

2017 SEATTLE TIMES ANALYSIS REPORT

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SEATTLE TIMES' COVERAGE OF ISLAM AND MUSLIMS

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CAIR
WASHINGTON

The Washington State Chapter of the
Council on American-Islamic Relations

ABOUT CAIR-WA

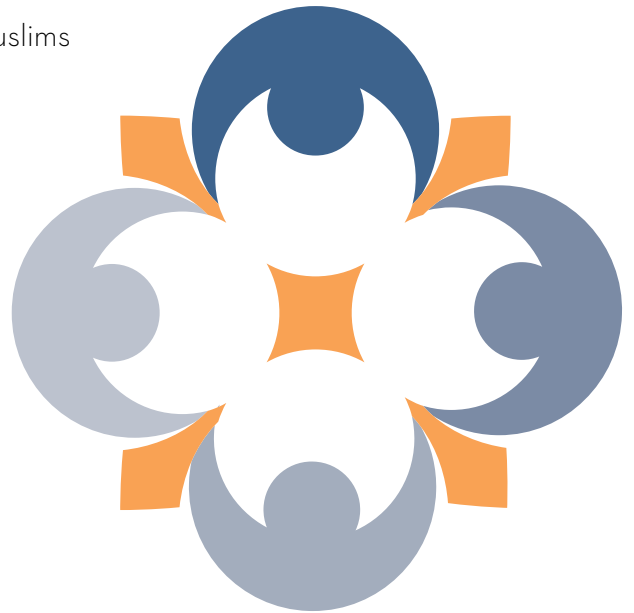
CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding. CAIR-Washington is a not-for-profit organization registered in Washington. Though it leverages the resources, expertise, and knowledge base of CAIR (based in Washington D.C.), it functions as an independent organization that sets its own strategy and goals. CAIR-WA is one of thirty-three CAIR chapters nationwide.

OUR VISION

To attain equal opportunity for—and normalize the image of—Muslims in America.

OUR MISSION

To defend civil rights, fight bigotry, empower American Muslims and promote understanding.



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I. Executive Summary

a. This report was created in order to monitor, track and analyze coverage of Islam and Muslims in *The Seattle Times* during the year 2011. We believe the findings presented in this report provide a thorough and accurate report on these objectives. Each category produced unique conclusions that should be examined individually.

- First, we flagged a significant number of articles for “informative and representative reporting.” We were pleased with the high number of these articles and urge *The Times* to continue producing such high-quality journalism that serves the reading public.
- For “terminology,” we found that articles in *The Times* often failed to use precise and proper terminology when describing Muslim individuals or groups. The most glaring errors were the high volume of words such as “Islamist” and “jihad.” As discussed previously, these terms are almost always used incorrectly, do not benefit *readers*, and are in fact obstacles to readers’ understanding of issues.
- For “labeling disparity,” we found a strong trend toward labeling Muslims who commit violent acts as “terrorists,” while the apparent refusal to use the same language to describe non-Muslims who commit similar acts of violence. This has created an environment in which now only Muslims would be considered by readers as “terrorists” and is an obstacle to readers’ understanding of the nature of the crime and the possible motivations of the alleged perpetrators. *Acts of violence and violent extremism* and the actual action (e.g. shooter, shooting, bomber, bombing, etc.) should be used to describe the nature of the attack rather than “terrorism” which is a vague word that has become one that is racially loaded and seen to be specific to one religious group. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that there is still no clear, broadly agreed-upon definition of the words terror, terrorism or terrorist. Further, we found a strong trend toward using ‘Islam’ as a qualifier for violence and terrorism. A clear policy on how and when a religious qualifier is used would address this. Additionally, if religious-based qualifiers are used, they must be used uniformly, across all religions.
- In the section “biased and unbalanced reporting,” we found a limited number of articles that appeared overtly one-sided. These articles were fairly uncommon, yet we still feel it is important to bring attention to them, as they may misinform the reading public.

Please visit cairseattle.org/SeattleTimes to view scanned copies of the clipped/flagged articles.

II. Introduction

a. Who we are

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is a non-profit grassroots organization dedicated to presenting an Islamic perspective on issues of importance to the American public. CAIR is the largest Muslim-American civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, serving the interests of more than seven million American Muslims with over 32 chapters and offices nationwide and in Canada.

CAIR strives to be a leading advocate for justice and mutual understanding, with a mission to: enhance a general understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.¹ CAIR Washington (CAIR-WA) is a local chapter that is affiliated with the national organization yet functions as an independent organization with its own strategy and goals.

b. Why this report is needed

Due to strong public misconceptions and high levels of anti-Muslim sentiment since the tragedy of September 11, 2011, we believe this report is a much needed counterweight. A 2006 survey commissioned by CAIR's Chicago chapter found that one in four Americans view Islam as a religion of hatred and violence. Additionally, when asked their first impressions of the word "Muslim," 26 percent responded with comments deemed "negative," such as "violence," "hatred," "terrorists," "war," "guns," "towel-heads," and "rag-head," while only six percent of responses were categorized as "positive," such as "good religion."² Unfortunately, these unfavorable poll numbers have not improved with time. A 2010 ABC News/*Washington Post* poll found that only 37 percent of Americans have a favorable opinion of Islam—the lowest favorability rating since 2001.³ Furthermore, in light of the recent "birther" movement, a 2010 *Time* magazine poll found that a third of Americans do not believe a Muslim should be eligible to run for president.⁴

We believe these views are due, in part, to biased and sensationalized reporting in mainstream media that links Muslims and Islam to violence and backwardness.⁵ These linkages occur through incorrect terminology use, labeling disparities, and outright biased reporting and editing. These unfavorable attitudes are exacerbated by a glaring knowledge gap among Americans, with most Americans discovering Islam only in the context of

¹"CAIR: Who we are," *Council on American Islamic Relations*, June 2010, <http://www.cair.com/CivilRights/CAIRWhoWeAre.aspx>.

² Reem Rahman and Ahmed Rehab, "Daily Herald Review: A Muslim Reader's Perspective," 2007, http://www.cairchicago.org/pdf/dailyheraldreview_2007.pdf, 3.

³ Wajahat Ali et al., *Fear, Inc. The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America*, The Center for American Progress, August 2011, 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵ Gallup Poll, January 21, 2010: "In U.S., Religious Prejudice Stronger Against Muslims"

terrorism and violence in the Middle East. This tendency in coverage leaves many Americans misinformed about Muslim issues and perspectives. A 2006 CAIR-Chicago survey found that two-thirds of respondents had never seen, heard or read “any Muslim leaders who have condemned terrorism.”⁶ Thus, this report seeks to highlight trends found in *The Seattle Times* (*The Times*) during the year 2011 with the goal to examine and analyze the status quo of its coverage of Muslims and Islam.

