

### Episode Three: A Tainted Home

#### CUE: SAJDAA BY NASHITA HASAN

MAS: I told all of my interviewees beforehand as they signed their consent forms that I would ask about the events of September 11, 2001 and what they remembered from it. But as I sat across from Asifa Siddique virtually, I felt nervous. I had nothing to fear since Asifa practically raised me from carpooling, birthday parties, and the hours of arts and crafts we did. Asifa Siddique came to the United States from South Asia when she was just five years old and even married someone sponsored by Salma Khan and her husband. She was one of the closest interviewees to me but still something gnawed inside me. Looking back, I know it was the guilt for re-opening her and the others' wounds from 9/11. When I was growing up in Elgin, no adults acknowledged the burden 9/11 was on us, Muslims. So this portion of the interviews always made me apprehensive. I took a deep breath and shared with her what Salma Khan said about 9/11.

Salma Khan: "They changed their habits, they changed their dress, they changed their names."<sup>1</sup>

9/11 ushered a multitude of changes for Muslim-Americans including the media's racialization of Muslims and South Asian people. Quickly after the tragedy, news outlets across the nation and even the globe ran stories on 9/11 almost 24/7. Salma Khan and Asifa Siddique spoke up about how even the mention of the news made their stomachs turn.<sup>2</sup> Majority of these stories typically showed images of Osama Bin Laden--the founder of Al Qaeda-- which led viewers to associate turban, beard, and brown skin to the word terrorist. Suddenly, anyone with such features was seen as evil, delinquent, and dangerous. News outlets focused on the religion of Islam heavily in their broadcasts thus creating a schema where Islam and those who practice it

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<sup>1</sup>Khan, Salma. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 27:50.

<sup>2</sup>Khan, Salma. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 32:50; Siddique, Asifa. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 1:07:50.

are suspicious and untrustworthy.<sup>3</sup> This is a term called *racialization* (say quote)-“ a process by which individuals are categorized into racial groups based on their physical appearance” (say end quote) alone defined by Bhoom Takore in her article, “Must See TV: South Asian Characterizations in American Popular Media”.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Mumtaz Siddique speaks in depth throughout his interview about how the media worsened and exacerbated the conditions of Muslims in the United States and other western countries.

Insert Dr. Siddique: “informing people through media or rubbing people to their skin are two different things.”<sup>5</sup>

The mainstream forms of media, like newspapers, broadcast media, and even the budding internet forums, created the moral fiber of hate, Islamophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States according to Dr. Siddique.<sup>6</sup> In Elgin, the *Courier News* even took a pause from reporting on the growth and successes of the South Asian Muslim community. Furthermore, the U.S. government only added to this panic and amplified Islamophobia by declaring a ‘War on Terror’ under President George W. Bush’s term.<sup>7</sup> Salma Khan and Asifa Siddique corroborate with Dr. Siddique’s words by mentioning the frequency of newsreels focused on showing graphic videos of the towers and constant images of Al Qaeda members.<sup>8</sup>

Asifa Siddique recalled: “they were constantly showing the planes, all the destruction. You know the damages. That was so heartbreaking”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Shams, Tahseen. “Visibility as Resistance by Muslim Americans in a Surveillance and Security Atmosphere.” *Sociological Forum* 33, no. 1 (2018): 75.

<sup>4</sup>Thakore, Bhoomi “Must See TV: South Asian Characterizations in American Popular Media” 149.

<sup>5</sup> Siddique, Mumtaz. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 40:35

<sup>6</sup>Siddique, Mumtaz. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*.28:30.

<sup>7</sup>Rana, Junaid Akram. *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. 39.

<sup>8</sup>Khan, Salma. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 26:13.

<sup>9</sup>Siddique, Asifa. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*.1:07: 27.

