



NOONSNOW

ISSUE
NO.3



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Letter from the Chairs

ANISHA PADMA AND SARA ALI KHAN

To the reader: On a chilly October night, Sara and I saw *Disgraced*, a contemporary play by novelist and screenwriter Ayad Akhtar. The play intelligently explores South Asian and Muslim identity in America in the context of orientalism, the struggles of assimilation, and the erasure of one's self. Overwhelmed by the depth of meaning within the play, we chose to stay for a discussion with other audience members after the play.

Upon entering a room reserved for the post-show dialogue, Sara and I saw that the other patrons were primarily wealthy, white Chapel Hill residents. We stuck out like sore thumbs. The discussion began, and one elderly white man wasted not a moment to share his two cents, "Muslims cannot be Americans." Another elderly white woman chimed in support, "Those Arabs, those Muslims... they're just violent." Faced with blatant assaults on her identity, Sara bravely defended her existence as a proud Muslim woman and as an American. Her statements, however, fell on deaf ears, and we left.

Incensed by the Islamophobic and racist discourse taking hold not only in the discussion group but also in mainstream American politics, Sara and I realized that the most profound way to combat hate is by making those of marginalized identities visible. We chose to dedicate this issue to the perspectives, experiences and politics of South Asian and South Asian diasporic individuals who have experienced marginalization through the expression of their identities.

What better way, we thought, than to choose two conditions that seemingly operate as polar opposites?

Patriot and Refugee. Nationalism and Displacement. Belonging and Not Belonging. When we imagine a Refugee, what do we envision? Palestinians in Gaza and Black Americans in the United States, or the mass violence and borders that structure their displacement? Similarly, who do we think best captures the essence of a Patriot? A man in a military uniform, or a Muslim woman wearing an American flag hijab? Is the line between a Patriot and a Refugee distinct or blurred? Join us as we explore themes of belonging, oppression, and expulsion in this special edition of Monsoon: The Refugee and Patriot.

Sincerely,

Anisha Padma & Sara A. Khan

Monsoon Chairs 2015-2016

جنورے ماہرم

لے مرڈالو ہندی جواو جلدی لو تھیار

جنورے ماہرم



ہفتہ وار اردو گورنمنٹ اخبار

انگریزی راج کا دشمن

نمبر ۳۲

یگانتر اشرم سان فرانسسکو امریکہ سے شائع ہوا۔ ۲۲ مارچ ۱۹۱۴ء

جلد اول

انگریزی راج کا کچا چٹا

چندوں کی بانی

للا ہویاں جی کی گرفتاری۔ ضمانت۔
مقدمہ کے حالات اور اس کے متعلق
سان فرانسسکو کے روزانہ اخبارات
کے مضامین +

غدار کے کیا ہو
اصو۔ جاگو۔ اور پھلے کی نسبت
زیادہ سرگرمی سے کام کرو۔
سکریٹری یگانتر اشرم

تمام خط و کتابت اور تحریکات اور مستند ذیلی قیادت پر ہونی چاہی۔

سکریٹری یگانتر اشرم سان فرانسسکو کی طرف سے

یونائیٹڈ سٹیٹس امریکہ

THE SECRETARY

YUGANTAR ASHRAM

SAN FRANCISCO

- ۱۔ انگلینڈ ہر سال پچاس کروڑ روپیہ ہندوستان سے کھینچ کر انگلستان کے ہاتھ میں لے جاتا ہے۔ اس روپیہ سے ہندوستانی کے گھر، زمین، کھیتوں، کھجور، گڑ، آملہ، آبی گیس، الیکٹرک سہولتیں، کال کٹنگ، اور ہندوستانی کے گھرانوں کی سہولتیں بنائی جاتی ہیں۔
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Wikimedia Commons

The Ghadar Party's Urdu newsletter from March 24, 1914. The subtitle says "angrezi raj ka dushman" (enemy of the British Raj)

The Ghadar Party in America

BY SHARATH RAMA

A few years ago it came to light that the New York Police Department had been spying¹ on Muslim communities in the northeast since 2002, often without any evidence of wrongdoing. Mosques, restaurants, and even schools were targeted for suspicionless intelligence gathering. The news provoked widespread outrage, spawning lawsuits that are still working their way through the court system. This wasn't the first time that immigrant communities have been trapped under the lens of state espionage. In the early 20th century, Indian nationalists, largely Punjabi immigrants to the west coast of North America, found themselves subject to intense surveillance by the British government.