III. Methodology

This report has been researched and written over the course of 2011, with staff and interns at CAIR-WA reading a daily hardcopy of *The Seattle Times*. In order to evaluate coverage of Muslims in *The Times*, we developed a system to categorize all relevant articles. First, we created a Microsoft Excel style spreadsheet to keep track of all articles that we considered relevant to this report, including articles on the following topics: Israel/Palestine, the Middle East, Afghanistan/Pakistan (Af/Pak), other regions (i.e., Indonesia), Muslim-Americans, other minorities/religions, immigration, domestic civil rights, government policy, terrorism and violent crimes. This list is intentionally broad; categories not directly related to Muslim affairs were chosen for comparative purposes. We entered approximately 2,500 articles into our database. Next, we flagged certain articles based on four categories in order to track trends in reporting that appears in *The Times*. These categories are: informative and representative reporting, terminology, labeling disparity and biased/unbalanced reporting and. These terms will be further defined in subsequent sections. Articles flagged under any of these four categories were clipped from the newspaper and placed in corresponding files on a daily basis. These clippings make up the preponderance of the source material for this report. Please visit www.cairseattle.org/SeattleTimes to view scanned copies of the clipped/flagged articles.

a. Syndicated Articles

The Seattle Times relies heavily on syndicated articles from other newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *McClatchy Newspapers*, as well as wire services, such as *The Associated Press*. These syndications were especially prevalent in our report, as the majority of coverage of Muslims lies outside the reach of *The Times*' local staff reporters. Thus *The Times* uses syndicated articles to give its readers national and international news coverage. These syndicated articles are protected by copyright laws and cannot be edited by *The Times*. However, there is a responsibility for the content in syndicated articles carried by a newspaper because even if the language cannot be edited, a choice could be made not to include the articles in the paper. Further, the media outlets from which these articles originate could be informed of concerns with their reporting. Articles featuring incorrect terminology, labeling disparities or outright bias

⁶ Rahman and Rehab, “Daily Herald Review: A Muslim Reader’s Perspective, 3.

could simply not be chosen for publishing by *The Times*' editors. Further, as a customer, *The Times* can contact these larger papers and wire services to improve their terminology and labeling so that readers may be better able to understand issues described in them. Thus, in this report, we have not always separated articles written by *The Seattle Times*' reporters and those written by outside sources. If *The Times* elects to use syndicated articles, it must take full responsibility for the content therein.

IV. Findings

In the following sections, we summarize our findings for articles in each of the four flagged categories. Each section will contain a brief introduction that defines terms and outlines why we chose the category. We note the total number of flagged articles for each category to illustrate the frequency that each flag appeared. The articles presented as examples herein represent only a sample of the total number of articles that we flagged for each category. To read all of the flagged articles as well as our entire article database, please visit www.cairseattle.org/SeattleTimes

a. Informative and Representative Reporting

In the first section of this report—"informative and representative reporting"—we examine articles flagged in *The Times* for exceptional reporting on Muslims and Islam. Within this category, we highlight three types of articles. First, we flagged op-eds that presented mainstream American Muslim perspectives and provided some counterweight to the op-eds we flagged for bias. Second, we flagged articles that demonstrated in-depth knowledge of Islam and contained well-balanced and accurate portrayals of Muslims in the US and abroad. In particular, these articles featured coverage of Muslims outside of the realm of conflict, which was the dominant setting of articles relating to Islam and Muslims. Third, we flagged articles that carefully avoided using incorrect, imprecise and possibly misleading terminology such as "Islamist," as well as articles that avoided using "Islam" or "Muslim" as qualifiers for something negative and instead used clear and accurate terminology. We flagged 62 articles for "informative and representative reporting." The examples featured below represent a sample of the trends we found.

i. Opinion

This section covers op-eds and editorials that we found presented objective, accurate, and research-based portrayals of Islam and the issues faced by Muslims in the US and abroad. We highlight these articles below to show the balance of editorial coverage in *The Times*. First we look at an editorial from May 12th that reports on the injustices faced by Muslims while flying, concluding that "demonizing people based on name, religious beliefs or ethnic origins is not the answer to national-security worries" ("Flying while Muslim," May 12, A13).

Another example comes from an op-ed by author and local Muslim Jennifer Jones (“Meet the Muslims next door,” April 8, A13). The article—which is in response to the McCarthyite hearings sponsored by U.S. Rep. Peter King (R-NY)—cogently describes the fears felt by many in the local Muslim community, as their faith and values are derided on a national stage. She writes, “I was left wondering if it ever occurs to others that we are sometimes afraid, sad—and yes, even a little angry—just like everybody else.” She concludes her piece with an invitation to those in her community: “If you’re brave, neighbor, come on over and ring the bell. I’ll take a break from my radicalization schedule to share some tea, and maybe the best wonton recipe on Earth.”

Next, we examine an editorial from June. The piece is in response to an attempted attack by two men on a Seattle military recruiting station. *The Times* questions the suspects’ motives and choice of action, and accurately notes that “bin Laden’s terrorism has killed more Muslims than U.S. military efforts has” (“Hate-filled violence thwarted once again,” June 27, A11). Furthermore, *The Times* writes that “The vast majority of Muslims have no propensity for the hate-filled violence espoused” by the culprits and that an entire group of people do not deserve to be demonized for the actions of a few. *The Times* quickly and forcefully responded to the bigoted attack on Muslims, serving its journalistic duties.

Another example demonstrates journalistic balance in *The Times*. An editorial from April 12th firmly rejects France’s burqa ban as “anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant and, by singling out women, sexist” (“France’s veiled threat,” April 12, A9). This editorial gives *The Times*’ readers a solid balance between the two sides of the argument, with *Seattle Times* columnist Joni Balter taking the other side of the debate.

Lastly, we flagged an op-ed by Ramsey Ramerman—founder of the Washington Association of Public Records Officers—a non-profit dedicated to educating the public on the Public Records Act. Ramerman’s article challenges the secrecy behind the assassination of US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki (“Legal details justifying assassination of US citizen need transparency,” October 13, A9). The legality of this assassination was not often mentioned in *The Times*’ coverage of the story, and many columnists featured in *The Times* champion increased counter-terrorism measures, such as targeted assassinations. Thus we note that *The Times* tried to maintain an editorial balance by featuring op-eds, such as Ramerman’s that challenge the legality of killing US citizens without due process.

