

HOOKS POLICY PAPERS

# Bending the Arc Toward Justice: Including the Excluded

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# FOREWORD

To protect and expand human and civil rights in these perilous times, we must remain vigilant and form alliances with people and organizations across diverse ideological perspectives. On September 5, 2017, as these policy papers were being prepared for publication, the Trump administration ended the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) program created by an executive order from the Obama administration. This program allowed undocumented immigrant children in the United States who had been brought here illegally by others and who had not been convicted of criminal offenses to attend school, work, or serve in the military, and obtain driver licenses without fear of deportation for renewable two-year periods. The reasoning behind DACA was that undocumented immigrant children should not be punished for the actions of others, but rather should be provided opportunities to become contributing members of society.

It is now in the hands of Congress to decide, in what form, if any, DACA continues. While Congress must tackle the complex issue of developing sound and fair immigration legislation for the nation, the manner in which DACA was terminated by the Trump administration evidenced a strong disregard for the welfare of immigrant children who obeyed the laws, pursued educational opportunities, and who have, and are making, significant contributions to the United States.

DACA is only one of many disturbing events in the nation that show racism, if not intolerance, against immigrants, minorities, Jews and Muslims. This environment has been fueled by the rhetoric and actions of President Trump, white supremacists, and those who know better, but remain silent out of fear, or for personal or political gain.

We cannot remain silent in the face of these challenges. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wisely counseled that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” However, this arc is not going to bend itself. Each of us must work to ensure that justice prevails through our sustained activism and vigilance.

As we navigate these times, we must also reach across the aisle to engage with people of different political, racial, and ideological views to bridge the great divide that is feeding the growing cancer of mistrust, resentment, racism and hate in our nation and world. We must work to eliminate racial inequality, bigotry, anti-Semitism, discrimination against immigrants, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) groups, and to uplift the poor, a group that includes whites, African Americans, and many others. Each of us has a respective sphere of influence that we can activate through educational outreach, community engagement, activism, writing, research and scholarship, or political action.

With this third edition of policy papers, the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change at the University of Memphis (UofM) seeks to expand the net of civil and human equality through overviews of complex issues through scholarly research and policy recommendations.

Michael R. Duke (Department of Anthropology, UofM) looks at the challenges and opportunities of immigrants from diverse countries who have settled in the small city of Springdale, Arkansas. These immigrants work in the poultry industry, in jobs that few whites will take. The poultry industry supports this labor force, a bright spot exists for upward mobility of immigrants, and there is greater integration and cultural exchange between immigrants and whites. Springdale, Arkansas represents, to some extent, a success story of immigration in that community.

Peter A. Kindle (Department of Social Work, University of South Dakota) examines how intergenerational poverty and reliance on welfare by the Oglala Sioux Tribe in South Dakota is rooted in historical discrimination and bad



government policies. Kindle compares the experiences of these Native Americans with the history of racial, social, and economic oppression of African Americans in the South Memphis. His examination of these two communities shows similarities rooted in historical discrimination and failed government approaches.

Idia B. Thurston (Department of Psychology, UofM) examines both the legal, social, and policy advancements made by the LGBT community, the aggressive challenges underway to undermine these gains, and she proposes initiatives to sustain and support this community.

Finally, Nabil A. Bayakly (Department of World Language and Literature, UofM) provides an in-depth overview of Islam, which embraces peace and love of one's neighbor. He explores how Islam has been distorted both by terrorist acts, and by a lack of understanding in many communities about Islam and the Muslims.

The Hooks Institute hopes that the information provided in these policy papers will encourage community members, activists, individuals, businesses and legislators to examine the issues presented here and to engage in action that is intended to uplift their communities. There is much work to be done, in this nation and abroad, on human and civil rights. As we work to root out injustices, we must, in the words of our namesake, the late Benjamin L. Hooks, "face the future unafraid."

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# IMMIGRANTS IN SMALL CITIES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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## INTRODUCTION

The Trump administration has engaged in an unprecedented attack on immigrants. Beginning with a presidential campaign framed by nativist sentiments and a vilification of immigrants from Latin America and the Muslim world, the administration has pursued policies that negatively impact all classes of non-citizen immigrants, from legal residents to refugees to undocumented populations. Despite concerns that the presence of undocumented immigrants leaves the nation vulnerable to terrorism, nearly all jihadist terrorists in the United States since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks have been citizens or legal residents (Bergen, et al, 2017). Furthermore, the current vilification of immigrants on economic and public safety grounds runs counter to a substantial body of research indicating that foreign-born residents contribute substantially to the overall economy, and that they are less likely to commit crimes than the native-born (Peri, 2013). Case studies from large cities indicate that foreign-born residents increase cities' economic productivity, reduce or eliminate population declines resulting from native out-migration, and are more likely than U.S.-born residents to start small businesses (Card, 2009; Hesson, 2015; Enchautegui and Giannarelli, 2015). However, far less is known about the economic and social impact of immigrants in cities having a population of 100,000 residents or fewer, called "small cities" in this paper. A consideration of immigrants' impact on these communities is warranted, given the growing number of small cities with immigrant enclaves and because relatively modest numbers of immigrant residents may have a disproportionate impact on the local economy and community life.

This paper will explore these issues through a case study of a small city with a substantial foreign-born population: Springdale, Arkansas, population 77,859. Springdale is relatively unique among small southern cities in that its substantial immigrant population is internally diverse, primarily consisting of residents from Latin America, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and a modest population of Laotians, Vietnamese, and Hmong. A consideration of these immigrants' impact on Springdale, and the city's efforts to absorb these new residents, holds important lessons for Memphis and other small cities facing rapid demographic change. More generally, in the context of pervasive anti-immigrant sentiment at the federal and state levels, this paper will show how demographic changes in one small city reflect both the challenges and opportunities afforded by immigration.

## SPRINGDALE, ARKANSAS

Springdale has been my ethnographic field site for the past four years. My research there focuses on migration, health, and historical trauma among the community's large population of migrants from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, a nation of low-lying coral atolls located approximately 2,300 miles west of Honolulu, HI. Driving along Springdale's streets can feel like being transported from Arkansas to one of California's ethnically diverse small cities, which have much longer histories as immigrant enclaves than Springdale. Its numerous businesses with Spanish signage, the multiple "Asian" markets selling Marshallese delicacies, the competing sounds of horn-driven Mexican banda music and Marshallese pop emanating from open car windows, and a Buddhist temple appearing like a vision along an otherwise non-descript industrial road, all reflect a surprisingly vibrant cosmopolitan community in an otherwise ethnically homogenous part of the world. It was not always this way.

Founded under the name Shiloh in 1838, Springdale is situated in the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas' northwest



corner. Culturally and geographically distinct from the rest of the state, the region was colonized by white settlers after the Cherokee lost their land claims in 1828 (Brotherton, 2002). For much of its history, Springdale’s economy was based on agriculture, particularly apple and grape cultivation. With a passenger train station and freight yard in its town center, Springdale served as the region’s commercial and retail hub (Ibid.).

The community’s economic fortunes—and ultimately, its demographic composition—emerged from an unlikely source, the codling moth. This insect had so devastated apple production that area farmers shifted their production to poultry. From these unlikely beginnings, Springdale has emerged as one of the nation’s primary centers of the poultry industry, with Tyson Food’s world headquarters located within the city limits.