In the 1890s, South Asians began to arrive in North America for the first time. Many were farmers escaping the poor economic climate in the Punjab. These new arrivals settled on the west coast, where they found work in the lumber mills of the Pacific Northwest and the fields of California's Central Valley.

The transition wasn't an easy one. In 1907, a xenophobic riot² forced Indian workers to flee the mill town of Bellingham, Washington. The rioters' complaints, that the Indians were taking away jobs from white workers and depressing wages, unfortunately wouldn't seem too out of place today.

Alongside the farmers, another group of Indians³ was also arriving in the United States around the same time: young men enticed by the prospect of studying at the University of California, Berkeley.

*"Better death
in that noble
cause than
living as slaves
of the British
Empire."*

- Har Dayal

Although these newcomers arrived to study a diverse array of subjects, a large number of them were bound together by a strong belief in Indian nationalism. One of their leaders was Lala Har Dayal, a lecturer of

Sanskrit and Indian philosophy at Stanford who also made overtures toward the farmworkers. Har Dayal urged the students at a meeting in Berkeley, "Prepare yourselves to become great patriots and wonderful warriors...Better death in that noble cause than living as slaves of the British Empire."

Har Dayal's anti-colonial sentiments found an eager audience among the students and other Indian expatriates in the U.S. and Canada. In 1913, they formed the Pacific Coast Hindustani Association, later called the Ghadar party from the Urdu word for "rebellion." While most of the Ghadarites were Punjabis, people from Bengal, Maharashtra, and other parts of India were involved as well. The party included Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims in its ranks. This new movement was, according to the historian Bipan Chandra, fiercely nationalistic but also secular and egalitarian. The Ghadarite Sohan Singh Bhakna later recalled, "We were not Sikhs or Punjabis. Our religion was patriotism."

►

From a rented San Francisco office called the Yugantar (“new era”) Ashram, the Ghadar party began publishing hundreds of copies of anti-colonial literature in English, Urdu, and Punjabi. To make their point of view perfectly clear, the Ghadarites had angrezi raj ka dushman – “enemy of the British Raj” – boldly printed near the top of every issue of their Urdu newsletter. The plan was to smuggle this subversive literature into India, where it might spark a popular revolution against the colonial rulers.

The British authorities did not of course take this threat lightly. It was during this period that British paranoia at the prospect of revolution reached its highest point since the end of the Sepoy Mutiny. They were especially concerned at the prospect Indian revolutionaries might ally themselves with the Central Powers of World War I. The government quickly moved to ban the Ghadar party’s publications and track Ghadar sympathizers’ movements both in India and abroad.

The man in charge of investigating Ghadar activities in North America was a police officer named W. C. Hopkins. A mixed-race Anglo-Indian who learned Hindi growing up in Allahabad, Hopkins was assigned as an interpreter and immigration officer in Vancouver. However, Hopkins’s formal job gradually became eclipsed by his assignment to gather intelligence on seditious activities along Pacific

coast. He received orders to keep watch on the Ghadarites in San Francisco as well as in British Columbia. On a visit to the Bay Area, he described a “hotbed of intrigue”⁴ among the students at Berkeley.

Hopkinson and British intelligence set their sights most strongly upon Lala Har Dayal, whose ideology was seen as particularly dangerous. The problem was that they couldn’t do anything to him as long as he was on American soil. So instead, Hopkins tried to convince the Americans to deport Har Dayal back to India on account of his association with the I.W.W., a radical labor union, and other anarchist groups. Har Dayal knew the consequences of deportation would be dire, so he quickly left for Europe.

