's statement that building the mosque is a way to "push back against the extremists." Not only is Rauf distinguishing himself from "bad Muslims" but the rhetoric is being picked up by the mainstream media. The authors proceed into the legal argument and the support of New York politicians such as Mayor Michael Bloomberg. The article turns into an exposé of Rauf more than an evaluation of the building of a mosque. As later articles show, the building of the mosque quickly turns from a debate about the building into a debate about people: the developers, the Imam and those who will pray there. The authors write of the Imam who is "preaching tolerance and interfaith understanding" and who abides by the creed "live and let live." However "let live" does not seem to be a universal value; it only applies to those who abide by the same creed. One of the only things that US Americans

are allowed to be intolerant of publicly is intolerance; therefore painting Muslims as intolerant and violent allows for rhetoric of discrimination towards Muslims.

The concept "live and let live" is espoused by many in defense of building the mosque since those who will attend are good Muslims who will do no harm to Americans. In a *New York Times* op-ed column entitled "Message to Muslims: I'm Sorry," Nicholas Kristof, writes, "I apologize to Muslims for another reason. This isn't about them, but about us. I want to defend Muslims from intolerance, but I also want to defend America against extremists engineering a spasm of religious hatred." Kristof dives into the exact same binary of us/them, Americans/Muslims, separating them from the US populous. The question of how to define a "true" version of Islam becomes a debate about not just what makes a "good" and "true" Muslim, but what makes a "good" and "true" American and in this discourse, for or against, that means Christian or Jewish.

As numerous articles attest, what is under scrutiny is not the legality of the building of Park51, but the claim to the emotion of 9/11. The language of affect, emotion, and morality has become the primary mechanism of the debate such that, the validity of the claim of Muslims to life and land in the US, revolves around their emotive and moral compass and its complacency with the rest of US societal norms. The Anti-Defamation League, which aims to "stop the defamation of the Jewish people ... to secure justice and fair treatment to all," released a statement written July 28, 2010 stating that they

> categorically reject appeals to bigotry on the basis of religion, and condemn those whose opposition to this proposed Islamic Center is a manifestation of such bigotry …. However, there are understandably strong passions and keen sensitivities surrounding the World Trade Center site …. Therefore, we believe the City of New York would be better served if an alternative location could be found …. Because the center will cause some victims more pain–unnecessarily-and that is not right.

This is one of many examples in which the question of what is right is utilized and informed by a version of rightness that dictates a "sensitivity" to Christian and Jewish families whose family members were killed during 9/11 and specifically not to any of the Muslim families. There is a common appeal to the decency of the American people not to allow the building of the mosque, implying that anyone who promotes the mosque is not a decent American, Muslim or not. This also signals whose pain is worth attending to, that of the families of Judeo-Christian victims in particular.

Defining "True" Islam

Imam Rauf was chosen to be the head of the Park51 project and the public face of the investment group SOHO properties developing the site. He was also the head of the American Sufi Muslim Society and ran the Masjid al-Farah, a Sufi mosque in New York City for over a decade. Of note is Imam Rauf's position as a Sufi, defined by most as a mystical order of Islam focused on internal truth. The media, by putting Imam Rauf forward as a representative of "true" Islam does more than legitimize Sufism as a version of mainstream Islam; it relegates Sunni Islam, 70% of all Muslims in the world, to the perimeter. The data from a Pew Poll[12] conducted in December of 2009 found that 47% of all Muslims in the US think of themselves as Muslims first, 28% as American first, and 18% as both. Interestingly, 42% of Americans identify as Christian before American; however, that is not a concern for leaders of the US. The embrace of Sufism as a form of mainstream Islam represents some of the effects of a good/bad Muslim discourse. However, if Sufis are being promoted by Muslims themselves as promoters of "true" Islam, where does that leave the majority Sunni Muslims, who do not fall into that category?

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[12] The use of statistics as a measurement of societal make up is a pivotal point in Foucault's analysis of biopower. Reducing individuals to statistics allows for greater control since statistics can be used as justification for modifications to social, political, and physical structures.