Table 1: Population of Springdale 1990-2015

	1990		2000		2010		2015	
	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total
White	97.2	29,095	82.0	38,661	64.7	45,185	61.6	39,088
Latino	1.5	446	19.2	9,041	35.4	24,692	34.6	26,251
Other Pacific Islander	1.1*	292*	1.5	671	4.6	3,026	6.6	4,950
Vietnamese + Other Asian	*	*	1.3	566	1.0	670	1.0	776
<b>Tot. Pop.</b>		<b>29,941</b>		<b>45,798</b>		<b>70,752</b>		<b>77,859</b>

*Note: Marshallese community leaders contend that Marshall Islanders have been undercounted, and that their current totals are between 10,000 and 12,000 people.*

### DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATION

As white residents showed little interest in poultry processing, these growing businesses have come to rely on immigrant labor. As a result, Springdale’s population has ballooned in recent years. Although the city’s white population increased by 74 percent between 1990 and 2015, the community’s total population grew by a staggering 260 percent, driven mostly by immigrant families (see Table 1).

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	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total
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Although Euro-Americans still constitute the majority of residents, immigrant youth comprise the preponderance of students in the Springdale public school system. In 2016, for example, Latinos comprised 46.4 percent of 21,507 students, while Pacific Islanders—nearly all of whom are Marshallese—represented 12.3 percent of the total. Asian students are included as Other in the district’s demographic statistics (Springdale School District, 2017). Furthermore, 54.6 percent of students are characterized as English Language Learners, indicating that most reside in households in which Spanish or *kajin majol* (Marshallese) are the primary languages.

As Springdale’s largest foreign-born population, Latinos are in many respects the most visible, with multiple



immigrant-owned businesses catering to this population. Although data are not disaggregated for all subgroups, people of Mexican origin constitute the largest portion of Springdale's Latino population (76.5 percent). Most of the remainder consists of Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Salvadorans. Likewise, data on the Latino community's legal status are not available, although it is widely believed that the majority either lack legal papers or have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status, which provides approved young people with temporary protection from deportation. Given the current administration's increased enforcement against undocumented immigrants, Springdale Latinos are extremely vulnerable to deportation.

In contrast, Marshallese citizens can live and work in the United States without needing a visa or green card, the result of the Compact of Free Association (COFA) agreement ratified by the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and the United States in 1986. Springdale's *ri-majol* (Marshallese) community is currently the largest in the continental United States. The COFA agreement provides the RMI with U.S. foreign aid and permits its citizens to reside in this country as "legally present migrants"; in exchange, the U. S. military exercises near-exclusive control of the Marshall Islands' vast territorial waters (Duke, 2017).

Springdale's culturally and linguistically diverse Southeast Asian population principally consists of refugees from the Vietnam War and their descendants. As refugees, they enjoy the same legal protections as the Marshallese, although they have the benefit of being eligible for U.S. citizenship, a status that is very difficult for the Marshallese to obtain. In contrast to both the Latin American and Marshallese communities, Southeast Asians by and large eschew poultry processing, instead working in restaurants and light manufacturing, or being self-employed in small businesses.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

Given the paucity of city-level data regarding Springdale's immigrants, ascertaining their economic impact can be challenging. To be sure, foreign-born residents require additional resources from the school system in terms of tutoring, special programs, and hiring additional English as a Second Language (ESL)-certified teachers. In 2016, 54.6 percent of K-12 students were classified as English Language Learners, among the highest percentage in the state (Springdale School District, 2017). Likewise, although most poultry plants offer health insurance, it is considered prohibitively expensive for many workers to cover their families. Finally, undocumented immigrant children (and, until very recently, Marshallese youth) are ineligible for ARKids First, a health insurance program for the state's low income young people. As a result, some immigrant families receive primary care through hospital emergency rooms and community clinics, which frequently absorb the associated costs through charitable donations and taxpayer funds.

On the other hand, it is hard to overstate immigrants' importance to the region's poultry industry, which would otherwise be untenable without a large foreign-born work force. Native-born citizens in non-supervisory roles are extremely uncommon in these plants, and those who do choose to work there rarely last more than a few weeks. Arkansas is the second largest producer of broiler chicken meat in the United States, and its poultry industry generates over \$34 billion in total economic activity throughout the state (Arkansas Farm Bureau, 2017). In addition to their participation in the labor market, immigrants contribute substantially to the local economy. According to a recent report, immigrants in Washington County (which includes Springdale) provided the county with a net economic impact of \$4.6 million in 2010, largely through their labor market impact, taxes, and consumer spending. (Appold, Johnson, & Kasarda, 2013).

## **SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT**

Springdale's immigrants have drastically changed the cultural texture of the city in ways both welcoming and troubling for native-born residents. Many longtime residents marvel at the increasing cosmopolitanism of their once homogeneous community. Local tolerance also stems from the fact that these newcomers are not seen as competing for employment with whites: Springdale's unemployment rate was just 2.4 percent in 2016, and the jobs that these immigrants fill have little appeal to the native-born.



Despite the fact that the Republican Party dominates regional politics, the city government has offered at least tacit support for its immigrant communities, due in no small measure to the political influence of the city's poultry firms. In 2015, for example, Mayor Doug Sprouse was one of nine mayors in the state to issue a Welcoming Proclamation to new immigrants (Nextstar Media Group, 2015). More recently, in response to President Trump's executive order to establish partnerships between the Department of Homeland Security and local law enforcement in order to detain unauthorized immigrants, Sprouse announced that Springdale would not participate in such efforts (Holtmeyer, 2017a).

Despite a measure of community support, Springdale natives live in different parts of the city than immigrants, and therefore have few interpersonal encounters with their foreign-born neighbors. And while the city's different immigrant neighborhoods substantially overlap, there are relatively few social connections between these groups. As with the relationship between Euro-Americans and immigrants, language poses a significant barrier to developing inter-ethnic social ties. Furthermore, cultural misunderstandings remain common, especially in regard to the Marshallese, whose matrilineal forms of kinship and chiefdom-based political structure distinguish them from both native-born Americans and Latin American immigrants (Duke, 2014; Duke 2017).

Although cleavages between and among Euro-Americans and other ethnic groups seem insurmountable, change is clearly taking place. Springdale has a small but growing class of English-speaking immigrant professionals (Holtmeyer, 2017b), who frequently take on the role of cultural brokers with the Euro-American population. More noteworthy, Springdale's high schools are extremely diverse, drawing from feeder schools within the city's various ethnic enclaves. Although not without their own forms of self-segregation, these schools provide numerous opportunities for white, Latino, Asian, and Marshallese students to study and socialize with one another under the common lingua franca of English.

## CONCLUSION

Although Springdale may be somewhat unique from some other small cities in terms of its internally diverse immigrant population and the relative absence of labor competition between its native and foreign-born residents, the evidence from this case study clearly points to the economic and cultural benefits of immigration on such communities. Large cities with diminishing populations such as Memphis would also likely benefit from efforts to increase their foreign-born workforce.

On a federal level, increasing the number of H2B work visas for foreign nationals and lifting the ban on Syrian and other refugees would greatly benefit small cities, which could profit from their work ethic and entrepreneurialism. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) should likewise focus their efforts on immigrants accused of serious crimes, rather than undocumented immigrants as a whole.

At the local level, mayors can offer forcefully-stated proclamations supporting their immigrant residents, coupled with enacting policies preventing their police departments from cooperating with ICE agents. In the current political context where foreigners are erroneously associated with crime, violence, religious extremism, and labor competition, and immigrants are thus the target of unprecedented scorn, cities both large and small are at risk of losing the very populations that contribute to their dynamism and economic success.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Given the numerous economic, social, and cultural benefits that young immigrants bring to communities in the United States, the federal government should make permanent the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order signed by President Barack Obama.
- Increasing the number of H2B work visas for foreign nationals and lifting the ban on Syrian and other refugees would greatly benefit small cities, which could profit from their work ethic and entrepreneurialism.
- As in Canadian towns and cities where immigrants are widely perceived as a resource, U.S. small cities—



particularly those with declining populations--should actively recruit foreign-born residents.