Hopkinson continued to relentlessly pursue the Ghadarites for several years, increasingly provoking the ire of his targets. Two of his Sikh informants were murdered in Vancouver. Then in September 1914, another one of his informants, Bela Singh, in turn killed two Ghadarites. After Hopkins testified at Bela Singh’s murder trial in his informant’s defense, he was shot dead outside the courtroom to avenge the Ghadarites’ deaths. The New York Times reported⁵ Hopkins’s murder at the hand of “Hindu feudists” as being motivated by revenge for his work in “unearthing dangerous conspiracies hatched by the

revolutionary society of East India.”

Although the Ghadar party continued to maintain a presence in California until Indian independence in 1947, its influence slowly declined over the years. Even after Hopkins’s death, the British continued to clamp down on Ghadar activities. Many were hanged in India for their participation in anti-colonial conspiracy. Meanwhile, back on the Pacific coast the British government pressured the Americans to deport the remaining Ghadarites to face prosecution in India.

The Ghadar party is hardly remembered in India; unlike Nehru or Gandhi, their names are rarely memorialized in street names or brought up in speeches. But the South Asian community in the Bay Area has tried to preserve their story and that of the earliest Indian Americans. The former party headquarters in San Francisco has been converted into a museum and library. Two amateur historians regularly run the Berkeley South Asian Radical History Walking Tour, immersing its participants with interactive street theater and contemporary photographs and news reports. There is a renewed interest in protecting the tangible records of the movement through the South Asian American Digital Archive and other organizations. This is a part of our history that should not be forgotten. ■

Islamophobia & Anti-Blackness: A Call to Action at UNC

BY **ATIYA HUSAIN, PAVITHRA VASUDEVAN, NEEL AHUJA**

On November 30, we published a short letter in The Daily Tar Heel calling on administrators to take concrete steps to combat Islamophobia. Since public discussions of structural and institutional racism quieted during winter break, we share this longer statement to contribute to renewed efforts to combat racism at UNC.

We want to specifically highlight the entanglement of Islamophobia with histories of anti-Black racism in the United States. Although Islamophobia involves denigration of a religion, we bear witness to the racial aspects of Islamophobic discourse. This racism is reflected in the fact that hate crimes, hate speech, and state profiling and surveillance practices have unequally impacted communities of color, regardless of whether individual victims identify as Muslims. Although it is possible to explore the legacies of slavery, anti-Black racism, Orientalist stereotypes against Muslims, and United States imperialism in South and West Asia as independent historical phenomena, we argue that they have been intertwined in significant ways since the 1960s as the surveillance of American Muslims became a justification for the expansion of military and police violence.

Following the November 13 mass murders in Paris, the UNC Department of Public Safety sent an Alert Carolina message proclaiming, “the University wants to underscore the need for increased vigilance” and encouraging the campus community to “always... operate with a heightened awareness of personal safety and report any unusual activity.”

Although interpersonal violence is a real concern following recent campus shootings, security alerts failed to name South Asian American, Arab American, and visibly Muslim students including African Americans as particularly vulnerable to such violence after the Paris murders. Instead, by highlighting a generic threat of terrorism, security alerts affirm the persistent racial profiling to which our communities have been subjected since the 9/11 attacks. Our conversations with students from these communities reflect a commonplace sense of exhaustion over the suspicion and social pressure to publicly perform rejections of extremism. Such feelings have intensified with recent local events -- the Chapel Hill shootings in February; the attacks on the course Literature of 9/11 in August; and legislative actions to bar Syrian refugees.

There is a direct link between post-9/11 forms of racial suspicion and the longstanding forms of surveillance and profiling that African Americans have experienced at the hands of the police and federal law enforcement agencies. In the 1970s, Congress had placed limits on racially targeted FBI surveillance programs of the civil rights era, including COINTELPRO and its precursor, RACON (a program that focused on black Muslims).