Newt Gingrich, on his website Newt Direct, turns Imam Rauf from the Sufi espoused by earlier articles into a radical Islamist, writing that his "true intentions" are revealed by his naming the mosque, the Cordoba House. Where "a conquering Muslim army replaced a church with a mosque … The Ground Zero mosque is all about conquest and thus an assertion of Islamist triumphalism which we should not tolerate" (Gingrich). The symbolism here is obvious; building the mosque replaces Christian US identity. In his ending he reasserts the good/bad binary: "Well-meaning Muslims, with common human sensitivity to victims' families, realize they have plenty of other places to gather and worship. But for radical Islamists, the mosque would become an icon of triumph, encouraging them in their challenge to our civilization" (Gingrich). Non-well-meaning Muslims support the building of Park 51 and are therefore radical, triumphant, and non-civilized, or at least pose the threat of becoming such. It is not just rhetoric against Rauf that perpetuates Sufism as the "true" version of Islam. On January 27, 2011 Omid Safi in the University of Chicago Divinity School journal, *Sightings*, published an article entitled "Good Sufi, Bad Muslims." He quotes New York Governor David Paterson: "This group who has put this mosque together, they are knows as the Sufi Muslims. This is not like the Shiites …. They're almost like a hybrid, almost westernized. They are not really what I would classify in the sort of mainland Muslim practice." Sufis are transposed into the only form of "good" Muslim, because they are not "mainland." Allowing that this was a public comment and not a well rehearsed speech, we can nonetheless notice that Paterson's tone is one of condemnation of a form of mainstream Islam that is not western and is thereby understood as villainous. Safi interrogates the role of Sufis as apolitical, writing, "Sufis have been fully engaged in both challenging political powers and alternately legitimizing political power throughout their history …. Sufis have not remained aloof from politics" (2). Safi concludes that we must create a third

category of Muslim, the much loved space of religious studies, the in-between or moderate Muslim who remains in the background condemning terrorism. Without defining a moderate Muslim as such, Safi suggests moderate Muslims be painted as supportive of US global policies, carefully assimilated into the US political sphere.

The media has put forth Imam Rauf as a representative of "true" Islam, thereby legitimizing Sufism as a version of mainstream Islam and relegating Sunni Islam to the perimeter. A question of how the US public is meant to discern what "true Islam" is arises, but the larger question is why must we define a "true" Islam? The Park51 debate has solidified a need to determine good and bad Muslims, true Islam and a hijacked version of it. No longer are they good and bad people or citizens and criminals; rather they are either good Muslims or bad Muslims, and we must distinguish between the two in order to protect ourselves. The issue becomes one of national security. In a biopolitical world, the subject as citizen has morphed into the subject beyond a citizen, a definition of the subject as a religious adherent above any other designator. No gray areas are allowed, and in order not to be perceived as a threat, Muslims in the US must denounce any and all parts of Islam that may conflict with US identity. Religious behavior is directly tied to political behavior, not that it was ever completely separate in a newly heightened way. The perception that religious behavior affects political dispositions is enough to motivate these discourses on Muslims in the US. Whatever authentic Islam is in the US, it cannot have a political agenda. The search for an "authentic" Islam is manifest in the necessity to find an orthodox form of Islam, a dominant form that enables judgments of what is and is not Islam.

Authenticity and Islam

In "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," Asad writes of orthodoxy within Islam as "not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship – a relationship of power. Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust correct practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine or replace incorrect ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy" (15). In this way, orthodoxy is not a universal definition of Islam but allows for multiple versions of the Islamic tradition. Searching for the "truth" behind Islam is not a productive way to analyze the Park51 debate or the people involved; we must instead question the very parameters of the debate. Asad cautions against looking for widespread homogeneity within the tradition, arguing that, "homogeneity is a function not of tradition, but of the development and control of communication techniques that are part of modern industrial societies" (16). The search for and definition of authentic Islam predominate because of Western notions of the subject and a powerful debate about the nature of national security. Arguments about the authoritative impact of Islamic institutions on Islam are not unique; they pervade the discourse set forth in the public sphere. Asad cautions against the creation of duality within Islam, against an emphasis on a higher or lower tradition, against good and bad. The defining of popular Islam, of contemporary Sufism as the more favored version of Islam due to its peacefulness, creates a higher/lower division within Islam that marginalizes the majority of Muslims not identified as Sufis.

In an article entitled "Formations of Orthodoxy: Authority, Power, and Networks in Muslim Societies," Richard Martin and Abbas Barzegar write,

> Contemporary Islam appears to be facing unprecedented challenges to its orthodox institutions of authority. These include the dissolution of "place" and traditional boundaries as globalization increasingly affects Muslim communities and networking abilities around the globe; the challenges to traditional modes of authority by nontraditional voices using media such as the internet and satellite

television; and the fallout from the self-fulfilling prophecies of a clash of civilizations between Islam and its historic "other." (179)

They take these things as formation of institutional authority within the tradition of Islam that claims to have no central authoritative institution. They write, "traditional Muslim institutions adapt and appropriate these changes in an effort to secure and expand their conventional spheres of influence" (183). Yet unlike Christianity, Islam does not have pervasive institutions to decide orthodoxy. One must ask if orthodoxy can be described as normative authority, if at all. This marginalization is compared to many other instances of gross prejudice such as what the Jews and the Japanese faced during World War II.[13]

As articles recounting the response to the building of Park51 from Jews attest, for the Jewish American minority, the tension is between two strong commitments. As Paul Vitello writes in the *New York Times* in September of 2010, "This debate touches on the two strongest commitments that American Jews have … one is to protect democracy and the rights of minorities, which makes Jews feels safer. The other is to protect Israel." He, as a minority himself, is commenting on the competing interests of domestic security compared to the larger issue of national security and foreign relations. Jews feel comfortable enough domestically that the question of foreign relations looms larger than domestic relations. The support (or lack thereof) by some in the Jewish community illustrates the importance of the Park51 debate in the international sphere, how the portrayal and treatment of Muslims in the US directly affects our international policy and therefore the entire world.