The articles above demonstrate *The Times*’ efforts to provide journalistic balance. These articles serve as a counterweight to some of the articles examined later in the “biased or factually incorrect reporting” sections that champion more aggressive counter-terrorism policy.

ii. In-depth and Well-balanced Journalism

This section highlights articles that provided in-depth analyses and insight into Islam and Muslim life. By focusing on issues outside of war and conflict, these articles shed light on Muslims and Islam in a way that typical news coverage often overlooks. We believe it is important to highlight these articles, as they represent ways of correcting many of the anti-Muslim stereotypes held by many Americans.

In *The Seattle Times*, the best example of this type of journalism comes from Aziz Junejo who writes in *The Times*' Faith & Values section, which features columnists across the spiritual/religious spectrum. Junejo, a local Muslim who hosts "Focus on Islam"—a weekly TV show—represents a mainstream Muslim perspective on both local and national news, as well as providing insight into Islam. We recognize *The Seattle Times* for including a mainstream and representative Muslim columnist in its Faith & Values section. In 2011, *The Times* featured ten of Junejo's articles.

By featuring articles by Junejo, *The Times* provides an important public service in dispelling some of the myths believed by many members of the American public. One of the most prevalent of these myths is the notion that the Quran, Islam's revealed text, somehow orders Muslims to kill non-Muslims ("Death to the unbelievers? A look at the Quran's most misread passage," June 25, B2). Junejo provides facts to challenge this commonly held myth, noting that the Quran is actually quite particular as to when fighting in self-defense is justifiable. Further, he notes that the passage only actually refers to "a specific time, and only at the city of Mecca, when idol worshippers of Mecca had broken a truce with Muslims and did horrible injustices." Additionally, Junejo writes that even in this scenario, there were many conditions that must have been met before killing could be justified, such as the passing of a defined grace period, the absence of any other pact between the two parties and only if they (the idol worshippers) attacked you first—"and even then," he writes, "God is merciful, forgiveness is supreme." In sum, As Junejo writes that the verse allows "Muslims to defend themselves only with peace as their ultimate goal, which mirrors the interpretation of Islamic scholars today."

We would like to note that Junejo was not the only columnist to write on this subject. Syndicated *Miami Herald* columnist Leonard Pitts Jr. used his column from March 27th to illustrate the dangers of picking and choosing passages from ancient texts to make a point, he writes, "I wish people would stop cherry-picking warlike quotes from the Quran to "prove the evil of Islam" ("A pop quiz on religious extremism," March 27, A11).

Junejo also uses his column to offer mainstream Muslim perspective on important issues dealing with or relating to Muslims. Specifically, in his article commemorating the tenth-anniversary of 9/11, Junejo

emphatically denounced terrorism, while he also shielded Islam from prejudiced and reactionary attacks: “Islam rejects all types of terrorism and its manifestations, but disinformation and misunderstandings about our religions have led many to see these distortions as truth, rather than as deception of confusion” (“Standing united against terrorism,” September 9, B2). The improper connection commonly made between terrorism and Islam is one of the most important issues facing the Muslim-American community, and Junejo’s articles enable readers to understand what mainstream Muslims believe. These articles are prime examples of how Junejo offers informative and representative journalism.

Junejo’s column is just one example of the in-depth and well-balanced journalism we found in *The Times* during 2011. Other examples consist of news articles and opinion pieces that feature in-depth and well-balanced reporting on Islam and Muslim affairs. For example, at the end of the Islamic month of Ramadan, *The Times*’ Northwest section featured two front page photos commemorating the Islamic holiday Eid al-Fitr—which celebrates the end of Ramadan (“Prayers at end of Ramadan, August 31, B1). Another article reports from a barbecue put together by the Islamic Center of Eastside, which brought in members from the neighborhood in order to “demystify” Islam and build relationships within the community (“Islamic Center barbecue help ease a difficult week,” June 26, B1). Additionally, a September 4th article provides in-depth reporting on an Islamic school in Seattle—Cherry Hill Montessori—that opened its doors to non-Muslim educators, highlighted by its new non-Muslim director Luis Tornillo (“Islamic school opens door to non-Muslim educators, September 4, B1). Lastly, an article from April gives a portrait of a Muslim family living in the Northwest that worked with Habitat for Humanity to rebuild a foreclosed home (“Habitat for Humanity builds through the bust,” April 4, E1). These three articles all represent great examples of coverage of Muslims in everyday settings. As illustrated in an op-ed by CAIR-WA Executive Director Arsalan Bukhari, Muslim-Americans “are part and parcel of the American fabric”—contributing to myriad facets of American life (“Muslims in America: united by shared ideals,” September 9, A21). These articles—and many others—provide readers with fact-based insight into everyday American Muslim life in the local community and address unfounded suspicion of Islam and Muslims.

iii. Terminology and Labeling

Lastly, we flagged articles that avoided improper labels—such as “Islamic” as a prefix for “terrorist”—and improper terminology such as “Islamist” or “jihadist.” These articles show how to cover sensitive topics relevant to Muslims and Islam, as they use precise terminology—making them an important showcase to foster better terminology usage in journalism.

Since 9/11, the phrase “Islamic terrorism” has entered the US vernacular. This threat is associated with the tragic 9/11 attacks, the menace of al-Qaeda and global violent extremism, and as ‘the clash of the 21st

century.’ However, as discussed above, the idea of “Islamic terror” as a singular and homogenous entity similar to that of the USSR is simply inaccurate. While some Muslim majority countries struggle with enforcing laws to curb violent groups, these organizations, each with varying political goals and geographic areas of focus, have used Islam to lend credibility to their messages, which in fact are often counter to Islamic teachings. Each individual organization should be referred to as precisely indicating their specific stated political goals, thus dispelling the myth of a homogenous ‘Islamic’ terror network. Articles should refer to these violent extremist groups by the name of the group or by their stated cause, thus refraining from linking the group to an entire religion, ethnic/racial group, or an entire country.

The following articles demonstrate how to more precisely and accurately comment on these varying organizations. First, an article on a drone strike against an extremist group in Northwest Pakistan refers to the group as the “Haqqani militant network” (“Drone-fired missiles kill 4 in NW Pakistan,” October 15, A4). Second, an article in the “Newline section” refers to an explosion in the Philippines by “al-Qaida linked militants” (“Bomb explodes,” April 10, A2). Third, an article refers to a suicide bomber who “attacked a funeral attended by anti-Taliban militiamen” in northwestern Pakistan (“Pakistan blast,” March 4, A2). Fourth and finally, an article on the prisoner swap between Israel and Hamas refers to the Palestinian group as “the militant faction Hamas” (“Killers on Israel’s list of 477 to be freed,” October 17, A2). This description of Hamas is significant, though it is a diversified organization, if compared to an article from September 18, which refers to Hamas as “the violently anti-Israel Islamic groups that rules Gaza” (“Palestinian question tops big U.N. agenda,” September 18, A8).