After 9/11, the PATRIOT Act was rushed through the legislative process and we have since witnessed a rapid expansion and militarization of the domestic security state. For example, the NYPD spied on Muslim communities within a 100 mile radius of New York for almost ten years after 9/11. The NYPD acted far outside its jurisdiction by extending into neighboring states, functioning more like a federal agency than a city-wide police department. They used tactics like deploying informants and mapping entire neighborhoods to target 28 “ancestries of interest,” including “American Black Muslims.”

Islamophobic security policies have also intensified anti-Black state violence. The post-9/11 creation of the Department of Homeland

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Not For Your Consumption

BY PARISA SHAH

The deteriorating, permeating sense of dread that inhibits my body every month is not unusual or even worth mentioning anymore. In South Asian culture periods are not deemed a proper subject to speak of, or even acknowledge. I remember when my mother told me how I should be very discreet in regards to how I disposed of blood soaked pads, and how it would be disgrace for my father or brother to see such items even by mere accident. One may not enter mosques or temples when they are experiencing the menstrual cycle, and there are even myths and superstitions that perpetuate the notion that periods are innately foul, dirty, and revolting. There is a cultural stigma of shame that surrounds the idea of periods, and there are larger social forces that perpetuate and enforce it.

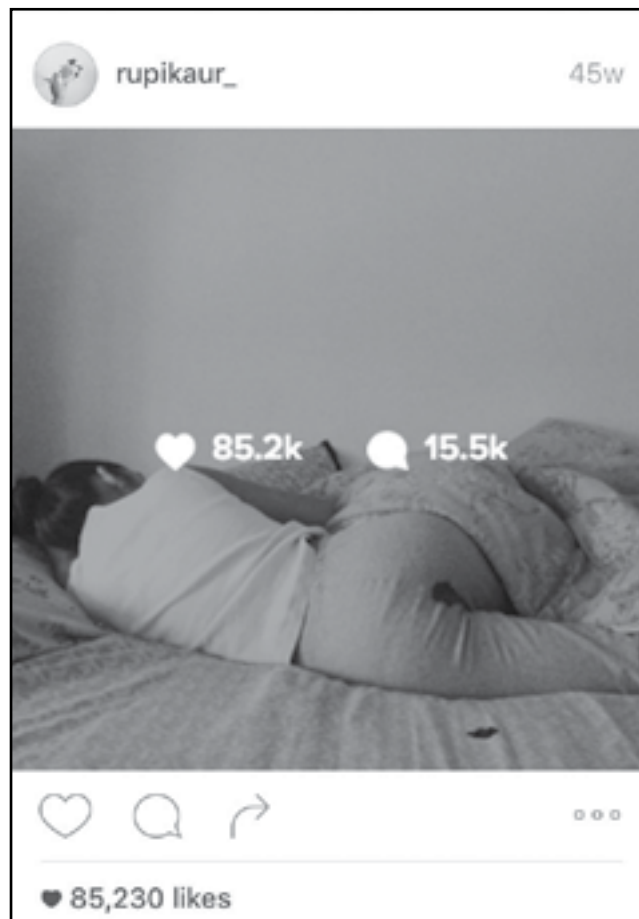
Two South Asian women, Rupika Kaur and Kiran Gandhi, are trying to break down this stigma and raise

acceptance and awareness about a completely natural biological process. Rupika Kaur, a student at the University of Waterloo, had placed two photos on Instagram for a

stains stealing the stage as they stained the bed and her pants. These pictures were removed from Instagram on March 25th with the explanation that a member

of the team took down the pictures on accident. In a world that openly sexualizes and objectifies women's bodies, these unprovocative photos seemed to shock and disgust many people. Women's bodies are not for consumption. The fact that these photos made people uncomfortable only further establishes that the natural processes women go through are not accepted because they are not inherently sexual in nature. Kiran Gandhi, a Harvard grad and drummer for MIA, decided to run the London marathon without a tampon in order to raise awareness for women who do not have access to feminine sanitary products. ▶

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Instagram of Rupika Kaur (@rupikaur_)

Social Media has become a new location for discussions of cultural stigma.

verbal rhetoric class; the pictures in question were of her in sweatpants and a tank top, with maroon blood

I've never liked going to the dentist, but at least before, it was for conventional reasons. After I aged out of the incentives of being able to play video games in the waiting room before the appointment and taking one of the many assorted squishy fluorescent toys from the goodies box after my appointment, getting my teeth and gums scraped has become my least favorite semi-annual activity.

