

## Abstract

The West's perception of Islam and the Muslims has been historically tainted with preconceived notions and biases. This trend has continued into the 20th century through Hollywood imagery with an Orientalist outlook. The violent and oversexed Muslim Man has made his entrance into the silver screen from day one with films like *The Sheik* (1921) and *The Terrible Turkish Executioner* (1904).

Such images continue to be prevalent in present day. Especially, post 9/11 era has introduced a heightened sense of fear of the Muslim other. The physical features of this Muslim have been predominantly Arab-looking, unlike Barack Obama. However, the fear of the otherized Muslim has been successfully projected onto Barack Obama throughout the 2008 presidential election campaign by the right-wing media vis-à-vis pre-existent oversimplified and stereotyped images of the Radical Black Muslim likes of Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan and the post 9/11 images of the undercover al-Qaeda operatives that any person including white Americans might be a terrorist. From lack of patriotism to the rumor that he took his senatorial oath with a copy of the Quran, a variety of suspicions invoking a Muslim identity have been popularized. These Islamophobic speculations operated on strong sentiments and stereotypes about Muslims rooted in the visceral visual memory of the American public. By invoking these speculations, certain media outlets and politicians not only misrepresented Obama but also intensified Muslim stereotypes killing two birds with one stone.

After providing a brief overview of Hollywood's images of Muslims drawing on Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, this paper will present how certain media outlets utilized these images linking Obama with the Muslim other.