Additionally Sophia Karwowski's "Remembering Balbir Singh Sodhi, Sikh Man Killed in Post-9/11 Hate Crime," sibling of Balbir Singh Sodhi recounts "Immediately they start showing the Bin Laden picture on the TV. And people saw only a turban and a beard".<sup>10</sup> The rampant negative portrayals of Muslims on news shows propelled the emerging stereotype that all Muslims are terrorists. Moreover, in Mary Marshall Clark's research, her longitudinal oral history study found (say quote) "the government and the media rushed to consolidate an impression of "the enemy" that was precise enough to rationalize a wholesale invasion of Afghanistan and yet broad enough to stimulate a climate of fear of anyone who "looked like" the enemy at home" (say end quote).<sup>11</sup> While the media continued to play information about the attacks, it suppressed graphic scenes and stories of suicide and violence against individuals, families, and community centers. This in turn further ostracized Muslim and South Asian groups in the United States. Asifa Siddique mentions that despite the portrayals of Muslims as dangerous,

Insert audio from Asifa: "You saw people help each other, it didn't matter what race, what culture, what religion, that didn't matter. Humanity just helping humanity"<sup>12</sup>

Asifa continued and noted that there was an overwhelming amount of donations and legal aid from Muslims across the country especially from CAIR- the Council of American Islamic Relations. However, most media corporations neglected to show such humanitarian efforts from Muslims in the United States including Elgin's own newspapers.<sup>13</sup> The media's racialization of Muslims and promotion of negative stereotypes associated with Islam created the perfect environment for Islamophobia and xenophobia to grow while simultaneously ignoring the

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<sup>10</sup> Karwowski, Sophia. "Remembering Balbir Singh Sodhi, Sikh Man Killed in Post-9/11 Hate Crime." StoryCorps, September 13, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Clark, Mary Marshall. "The September 11, 2001, Oral History Narrative and Memory Project: A First Report." 571.

<sup>12</sup> Siddique, Asifa. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 1:07:32

<sup>13</sup> Thakore, Bhoomi "Must See TV: South Asian Characterizations in American Popular Media" 151.

trauma South Asian Muslims face. Media coverage highlighted and targeted Islam instead of the Islamic extremist Group Al Qaeda and seemed to forget that there are Muslim citizens in the United States who also felt the impacts of 9/11. Media outlets failed to remember that as Salima Ahmed mentioned in her oral history with the Brooklyn history center 9/11 “was a dilemma for everybody, every citizen of the United States”.<sup>14</sup> CNN Commentator Haroon Moghul said in his interview with the National September 11 Memorial Museum that, “The greatest victims of Islamic terrorism are Muslims”.<sup>15</sup>

**Cue: Subtle sound effect like a quiet thought bubble sound**

The aftermath of 9/11 birthed extreme discrimination and hatred towards Muslims, immigrants, and essentially *anyone* who seemed associated with the media’s description of Islam evident by the spike of hate crimes.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, many non-Muslims experienced such violence simply by their appearance like Sikhs who also wear a turban. Sikh man- Balbir Singh Sodhi was the first person to be murdered in a hate crime after 9/11 on September 15th, 2001. Dr. Siddique’s own Muslim cousin--who had worked for Motorola in Elgin for 25 years in the United States and was a citizen-- experienced violence after 9/11 simply because of his bearded appearance. He was coming home from work when a group of men stopped him and pulled him out of the car and proceeded to beat him. They called his cousin ‘Ayatollah’ (the name of a former leader of Iran) and spat in his face.<sup>17</sup> Prior to 9/11, often males experience hate crimes but as Clark notes hate crimes started to impact Muslim senior citizens, women, and even children.<sup>18</sup>

A paradigm shift occurred regarding immigration; Immigrants, once ‘welcomed’, now viewed as

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<sup>14</sup> Ahmed, Salima Malik, Oral history interview conducted by Zaheer Ali, August 30, 2018, Muslims in Brooklyn oral histories, 2018.006.30; Brooklyn Historical Society.

<https://oralhistory.brooklynhistory.org/interviews/ahmed-salima-malik-2018-08-30/>. 57:28-1:00:11.

<sup>15</sup>Moghul, Haroon. “How to Be a Muslim.” National September 11 Memorial & Museum.<https://www.911memorial.org/learn/past-public-programs/how-be-muslim>.

<sup>16</sup>Gillum, Rachel. *Muslims in a Post-9/11 America*. 8.

<sup>17</sup>Siddique, Mumtaz. *At the Hyphen Podcast*.28:30.