Mayor Bloomberg states that the mosque was as "important a test of separation of church and state as any we may see in our lifetime, and it is critically important that we get it right"

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[13] Some of the Jewish organizations do not feel comfortable with the comparison of the current prejudice towards Muslims to the prejudice experienced by Jews during World War II. See earlier discussion on the Anti-Defamation League.

(quoted in Lizebeth, 1). He emphasizes the critical nature of the controversy in part for his own political gain, surely, but the greater underlying theme is one of emplacement. Who is welcome in America's memorial place? Are Muslims able to be American and Muslim? The opposition attempts to separate the mosque debate from the greater religious controversy to no avail, as mosques around the country are being questioned, vandalized, and picketed for being places of Muslim prayer.[14]

A press statement released on behalf of New York Neighbors for American Values, a group consisting of the American Civil Liberties Union, many religious organizations, women's groups, and political groups, among others, states, "Our Constitution's founding freedoms extend to every person and every house of worship, regardless of creed or color. America's founding values must be welcome on every street and in every town square across the nation." In the same vein, the ACLU released a statement in August of 2010 that claims, "When we violate one group's freedom, everyone's liberty is at stake." Also in August 2010, a *New York Times* editorial reasserted the basic tenet of democracy to be religious tolerance. There is continued citation of religious tolerance and pluralism as the cornerstones of America and yet somehow rhetoric of religious intolerance survives and permeates the nation. It does so because the discourse revolves not around the toleration of all Muslims but around what defines an "authentic" Muslim, since we only have to tolerate those Muslims defined as authentic and thus "good."

In the same month, Factcheck.org released a nine-page question and answer with regard to the "Ground Zero Mosque," including a video demonstration of the walk between the World Trade Center site and Park51. The website addresses allegations of Imam Rauf's being a radical,

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[14] See for example Murfreesboro, TN where protests were aimed at a mosque being built in the suburbs.
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/08/us/08mosque.html?pagewanted=all

stating that there is no such evidence, and also addresses the history of two other mosques in the area that are no longer big enough for practitioners. The site describes Rauf as "an adherent of Sufism, a mystical form of Islam that has itself been targeted by extremists …. Sufis could be potential partners against radical Islamism because of their victimization by (extremist sects) Salafis and Wahhabis, traditionalists and Sufis are natural allies of the West to the extent that common ground can be found with them." This implies that common ground cannot be found with anyone but Sufis and traditionalists. What is a traditionalist if different from a fundamentalist?

Conclusion

On the website Newt Direct, presidential candidate Newt Gingrich addresses the debate as a mischaracterization of the war on terror. Instead of a war on terror, he calls for identifying only "radical Islamists as the target of our campaign." Gingrich's take on the debate inspires an interesting spin, but one that points to the utility of the biopolitical machine present in the war on terror. If the US were to only target Radical Islamists, the power exerted over the entire population of the US with regard to who is a terrorist would be dramatically reduced as well as their foreign policy agenda. If we take this discourse to be violent, or an attempt to incite a form of it, violence on a non-US-American reasserts the ideal US American. Thus Muslims have become that beacon upon which it is acceptable to be violent as they are spoken about as un-American.

Gingrich writes, "Radical Islamism is more than simply a religious belief. It is a comprehensive political, economic and religious movement that seeks to impose Sharia – Islamic law- upon all aspects of global society." Without attempting to debate the factual problems of this sentence, what it promotes is the political agenda of "bad Muslims," those that want to affect

US politics in any way are radical and thereby bad. He continues, "Radical Islamists see politics and religion as inseparable in a way it is difficult for Americans to understand" (Gingrich). Besides the reductionism, many statements like these are perpetuated in online communities and anti-Shari'a, anti-mosque rallies all over the US. Americans, according to Gingrich, have clearly separated religion and politics in an already perfected way, and (bad) Muslims are trying to re-impose religion, namely Islam, into the American political sphere. He ignores the history of his own education and his own Western Christian presumptions about the making of the world. He asserts the supremacy of American law and values as defined against Islamic law. Writing about the mosque, Gingrich calls Park51 the "Ground Zero mosque." The location of the mosque, two blocks from the WTC site, is reduced to adjacent or next to in order to link it to the emotion of 9/11 and claim the space for Americans (Christians) and therefore not Muslim.