These four articles, along with many others, give a more precise and informative account of news stories involving violence and Muslims. Each article rightly identifies the organization by its name or affiliation, as opposed to its purported religion, and gives the reader further information on the group’s possible motives and objectives. Furthermore, the articles refrain from describing the groups with the vague term, “terrorists,” which would lead many readers to immediately associate the attack with Islam.

b. Terminology

Out of our four categories of flags, terminology was flagged most often. Over 130 articles were flagged for Muslim specific terminology errors over the course of the year. Several different words were flagged for incorrect terminology; each word shared the common trait of negatively linking Islam or Muslims to outside events. Within “terminology,” we focus on two of the most prevalent terminology misuses “Islamist” and “jihadist.” A quote from US Rep. Paul Broun (a Republican from Georgia) illustrates why these two words need to be addressed: “The focus of this hearing is not the Islamic religion. It’s Islamists. It’s jihadists”

(“Hearing on ‘radicalized’ U.S. Muslims takes on partisan tone,” March 11, A2). Below we provide examples and offer suggestions for improvement.

i. “Islamist”

Within “terminology,” use of the word “Islamist” was the most frequently flagged error. As this section will show, the term “Islamist” was used in a variety of different contexts with a variety of different meanings. We use the term in quotations because we do not believe the term has any definitive meaning and causes the reader to see the subject as negative, threatening and linked to Islam and Muslims. While the word was hardly used prior to 9/11, today the word is listed in some dictionaries, but these definitions do not capture its multitude of uses. A term used without an agreed-upon definition serves to obfuscate and, in this case, to instill a sense of fear towards what it qualifies. *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (1989), for example, lists “Islamist” as a form of the word “Islamism,” which it defines as “the faith, doctrine, or cause of Islam.”⁷ However, our research shows that, at least recently, the definition of the word “Islamist” has been transformed. For example, Webster’s online dictionary now defines “Islamist” as “a supporter or advocate of Islamic fundamentalism.”⁸ However, a Google search for “Islamist definition” provides the following definition, “A scholar who [is] knowledgeable in Islamic studies.”⁹ Lastly, Wikipedia, a website edited by the public, refers to Islamists as those who believe that Islam “is not only a religion but a political system” and advocate for: “the enforcement of Sharia,” “pan-Islamic political unity,” and the elimination of Western influence in the Muslim world.¹⁰ We are not using these definitions to make a statement regarding the veracity of any of these websites or definitions, but rather to illustrate the inconsistency in defining the term. Since Google and Wikipedia are two of the most widely used sources of information by the public, we thought it was important to look at their respective definitions. We found the term to be used most often within two broad groupings: Islamic militancy and political Islam.

1. The “Islamist” as the Islamic Militant

We first examine the use of “Islamist” to connote militants, or militant organizations comprised of Muslims, usually of a lesser pedigree. For example, now that groups such as al-Qaida and the Taliban have entered into the public’s vernacular, in general, *The Times* no longer qualifies them as “Islamist.” However, for lesser-known organizations, in *The Times* these groups were readily qualified—each with varying missions, national origins and sectarian affiliations—as “Islamist” which misleads readers into seeing all of these organizations as part of an ostensibly homogenous group.

⁷ Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, Springfield, MA, 1989, p.641.

⁸ “Islamist,” dictionary.com, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/islamist>.

⁹ “Islamist,” Google, <http://google.com>

¹⁰ “Islamism,” Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamism>.

For example, an article by Jeffrey Gentleman and Mohammed Ibrahim on the famine in Somalia refers to the withdrawal of forces by the “al-Shabab Islamist rebels” (“Government in Somali regains control of capital,” August 7, A4). By using this ambiguous term—“Islamist”—the authors seek to group al-Shabab as part of the greater nexus of “Islamic” violent extremists. Another article on the famine in Somalia refers to al-Shabab as “al-Qaida linked Islamists”—directly linking “Islamist” with the most well known terror outfit (“Chaos, gunfire as starving Somalis attempt to get food,” August 6, A4). Thus, the reader is left with a strong connection between “Islamist” and al-Qaida.

Al-Shabab is not the only violent extremist organization that gets the “Islamist” label from *The Seattle Times*. Over the course of 2011, there has been an increase in violence in Nigeria, with a militant group known as Boko Haram claiming much of the responsibility. An article by Lydia Polgreen highlights the trend of linking lesser-known militant groups to global terrorism by using vague terminology: “Nigeria’s president visited the site of [bombing], pledging to bring justice to an Islamist group called Boko Haram” (“Nigerian leader vows to suppress extremists,” August 28, A9). Since the majority of readers probably do not have knowledge of Boko Haram’s political goals and philosophy, the author uses “Islamist” in creating an image that this group is a part of “the global terrorism network”—giving the reader an easy but misguided way to organize the information. Referring to widely varying militant groups with varying goals, philosophies and areas of focus, as simply “Islamists,” is a disservice to *The Times’* readers as it oversimplifies the conversation and creates an obstacle in the reader’s ability to understand the nature, motivations, and goals of these groups and the reader’s broader understanding of world events.

Other examples are even less specific as to who “Islamists” really are. Consider an article on militants along the Af/Pak, which notes “Islamist militants, who flowed out of Afghanistan, battled a second day with Pakistani security forces...” (“Militants from Afghanistan clash with Pakistani forces,” June 3, A11). Another example comes from an article on violence in Kenya and Somalia, with the article explaining “Kenyan military aircraft will target and destroy weapons that were flown into Somalia on two planes and delivered to Islamist militants...” (“Kenya to target Somalia weapons,” November 3, A7). And lastly, a headline from June 27th read, “Islamist militants expand role in southern Yemen.” The article features an ominous introduction noting: “The ancient port city of Aden is now virtually surrounded by roving gangs of Islamist militia fighters—some linked to al-Qaida...” (“Islamist militants expand role in southern Yemen,” June 27, A2). These articles illustrate how *The Times* uses the term “Islamist” to tie various groups of militants to a greater storyline, that of “Islamic terrorism” and the global “jihad”. However, the militants in Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen and Afghanistan—to only name a few of the places where they may exist—are largely heterogeneous, fighting on behalf of local and national issues, rather than some international conspiracy to create an Islamic caliphate. *The Times* accurately noted that al-Shabab “rose up in 2006 as a popular nationalist movement to

kick troops from Ethiopia out of the country,” yet *The Times* continues to link al-Shabab—and other nationalistic groups similar to it—into some mythical “Islamist” cartel (“War-weary Somalis find respite at beach,” November 8, A6). The examples examined so far define “Islamist” as some kind of rag-tag militia fighting on behalf of a global Islamic crusade. But, as we will illustrate below, it has an entirely different definition when used in a different context.