<sup>18</sup> Clark, Mary Marshall. “The September 11, 2001, Oral History Narrative and Memory Project: A First Report.”573.

a national threat.<sup>19</sup> Quickly after 9/11, discrimination led to the creation of no-fly lists and TSA ‘random checks’. About eighty percent of the American public thought it was wrong for law enforcement to use racial profiling before September 11. However, after the shock of the 9/11 attacks, *sixty percent* favored racial profiling, at least as long as it was directed at Arabs and Muslims.<sup>20</sup> Directly following 9/11 hate crimes against Muslims and people perceived to be Muslim, rose 1,700% in 2001.<sup>21</sup> In Clark’s research, Afghans, Pakistanis, and Muslims developed a fear of retaliation in the U.S. not only by individuals and hate groups but also by the hands of the government.

### CUE Ding sound effect

And this is when the infamous Patriot Act appears! The USA Patriot Act was a reaction to the 9/11 attacks and aimed to protect the United States from future terrorist attacks. The act allows the surveillance of denizens of the United States as well as an easier process for search warrants. Lastly, the act makes immigration to the states more difficult. The social repercussions of the Patriot Act further villainized Muslim Americans and wrongfully imprisoned many.<sup>22</sup> The Patriot Act allowed middle of the night raids by police and federal agents in immigrant communities like Queens and Brooklyn where family members were taken to detention centers.<sup>23</sup> When discussing the Patriot Act, Dr. Siddique spoke about calling family members from Pakistan and said,

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 573.

<sup>20</sup>Maira, S. “Imperial feelings: Youth culture, citizenship, and globalization”. In M. M. Suarez-Orozco & D. B. Qin-Hilliard (Eds.), *Globalization: Culture and education in the new millennium*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 2004: 221.

<sup>21</sup>Curtis, Edward E. *Muslims in America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009.100.

<sup>22</sup>Rana, Junaid Akram. *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora*. 158-160.

<sup>23</sup>Clark, Mary Marshall. “The September 11, 2001, Oral History Narrative and Memory Project: A First Report.”573.

Insert Dr. Siddique: “Yeah, well, we knew we were being taped so you had to be careful with what you say...People were cautious and some were even questioned because of it.”<sup>24</sup>

The FBI interviewed 8,000 innocent Muslim men in suspicion of their ‘activities’ and about 1,200 were held on suspicion of possible ties to terrorism. To make matters worse, many of these innocent people were not allowed access to a lawyer or have their names released. They were held in jail without even a criminal charge.<sup>25</sup> The media and government continued to suppress information regarding such brutal treatment of Muslim-Americans and immigrants.<sup>26</sup>

Aforementioned, the Patriot Act complicated the immigration process for those from Muslim countries. In his interview, Dr. Siddique lists the process of immigration in 1977. He implied it was mainly filling out immigration forms and waiting. He mentioned they did not change any names or spellings of the names.<sup>27</sup> That is unique considering how many Muslims immigrants try to alter their names to seem less ‘threatening’ or avoid scrutiny from the U.S. Immigration officers now, especially since 9/11.<sup>28</sup> This should be juxtaposed with how immigration policies -especially from Muslim countries- to the U.S. became harsher and more difficult evident by the Patriot Act of 2001 and Muslim Ban in 2017. A 2008 article from Elgin’s *The Daily Herald* claimed 9/11 created huge obstacles for immigration and family reunification for South Asians in Elgin by dismissing applications or putting applications on hold for numerous years without updating its petitioners.<sup>29</sup> As islamophobia and xenophobia continues to exist in our society, it should be acknowledged that neither immigrants nor Muslims bring danger

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<sup>24</sup>Siddique, Mumtaz. *At the Hyphen Podcast*. 50:27.

<sup>25</sup>Curtis, Edward E. *Muslims in America*. 101.

<sup>26</sup>Rana, Junaid. *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora*. 158.

<sup>27</sup>Siddique, Mumtaz. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 10:11.

<sup>28</sup>Panagopoulos, Costas. “Trends: Arab and Muslim Americans and Islam in the Aftermath of 9/11.” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (2006): 614.