Chapter 3

Muslim Emplacement in the US

Orientation and Toleration

In his book, *Crossing and Dwelling*, Thomas Tweed writes of religion as a flow, "Whatever else religions do, they move across time and space. They are not static. And they have effects. They leave traces… And religious flows move across varied "glocalities," simultaneously local and global spaces" (64). The mosque is more than just a place to worship: it is an orientation of the Muslim devotee in the world, an assertion of their place in the context of American society. Within Islam, prayer within the mosque is necessary as a traditional way of life, a connection to Mecca and the greater Islamic community, and as a stabilizing force creating a communal identity. The need of a mosque within the Muslim community located in Manhattan is essential for the stability and growth of that community. This, of course, is not unique to Islam, as Tweed writes; it is a symptom of all religious traditions. He writes,

> Religions…situate the devout in the body, the home, the homeland and the cosmos. Religions position men and women in natural terrain and social space…Religions, in other words, involve homemaking. They construct a home – and a homeland. They delineate domestic and public space and construct collective identity. Religions distinguish us and them – and prescribe where and how both should live. (75)

Muslims are not only attempting to place themselves within US society, but as an embodied tradition, they must orient themselves in the world, in space, in relation to Mecca. The mosque is

a key component of a Muslim's orientation towards Mecca and therefore to Islam within their daily lives. As Tweed writes, "Spatial and temporal orientation is not only individual as well as collective, … it involves organic as well as cultural processes, … it is always embodied beings who do the orienting" (91). According to Tweed, Muslims must begin the homemaking process not only to practice Islam, but to place their community within a social time and space. To exist as part of US society, Muslims must establish their mosques: they must insert themselves into the social spaces of the US. This is construed as the creation of a form of supra-nationalism that is not an allegiance to a specific nation but rather the community of Muslims. In addition to the understanding of orientation that Tweed offers, one must unpack the structures of power related to the insertion of Muslim spaces into the US social and political spheres. The understanding of Muslim subjectivity as a form of supra-nationalism and a questioning of patriotism because of physical orientation reifies the division between Muslims and US citizens.

Within Islam, the idea of community plays a significant role: all Muslims are connected through an allegiance to the Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet, and the performance of prayer directed at Mecca. All Muslims pray in the direction of Mecca. Through the idea of an Islamic umma, or universal Muslim community, Muslims are tied to the "homeland[15]" of Arabia because of its importance as the birthplace of the prophet Muhammad and Islam itself. This tie is not necessarily a nationalistic tie, but for many US citizens the tie to Arabia draws into question a Muslim's allegiance to the US. Tweed continues, "So nationalism – and diasporic nationalism – creates an imagined community that has affective bonds with the natal land, but it also extends that bond beyond the borders of the native place… (Religious homemaking) maps social space.

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[15] Homeland is not an appropriate word as many Muslims have no claim to the Arabian Peninsula. The national identities of Muslims varies greatly, but a tie to Mecca as the birthplace of Islam is a main tenant of Islam, especially in the requirement for all able Muslims to travel to Mecca at least once on a pilgrimage, the Hajj. Moreover, the umma is a supra-national religious affiliation between Muslims, a tie to an idealized past in which the Prophet Muhammad exemplified the ideal community.

It draws boundaries around us and them; it constructs collective identity and, concomitantly, imagines degrees of social distance" (111). Muslims are creating their own boundaries by way of the mosque, their own framing of the us/them argument, to retain and re-envision their communal identity as Muslims and US citizens. Imam Rauf has stated, "We have to build on our common platform. We need to build -- we need to make a space which creates and emphasizes a culture of worship" (Rauf, Park51.org). The need to emphasize the practice of Islam, the applications of it as an embodied tradition more than a private faith, require physical space and physical buildings to allow for that practice and for the communal affiliation to the Islamic tradition.

The need for this space, the space to live their lives as Muslims first and in addition to living their lives as US citizens, is one of the complexities of the tensions in the US. As alluded to by Tweed, sometimes one homeland displaces another. Loyalty to a distant land beyond the US, a nation comprised mainly of immigrants who have put their primary allegiance in the US, is threatening. To be loyal to some other land, some other deity is to not be a valid citizen of the US. And to attempt to claim space within the US, one must be a recognizable citizen of the US, or the claim to land will be contested. As space is a limited and limiting commodity to be traded and won, to claim it is to assert ones power within a community to displace the other. It is only by keeping a community mobile, making it unable for them to put down their roots, that US power can influence the Muslim community as it wills. As a community without a place one can more easily criticize and label it positively or negatively. To claim space for one's own group is to claim power within the greater community, to define oneself, without labels from the "other."