2. The “Islamist” as the Muslim Politician

The Seattle Times also heavily used the term “Islamist” to refer to political parties with an Islamic ideology. This usage has appeared increasingly in *The Times* due to the so-called Arab Spring, which has revitalized many of the political parties that had been long suppressed under authoritarian rule. While the democratization of the Middle East has drawn praise from certain corners, others fear what will happen when the people of these countries actually choose the parties and policies for themselves. We look now to the use of “Islamist” to describe the rise of religiously inclined political parties in the Middle East.

Egypt stood at the center of the Arab Spring, due to its large population and its influence throughout the region. By reviewing the headlines and articles over the past year, however, the emergence of democracy in Egypt does not appear to the reader to be a good thing in-and-of-itself. An article from March 20 features a subtitle that casts some gloom on the upcoming elections, noting that “some critics fear vote will strengthen Islamist group.” Further, the first paragraph reinforces this imagery of fear: “Egyptians lined up by the hundreds Saturday to vote on constitutional amendments sponsored by the ruling military that critics fear could propel the country’s largest Islamist group to become Egypt’s most dominant political force” (“Egyptian referendum first major test of democracy,” March 20, A8). So, what ostensibly should be a good thing—Egyptians voting in free elections—has now been overshadowed by the fear of an “Islamist” government (the article seems to be referring to the Muslim Brotherhood, but it does not mention the group by name until much later on—choosing instead to use ambiguous language). The authors use the term “Islamist” to connote something bad, as the words “Islamist” and “fear” are linked together twice by the end of the first paragraph.

Not all mentions of “Islamist” in a political sense are directly tied to negative imagery. However, the myriad uses of the term throughout *The Times’* articles serve to obscure and generalize many of the issues at hand. Consider an article from November 30th by Ernesto Londono (“Islamists claim strong showing in Egyptian vote,” November 30, A1). The article’s headline reads “Islamists claim strong showing in Egyptian vote,” with a subtitle noting that the “Brotherhood party projected to lead.” The beginning of the article confirms the subtitle, noting that the Brotherhood is expecting to win the parliamentary elections, and that “a more conservative Islamist party” is supposed to finish second. Since these two parties—the Brotherhood and an

initially unnamed conservative party—are projected to finish one-two in the voting, Londono and *The Times*' editor chose to simplify the issue, writing “Islamists will play a major role in drafting the constitution. Not until much later in the article is the other “Islamist” party identified by name as “The Nour Party, run by ultraconservative Muslims called Salafists.”

This article—and others just like it—uses “Islamist” to link Islamic-based political parties, terrorist organizations, and Muslims in general, in spite of their diverse world-views, goals and areas of focus. By using vague and misleading terminology, *the writers* do a disservice to its readers by oversimplifying the news. Instead, *journalists should* use precise terminology and explanations to paint a more accurate picture of world events.

ii. Jihad

Another widely misused term was “jihad” and its variations “jihadi” and “jihadist,” ostensibly referring to Muslims who wage a supposed “holy war” against the “West” in order to create an Islamic caliphate based on Sharia. However, this common interpretation of “jihad” into “holy war” is not only false but also far from the truth. Unlike “Islamist,” jihad has a clear definition, with origins in the Quran. Jihad literally translates into “striving” or “struggle,” and its most prominent feature, known as the “greater jihad,” consists of “the internal struggle to avoid negative actions and cultivate good character.” What is known as the “lesser jihad” is “the external striving for justice, either in self-defense or against oppression.”¹¹ It is this second “lesser jihad” that has triggered the misconceptions of jihad meaning “holy war.” In reality, the “lesser jihad” serves to protect human rights and, even in the limited cases where war would be permissible, it could only be in self-defense and thus within the dictates of international law. A perfect example of this type of jihad would be the uprisings of the Arab Spring, violent and non-violent alike.

As the examples will show, this term is widely transformed in reporting in order to simplistically frame world events. An article by Heidi Vogt highlights this misconception; she writes, of al-Qaida’s “worldwide terrorist attacks in the name of Muslim jihad” (“Petraeus: Taliban may loosen ties to al-Qaida,” May 9, A3). This passage clearly uses “jihad” as a proper and accurate justification for the actions of al-Qaida.

Next, a headline of a May 12th article links “jihad” directly to the actions of Osama bin Laden: “Jihad journal: Bin Laden kept list of ways to kill Americans” (A4). This headline makes the inference that bin Laden’s “journal” of plots against the west is a legitimate example of jihad, something that almost all Muslims would object to. Another example comes from the “Newline section” on November 13th, which referred to a

¹¹ “Frequently Asked Questions on Terrorism,” The Islamic Network Group, <http://www.ing.org/index.php/community-statements/172-frequently-asked-questions-on-terrorism>.

“Kazakh ‘jihadist’” who “killed seven people and injured three when he went on [a] rampage” (“Kazakhiztan (*sic*) rampage,” A2). Why this article put jihadist in quotes, and why *The Times* decided to classify the attacker as “jihadist” is unclear, yet it infers that this shooting was inspired by mainstream religious teachings and that it was an act of jihad.

Lastly, an article on the assassination of US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki features the headline, “Drones quiet US-born cleric whose words inspired jihad” (September 30, A1). The headline is misleading and inflammatory because what *The Times* is really trying to say is that al-Awlaki inspired violent extremism, not jihad. By equating jihad with violent extremism, and using the two words interchangeably, *The Times* is explicitly linking violent extremism with credible Islamic teachings and turning the practice of a religious principle into a form of terrorism. For *The Times* to continue using a blatantly incorrect definition of an important Islamic term shows negligence on behalf of *The Times*. We encourage *The Times* to cease using jihad to refer to violent extremism.

c. Labeling Disparity

The second most frequently flagged category was “labeling disparity”—which we define as the inconsistent labeling of events and people so as to cause imbalances and misconceptions. This is a broad category that spans many different subject matters and appears in many different forms, yet it is a critical source of misinformation and a leading cause of Islamophobia in the US.¹² In this section, we will look at two different manifestations of labeling disparity—the labeling of terrorists or terrorist attacks and the use of the “Islamic qualifier.” We flagged 68 articles in *The Times* for labeling disparity in 2011.

i. Terrorism as a Label

Since the tragedy of 9/11, the word “terrorism” has taken on a life of its own, transcending any one definition. At the same time, however, it has taken on a completely new definition that has little to do with the act of violence in-and-of-itself. As this section will show, the post-9/11 definition of terrorism has more to do with the “who” than it does with the “what.” While definitions of terrorism abound, we believe terrorism to be a tactic, not an identifiable enemy, which can be defined as “the use, or threat, of violence against civilians to achieve political objectives, regardless of who uses it.” Within this definition, terrorism can be committed by anyone, whether it is one person or a group of thousands, and can be used to achieve any number of political goals. However, this definition is no longer congruous with the use of the word terrorism in the mainstream media. Instead, as readers of *The Seattle Times* would recognize, “terrorism” only refers to acts of violence committed by Muslims, ostensibly as part of a global cultural-religious “holy war” or “jihad.”