<sup>29</sup>Krishnamurthy, Madhu. “Muslims Fighting Citizenship Delays May Have Ray of Hope.” *Daily Herald*. Daily Herald, October 20, 2008..

to our nation. People who do support anti-immigrant sentiments typically claim that immigrants increase the crime rate and are a large portion of it. That is completely false. In Reuben Rumbaut and Walter Ewing's "Myth of Immigrant Criminality and the Paradox of Assimilation", they disprove the hypothesis that foreign-born or first generation adult males from ethnic minority groups have higher rates of crime and incarceration.<sup>30</sup>

Moving past the immigration policies and its change over time, Muslim families in the United States faced multiple fundamental changes after 9/11 like the mass stereotyping of 'Muslims' as terrorists. Muslim families turned to multiple methods to adjust to the post 9/11 life. The first method being isolation and social withdrawal. I'll play Dr. Siddique describing how his family and the surrounding Muslim community in Elgin, Illinois reacted to the aftermath of 9/11.

Insert Dr. Siddique "we stayed instead, completely isolated. One person in the house would go out for groceries while everyone else stayed home"<sup>31</sup>

After his cousin's incident, the extended family decided to not go out after dark and stay home. He continues to say that 9/11 left a scar on most people's hearts especially after the way they were treated. Sufia Azmat discusses how 9/11 was an open wound- destroying the decades of community activism and labor of Muslim-American communities.<sup>32</sup> Muslim communities across the nation followed methods of isolation. Interviewee, Asifa Siddique opened up to discuss her family's worries about her safety as a hijabi women:

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<sup>30</sup>Rumbaut, Ruben & Ewing, Walter. (2007). The Myth of Immigrant Criminality and the Paradox of Assimilation: Incarceration Rates Among Native and Foreign-Born Men. Essay. In Collins, Patricia Hill & Andersen, Margaret L., *Race, Gender, & Class: Intersections and Inequalities*. Cengage Learning Inc. 2016. 398..

<sup>31</sup>Siddique, Mumtaz. *At the Hyphen Podcast*. 33:11

<sup>32</sup>Azmat, Sufia. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 41:34

Insert Asifa Siddique- “Cause I remember when 9/11 happened, I was at home. We just saw the planes hit the building. And then at that point everybody was like don’t leave the house. You wear a hijab. Don’t wear the hijab outside the house.”<sup>33</sup>

Interestingly enough, in these interviews a trend emerges amongst the female interviewees: a lack of fear. All of our female interviewees expressed an annoyance towards the isolation practices their families- particularly their male counterparts- pushed on them. Asifa Siddique said (say quote), “ I kept thinking oh it's- nothing is gonna happen, everyone knows us in this community. I was not afraid. I think thajjaan was more afraid than I ever was” (say end quote).<sup>34</sup> Salma Khan vehemently asserted she felt there was no need for fear because she had Allah to protect her. She also noticed her male family members experience more anxiety about her own safety than she ever did.<sup>35</sup> Sufia Azmat recalled not having any desires to suppress her religious identity nor her South Asian one and she did not.<sup>36</sup> All the women interviewed at some point wore the hijab and confessed they never once thought to discard it because of backlash Muslims faced. Repeatedly in all the female interviews, their family members and men at the mosque told them to- yet these women held firm to their *imaan*- faith.<sup>37</sup>

Insert Salma Khan: “ “People told me to--that when you go like that, people will be hurting you or something. *And I said* (originally in Urdu) no. I believe in Allah and he has the most power and if he wants to protect me, he will. And the result was I never experienced any slurs or bad words from anybody in Elgin”.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Siddique, Asifa. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*.55:51

<sup>34</sup>Siddique, Asifa. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*.56:38; Thajjaan is an Urdu term for an elder uncle. Asifa is referring to her husband through my own kinship.

<sup>35</sup>Khan, Salma. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*.19:01

<sup>36</sup>Azmat, Sufia. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 47:54.

<sup>37</sup> Imaan is the Arabic word for faith, devotion to Islam.

<sup>38</sup>Khan, Salma. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*.19:10.

This trend did not appear in any of the secondary source research I did, which posits that this may be a feature specific to Elgin because of its history of fair treatment of Muslims and South Asian and community engagement actions. Muslim women in Elgin felt safer than their male counterparts, suggesting a gendered reaction to 9/11.

While these Elgin women tried to fight isolation and the forced removal of hijabs, another counter-move appeared in Muslim communities to 9/11: patriotism.