The language of emplacement is not all that is being used by the US media, but the language of toleration; one must question the costs of using language of toleration. By tolerating

Muslims, the nation is authorizing their stay here as a subservient group subsumed by the power of the nation state of the US. The mere manner of the discourse as to whether "we" are to let "them" build a mosque in "our" city, dictates the presuppositions of the argument itself. *We* are the US people, therefore Muslims are not, and they need "our" permission to build a home on "our" land. The only way for Muslims to gain power is to insert themselves physically into the environment. As Talal Asad writes in *Formations of the Secular*, on the situation of Muslims in Europe, "for liberals not less than for the extreme right, the narrative of Europe points to the idea of an unchangeable essence, and the argument between them concerns the kind of "toleration" that that essence calls for" (165). This can be inserted into US debates as to what it means to be an "American," and how Islam interferes with that definition. The language of toleration speaks to a superiority of one community to the other, and therefore a notion of a fundamental difference between the two communities. The language of toleration calls for a progressive politics with a teleology put forth by the "superior" of the two in an effort to justify their superiority which is crystallized by the contestation over space.

In his theory of the "other," Jonathan Z. Smith points to a binary of a near other and a far other, a distant other that does not impact our daily life, and a near other in constant visual tension that can be vilified and blamed. It is through interaction with what Smith calls "the near other" that we are confronted with what we do not want to see in ourselves. In our post 9-11 world, our distant other has crashed within our borders, drastically realigning our concept of the "far other." It is not to say there were no Muslim stereotypes or Muslims within the borders of North America, but rather before 9-11 Muslims were generally aligned with the distant other; prejudice against them was not at the forefront of the national media though it undoubtedly occurred. The spheres of influence and boundaries between near and far converged in the city of

Manhattan, creating a fireball of public polemics on the constitution of the enemy attackers and what their religious affiliation had to do with the attack. The religious affiliation of the attackers, as well as their racial identity structured the debate surrounding Muslims in the US with regard to the toleration of Muslims in the US.

Freedom of Religion

One of the main debates in the press surrounds the freedom of religion. However, the issue of freedom or religion is not about universal applicably, rather in order to utilize freedom of practice, a group must distinguish themselves within the larger framework of the US, must define themselves and be defined by the US population and not outside of it. To practice "freely" in the US, a religious group must define itself as a religious group, and conform to the US legal system's definition of religion.[16] Imam Rauf writes on the Park51 website that, "They know that many American values – freedom of religion, human dignity and opportunity for prosperity – are Muslim values too." He inserts himself and Muslims into US public identity and attempts to universalize the notion of freedom of religion; yet the notion of freedom itself must be questioned as a normative relation in society. In *The Birth of Biopolitics* Foucault states,

> Freedom is never anything other than an actual relation between governors and
> governed, a relation in which the measure of the "too little" existing freedom is
> given by the "even more" freedom demanded. … The new governmental reason
> needs freedom therefore, the new art of government consumes freedom. It
> consumes freedom, which means that it must produce it. It must produce it, it
> must organize it. The new art of government therefore appears as the management
> of freedom, … it is clear that at the heart of this liberal practice is an always
> different and mobile problematic relationship between the production of freedom
> and that which in the production of freedom risks limiting and destroying

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[16] No standard definition of religion exists for the United States government. In legal matters the government usually refers to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Article 18 which states, "to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance". Also, the IRS tax code narrows down definitions of religions based on individual cases.

it….Liberalism must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment
of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats, etc.
(63-64)

The idea of freedom and freedoms is put forward pervasively in the defense of Muslims in the

US but as Foucault illustrates; to produce freedom is to put a limit on it.

This discourse questions the boundary of the freedom produced within the US. The

boundary for freedom of religion and freedom of speech revolves around so called intolerance

manifested in violent ways. As another *New York Times* article stated in November 2010, a great

deal of what public figures have said about the proposed Islamic cultural center….has been

aimed at playing off fear and intolerance for political gain." If Muslims are portrayed as

intolerant, hateful people, then "freedom" does not have to apply to them. Foucault continues,

The point of all these investigations…is to show how the coupling of a set of
practices and a regime of truth form an apparatus of knowledge-power that
effectively marks out in reality that which does not exist and legitimately submits
it to the division between true and false. (*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 19-20)

The regimes of truth shown by this debate revolve around the reality created in which being a

Muslim means deciding if you are the correct version or not. Once defined, Muslims must

inscribe that correct Muslim-ness smoothly into being a US citizen, a citizenship that has been

carved out throughout the creation of the US by Christian founders. Those founders, beginning

with George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, did not impose freedom of religion to

incorporate all religions; rather they were working from an understanding of the plurality of

Christian religions after the reformation. The freedom of religion as the first amendment[17] in the

US Bill of Rights already presupposes the definition of religion as a distinctly Christian category

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[17] The first amendment states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting
the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to
assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

in which religion can be understood as belief, thereby separable into the private sphere and separate from public action and interference.