I recognize that complaining about the dentist is in many ways commonplace and tone deaf. From metal songs to stand-up acts, those

with the gum-scraping, although I admit it can be temporarily unpleasant. For the last few years, my dental-dread has been caused by the one-way lecturing I receive under the white light.

In many ways, this also is fundamental to the common depictions of dentistry and its horrors. The dentist who talks too much to you when you can't talk back.

My now-former dentist talks too much. I don't mean he talks often. I say he talks too much because

that too many people somehow feel comfortable sharing with strangers. "How will you make a living doing that?" or an extended discussion of how they would "kill their own children if they majored in something like that."

Sadly, after a few of these incidents, I decided to minimize this type of conversation at first by lying. I'd say something like, "Oh I'm a biology major" or "I'm thinking about law school," the type of answers people who don't know you are comfortable moving on after hearing since they are

Reclaiming Dinesh from D'Souza

BY **DINESH MCCOY**

of us with the privilege to be among those who receive dental care, rather than among the 100 million Americans who can never afford to participate in America's dental industrial complex in the first place, preach to the masses about the horror of it all while spending \$113.5 billion overwhelmingly-private dollars in pursuit of the promises of 3D White, Invisalign, and Ultra Waterpik technologies.

So my problem with the dentist isn't

the content of what he says is profoundly bad, and it would have undoubtedly been better had he never spoken at all.

It started with questions about my life plans, major, career goals, etc. This is fine small-talk conversation when the interest is honest, and I initially answered as if it were. But then came the first mini-lecture after I explained I was a Global Studies major. The lectures started as the cliched judgments

easily digestible for mainstream, American-dream-nostalgic "working professionals."

And this worked. Not because my dentist forgot our previous conversations. Those conversations were never for remembering in the first place. It's easy to distinguish legitimate interest from inane small talk. Words coming out of a mouth too careless to have thought about them before speaking, simply filling the space without any awareness that the silence ▶

is almost always less awkward than the noise. But the mindlessness of the statements does not make them less biting. Indeed, the casualness of these needlessly-judgey statements almost made them more frustrating than if they were intentional. This was the same dentist office that never could remember how to pronounce my name and would refer to me as Ms. McCoy whenever they contacted me, despite my effort to correct them on both things on the phone and in person.

The most egregious incident came during my last visit. At my last check up during the summer, the dentist pulled up my chart and saw my name. He pronounced it correctly this time, Din-aysh, understanding the “e” actually sounds like the English pronunciation of the letter “A.” I didn’t really think about it at first, but as he pried around my molars and I tasted and smelled the latex of the gloves, he began to explain exactly why he knew my name.

“I know another Dinesh. He’s pretty famous. Have you heard of Dinesh D’Souza?” he asked?

I nodded awkwardly, chin already pressed down to my neck given the position of the chair, a suction tube perilously close to falling from my mouth and onto the floor.

“Dinesh D’Souza is a remarkable person. Truly patriotic. He’s from an immigrant family but really made something of himself. You should read one of his books some time.”

While he continued to ramble about D’Souza’s greatness, I processed the role of this “patriot” in my life.

Dinesh D’Souza, a man who both started and maintains his career on a public platform of anti-blackness and anti-immigrant sentiments framed as intellectualism. A man who my parents, once I was old enough for them to think I had even a shred of political awareness,

were eager to clarify I was “not named after.”

Jeet Heer, an editor at The New Republic, lays out examples of D’Souza’s racism in his article “Making it in (Right-Wing) America”:

“One D’Souza-edited article discussed affirmative action in Amos ‘n’ Andy dialect. ‘Now we be comin’ to Dartmut and be over our ‘fros in studies, but we still not be graduatin’ Phi Beta Kappa,’ the article read. In his 1995 book *The End of Racism*, D’Souza argued that “the old discrimination” has declined and been replaced by “rational discrimination” based “on accurate group generalizations.” During the Obama years, D’Souza has specialized in writing books and producing documentaries suggesting the President is motivated by anti-colonial hatred of Western civilization.”