- Because immigrants are unable to vote, their issues and concerns tend to be left unaddressed. Small cities should therefore explore the feasibility of allowing immigrants to vote in local elections.
- Mayors should offer forcefully-stated proclamations supporting their cities' immigrant residents, coupled with enacting policies preventing their police departments from cooperating with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents.

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# WELFARE DEPENDENCY AND EXTRACTIVE ECONOMIES: LESSONS LEARNED FROM PINE RIDGE

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## INTRODUCTION

Antipathy towards the creation of *welfare dependency* has deep roots in Western civilization and continues to plague communities like South Memphis and the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota where poverty is concentrated. Prohibitions against harvesting the corners of the fields or the gleanings (remnants of crops) so that the poor could have access to foodstuffs (Leviticus 19:9) and St. Paul's admonition that "anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Timothy 5:8) are indicative of the enduring fear that the provision of benefits to someone who does not work may harm the recipient and create a dependency on welfare. Even a casual observer of the Third World lifestyle on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, a lifestyle that is substantially indebted to the continued provision of federal support provided through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, might easily conclude that this fear is completely justified. Despite the radical differences between Pine Ridge, a rural area of primarily Native Americans, and South Memphis, an urban district of primarily African Americans, they share geographical isolation and concentrated poverty. A closer look at Pine Ridge as an exemplar of concentrated poverty may inform policy solutions relevant even in South Memphis.

## PINE RIDGE DEPENDENCY

Pine Ridge is home to the Oglala Sioux Tribe, which has an enrolled membership of 46,855 (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2017). Only a minority of the tribe, at best 16,000-17,000 members, live on the 2.1-million-acre reservation spread across Shannon, Jackson, and Bennett counties (U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2017) in South Dakota. Shannon County, recently renamed Oglala Lakota County, has been among the poorest counties in America with a current unemployment rate almost 3.5 times the state average (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016), a poverty rate over 44 percent, and one of the lowest household median incomes in the nation at \$30,391 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Tribal civilian employment in the Oglala Sioux Tribe Statistical Area is estimated to be only 36.4 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Interior, 2013), which means that over 60 percent of the people depend on federal financial support.

Historical causes of the intergenerational poverty at Pine Ridge are rooted in the intentional destruction of Native American subsistence and agricultural lifestyles by European immigrants expanding westward. In North America, trade enticed Native Americans to destroy their own hunting areas in order to gain access to guns, powder, bullets, and liquor (White, 1983) and resulted ultimately in land concessions. What the Native Americans could not be persuaded to do was done for them. In the Great Plains, the intentional slaughter of millions of American bison not only fed the eastern markets' desire for buffalo hides, but also destroyed the Lakota (also referred to as Sioux) political economy (Brown, 1970; Ostler, 2010).

U.S. federal policy toward Native Americans has gone through many ignoble stages. Prior to 1820, most negotiations took place on a nation-to-nation basis in the form of treaties, but by the 1830s the only accurate description of federal policy toward Native Americans was genocide (Wilkins, 2010). Military dominance of most tribes was asserted by the 1850s as tribes were gathered on reservations or what might better be described as concentration camps (Ortiz, 1977). By 1871, Congress had discontinued treaty negotiations with Native American



tribes and instituted a policy of forced assimilation that was aimed at destroying Native American cultures. Communal land ownership was replaced with private ownership; boarding schools and the imposition of the rule of American law over marriage, disputes, social life, and even religious practices served as a form of cultural genocide (Wilkins). Yet, Native Americans survived. By the 1920s, federal policy began to promote limited Native American self-rule, but this more lenient approach was applied inconsistently as episodes of forced assimilation would return with two-thirds of Native Americans nationwide suffering relocation to urban centers in order to depopulate the reservations following World War II (Cook-Lynn, 2010). Most telling are the documented cases of coerced sterilization of Native American women by the federal Indian Health Service as late as the 1970s (Torpy, 2010), a blatant return to genocidal intentions. Tribal self-determination and self-governance was not fully granted until 1988 (Wilkins).

In the last 30 years, substantial economic diversity has developed between the 556 federally recognized tribes. Nearly 40 percent, for example, have taken advantage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (1988) to construct casinos. Revenues from gaming are required to be used for tribal government programs and local agencies in support of the welfare of tribal members, specifically for charitable uses or economic development. The success of gaming has resulted in some tribes reaping substantial profits to fund services and invest in local economic development. Others merely provide jobs at the casino or deal with the collateral damage associated with alcoholism, gambling addiction, and criminal involvement. Some tribes, as has happened at Pine Ridge, have not participated in gaming because of geographical remoteness from major population centers (Davis & Feustil, 2010).

### **EXPLANATIONS FOR PINE RIDGE DEPENDENCY**

The explanations for welfare dependency that a casual observer might attribute to Pine Ridge must take into consideration the deep historical and institutional causes of the unmet human needs on this reservation. Never defeated in battle (Brown, 1970), the Sioux were starved into submission as the bison herds were killed off, and their living space continually restricted onto smaller and more remote reservations. Every inch of land surrendered was accompanied by a promise, but these promises went unfulfilled (Brown; Ortiz, 1977; Ostler, 2010; Wilkins). The promised food was not edible. The promised shelter was substandard. The promised health care was ineffective or actually harmful (Joe, 2010). In addition, there were problems with the governance of the reservations. Some were administered by federal designated Indian agents who had “virtually unlimited power over the Indians under their care on reservations” and who “often abused that power” (Wilkins, p. 107). Restrictive land allotment legislation that assigned small parcels to individual Native Americans rather than to the tribe opened reservation land to appropriation by non-Native Americans and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Mohawk, 2010). The reservations emulated the weak government structure of a failed state with an extractive economic system to funnel what little wealth existed to those who were in charge (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Mohawk). Once self-rule was permitted on the reservations, many of them instituted forms of tribal government along the same pattern of the Indian agents so that power enriched a few while sustaining poverty for the many (Mohawk, 2010). Segregated and isolated geographically and taught through hard experience that they could not trust the government of the United States, there is little wonder that the Oglala Sioux are not yet self-sufficient.

A theoretical explanation for what appears to be a lack of personal initiative at Pine Ridge may be best explained by Charles Tittle’s (1995) control balance theory. Conceived originally as an explanation for deviance, control balance theory asserts that social conformity requires a balance between autonomy and social control. In application to Pine Ridge, this theory would predict little motivation to save, invest, or innovate in support of a political economy ruled by federal neglect and a spoils system of corruption (Mohawk, 2010). Constraints on one’s behavior, such as institutional instability, social distrust, a history of capricious imposition of federal government authority, and discriminatory state authority, undermine self-motivation and self-reliance (Kindle, 2006) and clearly do not present the social context (e.g., government stability, property rights, and an inclusive political economy) that encourages economic development (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). The causes of the apparent welfare dependency, therefore, cannot be accurately attributed to Native American culture or personal characteristics. It should be attributed to intentional federal policy decisions implemented over the last 150 years at Pine Ridge that have sustained an extractive political economy, unstable tribal government, and insecure property rights that have perpetuated widespread poverty. Specifically, these decisions have permitted:



- Political corruption on the reservation to sustain leadership stability (Melmer, 2007).
- Chronic underfunding of rehabilitative services (Horwitz, 2014).
- Lax law enforcement even in the face of increased violence, alcoholism, and youth gangs (Eckholm, 2009).
- An explosion in virtually all of the traumas (Azzi-Lessing, 2017) associated with poverty – child sexual abuse, youth suicide, drug and alcohol addiction, teen pregnancy, and violence (Flood, 2015).
- Neglect and underfunding of infrastructure at Pine Ridge that impedes economic development, communication, and educational systems. For example, recent U.S. Department of Agriculture grants to address the Third World conditions at Pine Ridge amounted to less than \$56 per tribal member (U.S. Official News, 2015).