### Cue national anthem instrumental

Soon after 9/11, South Asian Muslims, other Muslim groups, and immigrants sought to increase their patriotism to the United States outwardly. Many South Asian and Muslim owned businesses hung American flags almost as if it were a suit of armor. Clark said it best, the American flag was “offering protection to many who feared being cast as the enemy in the drama of September 11”.<sup>39</sup>

The New Yorker’s November 5th 2001 cover accurately captures the desperation of these targeted groups to try to appear “non-threatening” through excessive loyalty to the United States. The cover is a political cartoon depicting a bearded man with a turban driving a taxi plastered with American flags.<sup>40</sup> Also, some South Asian Muslim families chose to change their children’s names or exclusively go by nicknames similar to traditional English names. Though Dr. Siddique did not partake in such measures of “patriotism”, he remembers witnessing such changes in the Elgin and Chicago Muslim communities. Salma Khan rebuked such acts of patriotism, stating “I didn’t need a flag to protect me.”<sup>41</sup> In *Behind the Backlash* by Lori Peek and in Katherine Ewing’s *Being and Belonging*, they both noted that many immigrants and Muslim business

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<sup>39</sup> Clark, Mary Marshall. “The September 11, 2001, Oral History Narrative and Memory Project: A First Report.” 577.

<sup>40</sup> Godrich, Carter “What So Proudly We Hailed,” *The New Yorker*: November 5, 2001.

<sup>41</sup> Khan, Salma. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 25:15

owners ran to their nearest store to place an American flag at their entrance.<sup>42</sup> The flag stood as a shield for Muslims and immigrant groups to protect themselves from the rising xenophobia and islamophobia.<sup>43</sup> The New York Times in September 2001 reported that Walmart by September 14 sold out all its American flags nationwide- accounting for about 450,000 flags. The article from the Times also contained testimonials from Arab immigrants working at Annin, a flag factory. One of the immigrants, Mr. Yousef said, “ “I feel very bad for what happened,” he said. ‘I left my country to come here. This is my dream, living in America.’”<sup>44</sup> Feelings of guilt plagued Muslims worldwide and prompted many muslims to shed the racialization and stereotypes imprinted onto them by the media and United States government.

### Cue ding

In Elgin, the mosque and Islamic Community Center worked hard to clear negative stereotypes and debunk any myths or fears non-Muslims had about Islam. Dr. Siddique explained how the Islamic Community Center in Elgin hosted various dialogue events and solidarity actions to unify the area. They had open-invite cookouts with other religious groups in the area to show what Islam was truly about: peace. The former President of ICC pushed that the Muslim community needed to join together with other communities to clear the air because otherwise they would be segregating themselves even more.<sup>45</sup> The dialogue events were also hosted with Hindu priests and Jewish rabbis. Dr. Siddique said, “We have to work together. Everybody is affected by this. America's economy- it affects all of us.”<sup>46</sup> There was an urgency coming from Muslims in the area, especially those who were citizens, to stand up for the United States and

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<sup>42</sup>Peek, Lori A. *Behind the Backlash: Muslim Americans after 9/11*. 22 & 68.

<sup>43</sup>Ewing, Katherine Pratt, and Marguerite Hoyler. “Being Muslim and American: South Asian Muslim Youth and the War on Terror.” 80.

<sup>44</sup>Barnes, Julian E. “As Demand Soars, Flag Makers Help Bolster Nation's Morale.” *The New York Times*. The New York Times, September 23, 2001.

<sup>45</sup>Siddique, Mumtaz. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 32:54.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 47:49.

Insert Salma Khan “they had a feeling that since we are American citizens, we have to have the same rights and responsibilities as a citizen- not just like a second nation or something, just came in- we are not immigrants anymore”<sup>47</sup> -aptly said by Salma Khan.

Elgin made space for their Muslim community shortly after the tragic events unlike other nearby suburbs through its own efforts of care towards its Muslim population.<sup>48</sup> Across the United States during the week of September 11, Americans placed memorial candles out for the lives lost in the terrorist attacks. However within Elgin’s Valley Creek, neighbors placed what they termed as ‘unity candles’ on the end of their driveways to represent mourning for those who passed but also to demonstrate support to the Muslim community in the area.<sup>49</sup> Then in October of 2001, the Gail Borden Public Library hosted a book club where they featured a text on Islam.<sup>50</sup> Only a month post 9/11, the Elgin library staff understood the importance of clearing any misconceptions about Islam through its well-attended book club. Salma Khan stumbled upon the group one afternoon and realized they lacked members of the Muslim community. She quickly joined and helped squash any other instances of misinformation. Salma recognized that Elgin residents,

Insert Salma Khan: “ started taking an interest in Islam. They ask for the Qur'an. Education. They wanted to know. The Muslims (of Elgin) also tried to emphasize more and more of their identity, their cultures, and what they are about.”