Indeed, D’souza’s recent anti-Obama documentaries have made millions of dollars, arguing that Obama is a radical anti-colonialist while somehow conveniently ignoring the U.S. drone campaign expansion, the Obama administration’s acceleration of deportations, or the expansion of the surveillance state.

What makes a person like D’Souza interesting to someone like my dentist is also what serves as D’Souza’s source of mass appeal. The “good” immigrant who “knows their place.” ▶



Dinesh D’Souza Speaking at CPAC 2012

Wikimedia Commons

The immigrant who in this case, is not silent, but instead actively upholds oppression by using the story of their material success and “intellectual attainment” to shut down the narratives of the oppressed, embracing the right-wing sentimentality of the claim that “anyone can make it” while arguing vehemently against the expansion of social programs, instead pinning the blame for racial and class oppression on cultural differences.

My dentist isn’t the only one who eats that shit up. During an interaction over the summer, another student’s mother, who I only had a conversation with for approximately 15 minutes, probed me with questions about my family’s past. If you’re brown, or have an accent, or have a name that’s not on the top-100 most common U.S. baby names list, these conversations happen fairly often.

I told her I am half-Sri Lankan, to which she responded. “Oh, but you’re dark?” After a second of staring blankly in response to her reaction, I mumbled, “Uh, yeah... It’s the country right below India?”

It’s astonishing how someone who reveals so clearly their ignorance of the entire situation in the first portion of a conversation can so confidently move forward with further questions and proclamations in the second. But she continued: “So, are your parents first-generation?”

I explained how my grandparents on my mother’s side moved from Sri Lanka, to Sierra Leone, to England and finally to Bowling Green, Ohio as my grandfather pursued a career in higher education as an English professor. It’s a complicated story, made more complicated by the eruption of civil war in my mother’s native region of northern Sri Lanka only years after the family left.

The woman’s response was short. “Oh, it’s great they left. The poverty

*“So many
immigrants
just don’t come
with the right
mindset, you
know?”*

in those countries is unimaginable. It’s great they were able to make something of themselves here. So many immigrants just don’t come with the right mindset, you know?”

I don’t remember the rest of our conversation, because I was so upset by the callousness of those words. It was a complete erasure of the difficulties faced by members of my family both before and after they arrived in the United States, a narrowing of their histories to a projected idea of “shameful” poverty my grandparents never actually had the misfortune of facing. I only know my grandparents’ migration story in

small parts, filling in the gaps with my interpretations of all the little individual stories I remember: the feeling of disconnection and loneliness thousands of miles from their homeland and relatives; the rude or outright discriminatory sentiments of classmates and colleagues in an overwhelmingly white college town in rural Ohio.

That’s not to say that there was no good in their experience. These hardships certainly were combined with new friendships and relationships of love and mutual respect. My grandparents managed to build a community of friends in the United States, and they learned to enjoy distinctly American comforts and traditions.

Yet, despite my uncertainty of the balance between positive and negative emotions evoked by the entire experience of adapting to life here, I think about all the times my grandparents likely regretted their decision to come to the United States. I think about at what point that regret would have subsided. Was it when my grandfather was comfortably established in his teaching position? Was it when their two children got married? Was it when their grandchildren were born? I imagine it never fully went away. Memories of the extended family eating together on banana leaves, drinking tea in the breezy flats of Jaffna, excelling at cricket and running along the clay colored streets of the small college there. Memories recalled in ▶

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Fresh Out the Closet

“Mummy, Deddy, mane laggan nathi karvuu”

“Pan mota beta eh naam roshan karvaanu hoy. Ane aapnu parivaar su vichaarse? Taru to bau motu laggan karvanu chhe gaam maa!”