## LESSONS LEARNED FOR MEMPHIS

Pine Ridge is over 1,000 miles northwest of Memphis, suggesting that any attempt to apply lessons learned from a reservation that is ethnically, culturally, and geographically remote to the Memphian urban experience must be attempted with care. However, South Memphis, a poorly defined section of the city without specific federal or state defined boundaries, may be the closest approximation to Pine Ridge. Bounded on the west and south by Interstate 55, on the east by Interstate 240, and on the north by state highway 78, South Memphis contains parts of four zip codes, 38106, 38109, 38116, and 38126, with a combined population of just over 121,000 people. Combined, these four zip codes contain fewer than 19 percent of Memphis population with disproportionately higher levels of poverty, 33 percent to 27.6 percent, and a higher concentration of African American residents, 95.4 percent to 63.3 percent. The average household income in 2010 was \$26,265 (author's calculations based on American Factfinder, 2010 unweighted data).

Similarities between Pine Ridge and South Memphis lie in the ethnic homogeneity of each, Oglala Sioux in Pine Ridge and African America in South Memphis, their high levels of concentrated poverty, and even their geographical isolation. Pine Ridge is more than a five-hour drive in any direction from an urban center with more than 100,000 people, but South Memphis' geographical isolation is more subtle. Bounded on three sides by interstate highways that grant limited egress and entry and served by inadequate public transportation (Santo, 2016), residents of South Memphis live in the city while being separated from it. Furthermore, the racial, social, and economic isolation of South Memphis was the intentional creation of civic leaders who, in a manner strikingly similar to Pine Ridge, funneled federal financial assistance away from the poor into the pockets of the Memphian elite (Lautherback, 2016) and directed law enforcement to constrain any potential backlash (Tulumello, 2016). Through separate histories and policy decisions, the Pine Ridge and Memphian experiences have produced common patterns of political corruption, underfunding of rehabilitation services, lax law enforcement in the interest of the poor community, a bad harvest of the consequences from childhood traumas, and substantial infrastructure neglect.

## POLICY SOLUTIONS

The phrase *concentrated poverty* has been in used in the social science literature at least since 1973, and even at that time the realization was that there could be no solutions to concentrated poverty without substantial commitment of new financial resources (Bails, 1973). From a broader perspective, concentrated poverty is little more than the byproduct of political power in the hands of an economic elite intent on extracting a society's wealth for themselves (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Poverty intensifies as income and wealth inequality grows. In order to address the forms of concentrated poverty that exists in Pine Ridge, South Memphis, and every other neighborhood in America in which there is a concentration of poor people, tinkering around the edges of social welfare programs is a wasteful exercise in futility (Azzi-Lessing, 2017). Concentrated poverty and reliance on welfare mischaracterized as *dependence* are rooted in power and control dynamics justified by false arguments about meritocracy, racial deficiencies, and personal failings (Lakoff, 2002).



Policy solutions to the problems created by power and control imbalances do begin with inclusive political rights (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012), but are not realized in the reality of non-elites without those political rights growing to include economic rights. Concentrated poverty is created in neighborhoods in which the property rights of slumlords are valued over the human rights of tenants (Desmond, 2016; Lauterbach, 2016), where minimum wages do not equate to a living wage (Covert, 2016) and employers are free to shape work schedules to legally deny employment benefits by limiting work hours, and where substandard schools are under-supported by a weak tax base (Turner et al., 2016). A more inclusive political economy would address these structural inequities by:

- Raising the minimum wage to the level of a living wage.
- Mandating adequate employee benefits for all workers.
- Redirecting tax revenues to provide quality public education for all American children.

These changes, however beneficial, would be partial steps toward an inclusive economy. A fully inclusive economy would also address the four primary causes of financial distress – a major medical problem, job loss, divorce, and the birth of a child (Gosselin, 2008; Hacker, 2006). Policies effective in addressing the high level of financial risk currently weighing on American households include:

- Universal healthcare.
- Life-long free public education.
- Adequate guaranteed household incomes.

## **CONCLUSION**

In essence, the construction of a fully inclusive economy in America, one that would unleash the innovative capacity Americans have demonstrated in the past and would fuel explosive economic growth in the future, depends on the radical restructuring of the political economy so that risk is shared, not individualized. Former President Franklin Roosevelt called for a second bill of rights in 1944 that would have created an inclusive economy by entitling every American to a job that provided a living wage, a decent home, a right to a good education, and medical care (Sunstein, 2004). Substantive rights to receive welfare assistance, not merely procedural rights in the processing of applications, were nearly extended to all Americans in the 1960s (Tani, 2016). The fight for an inclusive economy is a moral fight, a political fight, even a spiritual fight. Daily the headlines proclaim loudly that the American people cannot expect the elite to freely and willingly turn from their self-interested extractive policies to promote an inclusive economy. Only the American people can make that happen.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To summarize, the author offers the following recommendations to create an inclusive society in which no people or groups are excluded and all have the opportunity for economic and social development, whether in Pine Ridge, SD, or South Memphis, in Memphis, TN:

- Raise the minimum wage to the level of a living wage.
- Mandate adequate employee benefits for all workers.
- Redirect tax revenues to provide quality public education for all American children.
- Provide universal healthcare.
- Provide life-long free public education.
- Provide adequate guaranteed household incomes.



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# PRIORITIZING LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER LIVES IN THE ERA OF RESISTANCE AND PREJUDICIAL RHETORIC

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## SHARED LANGUAGE

After the 2016 election of the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, many individuals from marginalized and underserved communities sought to make meaning of how the election results would impact their lives. Defining the members of marginalized and underserved communities can be complex. The ADDRESSING framework, which stands for **A**ge, **D**evelopmental and acquired **D**isabilities, **R**eligion, **E**thnicity, **S**ocioeconomic status, **S**exual orientation, **I**ndigenous heritage, **N**ational origin, and **G**ender (Hayes, 2009), provides a useful and evidence-based mnemonic to capture minority identities that have been traditionally marginalized and underserved in the United States.

The Hooks Institute Policy Papers, in prior issues and this current issue, have reviewed many of the disparities and civil right concerns impacting many of these minority groups and discussed policy implications to help close the equity gap. This paper focuses on sexual orientation and gender identity and discusses how health disparities, employment discrimination, and parenting stigma impact lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people while providing suggestions for promoting non-discrimination legislation, policy, and support for this community.

This paper strives to support the work of numerous scholars and advocates from within and outside the LGBT community who advocate daily for the needs of LGBT people. It aims to encourage readers to take a stance of “cultural humility” (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998) in their involvement with the LGBT community by: a) engaging in critical self-reflection about biases held about this community, b) committing to lifelong learning about things they do not understand about this community, c) promoting equal partnerships and reducing power imbalances in interactions with this community, and d) engaging in advocacy that is driven by members of this community. While this paper focuses on areas of concern, it should be noted that there are many strengths within the LGBT community that have allowed many to thrive in spite of the intersectional adversities they face. Yet, there remains much more to be done.

