Beyond "Ignorance" and EDI: Critiquing LIS Accounts of Islamophobia

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To what degree does the field of LIS acknowledge and recognize Islamophobia, and in what ways is it framed?

Understanding the Other

Librarians who fought ignorance with information

By Sallyann Price | September 1, 2021

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Islamophobia in the US existed long before the September 11 attacks. But as a traumatized country mourned and searched for someone to blame, fear and suspicion of those perceived to be Muslims or Arab Americans intensified. The FBI reported a 17-fold increase in anti-Arab and anti-Muslim crimes in 2001 over the previous year, according to a 2002 report from Human Rights Watch. Some librarians experienced discrimination or witnessed bigotry in their communities—and many worked to fight ignorance with information.

ALA member news

Using positive stories about Muslims to foster multicultural understanding

CHICAGO — Islamophobia, a long standing, deeply entrenched global issue, disrupts civil society at many levels, from anti-Muslim policies to heightened tensions and hate crimes, including the increased bullying of Muslim children. One of the root causes of Islamophobia is ignorance, often fueled by stereotyped and negative portrayals of Muslims in media and popular culture. Gauri Manglik and Sadaf Siddique's new book "Muslims in Story: Expanding Multicultural Understanding through Children's and Young Adult Literature," published by ALA Editions, is a timely and proactive approach to tackling this issue, by engendering friendships and empathy through quality children's and young adult literature. Exposing children in their formative years to positive stories about Muslims can go a long way to creating a multicultural understanding by cementing ideas of tolerance, respect, and acceptance. This resource:

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Islamophobia is reduced to 'hatred' and 'ignorance' on the part of individuals, rather than an essential component of racial capitalism.

The EDI Paradigm in Libraries and LIS

"Dominant conceptual framework through which Library and Information Studies (LIS) **addresses questions of racialized power and difference**."

- Hudson, 2017

"... rely upon liberalism in regard to power and conflict, subjectivity and equality, and capitalism. This reliance results in a vision of librarianship ... that [is] completely decoupled from political, economic, social, and historical contexts.

- Seale, 2016

The Problems of EDI

- Deeply limited as a modality for understanding racial violence

- Signals an underlying set of assumptions about race that is removed from power

- Can actively sustain and uphold the very violences it claims or intends to address

"We often associate racial capitalism with the central features of white supremacist capitalist development, including slavery, colonialism, genocide, incarceration regimes, migrant exploitation, and contemporary racial warfare. Yet we also increasingly recognize that contemporary racial capitalism deploys liberal and multicultural terms of inclusion to value and devalue forms of humanity differentially to fit the needs of reigning statecapital orders."

- Jodi Melamed, 2015

Islamophobia in LIS

- Treated as a moral failing

- Reduced to individual ignorance/hatred/bigotry

- A threat to multiculturalism, democracy, 'cultural values'

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- Inherently functional, "good", neutral - *vocational awe*

- Racialized violence treated as incidental in an otherwise functioning system

- Removed from Islamophobia and therefore positioned to combat it

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Lack structural critiques of how libraries and LIS are deeply entangled with regimes of power and oppression that are dependant on racialized violence.

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Recontextualizing Islamophobia in Libraries

- Islamophobia as a form of racial violence

- Racial violence sustains regimes of power (captialism, War on Terror, etc.)

- Universities are not removed from these regimes, and in fact are in service of them

  - *The fully racialized social and epistemological architecture upon which the modern university is built cannot be radically transformed by "simply" adding darker faces, safer spaces, better training, and a curriculum that acknowledges historical and contemporary oppressions. This is a bit like asking for more black police officers as a strategy to curb state violence.*

- Robin D. G. Kelley, 2016

These Are the 100 Most Militarized Universities in America

Engineering Tomorrow's Military Successes

November 7, 2018

As they explore the cutting-edge of materials, microscopy and biomedical engineering, McMaster researchers are making discoveries that promise to keep Canadian troops safer and healthier in years to come.

Nabil Bassim, associate professor, Materials Science & Engineering
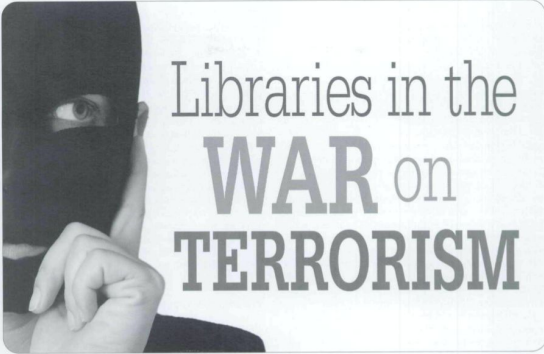
Virginia Tech awarded $1.5 million to cultivate diverse cybersecurity pipeline

By Lindsey Haugh   5 APR 2022   5 minute read

Blind Spot on Palestine and Palestinians at UCLA: An Open Letter

June 2, 2021

Libraries in the WAR on TERRORISM

By BRAD ROBISON and GRETA E. MARLATT

While terrorism has existed in the world for a very long time, until recently, the U.S. had been extremely fortunate to have had limited experience with such attacks within its own borders. These two very deadly events served as major wake-up calls for Americans that we are, in fact, vulnerable. The bombing of the Murrah federal building in Oklahoma on April 19, 1995, and the multiple events of 9/11 showed us that in order to deal with the aftermath as efficiently as possible.

Two specific organizations were established to help set the course for new directions in antiterrorist education and response: the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) in Oklahoma City [www.mipt.org], and the Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) in Monterey, Calif. [www.chds.us]. Each organization created a library to collect, organize, and preserve information so that those in emergency management and emergency response roles

INFORMATION POLICY
edited by John A. Shuler

• Librarians Go to War
by John A. Shuler

Student accused of being a terrorist for reading book on terrorism

Staffordshire University apologises after counter-terrorism student Mohammed Umar Farooq was questioned under Prevent anti-extremism initiative

US libraries report spike in Islamophobic hate speech since election

As well as an attempt to remove a student's hijab at the University of New Mexico, books across the country have been defaced

US public library exhibits Islamophobic poem insulting Muslim women

Next Steps

In what ways does this framing of Islamophobia signal the absence of structural critique within LIS's understanding of racialized violence more broadly?

Cautions and Reflections

- Not just about semantics (i.e. replacing "bias" with "structures")

- Not about better, more militant EDI

- Current framing of Islamophobia is not only limited, but actively sustaining regimes of power

- Reckoning with Islamophobia to its fullest extent and its implications on our profession

Thank you! :)

Dave   David

Yoonhee   Hannah

Ebony   Matty

Baharak   Bayan

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