In *Genealogies of Religion,* Talal Asad evaluates the role of belief in common definitions of religion and concludes that, "It is preeminently the Christian church that has occupied itself with identifying, cultivating, and testing belief as a verbalizable inner condition of true religion" (48). Throughout the history of the Church and its role in the formation of Western society, the shift of the relations between knowledge and belief has led to a dichotomy and definition of religion as reducible to belief alone. If religion is a category based on a "particular history of knowledge and power" (54), then how can one define it, let alone guarantee its free exercise? For Asad, one must keep separate "the occurrence of events (utterance, practices, and dispositions) and the authorizing processes that give those events meaning and embody that meaning in concrete institutions" (42). To understand the necessity for finding the essence of any religion, the essentials that qualify it, one must understand the production of religion as a category and the essentials attached to that category, not necessarily to the tradition being studied. Attempting to fit Islam into a secular framework and emphasizing belief rather than practice delineates the discussion surrounding what it means to be a "true" Muslim in the US. By reducing religion to belief, the rhetoric around Islam in the US has been reduced to a good/bad version. Reducing all Muslims to a simple good/bad binary ignores the complexity of their situation as people and allows for the oversimplification of all Muslims into and us/them discourse.

The notion of secularity allows for the creation of a so-called neutral plane in which religion must fit as a version of belief in order to be defined as religion. This directly conflicts with ontological questions surrounding Islam in which to be Muslim is to practice, is to abide by certain legal and traditional structures that define a Muslim subject. The presentation of Sufis as

pious Muslim subjects benefits the secular narrative as their Islamic actions and rituals are more fluidly implemented into the secular sphere since Sufism allows for a much more opaque understanding of Islamic thought and practices.

The idealization of the US as a nation of freedoms is essential to the condition of power relations in which those freedoms are not applicable to everyone and therefore a privilege that must be protected and specifically not universalized. As Giorgio Agamben discusses in the *State of Exception*, when law and life collapse into each other, an act becomes the essence of a person instead of an act by a person, much like religious identity has become the only signifier of Muslims in the US. An act by a Muslim has become an act any Muslim can accomplish and, therefore, all Muslims have become culpable for the actions of some. This has resulted in an intense need to redefine themselves in terms of the good/bad binary. This binary functions as a way to differentiate Muslims as those that should be accepted as part of the US populous from those that should not be included. The debate around Park51 revolves around the freedom of religion because that then avoids a discussion of the governance of the US population as limiting of the individual.

Ownership and Legality

In many of the articles on the Park 51 debate, one of the first topics discussed and quickly dismissed is the question of legality. The majority of articles produced on the subject mention the apparent legality of the building and their constitutional right to build a mosque where they please. On May 6, 2010 a unanimous vote by the New York City community board approved the project. That day the *New York Post* ran a story entitled "Panel approves WTC Mosque" and Pamela Geller launched a campaign against the mega-mosque at Ground Zero also calling it the "9/11 mosque." By May 13 an article was published called "Mosque Madness at Ground Zero"

that categorized the project as inherently wrong. The beginning of the public debate revolved around issues of ownership instead of legality. Instead of a question of legal rights, the building of the mosque became a question of what is morally "right" which was then expanded into who is "right:" the answer being only those "good" Muslims who are not politically motivated and therefore have no effect on national security.

The Park51 debate has solidified a need to determine "good" and "bad" Muslims, "true" Islam and a hijacked version of it from an ideological mission of rightness. Once a "true" form of Islam can be determined, it can be placed within the larger US landscape in order to justify US domestic and international policies. The rhetoric no longer asks if people are "good" or "bad," citizens or criminals, rather they are "good" Muslims or "bad" Muslims and one must distinguish between the two in order to protect national security and American bodies. Foucault writes,

> The function of security is to rely on details that are not valued as good or evil in themselves, that are taken to be necessary, inevitable processes, as natural processes in the broad sense, and it relies on these details, which are what they are, but which are not considered to be pertinent in themselves, in order to obtain something that is considered to be pertinent in itself because situated at the level of the population. (*Security, Territory, and Population,* 45)

The so-called neutrality of security discourse and the "objectivism" of how to discern what "good" and "bad" Islam or "good" and "bad" Muslims are, has become entrenched in the discourse. Instead of questioning the validity of the claim to good and bad and the power relations determinate in their description, the population feeds into perpetuating the binary with ever more remote minutia. Foucault asserts that,

> Discipline concentrates, focuses and encloses. The first action of discipline is in fact to circumscribe a space in which its power and the mechanisms of its power will function fully and without limit…in contrast, you can see that the apparatuses of security…have the constant tendency to expand…security therefore involves organizing, or anyway

allowing the development of ever-wider circuits. (*Security, Territory, and Population,* 45)

Instead of disciplining a single person, the discourse now revolves around national security so as to encompass a much larger group over and through which power is exerted.