¹² Wajahat Ali et al., *Fear, Inc. The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America*, 50.

Thus, we see “terrorism” as a label that is predominately applied to Muslims, whereas violent crimes committed by non-Muslims are referred to in other, more exact terms.

The most significant case study regarding “the terrorism label” was *The Seattle Times*’ coverage of the July 22 attacks in Norway by Anders Breivik. This case shows widespread confusion over the meaning of the word “terrorism” and illustrates how the word has come to refer largely only to Muslims. On its front page, *The Times* featured a large front page banner reading “A madman’s work?: 80 killed at youth camp” with a large photo of a Norwegian SWAT team storming Utoya Island, where Breivik had just murdered over 70 people. Under this photo, however, was an interesting headline that cogently illustrates *The Times*’ confusion over the meaning of terrorist: “Official says no link to terrorists; death toll in attack could rise.” Not only did *The Times* not refer to this blatant terrorist attack as such, it went a step further and proclaimed that there was “no link to terrorists”—clearly alluding to the homogenous nexus of international “jihadists.” Even stranger, however, is that despite quoting several officials as saying that the attack was not “Islamic terror related,” the article concludes by noting “[a]t least two Islamic extremist groups tried to take responsibility for the attack” and that “Norway has been dealing with a homegrown terrorist plot linked to al-Qaida.” The only plausible reason for including this would be to further cement the link between Islam and terrorism, while also differentiating this attack from “real terrorism,” i.e., acts of politically motivated violence by non-Muslims.

Over the next week, *The Times* featured 53 articles on Breivik and the attacks. Two of these articles did refer to Breivik as a ‘terrorist,’ one by Steven Erlanger—who described the attacks as “a shocking case of homegrown terrorism,” (“Shooter: You’re all going to die,” A1, July 24)—and the other by Henry Chu, who referred to the two attacks as “twin terrorist attacks” (“Suspect’s manifesto sought ridding Europe of Muslims,” A2, July 25). However, the rest of *The Times*’ coverage failed to address Breivik as a terrorist, and it continued to make the distinction that Breivik was an anti-Muslim extremist—not a terrorist. Breivik, however, in his online postings, was explicit as to his motivation: to save Europe’s Christian values and culture from the oncoming tide of Muslim immigrants. Thus he used violence to achieve political objectives—terrorism.

Another interesting case study comes from the shooting of former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-AZ) and 18 other Arizonians at a rally outside Tucson on January 8th. As noted in Ross Douthat’s column on the Norway attack, there are many similarities between Breivik and Jared Lee Loughner—the man who shot and killed six other officials while attempting to kill US Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in Tucson, AZ (“The reality behind a monster’s act,” A11, July 26). Both had posted anti-government manifestos online and both appear to have specifically sought out liberal-minded politicians. Furthermore, the commentary stemming from the shooting focused heavily on potential political motivations. Thus, in this context, there is good reason to view

Loughner as a terrorist, much like Breivik. In all of its coverage and follow-up on the story over many months, *The Times* never used this term, referring to him instead as “the gunman,” or “the suspect,” while referring to the event as a “rampage” or a “mass shooting” (“Congresswoman shot in Arizona rampage,” A1, January 9) (“Families offer their stories; Giffords shows more progress,” A1, January 12). Again, this is not to say that Loughner is or is not a “terrorist” but to show that the word “terrorist” consistently appears to be reserved for Muslims only. Imagine what the mainstream media response would have been and what terminology would have been used had Loughner been a Muslim.

A more local example comes from Spokane where white supremacist Kevin Harpham was charged with “attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction and one count of knowingly possessing an improvised explosive device (IED)” at a Martin Luther King Jr. Day rally (“Bomb-plot suspect pleads not guilty,” March 24, B1). Harpham pled guilty to the crime in September, and admitted that he sought to commit a hate crime by detonating the device into a multicultural crowd (“Guilty plea in parade bomb plot in Spokane,” September 8, B1). Harpham even admitted his political motives in his plea deal, saying, “I was making a statement that there are people out there who don't agree with these ideas,” referring to multiculturalism (“MLK parade bomber sentenced to 32 years in prison,” December 20, B1). Yet despite this admission to using violence for political motives, headlines from *The Times* referred to the event as a “bomb-plot” and to Harpham as “bomb-plot suspect,” and to the trial as “Spokane bomb trial.”

A few other examples of the “terrorist” label are worth mentioning. On November 10th, the Newsline section carried a story with the headline “Alleged militia target,” which detailed a plot by four members of a Georgia militia who plotted to assassinate US Attorney General Eric Holder and other government officials with explosives and toxins (A2). Authorities confiscated 52 guns and 30,000 rounds of ammunition that had been stockpiled in the ringleader’s home. Yet this group was never accused of plotting terrorism, nor was its members depicted as terrorists. On December 14th, a man opened fire and hurled grenades into a crowd of Christmas shoppers in Liège, Belgium. He killed at least three and later committed suicide; he was never referred to in *The Times* as a terrorist (“Belgium Attack,” A2).

Lastly, on September 7th, *The Seattle Times* featured an article in its Nation & World Report with the headline “3 killed after gunman opens fire at restaurant.” The article covers a story about a man who opened fire “on a group of five uniformed National Guard members” at an IHOP restaurant in Carson City, Nevada. The story claims that the man specifically sought out the men in military uniforms, noting that it appeared the man knew they were inside and targeted them—suggesting a political motive—and thus calling for the suspect to be referred to as a “terrorist”; the article, however, does not refer to the “gunman” as a terrorist (The New York Times and The AP, A2).