## THE CASE FOR REFORM

Data from four national, population-based studies indicate that LGBT individuals aged 18 and older make up 2.2 percent - 4 percent of the United States population. This implies that there are between 5.2 million and 9.5 million adults who identify as LGBT (Gates, 2014). These rates are fairly equally distributed by race and ethnicity with higher rates in younger adults. Of note, there were more adults in the Northeast and West willing to publicly identify as LGBT than adults in the South and Midwest. Thirty-five percent of the LGBT population lives in the South and these individuals are more likely to lack employment protections, earn less than \$24,000 a year, and report that they cannot afford food or healthcare (Mallory, Flores, & Sears, 2016). While specific data on the percentages of LGBT people in Memphis is not directly available, the lower rates of LGBT self-identification in the South coupled with the absence of non-discrimination policies that protect their rights highlight the need for policy reform. Statewide, Tennessee does not have:

- Housing laws and policies that prohibit housing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



- Employment laws and policies that prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Public accommodation laws and policies that prohibit discrimination in public accommodations based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- School anti-bullying laws and policies that address harassment and/or bullying of students based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- School non-discrimination laws and policies that address discrimination against students based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- A ban on insurance exclusions for transgender healthcare and transgender-inclusive health benefits for state employees.

## **LEARNING FROM OUR HISTORY**

The history of marginalization of LGBT people has a long history in the United States but perhaps was most notable during the Reagan era. After the discovery of the first cases of AIDS in 1981, former President Ronald Reagan's administration refused to acknowledge the epidemic's existence for over six years despite surmounting evidence that AIDS was a national health crisis among gay men. The inaction of the Reagan administration persisted despite calls from scientists, researchers, and health care professionals expressing the need for funding to reduce the spread of the epidemic. In May 1987, when President Reagan made his first remarks about AIDS, more than 50,000 cases had been identified in 113 countries and more than 20,000 people had died from the disease. While the AIDS epidemic and governmental non-response became a rallying point for the LGBT community, it also exposed the public's irrational fear of LGBT people and the limited policies protecting their civil rights.

Fast forward to 2017 and these policies (or lack thereof) continue to impact the health and well-being of the LGBT community in Tennessee. A seminal study conducted in 2010 examined the impact of living in states and cities that have lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) non-discrimination policies. After examining the experiences of over 2,500 LGB adults, researchers found that inclusive non-discrimination policies were associated with LGB people perceiving more positive messages and fewer negative messages from their environments, higher rates of disclosing their sexual identity (which was associated with higher levels of social support), and lower rates of internalized homophobia (Riggle, Rostosky, & Horne, 2010).

This study shows that non-discrimination policies can have a major impact on the health, quality of life, and well-being of the LGB community. However, the presumption of heterosexuality as the default sexual orientation and the dominance of heteronormative perspectives have resulted in increased stigma and discrimination of LGB people across numerous but interconnected areas. This policy paper therefore focuses on three primary areas: health, employment, and parenting.

## **HEALTH DISPARITIES**

Overt or perceived stigma and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals has opened the door to uneven health care when accessed or the avoidance of health care services. These negative experiences serve as barriers to the use of healthcare, which have consequently contributed to major disparities in health outcomes. Specifically, research has shown that LGBT adolescents and adults experience or are at greater risk for experiencing a disproportionate amount of adversities and health concerns, such as interpersonal violence, depression, anxiety, suicide attempts, sexually transmitted infections, HIV, and substance abuse (Elliott et al., 2015; Healthy People 2020; Thurston et al., 2014).

With the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), expectations were high about the possibility of expanding health care services for all underserved groups, including members of the LGBT community. However, with possible numerous changes to the ACA pending and the possibility of 24 - 32 million



people losing health care, it is likely that LGBT people will continue to experience a decline in health coverage, and as a consequence decreased health care access.

Beyond logistical issues of accessing health care, LGBT individuals experience stigma and discrimination from health care institutions and the people therein. Trust in patient-provider relationships are critical for accurate diagnoses and high quality care, yet many LGBT people experience discrimination and heteronormative practices resulting in decreased trust of their providers. An example of a heteronormative practice that could lead to poorer health care for an LGBT individual is the assumption by a provider that the patient has only had sexual relationships with members of the opposite sex. This could result in the provider inquiring about a limited range of sexual behaviors, and not asking about important sexual practices that have been associated with increased risk for certain cancers or sexually transmitted diseases.

A recent study found that when providers use non-heteronormative practices, LGBT individuals are more likely to disclose health-relevant information and are more trustful of their providers (Utamsingh, Richman, Martin, Lattanner, & Chaikind, 2016). In summary, LGBT people are less likely to use health services and often experience subpar treatment when services are used due to the heteronormative bias that is highly prevalent in the health care system. There also is a lack of LGBT-friendly supports available to them, such as artwork and magazines in waiting rooms that show LGBT people and diverse staff who practice cultural humility in their interactions with patients (i.e., not assuming everyone is straight, using non-gendered language on forms and in conversations). Eventually, this imbalance in appropriate care results in higher rates of physical and mental health problems and contributes to a higher burden on the health care system.

### EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

LGBT individuals experience employment discrimination at high rates with little to no protections offered in many states, including Tennessee. Data from The Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law indicates that discrimination, fear of discrimination, and concealing of one’s LGBT orientation is associated with negative effects on wages, job opportunities, work productivity, and job satisfaction for LGBT employees (Sears & Mallory, 2011). Further, LGBT employees across the United States who are “out” at work experience greater discrimination (38 percent vs. 10 percent), harassment (38 percent vs. 10 percent), and job loss (9 percent vs. 0 percent) than their counterparts who are not “out” about their sexual orientation. The “score card” with respect to employment discrimination in Tennessee is shown below (Mallory & Sears, 2017) and highlights significant disparities in wages, supports, and protections for LGBT people. With 21 percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people reporting being treated unfairly by an employer in hiring, pay, or promotions in Tennessee the need for reform is high. Further, research shows that in states with anti-discrimination policies, wage gaps and workplace harassment is significantly reduced (<http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/>).

**Table 1. February 2017 Score Card Illustrating Factors Associated with LGBT Employment Discrimination in Tennessee (Data from Mallory & Sears, 2017)**

<b>94,000</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>44</b>
Number of LGBT Workers	Income Disparity between Straight and Gay Male Workers	Public Support for LGBT Workplace Protections	Workforce Covered by Local Non-Discrimination Laws	Estimated New Complaints if LGBT Protections are added to State Laws

With the ACA in the balance, employment in the United States remains inextricably linked to health via health insurance. Therefore, the lack of civil protections for LGBT employees means that not only does LGBT employment

discrimination directly impact wages, work productivity, and employee well-being it also has an indirect impact on health given that employment is tied to health insurance access. This links the intersection of discriminatory employment practices and health disparities among LGBT people.

## **PARENTING STIGMA**

On June 26, 2015, civil marriage for same-sex couples was legalized in the United States, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that state-level bans on same-sex marriage were unconstitutional. Prior to the national recognition of same-sex marriage, a study found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals residing in states that recognized civil marriage were less likely to conceal their identity, experienced less isolation, and had an easier process accepting their LGB identity (Riggle, Wickham, Rostosky, Rothblum, & Balsam, 2016). These factors support the case for better quality of life among LGB individuals whose family structures are recognized and accepted. Like their heterosexual counterparts, LGB couples value family life and opportunities to parent and raise children. This means that many LGB couples explore adoption options.

Researchers estimate that 6 to 14 million children nationwide are living with at least one LGB parent, with an estimated 2 million LGB people interested in adoption (Gates, 2013). Same sex couples are four times more likely than different sex couples to be raising an adopted child. Yet in most states LGB parents cannot adopt a child at the same time. Instead, the only way a child can have two legal same-sex parents is when one parent adopts the child and the other parent adopts the same child via a "second-parent adoption." Second-parent adoption is a process that allows a second parent to adopt a child without the "first parent" losing any parental rights.