Laggan. It always comes down to laggan. A marriage discussion is the closest thing to me trying to come out of the closet to my parents. As a South Asian, or Desi, I find the notion of coming out of the closet to be a very Western concept, that is untranslatable in communities that foster different norms and cultural practices. What exactly does it mean to be queer and Desi in America? Being queer is not just about physical and sexual attraction, but it also encompasses emotional needs and gender expression. Now mesh this already complex identity with an identity that has thousands of years of ►

BY **KISHAN RANA**

geographic, cultural, religious, and colonial history. Despite living in the “Land of the Free,” I often experience unforeseen pressures that white Americans do not. The unique experience of being queer and Desi is not represented in mass media. Even queer media, which aims to place queers at the same level as heterosexuals, is specifically tailored to the Western white rhetoric of male gayness, despite the presence of ethnic diversity and the fluid spectrum of gender and sexuality. Let us backtrack before Europeans started settling in South Asia. The region was distinct in the fact that it had already endured many waves of settlers, which made it a religious and cultural buffet of ideologies. Even when looking at homosexuality just from a broad “Hindu” standpoint, one can see that it vastly differs from the white beliefs and practices in those times. In the Vedas, there is much discussion of the third gender, better known as Hijra today, but also androgynous Gods such as Lord Shiva in the form of Ardhanarishvara. The Kama Sutra, a sacred treatise on sex, includes various descriptions of homoeroticism, as well as the swapping of male roles with the female, which are regarded as permissible in some castes while not in other castes. We also learn that transvestite prostitutes played an important role in public life and were considered good omens at weddings, a belief that still stands true in India. A lot of the local climate changed after the British started colonizing in South Asia. Unlike the former Muslim settlers who adapted to and meshed with the local climate, the British started a new world order in which the locals had to adapt to their own environment. With them, they brought their white ideals, one of which viewed homosexuality as a sin. Even after they left, their ideologies ran deep in the veins of Mother

India through Chapter XVI Section 377 of The Indian Penal Code, which criminalized “sexual relations against nature”. Unfortunately this law is still not struck down, and most upper-caste Indians, especially the lawmakers who were schooled in India, went through a British-orientated educational system which fostered white values. This could be a reason why so many

people in India today deny the existence of homosexuality. This thought has evolved to many forms, and manifests itself quite heavily in the diasporic Desi communities of America.

Today much of what queer American Desis have to struggle with are the pressures of their “zero to hero” families wanting the perfect child who will grow up to have a successful family, but also the pressures of being accepted into the stereotypical white-normative queer community.

In order to present the struggles of

queer American Desis, I spoke to friends who identify as such that I met at school, on dating sites, and Tumblr. From the people interrogated, many feel that coming out is an imposed narrative in the queer community that mostly applies to white people. Coming out is viewed as a right of passage and an act of accepting oneself, but it has a very different value amongst Desis, where honouring family politics is a lot more important.

For the average Desi, life is more heavily concerned with family rather than the individual. A pansexual respondent from Tamil Nadu, said that her mom asks her if she is gay or straight every so often ▶

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On a humid Saturday night in August 2015, Himanshu Suri, aka Heems, performed at Cat's Cradle to promote his latest album *Eat Pray Thug*. I had the opportunity to interview Heems between sets to unearth what I could of his enigmatic persona.

We spoke primarily in Hindi/Urdu/Punjabi and English at times when the mother tongue(s) failed us. Heems' ability to speak numerous languages (those aforementioned as well as

provocative punch lines.

Perhaps the most defining moment of our conversation was when we discussed our favorite Urdu words. Mine is *khaufnak* which means scary or dangerous. When I asked for his, he responded:

While *Kashmakash* more likely means confusion or turmoil—the word means something to Heems. The concept of *Kashmakash*, the internal turmoil, is a major theme within Heem's new album and his current life journey. After

and emotional journey through many countries including India. When I asked if Heems felt any different than Gilbert:

"I'm not different from her. My band broke up. Me and my girlfriend broke up. I was sad. I'm going to go to India to go figure myself out. How does that make me different than any (explicative) white American? So my point is you look at me, and think Indian. But, my identity is much more complicated."