These examples seek to show the disparity we found in the use of the word ‘terrorism’. Each case reveals instances where acts of violence were carried out with political motivations, and the perpetrators were not described as terrorists. Whether or not these cases are terrorism can be debated. However, these examples show that *The Seattle Times* rarely, if ever, applies the word terrorism to non-Muslims. *The Times* should either cease to use “terrorist”, “terror”, and “terrorism” and use exact terminology to describe violent crimes or it must provide a definition of “terrorist” and apply it uniformly.

ii. The “Islamic Qualifier”

The “Islamic qualifier” seeks to tie an entire religion and its followers to certain groups or acts repetitiously linking Islam with violent extremism. Over the past year, *The Times* consistently used the “Islamic qualifier,” while other religions or groups are generally not linked to negative actions of their followers. Use the “Islamic qualifier,” obscured and generalizes news events, which may leave readers with misconceptions and biases—a major cause of Islamophobia.¹³ Additionally, similarly consistent use of qualifiers to describe groups affiliated with Christianity or Judaism could not be found in *The Times*’ coverage.

The most common “Islamic qualifier” was “Islamic militants.” This term was used to refer to a wide range of groups, including Hamas (an elected political party in Palestine with a militant wing), al-Qaida (and all of its loose regional affiliates), and regional militant groups in Yemen, Nigeria and Somalia. Other common qualifiers were “Islamic extremists,” “Islamic fundamentalists,” “Islamic terrorism,” “Islamic separatists,” “Islamic insurgency,” and “Islamic rebels.” By qualifying words like “militants” or “extremists” with “Islamic,” *The Times* plays on its readers’ preconceptions of Islam and terrorism. Research studies have consistently shown that Muslims do not consider these organizations to be true representatives of Islam and Muslims, and neither should *The Times*.¹⁴

A comparison of two articles will elucidate this issue. First, in an article from November 6, Jon Gabrell of the AP refers to “a radical Islamic sect known locally as Boko Haram...” (“Nigerian militants ignite deadly attacks,” A12). This sort of labeling appears to be a standard practice in *The Times*. Yet, by qualifying this group as “a radical Islamic sect,” the reader instantly links this group with the likes of al-Qaida and any chance of clear, informative, honest discourse is lost. Instead of using vague and sensationalist language, the author could refer to the group as “a militant group in Nigeria known as Boko Haram.” The latter definition accurately depicts the group in clear terms without linking it to a religion, especially one whose adherents don’t view this group as credible representatives of their faith.

¹³ Wajahat Ali et al., *Fear, Inc. The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America*, 27.

¹⁴ “Muslim Americans: Faith, Freedom, and the Future,” Abu Dhabi Gallup Center, Aug. 2011, 6.

On the other hand, *The Times* appears wary to use religious qualifiers for other religions. Another look at the Breivik commentary illustrates the discrepancy. In his online postings, Anders Breivik referred to himself loosely as a Christian and cited defending Christian values and culture as one of his primary motivations in carrying out the attacks. In this sense, his motivations are similar to that of al-Qaida, which seeks to purge the Middle East of American military presence and what it considers to be Western values. However, instead of flatly referring to Breivik as a “Christian terrorist,” *The Times* refers to him as “Anders Breivik, a self-proclaimed Christian crusader...” (“We won’t succumb to fear, Norway PM says,” July 28, A2). The distinction here is significant. Breivik, whose manifesto is strikingly similar to that of al-Qaida, can only be a “self-proclaimed Christian,” which makes sense because clearly the majority of Christians see his views as outlandish and as having nothing to do with Christianity. *The Times*, however, does not allow for this degree of distinction when it comes to Islam.

In sum, we found that *The Times* consistently used “terrorism” and “terrorist” to only refer to Muslims, while other violent extremists are described as “gunman” or “attacker.” Further, we find that *The Times* has a tendency to qualify acts of terror or militant groups as “Islamic,” whereas similar groups of a different religion are not directly tied to their religion. In sum, *The Times* must stop inciting hatred towards Muslims through inflammatory and inaccurate word choices. As long as Muslims are directly linked to “terrorism” in the press, so too will they be linked in the minds of the American populace.

In order to improve improper labeling of Muslims, we ask journalists to ask themselves seven questions before they use a particular label:

1. Why am I using this description?
2. What does this description say about the individual?
3. What relevance does this individual have to the story I’m telling?
4. What background can I offer that increases the public understanding of this individual and his or her relationship to the story?
5. What context am I providing about the people and events I’m covering?
6. Does this description advance the story in any significant, substantive way?
7. How would this description sound if I were describing someone who looked like me?¹⁵

d. Biased or Factually Incorrect Reporting

This category features articles that we flagged for bias or factually incorrect reporting on Islam. Most of the

¹⁵ American Muslims: A Journalists Guide to Understanding Islam and Muslims, CAIR, n.d., p. 18.

articles flagged in this section were op-eds, which are inherently biased as they convey the author's view. However, while one is entitled to their own opinion, *The Seattle Times* should not print any article that is biased to the degree that it becomes inflammatory, nor should it print articles that contain factually incorrect claims. We flagged eleven articles for bias or factually incorrect reporting. Here we examine four articles that we believe to embody the category.

September 11, 2011 produced a flurry of articles commemorating the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Many of these articles sought to champion or defend policies in the years after the attacks. Of the 9/11 remembrance articles, two stood out for being factually questionable. One of these op-eds was by former US Senator Slade Gorton. Gorton, who was a member of the 9/11 Commission, used his op-ed to defend the policies he advocated in the aftermath of 9/11. He notes how "at great cost in both dollars and personal disruption" the US is "clearly safer" now than it was previously (Ten years after 9/11: Where do we stand?" September 4, A17). To support this claim he notes that "in the past decade there has been only one fatal terrorist attack, the Fort Hood massacre..." Gorton attempts to justify his claim by saying that "the enemy is not generic 'terrorism' but violent Islamic extremism. However, terrorism is a tactic, and thus it cannot be defined as being committed only by Muslims. Therefore, Gorton's claim is false, as there have been at least two major fatal terrorist attacks since 9/11. Most recently there was the attack in Tucson, where Jared Loughner killed six people. Additionally, there was a fatal attack on the IRS building in Texas, when Joseph Andrew Stack III flew a plane into an IRS building killing himself and one other. These two examples, among the many more fatal attacks, clearly refute Gorton's claim.