However, this option is not available in all states or cities, with some states passing legislation forbidding adoption by LGB individuals or couples. Thus, while LGB couples have been adopting children long before marriage equality, the hope was that marriage equality would come with adoption equality. This has not occurred and may take several years to come to fruition given that adoption is guided by state-specific statutes. In Tennessee, same-sex couples may legally adopt a child but there are numerous stressors and road blocks associated with same sex adoption, including limited support services, lack of cultural humility in understanding and appreciating family diversity with respect to sexual orientation among personnel at social service agencies, and experience of discrimination leading to decreased engagement in adoption services. The first documented same sex adoption by a gay couple in Memphis only occurred in 2016 (W. Bates, personal communication, December 13, 2016).

In summary, while Tennessee has shown progress in the legal ability for same-sex couples to adopt children, the lack of support services makes normalization and realization of adoption for LGB couples challenging. Further, state legislation continues to be promoted to undercut the successes of marriage equality. Examples include: House Bill 1406, which would prevent a couple from listing on the birth certificate the second parent (the spouse not giving birth) after a woman becomes pregnant through artificial insemination, or House Bill 33 which would "[require] that the words 'husband,' 'wife,' 'mother,' and 'father' be given their natural and ordinary meaning" in any legal or legislative context. This would mean that birth parents may have the legal right to influence decisions of a child adopted by a same-sex couple even though the birth parent has not been involved in the child's life. All of these factors present real barriers to adoption and maintains an atmosphere of uncertainty for LGB families, affecting their quality of life and sense of safety and security, and serving as a deterrent for engaging in the adoption process.

## **CONCLUSION**

For lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, only time will tell the full impact of the Trump administration's legacy on their access to quality health care, ability to earn a fair wage in a safe workplace, and opportunity to raise a family without fear of discrimination and stigma. The lack of federal anti-discrimination policies for LGBT individuals, which many years ago contributed to thousands of lives lost to AIDS in the gay community, continues to drive states to make policies that discriminate against LGBT people and allow states to reject the implementation of policies that protect the civil rights of LGBT people. Furthermore, those who support



the LGBT community have to remain vigilant as developments on issues pertaining to the civil rights of LGBT individuals are occurring frequently and without notice, e.g., the Trump administration's recent ban on transgender people serving in the U.S. military, which disregards the rights and service to the nation of over 5,000 people who are transgender. In these current times, yet to be unfolded is whether the prejudicial rhetoric of President Trump becomes emboldened or if the *era of resistance* fuels the flame to protect people who do not have the power to make their voices heard. One fact, which has been replicated over time, remains true – voices are loudest when they are raised together. To quote Wentworth Miller, a multiracial, gay actor, "You only cry for help if you believe there is help to cry for." We – the ally, health provider, employer, policy maker – are the help that is being cried out for. Here's hoping we have the courage to answer the call.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given our understanding of the impact of prejudice, discrimination, and stigma on the lives of LGBT individuals and their communities across health, employment, and parenting, the following recommendations are offered to continue the journey toward addressing the civil rights injustices impacting this community and closing the equity gap.

### *For Allies*

- Become a support person (i.e., ally) and raise awareness about disparities and prejudices experienced by the entire lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.
- Be an activist and advocate at the local, state, and federal level to resist discrimination and help implement the policies supporting the full inclusion of LGBT people in our society.
- Volunteer, financially support, and promote the programs whose mission is to empower, connect, educate, and advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals.

### *For Health Providers*

- Increase opportunities for training in cultural humility among all employees from front desk staff to medical directors, in order to raise awareness about LGBT health disparities and promote strategies for bridging the equity gap.
- Medical and mental health providers should work to create affirming spaces that showcase a welcoming environment for LGBT individuals and their families by implementing quality care and treatment that rejects heteronormativity, and by advocating for insurance companies and policy makers to address specific policies that create barriers to equal health care access.
- Intervene with individuals who work with children of LGBT parents to develop strategies for how educational, health care, and therapeutic settings can become more LGBT-affirming.

### *For Employers*

- Pledge not to discriminate against employees or customers on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity by listing businesses on public websites supporting LGBT people and displaying signs storefronts and on company websites.
- Implement protections within the workplace that support LGBT employees who are and are not "out," and have a strong stance that is communicated to all employees about zero-tolerance for discriminatory practices.
- Create a workspace environment that is LGBT-affirming, such as promoting gender neutral language by employees, displaying artwork showcasing a diverse array of people, and providing gender restrooms that do not prohibit use based on gender identity or gender expression.



- Promote policies that affirm all sexual identities and create legal protections to decrease the stigma on LGBT individuals and their families and the impact of external stressors (such as clerical staff refusing to issue marriage certificates to same sex couples, landlords refusing to rent or sell homes to LGBT people, or employers refusing to hire people based on their gender expression and identity).
- Denounce policies that allow therapists to deny counseling services to LGBT individuals and encourage professional mental health associations to adopt counselor training requirements on how to provide mental health treatment to LGBT individuals or make appropriate referrals based on non-discriminatory criteria.

Support and incentivize schools for joining initiatives such as the “SAFE (Schools Are For Everyone) Tennessee” program promoted by the Tennessee Equality Project (<http://tnep.nationbuilder.com/safetn>), which works with citizens across the state to create safer schools for LGBT students in their communities.

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# MEMPHIS AND ISLAM: INTEGRATING MUSLIMS AND ISLAM INTO THE COMMUNITY FABRIC

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamophobia is defined as the fear of Islam or Muslims, or both. Muslims living in America and the western world have been suffering from this social and political problem throughout history. More troubling, since the start of the 2016 presidential election campaign, the rhetoric on Islamophobia has increased dramatically to criminal proportions. Now we hear of killing Muslims, burning mosques, Islamic centers, Muslim-owned restaurants and other businesses. Furthermore, attacks on women wearing Hijabs, or head coverings, have swelled, either through verbal assaults or physical aggression. These attacks are not only limited to followers of Islam, but also to anyone whom the attacker perceives to be empathetic to Muslims. Interestingly and contrary to what one might expect, those who express the strongest anti-Muslim attitudes tend to also have anti-Semitic attitudes (Levin and Grisham, 2016).

Muslims, sensing the increase in Islamophobia, are rightfully becoming more fearful for their lives, families, and property (American Muslim Poll, 2017). They are seen less in public, and often limit shopping to familiar Muslim-owned business or institutions. Muslims are increasingly using "Americanized" names. A person whose name is Mohammad now is called "Mo," Mustafa is "Steve," Khadijah is "Kate," and Amira is "Amy." Those who grow their beards are shaving or keeping them short, and many have stopped wearing any traditional clothes that identify them as Muslims.

Women who wear Hijabs are removing them or wearing wigs instead (Mackay, 2013). The latter choice to conceal their Muslim identity is based on a Fatwa (Islamic edict) from the time of the Spanish Inquisitions. Muslim children are told by parents to avoid public parks, shopping centers, malls, movie theaters, and other places of fun and to stay vigilant for "impromptu" mob attacks. Muslim parents are telling their children to stay in contact with them on regular time intervals, even when they are in school, and are also instructing them not to leave the house alone, but only in groups. Those who believe in carrying guns for self-protection are doing so, while others are taking martial arts to defend themselves.

## HISTORY OF HOW WE GOT HERE

Islam captured public attention after the cowardly attacks on September 11, 2001, and in the early 1980s during the Iranian hostage crisis. Prior to this, Muslims in America did not enter people's consciousness on a daily basis. Recent Muslim immigrants and non-Muslims simply assumed incorrectly that Islam was a new religion in the United States. However, Islam was on this side of the Atlantic Ocean and/or Pacific Ocean even before the establishment of the United States.