When the New York City's landmarks preservation commission voted unanimously not to designate the building now known as Park51, a landmark, that action was understood as a sign of religious tolerance instead of a legal action. The question of the legality of the mosque is how the debate began but is no longer what the debate revolves around. Once the legal framework had been addressed, the debate worked around the legal arguments. The law in this debate is not the decider of right and wrong, emotion is the determinative factor. The beginning of the public debate revolved around issues of ownership; who owned the emotion of 9/11 and who owned the land. The ownership of the emotion relating to September 11 became tied to ownership of the land. As the debate around the building on a mosque quickly turned heated and angry, the rhetoric used by the investors and Imam Rauf shifted the emphasis away from the building of a mosque and towards the building of a community center, a shift from a small Muslim community to a center that could involve the entire surrounding area. Instead of defending their legal right to build a mosque as they saw fit, the Park51 community shifted the discussion towards a meditative discourse with an emphasis on the communal uses of the center with an attached prayer space to be used by everyone. The building of the mosque became a question of what is right and who is right. This question has since become a violent discourse that necessitates opposition to "violent extremists" by US citizens.

Newt Gingrich writes on his website, "I think the Congress has the ability to declare the area a national battlefield memorial because I think we should think of the World Trade Center as a battlefield site; this is a war" (Gingrich). He writes that it is a war against Muslim

"extremists" and the "Irreconcilable Wing of Islam." I argue that this language is tied to the religious language of "sacrality" being used to claim ownership of ground zero for specific groups, especially US Christians. In a letter written in December 2010, Imam Rauf writes,

> We must retake the discourse among religions and cultures from the hands of the extremists around the world who benefit from hatred and violence. The global battle isn't between America and Islam. Instead it is between the 95 percent of people in the world who want peace …. For too long; the 95 percent of people in the world who want peace have sat in the stands watching the extremists battle it out in the area. We must enter the arena ourselves and retake control of this important discussion.

Rauf's method in retaking control of the discourse is to reinforce the divide between good and bad Muslims, with his form of Islam firmly established on the good side.

Conclusion

In *American Sacred Space*, Linenthal and Chidester identify two forms of desecration of the sacred, one of defilement and one of dispossession, both of which have been deployed in the Park51 debates. Sarah Palin, has stated with regard to the planned center that it is "an intolerable and tragic mistake to allow such a project to go forward on such hallowed ground. This is nothing close to "religious intolerance," it's just common decency." Linenthal and Chidester write, "If sacred places could be battlefields, battlefields could also be sacred places" (3). The media has presented arguments that claim that to give Muslims land, a place, is to take it away from someone else; Park51 is promoted as a displacement of something American and Christian, of something sacred. Through delineating "Ground Zero" as a "Sacred American Space," the events of 9/11 become sacred to the idea of America itself. This sacralization of land and idealization of American identity solidify the sides of the so called battle for American identity towards the rest of the world. An identity that conflicts with the presented form of Islam

construed as violent, traditional, backwards and non-Western. Newt Gingrich, again, writes on his website: "I think the Congress has the ability to declare the area a national battlefield memorial because I think we should think of the World Trade Center as a battlefield site; this is a war." Not only is ground zero and its surroundings a battlefield that is sacred, it is a battlefield because of its sacrality. Sacrality is first and foremost a category of emplacement. In current discourses, to label something sacred is to claim it for one group alone, to prioritize one claim of sacredness over another. Much of the opposition to the building of the center uses the language of war; the building of the mosque as a "victory" for Islam guaranteed through letting them construct their own "sacred" space in the US.

The battle metaphor between Muslims and the US is now being utilized not just by Christian politicians, but also between Muslims and speaks to the violence embedded in defining ourselves and shows the permeation of this violent form of rhetoric. Instead of negating the entire structure of the argument, it has become acceptable to attest to the presence of "bad Muslims" instead of "bad" people. In so doing, in the allowance of a discourse of "bad" Muslims, the debate can then transform into a debate about Islam, whether it is inherently good or bad, and thereby what Islam "truly" states. If we consider language as a source of power, how Muslims are labeled demonstrates a pivotal experience of power over and through the "other," especially the religious "other," in the US.