Next we look at an article by former US Attorney and Seattle University law professor John McKay. This article also seeks to defend the policies advocated by the author following 9/11. McKay mentioned that policies such as the PATRIOT Act, increased border enforcement, and Guantanamo Bay detention and interrogation "must be credited...with keeping us safe here at home" ("Ten years later, a vigilant nation grapples with existential questions," September 11, A19). First, as outlined in the previous paragraph, it is debatable whether we have in fact been "safe" over the past ten years. Second, we question McKay's argument that policies such as the PATRIOT Act can really be attributed to the lack of terrorist attacks in the US. These policies were designed to stop "terrorists" from entering the country, and preventing explosives from getting onto planes or from detonating in public places. However, we have seen numerous attacks thwarted not by these policies, but by sheer luck, such as the so-called "underwear bomber" and the so-called "Times Square bomber," both of which failed due to poor bomb making skills, rather than any concerted law-enforcement effort. In both of these cases, the perpetrators were able to evade law-enforcement detection, and in the case of the "underwear bomber," board a plane headed to the US. Thus, in light of these

two examples, we find McKay's claim that increased detention and interrogation "must be credited...with keeping us safe here at home" to, at the least, be lacking any factual supporting evidence.

Another prominent theme in 2011 was France's so-called "burqa ban." While the ban does not explicitly refer to religious garments, it forbids anyone from covering their face, which effectively bans the burqa and the niqab (a face veil). *Seattle Times* columnist Joni Balter supported this controversial ban in an op-ed in *The Times* ("Rethinking France's burqa ban," October 6, A17). In this article, Balter explains that while she was previously opposed to the "burqa ban," after spending time living in France, she now supports it. Balter's main argument in favor of the ban is that the religious practice of wearing a burqa or niqab is inherently sexist because only women have to wear it. We have no problem with Balter expressing her view in support of the ban; she is entitled to her view. However, there was one line in the article that we found to be inflammatory. She writes that while Muslim women bear the brunt of this abominable practice, "Muslim guys prance around in Paris in super-tight jeans and slinky shirts." Clearly she is trying to draw a distinction between the life of Muslim men and women. However, this sort of stereotyping and hyperbole is unacceptable. Did Balter actually witness Muslims literally "prancing" in tight jeans and slinky shirts? Or is she just stereotyping all Muslim men living in France to help make her point? Would *The Times* print a column that said, in the same context, "black guys in America strut around in baggy jeans and du-rags?"

Unfortunately this was not the only time we found inflammatory language directed towards Muslims in a Balter column. Three days after her column on the burqa ban, *The Times* featured another one of her columns on immigration policy in the EU ("EU: a roiling melting pot," October 9, A21). She writes about how Muslim immigrants in places such as France are having a hard time integrating into society. She argues in favor of increased border protection and stricter laws on assimilation. Again, however, her language towards Muslims, specifically, is inflammatory. She writes: "newcomers sometimes prefer to live in mono-ethnic communities and present themselves as different and separate by wearing their burqa, niqab and the rest of it." The rest of it? We are not aware of what other garments she is referring to, and this language seems to carry condescending connotations.

In this section, we have presented a variety of articles that we find to be factually incorrect or inflammatory. While we did not present all of the articles we flagged for bias, we chose the articles above because they relate to some of the most important issues of 2011. Furthermore, all of these columnists are staff members of *The Seattle Times* (not syndicated), which means that *The Times* had control over the content therein. We understand that bias is inherent in any article, and is, in fact, mandated in any op-ed. However, we urge *The Seattle Times* to be as diligent as possible in eliminating articles that are factually incorrect or inflammatory.

V. Recommendations

We intend for this report to be used as a tool for further, mutually beneficial engagement between American Muslim communities and their local and other media outlets. Thus we offer some recommendations to journalists and media outlets, ally organizations, and to people who care about these issues throughout the country.

Recommendations to Journalists and Media Outlets

- Journalists should use this report to see how they can improve their terminology and labeling when writing about Islam and Muslims
- Media outlets should be more vigilant in closing the comments section for online content that is likely to be used to promote hate speech.
- *The Seattle Times*, as a customer of other media outlets and buyer of syndicated articles, should work with larger news organizations to improve their coverage of Muslims in order to serve their constituency with helpful, informative journalism

Ally Organizations

- We encourage organizations throughout the country to use this report to track and monitor the news in their respective regions.
- We also find that a national report would be extremely helpful, given the nature of the newspaper business today.
 - For example, nearly all of *The Times*' articles on foreign affairs (which happen to be the preponderance of Muslim-related articles) are syndicated from other larger news outlets, such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Associated Press*.
- We recommend other organizations to open a dialogue and build relationships with the editors of their local papers in order to help improve the portrayal of Muslims in the media.

People Who Care

- We encourage activist minded citizens to engage with their local media to enhance the coverage of Muslims in the press.
 - Write letters to the editor to:
 - Emphasize and praise excellent reporting and coverage
 - Note an error; suggest a correction
 - Highlight weak coverage of an important issue
 - Comment on online articles
 - Provide links to in-depth and factually correct articles on the web

- Refute blasphemous and degrading posts
- Call or write letters to reporters with positive reinforcement as well as constructive criticism.
- If you have a specialty in a field, write op-eds and send them into the paper to ensure well-balanced journalism in your local paper.

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Born and raised on Queen Anne, Zachary dabbled in East Coast life while studying international affairs and economics at Northeastern University in Boston. While pursuing his degree, Zachary developed an affinity for international issues, focusing his studies on both Latin America and the Middle East. He took advantage of Northeastern's experiential education opportunities through study abroad programs in Chile and Costa Rica and an internship at the International Institute of New England—a refugee resettlement agency. While at the Institute, Zachary witnessed the plight of Muslim refugees fleeing the turmoil in the Middle East. This experience led him to a position as a Communications Intern at CAIR. He graduated in August 2011 with high honors.

TIMOTHY J. MURPHY

Timothy J. Murphy attended the University of Washington in pursuit of a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Communication, a certificate in International Security, and a minor in Law, Societies and Justice (LSJ). He has focused his studies mainly on U.S.-Middle Eastern relations and international law and conflict issues.

At the University of Washington, he earned the annual Dean's List recognition for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years. Timothy became interested in the Council on American-Islamic relations through a prior internship at the Common Language Project, an internationally-focused journalism organization. Upon graduation from UW, Timothy plans on further pursuing his interests in law and politics by attending law school.

DANA YOO

Dana Yoo was born in South Korea and has been studying in the United States since the age of 13. After moving to Seattle in 2008, Dana enrolled in the University of Washington, studying Political Science as a major and Human Rights and Law as minors. Dana has volunteered as an intake specialist at the Legal Action Center in King County and gained much interest in civil rights law. As a Communications Intern at CAIR, Dana gained a great deal of interest in human rights issues around the world. After graduating from UW, Dana wishes to pursue a more comprehensive study of law, specifically in the area of human rights. Dana hopes to find a more true passion in law and human rights through professional and academic experiences before deciding to go to a law school.

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