This provided an opening for the South Asian Muslim population to host even more dialogue events, open houses at IIE, and join local politics. While the non-Muslim community sponsored

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<sup>47</sup>Khan, Salma. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 14:38.

<sup>48</sup>García-Mathewson, Tara. “All around the Fox Valley, 9/11 Remembered.” *Daily Herald*. Daily Herald, September 11, 2011.

<sup>49</sup>Siddique, Mumtaz. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 29:31.

<sup>50</sup> Gail Borden Library Community Archives of October 2001.

and attended these events, they also felt a pang of fear for these Muslim residents. Asifa Siddique narrates an encounter at the Elgin Jewel-Osco just two weeks after 9/11:

Insert Asifa Siddique: A friend of mine that I went to highschool with worked at the counter- the registers. She saw me and left her register because I was at a different register. And this was a girl I'm not close friends with but we'd gone through high school so we talked or what not. She left her register and came to me, gave me a hug and started crying saying I was so worried about you... And if you need anything, I'm here. And we're hugging and crying."<sup>51</sup>

The Hijab became a marker for disclosure of Muslim identity which began its own battle in the wake of September 11. Due to the intense scrutiny and violence Muslims faced post 9/11, Muslims feared disclosing their religious identity.<sup>52</sup> Being a Muslim following 9/11 was not only dangerous to oneself, but immediately villainized the individual in the eyes of society. Dr. Siddique focused on how disclosing Muslim identity especially after 9/11 is a huge social consequence. He said,

Insert Dr. Siddique: "now, everyone who calls themselves a Muslim is labeled a terrorist".<sup>53</sup> Thus disclosing their religious identity at times caused more trauma and disruption in their lives. Some choose not to mention being a Muslim to avoid discrimination and prejudice. Others like our interviewees chose to disclose,

Insert Dr. Siddique "I am a Muslim but I am not a terrorist audio"<sup>54</sup>

The issue of disclosure during 9/11 created a divide between South Asian Muslim generations- the first generation versus the 1.5 and second generation. The experience of the new generation of Muslim youth in the United States is shaped by dissonance and stress. Stress is

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<sup>51</sup>Siddique, Asifa. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*.56:38.

<sup>52</sup> Ewing, *Being and Belonging: Muslims in the United States since 9/11*. 17-18.

<sup>53</sup>Siddique, Mumtaz. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*.18:14

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 33:14

only added as more and more Muslim Youth reveal themselves to be a part of the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>55</sup> Young South Asian Muslim-Americans are pressured to be equally immersed in their South Asian culture and mainstream American culture while still balancing their Muslim identity in a post 9/11 world. In the interview with Dr. Siddique, he details his experience in the United States different from the experience his children have. Both Asifa Siddique and Salma Khan agree and talk about the tolerance and kindness they experienced from their community members prior to 9/11.<sup>56</sup>

Insert Salma Khan “people in elgin were so kind, they took care of your kids, the neighbors, they did as if they were their own”.<sup>57</sup>

But after 9/11, South Asian Muslim American youth find themselves playing identity politics. Navigating when to emphasize one identity and suppress the other for their own safety. Tindongan found in her research that Muslim students usually feel rejected by their own country and experience distress when switching back and forth from the classroom and the outside world.<sup>58</sup> Asifa Siddique shared her experience with the American public school system while juggling her parent’s strict rules tied to Islam and Pakistani culture. She spoke about wearing traditional Pakistani clothes in high school to feel a stronger connection to her own ethnic identity in the early 1980’s.<sup>59</sup> Dr. Siddique admitted he removed his children from public school due to the increase in Islamophobia within public school systems nationally.<sup>60</sup> Asifa Siddique would not allow her children to walk to and from school after September 11. Tindogan asserts that (say quote) “a key factor in adolescents' understanding of what it means to be a member of

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<sup>55</sup>Rahman, Momin. “Queer as Intersectionality: Theorizing Gay Muslim Identities.” *Sociology* 44, no. 5 (2010): 944–61.