In fact, Muslims have been living in the Americas as long as Europeans and Africans. A number of documents show that when Columbus sailed to this part of the world he was accompanied by Moors (Arabs) on his ship (Abdelkader, 2012). Other Spanish explorers also brought Moors with them. A case in point is Estevanico, (whose real name was Mostafa) from the city of Azzemour in Morocco, who landed in present day Florida on April 14, 1528, with explorer Panfilo Narvaez (GhaneaBassiri, 2015). Even during the Spanish and British battles with the early colonies there were references to the presence of Moors (Abd-Allah, 2010). Furthermore, the Melungeons, a tri-racial group of people who live in the Appalachian Mountains of southeastern United States, are presumably of unknown origin. Recent DNA studies show that the Melungeons could be descendants of Moors who ran away from the first Spanish colony Santa Elena, which existed from 1566 to 1587 in present day Paris, South



Carolina. (Kennedy et al., 1997; Hirschman, 2005; Hirschman and Yates, 2007; Price, 1953). During the slave trade, historians estimate that no less than 30 percent of the people who were captured and sold into slavery were Muslims (Tweed, 2004). A Muslim from present day Syria called Hi Jolly (real name is Hadji Ali) was the first camel herder hired by the U.S. Army in 1856 to train the military on desert warfare (Kjelgaard, 1960).

The West has viewed Islam with suspicion for a very long time, and the increase in negative publicity toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century contributed to negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims (Shadid & van Koningsveld, 2002). Recent events have not helped. In 1989, Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini called for the killing of author British-Indian novelist Salman Rushdie after publication of his book "Satanic Verses" which he considered contributed blasphemy against Islam. This contributed to the feeling among many Americans that all of Islam and all Muslims should be blamed for the carnage that took place with the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Because of the acts of a few terrorists associated with Islam, there have recently been orchestrated, systematic attacks on the a) deity of Islam, b) the holy book of Islam, c) the prophet of Islam, d) the teaching of Islam and finally e) the followers of the religion.

### WHAT IS SHAREE'AH?

The basis of these attacks is, in part, the fear of Sharee'ah or Islamic legislations. Many Americans think that Sharee'ah is a political system which Muslims in America are trying to establish so they can govern this part of the world (Johnson and Sergie, 2014). That's far from the truth and to put this idea to rest one can look at present day Ethiopia. Prophet Mohammad (PBAUH) ordered the Muslims of Makkah (a city in Saudi Arabia, Mecca) who were persecuted to migrate to Abyssinia (present day Ethiopia) in the year 613 or 615 CE. The prophet's command was "Go to Abyssinia for it has a king who oppresses nobody" (Ibn Kathir, 1998; Pasha, 2009). This migration happened more than 1400 years ago and to this day, Christians and Muslims coexist and practice their religions peacefully in Ethiopia, alongside a number of other religions including Judaism and some African traditions. Just as Muslims are living in peace and are not trying to impose Sharee'ah on everybody in Ethiopia, Muslims in the U.S. are doing the same. It is important to remember that just as Prophet Mohammad (PBAUH) asked his companions to flee persecution of the Makkah at that time, the Muslims are fleeing the tyrant rulers that are present in majority Muslim countries in these days.

To explain the above point, it is important to understand the meaning of Sharee'ah in Islam and its relevance for Muslims. Sharee'ah (شريعة) comes from the root word (شروع), which has two meanings: a) the straight path and b) the path to running water. Simply put, Sharee'ah means "code" or "law," thus in Arabic, the "Codes of Hammurabi" is known as "The Sharee'ah of Hammurabi" (Hasan, 2013). Since Islam is a "way" of life then Muslims must apply this "way" in their lives. This way of life includes personal, social, economic, and legislative aspects of life. The laws of Sharee'ah are extracted from two sources: The Quran (the revealed words of Allah) and the Hadith (the saying and practices of Prophet Mohammad).

Islam comes from the root word (سلم), which means peace and submission (Khan, 2003). So Sharee'ah shows the Muslim individual the way to submit peacefully to the will of God or Allah. First, the believer must attest that there is only one deity and Mohammad is the final prophet. For Muslims this is an admission that God is the creator, sustainer, and controller of all affairs. The way God wants the believers to do all worldly activities is the way Prophet Mohammad did them. Thus, if you ask a Muslim why they pray five times a day, pay homage, fast Ramadan, and perform pilgrimage the way they do, the answer is because Prophet Mohammad did it this way. The purpose of these instructions is to keep the believer humble and constantly remembering the blessings of God that guided her or him to this way.

In the social sphere, Islam shows the way to its followers on how to live as social beings. The word human in Arabic is "Insaan/إنسان," which comes from the root word (إنس), which means "close companionship" and a creation with a tendency to forget (Inel and Yucel, 2015). For the Muslim, belonging to the human race means being close companions to our fellow beings. That is accomplished by treating family members, neighbors, colleagues, and other members of the society with close companionship. As the society grows and becomes diverse people have to deal with each other in business and trade. The Quran tells Muslims that "everlasting righteous deeds that help people are better than the love of beautiful material things." The Quran instructs the believers how to deal with the world, including money and wealth (Ali, 2000). In order for Muslims to stay focused on keeping the peace in the society, evil dealing with others is prohibited. Evil dealings include, but are not limited to greed, hiding the defects of a commodity for sale, inflating the price, taking advantage of a need, and dealing



with prohibited items.

As a complete way of life, Islam also has a legislative aspect as well. Many look at the legislative verses in the Quran and criticize Islam as being harsh and/or primitive if not even barbaric (Ad-Dausaree, 2013). The fact of the matter is that out of about 6,241 verses in the Quran only 200 (or so) verses are legislative (the differences in the verses' numbers are due to the differences of opinions as to where a verse ends and where the next verse starts). In the modern world, however, these verses are interpreted in modern legal and human-rights frameworks, which render the strict application of these verses impossible, and thus it is left to the judge to find "holes" to show mercy if there is a need to do so (Hakeem et al., 2012). The best example is stoning the adulterers. Yes, the Quran does state that, but Sharee'ah states that in order to carry on a stoning, four, reliable, separate individuals must have witnessed the act at separate events (Shahidullah, 2014). When the Prophet Mohammed (PBAUH) was asked what constitutes "witnessing the act" he responded "just as you see the pen going into the ink jar." Everybody knows that this is next to impossible to happen unless you are the person who is involved in the act. Scholars of Islam all unanimously agree that the harsh punishments are there as a deterrence, and every legislator knows that the first reason to legislate a punishment is to deter an individual from committing it. Like Christianity, some of the language in the Quran is not applicable today. The Bible states "an eye for eye, a tooth for a tooth." But that fact is that if one were to knock out someone's eye or tooth, one is going to be charged and jailed in America. Similarly, the Quran might have such language, but it is not practicable in American society. It is crucial to understand that it is almost impossible in Islam to reach the verdict of stoning, just like Jesus (AS) said "let the one without sin cast the first stone." A very strict interpretation of the Quran is impossible to correctly and legitimately apply even in Muslim majority countries. What this means is that those who would stone adulterers, for instance, are not really following the Sharee'ah even in their countries. They are using Sharee'ah as a way to subjugate women. Like aspects of every religion, Sharee'ah can be abused, but that is the travesty that flows from such abuse. More importantly for Muslims in America, the Quran also mandates that Muslims abide by the law of the land. Muslims in the United States must obey American laws as a central element in the religion.