Conclusion

A December 2009 *New York Times* article utilizes input from a Christian academic followed by an assessment of Imam Rauf by the FBI. This article, one of the first about the mosque in Manhattan, sets up two of the main themes of the debate, the (lack of) a political agenda of good/true Muslims and the role of national security construed as the relation between US Muslims and the rest of the world. The one Muslim besides Imam Rauf quoted in the article states, "We like Imam Feisal, the way he presents the philosophy of the true Islam." The article is attempting to show Muslims as fans of Imam Rauf, as a peaceful Sufi representing a "true" Islam that is completely non-violent and completely assimiliable within the US. The authors categorize Imam Rauf as "a Sufi … who follows a path focused more on spiritual wisdom than on strict ritual." The focus on a type of belief as spirituality which can be then re-imagined as similar to Christianity speaks to the agenda of the discourse. The agenda became a type of assimilation of Islamic thought and even practice into the wider public secular sphere in which religion should not affect political life. The use of quotations by the FBI on Imam Rauf demonstrates the role of national security and the disciplinary force behind it as the legitimizer of public fear surrounding "bad" Muslims. The discourse of national security constructs Muslims in such a way to define coexistence with American citizens as not having any other allegiances that may affect their political situation. A new type of personhood has emerged in which defining oneself as Muslim in the US has redefined what it means to be Muslim elsewhere. Defining a US Muslim as non-violent has global implications on how Muslims are defining themselves elsewhere, even though the numbers of Muslims in the US are small, the debates about them have worldwide implications.

The Park51 debate ended soon after the mid-term elections ended, as part of the debate rested on its polarizing nature as an easily identifiable political platform for candidates. Also, it ended when the lack of current funding for the project was realized. The final end, however, must be attributed to the departure of Imam Rauf from the project when he suggested in an interview that he would be open to looking at other potential locations. Soon after this interview, Sharif el-Gamal released a statement about Imam Rauf's departure from the Park51 project to pursue his own work full time. The importance of this debate, especially with regard to the election cannot be understated. The use of the Park51 debate as a key identifier within the election season speaks to the importance of the debate on Muslims in the US, especially in national politics and especially with regard to the emplacement of Muslims within the US political sphere.

As Talal Asad argues in *Genealogies of Religion*, the modern secular nation state asserts its power through the organization of space, because it is defining "what is local and what is not" (9). Asad argues, "Being locatable, local people are those who can be observed, reached and manipulated as and when requires" (9). Through the label of locality, a group of people is designated within a certain area that the nation state can then use to confine people within and exclude them from. That area, once defined, can be possessed, claimed, and valued and subsequently taken away or moved. He illustrates that it is through mobility and mobilization of people that dominant power asserts itself. Just as assigning a group of people to a specific area allows for control of their land and therefore their governance, through not allowing a group claim to space, the government can still control the group in a more obvious system of inclusion and exclusion. Asad poignantly writes,

> If people are physically and morally uprooted, they are easy to move, they are more easily rendered physically and morally superfluous…for it is by means of geographical and psychological movement that modern power inserts itself into preexisting structures. That process is necessary to defining existing identities and motives as superfluous, and to constructing others in their place. (11)

Without a place, a space to tie themselves to, the construction and cultivation of the subject is manageable; the literal and metaphorical roots of subjectivity tied to location are not allowed to take hold. In the modern world, ideas are not geographically or culturally specific or contained; each "area" creates its own value system and government no longer isolated from other nations or ideas. Even if acting defensively, people are still engaging and reacting to alternate political and societal models: it is the complexity between these social models that must be explored.

This is a discussion about contemporary globalization; though the communicative distances between countries may be shrinking due to modern technology, the impact of globalization is not one of unification. According to Asad, globalization is a form of competition amongst states. He states,

> The difficulty with secularism as a doctrine of war and peace in the world is not that it is European (and therefore alien to the non-West) but that it is closely connected with the rise of a system of capitalist nation-states –mutually suspicious and grossly unequal in power and prosperity, each possessing a collective personality that is differently mediated and therefore differently guaranteed and threatened. (*Formations of the Secular*, 7)

Globalization is not an equal distribution of information and a minimization of distances; it is a structure of power between nation states. For Asad, one must question the rationale behind justification for interaction between nation states, not just their consequence. The globalized economic and capitalist interests of the space formerly occupied by the twin towers have had a large impact on the definition of "ground zero" as sacred space. Ground zero has become a global term, clearly identified with the specific area of New York as well as the incidents of

9/11. The importance of the towers as pillars of economic activity and global competition before their destruction, contributed to the increase of discourse on national security. Speeches given by President George W. Bush indicate a new level of contestation between the US and the "terrorists," invoking religion and religious language in an effort to justify the US state's declaration of war. The use of the language of "national security" as justification for war attests to the importance of the nation state within a globalized framework. The use of religious language calls into question the norms associated with US society and the normative function of a Christian understanding of the definition of religion.

The need to define groups of people as believers or non-believers, religious adherents or not, confines those definitions to value judgments about the "goodness" of that group. Rather than attempting to categorize Muslims as good, bad or in-between, perhaps we should rethink the entire discourse surrounding the nature of people based on their religious adherence and return to an analysis of people as people. We, as scholars, need to revisit how we define the human as that determines how we define "otherness" and the authentic. The task for all of us is to recognize difference, not convert or persuade each other into our own image, but rather to delight in the differences.[18]

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[18] John Durham Peters recommends that we delight in difference in his book, *Speaking into the Air: a History of the Idea of Communication.*

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