<sup>56</sup>Khan, Salma. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 22:55. Siddique, Asifa. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 1:20:13.

<sup>57</sup>Khan, Salma. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 11:59.

<sup>58</sup>Tindongan, Cynthia White. “Negotiating Muslim Youth Identity in a Post-9/11 World”.75.

<sup>59</sup>Siddique, Asifa. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 54:42.

<sup>60</sup>Siddique, Mumtaz. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. 30:20.

an ethnic minority revolves around discussions with their parents”.<sup>61</sup> However, Dr. Siddique never explained why to his children nor did he ever really tell them about 9/11. Samah Raheem recounts how her the adults in her life handled 9/11:

Insert Samah Raheem: “I remember being in school in the assemblies, being seven, and our parents didn’t tell us anything about what happened. I remember that day we did talk about it. One of the teachers said something that this is gonna be a national moment.”<sup>62</sup>

From the other South Asian Muslim youth I spoke and corresponded with, none had any discussions regarding 9/11 and/or how it impacts being Muslim in the U.S with their parents like Samah. This lack of acknowledgment creates a confused identity in which double consciousness runs amok and disrupts Tindogan's key factor theory. This double consciousness lives in the very hyphen between the words Asian and American or Muslim and American.

All in all, 9/11 acts as a specter over Muslim-Americans in the United States and prompted large scale behavioral changes for this group. Research points to a rise in hate crimes and discrimination towards Muslims from other American citizens leading to a series of strategic actions employed by Muslim-Americans in reaction. Of those actions, *A Community of Our Own* acknowledges: isolation, patriotism, and dialogue. While nationally, the Muslim-American group was under attack, in Elgin there is an impressive amount of community care from candles and book clubs to hugs in grocery stores. Elgin’s treatment of the Muslim after September 11 depicts a case of solidarity and uplift- not yet discovered in this field of research.

**CUE thought bubble audio**

This concludes our third and final episode of *A Community of Our Own*. This episode could not have been crafted without the encouragement of the University of Illinois’ History

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<sup>61</sup>Tindongan, Cynthia White. “Negotiating Muslim Youth Identity in a Post-9/11 World”.75.

<sup>62</sup>Raheem, Samah. Oral history interview conducted by Muskaan Siddique, February 11, 2023. *A Community of Our Own Podcast*, 2023.20:20.

department. A special thanks to my thesis advisors-Professor Ramirez & Professor Mathisen- and my history honors thesis cohort. Lastly, I am forever indebted to all the interviewees in this project. Thank you for entrusting me with your joy, pain, and experiences.

End music: resume cover by Nashita Hasan

CUE Record Scratch:

MAS: Before I close out this three-part podcast series, I present a recent update on the South Asian Muslim community events in Elgin as well as a national and global update.

The Muslims of Elgin kept involving themselves within Elgin's community by inviting other religious groups to their events soon after 9/11. In the early 2000's the coalition of In 2007, the First Congregational Church returned the favor and hosted an interfaith thanksgiving dinner noted in a Daily Herald article.<sup>63</sup> They also held an interfaith prayer which had not happened since 2004. Since then, the interfaith prayer and thanksgiving dinner occurs every other year until the COVID-19 pandemic. Elginites are hopeful that the event will return within the next two years.

In July of 2008, there was a religious discrimination case that took place near Elgin. Elgin's *Daily Herald* newspaper documented the filing of a religious discrimination lawsuit by Abal Zaidi-- a Muslim resident of Elgin's neighboring suburb, Streamwood-- against the Kane County Sheriff's Department. Zaidi alleged that he was wrongfully terminated and sought an apology letter and unspecified damages. In 2006, Zaidi worked as a corrections officer in Geneva, Illinois when Deputy Sheriff Pat Perez announced all officers must cleanly shave their face. Zaidi informed his supervisor that his beard was for religious purposes thus allowing him to keep the beard. Yet two days later, the department told Zaidi to resign or "face being fired for

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<sup>63</sup>Moylan, Sue. "Interfaith Prayer Service Today at First Congregational Church in Elgin." Daily Herald. Daily Herald, November 17, 2007.

poor performance” covered by the Daily Herald article. Zaidi’s performance reports before his termination were excellent and spoke of him as a true asset to the department listed in the lawsuit.<sup>64</sup> Zaidi then reached out to CAIR’s Chicago branch to handle his case. Soon after the Daily Herald article, Elgin’s hometown newspaper, *The Courier News*, also featured the lawsuit which raised support from Muslim and non-Muslim residents in Elgin. Elgin Muslims at the ICC mentioned the case in its Friday prayer’s sermons which prompted an influx of donations to his family.<sup>65</sup> This instance shows Elgin’s commitment against religious discrimination and the ICC’s continued presence in Elgin. Eventually, Abal Zaidi’s case was settled privately.