## **ISLAM IN MEMPHIS**

Memphis can serve as a model for the entire country in the way Islam is practiced and the way Muslims live. The Muslim community in Memphis is as diverse as Islam and includes Muslims from every continent and almost every cultural background. There are eight mosques in the city, with the first built in 1975, seven representing Sunnis, a branch of Islam, and one representing She'ah. Having said that, it is important to mention that no one checks identification as to what sect a person belongs to, and Muslims (and non-Muslims) are welcome at all area mosques. Besides mosques, the Memphis Muslim community built an Islamic school from pre-K to high school, a butcher shop that provides stores and restaurants with Halal meat, a cemetery, Islamic businesses, and wedding halls. The month of March was officially dedicated by elected officials as Muslims in Memphis Month. The 15th annual celebration was held in 2017.

The Memphis Muslim community has established interfaith relationships with all traditions: monotheistic, Hindus, Buddhist, agnostic and others. Our faith tells us to be only ambassadors of our faith tradition, not to try to convert individuals into Islam. Muslims are actively involved in political life in Memphis and regularly hold meetings and workshops to explain our faith and practices. For example, we discuss why when a Muslim speaks to someone they make no eye contact, why some women cover their heads, while others do not, and how to behave in the mosque. And, since most Muslims are from different countries we help educate the Muslim community about the importance of getting involved in civic activities. These meetings are very crucial because when there is a new Islamophobic rhetoric or concept floating in the media we must immediately show the fallacy of such thoughts.

However, the civic engagement of the Memphis Muslim community is not limited to Islamic issues. We also address community problems that affect others. To bridge differences and to make friends and allies, the Muslim community has formed strong alliances with various civic and nonprofit groups throughout Memphis that represent diverse interests, including include Latino, LGBT, youth, racial and religious concerns. Through a series of meetings, ongoing dialogue and community events, Muslim, Christian, and nonprofit leaders and their organizations continue to facilitate discussions and interactions that lead to understanding, acceptance, and support of Muslims and other groups in Memphis.



## **HATE PRACTICED AGAINST ANY MINORITY IS EQUALLY ABHORRENT TO ALL**

As hard as it is to admit, Donald Trump became the president of the U.S. while campaigning on racism, sexism, bigotry, xenophobia and all other forms of hate. This hate has not been limited to Islam and Muslims but has been equally launched against women, Latinos, Jews, African Americans, Native Americans and many other minorities (Abdelkader, 2016; Anti-Defamation League, 2016; Okeowo, 2016). Even Mother Nature was not spared from the venomous rhetoric throughout the election campaign (Merica, 2017). The truth of the matter is that all these fears grow from one common cause: ignorance. We all have biases that are often formed in the cultural and sociological shackles of our childhood. However, if we stay locked within our biases and justify our hate of others using any concept ideology and political strategy that only leads to more fear further entrapping each of us at the expense of ourselves and others.

### **DEMOCRACY'S YINGS AND YANGS**

Living in a "global village" with other people who lack education about others with different religions and from different ethnic groups, along with misinformation from the media, can easily lead to people who are afraid of each other. These social conditions can lead to governance through fear. The conditions of fear among different groups perpetuates the creation of terrorist acts, which ultimately have the effect of limiting the freedom of Muslims and causing others to wrongly attribute these acts to an entire religious group.

In general, terrorists, who operate at the fringes of society, live in a distorted world of extreme ideologies. However, once they are exposed, even within their own community, they will be stopped. It is critical, therefore, that informed citizens, including the Muslim community, remain vigilant to guard against governmental powers of intrusions in the name of security, and against fringe elements and terrorists that may take advantage of our liberties and freedom.

Many Muslims, especially those who lived under dictatorships, cherish individual freedom more profoundly than those who have always lived in a democracy. We know what happens to individuals and their families who rightfully criticize brutal regimes. We know first-hand the horror of friends, family members, and loved ones who disappear overnight or on the way to work, with no trace left behind. Because many Muslims have lived under the most repressive regimes, we know the true meaning of "give me liberty or give me death." These experiences have taught us that Muslims and others have a personal stake in promoting a free and open society. The alternative, an oppressive society, offers only suffering for our children, neighbors and loved ones.

### **CONCLUSION**

The efforts of the Muslim community, Christians, nonprofit and other groups to incorporate Muslims into the broader Memphis community can serve as a blueprint for the nation. Some of our success in Memphis stems from the willingness of the Muslim community to embrace others. For example, as Muslims, we adopt open door policy. This means that any person can go to any of our mosques, schools, centers or any other Islamic institutions. Additionally, all of the educational activities at mosques are taped, with some appearing online, and are available for the public to watch anytime. Muslim leaders also encourage their followers to engage in all spheres of civic activism.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Through the work of interfaith religious leaders, including Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists, various interfaith activities such as potlucks, Thanksgiving dinners, and the Kosher Bar-B-Que contests are held annually. To top this off, we have in Memphis, the Muslim Memfest at one of the largest area facilities in Memphis each March.

As a way to promote cultural understanding, leaders of the Muslim community convene meetings with elected officials to discuss issues, including training of police and first responders on how to interact with Muslims to avoid misunderstandings based on cultural misunderstandings.

Some recommendations for law enforcement to consider when dealing with Muslims: During routine traffic stops police should:



- Avoid asking, "Where are you from?" if they want to know what language the person speaks. Ask about the language directly and if someone answers, "I am from here" don't follow up with "Where are you really from?" If a woman is wearing the Hijab don't ask "Are you hot in this head cover?"
- Eye contact between opposite genders is not permissible, while eye contact between a driver and a police officer is considered a challenge to authority. If a Muslim driver doesn't look the police in the eye it is out of respect not because they are hiding something.
- A woman wearing the Niqab (face cover) can only remove the Niqab for another woman. The same is true for a body search. A woman's body is not to be touched by a member of the opposite gender unless he is part of the nuclear family.
- The saliva of a dog is considered an impurity, so if a canine unit stops a Muslim and they want to conduct a dog search, the Muslim may become extremely worried about the dog smelling or licking them. This does not mean they are trying to hide something.

During a house visit for a non-violent call:

- Police should remove their shoes upon entering the house and step in with the right foot.
- Shake hands with the right hand only and with the same gender and not with the opposite gender.
- If an officer needs to talk to a female in the house in private, a policewoman should be present in the same room.

During a visit to a mosque:

- Remove shoes, step in with the right foot. Shake hands with the same gender and with the right hand.
- If it is necessary to go in the prayer hall, and it is not an emergency, male police officers should enter the male section and female officers should go into the female section.
- Recognize that the Quran is a holy textbook and is written in Arabic. Do not use derogatory terms in describing the language or religion.
- Remember that when Muslims are in the midst of prayers, they are not supposed to talk to anyone.
- Emergency trumps everything: promptly notify the members of the congregation that it is an emergency situation when officers are in hot pursuit of a suspect.
- Have a Muslim liaison and translators on the police force for consultations.

In public schools:

- Educators should be informed about the practices of the Muslim way of life, why women wear the Hijab and the dietary laws, particularly for when students go on field trips.
- Educators should be taught the significance of Islamic holidays, particularly Ramadan (when Muslims must fast and abstain from water from sunup to sundown) and why when Ramadan comes Muslim students should be given the option not to go in the cafeteria and go to an alternative place.
- School curricula should be revised to include correct information about Islam and Muslims, including the fact that Muslims also were victimized by the slave trade. The school systems should host an International Day, which would allow all ethnic minorities an opportunity to educate the community on their culture and practices.

In Hospitals (and to a lesser extent other professional institutions):

- Provide health care provider workshops on sensitive gender issues.
- Provide instructions geared to Muslims (as well as other specific communities) in neo-natal facilities about the rights of the newborn and if possible, rights of family members to be in the delivery room and to engage in religious practices that do not break the law.
- Provide instructions on the spiritual requirements of Islam and its impact on healing.
- Provide instructions on the food requirements, or dietary restrictions, of Muslims.



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# NOTES



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