Following that, *The Courier News* published an article on the memories of 9/11 in 2011, marking ten years after the tragedy. In that article, they interviewed a Muslim man named Riaz of Indian and Pakistani descent to share his thoughts on the events. The article proves the dedication of Elgin media to not exclude the Muslim experience in regards to September 11 as many other media conglomerates did.

The Coalition of Elgin Religious Leaders and the Elgin Human Relations Commission co-hosted an event called ‘Who is your Muslim Neighbor?’ for non-Muslim residents to chat and learn more about Islam from Elgin area Muslims in 2013. The event at Elgin’s Community College gained so much popularity and acclaim.<sup>66</sup> The outreach coordinator from CAIR’s Chicago branch, Gerald Hankerson, even made the drive to attend the event and wrote about it on the CAIR blog.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Stockinger, Josh. “Muslim Corrections Officer Forced out over Beard, Suit Claims.” Daily Herald. Daily Herald, July 16, 2008.

<sup>65</sup> ICC representative comments, Interview conducted by Muslaan Siddique, *A Community of Our Own Podcast*. September 20, 2022.

<sup>66</sup>Garcia-Mathewson, Tara. “Elgin Event Asks: Who is My Muslim Neighbor? .” Daily Herald. Daily Herald, May 19, 2013.

<sup>67</sup>CAIR-Chicago. “Onislam: Illinois Muslims Welcome Neighbors - CAIR-Chicago.” CAIR. CAIR-Chicago, November 17, 2020

Finally in 2015, the Elgin historical Museum held an event full of arts and crafts along with South Asian food to celebrate Eid al-Fitr. The *Daily Herald* reported on the event's second year, mentioning that the museum felt it was necessary to sponsor such an event with such a large Muslim population. Executive director, Peggie Stromberg, pointed to how the Museum had never done programming like this for Muslims in the area but in 2015 it was a huge success hence its continuance.<sup>68</sup>

Ten years after 9/11 signaled a turn in national opinion towards Muslims and a decrease in hate crimes until the 2016 election.<sup>69</sup> The xenophobic and islamophobia sentiments expressed by former President Donald Trump spiked harassment towards Muslims again according to the 2021 'Views of Muslims in the United States' Pew Research Survey. The Muslim ban of 2017 added to the already poor immigration policies for those coming from Muslim countries.<sup>70</sup> Now globally, there are many instances of islamophobia practices and actions from the conflicts in Israel, France's banning of religious garments aimed at the hijab, and even the current genocide of Uyghurs Muslims in China.

However, there are some bright spots in regards to Muslims in the United States. In 2018, the U.S. government elected the first Muslim congresswomen, Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib.<sup>71</sup> And just this month, the state of New Jersey announced that January would be Muslim heritage month! The Muslim community both in Elgin and the United States continues to grow rapidly and raise more awareness to the injustice they've faced since as early as 1700's. With that, I

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<sup>68</sup>Krishnamurthy, Madhu. "Muslim Families Celebrate Eid at Elgin Museum." *Daily Herald*. Daily Herald, July 9, 2016.

<sup>69</sup>Mohamed, Besheer. "'Views of Muslims in the United States.'" Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, April 27, 2022.

<sup>70</sup>United States. "Executive Order 13769: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States" Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Justice. 2017.

<sup>71</sup>Boorstein, Michelle, Marisa Iati, and Julie Zauzmer Weil. "The Nation's First Two Muslim Congresswomen Are Sworn in, Surrounded by the Women They Inspired." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, January 4, 2019.

officially end this final episode of *A Community of Our Own: South Asian Muslims in Elgin, IL since the 1980s*. Thank you for listening and be sure to check out the website exhibit!

**CUE: SAJDAA BY NASHITA HASAN**

**END OF EPISODE THREE**

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