The Patriot/ BY SARA KHAN Heems

Spanish) is only one of the many examples of his cross-cultural and intersectional identity as an artist who embraces numerous mediums of self-expression. Rap music, visual arts, public speaking, social media, written work and even a possible TV series provide space for Heems' eclectic voice and penchant for

the breaking up of his band, *Das Racist*, which included Victor Velasquez and himself?, Heems returned to India to find himself, pick up the pieces, and start afresh. The title of his new album is a significant reference to the book *Eat Pray Love*—a novel by Elizabeth Gilbert that is about a white woman's spiritual

It is that complicatedness that fueled the most difficult tracks on the new album, particularly the songs *Patriot Act* and *Flag Shopping*. Both songs are inspired by Heems' struggle and experience in a post-9/11 America as a young South Asian-American man. Discussion of post-9/11 America from the perspective of Brown folk has not reached the mainstream, but Heems' music ▶

"Kashmakash...it means trouble and heartbreak."

lends a voice to intersectional Americans in an unparalleled age of greater surveillance and suspicion. In the song *Flag Shopping*, Heems describes how his family and others had to purchase American flags after 9/11 to visually prove their patriotism, which stood in opposition to their brownness. As a small child, I vividly remember my desi uncles and aunts purchasing miniature U.S. flags

there was a 1600% increase in anti-Islamic hate crimes in the United States, and these statistics would include attacks against other brown people like Sikhs, Hindus, and non-Muslim Arabs. It is also important to mention the forced detention and surveillance of “Muslim-looking” individuals after 9/11. Thus, purchasing flags was a way to purchase legitimization as patriots, as Americans, to

focusing on an emotional narrative about his own experiences but also conflicts with privacy, security, and collateral damage inflicted by governments. His monologue is heart-breaking but resonates with the experiences of people like me. Deportation, hate crimes, racism in the workplace were realities that were experienced but silenced. Now, more than ten years later,

**“And I was there
I saw the towers and the planes
And I’ll never be the same
Never ever be the same
I seen things that I never wanna see again
I heard things that I never wanna hear again
And now we’re going flag shopping.”**
Flag Shopping, Heems (Greedhead Music)

for their cars and larger ones for their homes. My cousin’s family in New York went as far as to decorate their station wagon with not just one, but two flags along with stickers for the trunk.

Flag Shopping unpacks the legitimate fear over escalating violence and hate crimes, as South Asian and Middle Eastern-looking people were attacked and imprisoned as suspected terrorists after 9/11. Families experienced the danger of having brown skin, beards, turbans- any physical resemblance to the Taliban or Al-Qaeda- because it made you vulnerable to possible suspicion. The FBI states that in 2001,

decrease profiling and potential hate crimes.

Heems’s own story is a graphic, haunting experience of the 9/11 attacks. He was a child in Queens during the time of the attack, and his own school was converted as a triage unit for a while. He watched the destruction first hand, and it has obviously created a lasting impression on his artistic and personal life. His work and voice has been critical of our understanding of patriotism, identity, and racism- while maintaining a whimsical and experimental sound. His *Patriot Act* is sadder, mournful and plays into those themes,

we can sit and discuss these issues that plagued our hearts and security as Americans.

Heems provides a perspective of the fears of Middle Easterners, South Asians, and anyone who looked physically similar to the terrorists on television. The backlash did not see religion, language, or nationality. Even if you do not like his music, his Twitter, or his style- songs like *Flag Shopping* and *Patriot Act* should be considered time capsules of an era that will probably be forgotten. An era where patriotism was fragile and our citizenship was feared to be tenuous at best. ■

M.I.A., or Maya Arulpragasam is no stranger to borders. The artist's family escaped Sri Lanka during the recently concluded civil war between the Tamil population and the Sinhalese majority, a conflict in which her father was allegedly a member of the Tamil Tigers. Maya, her mother, and her siblings fortunately gained refugee status in the West because of her British birth certificate. In a 2013 NPR interview, Arulpragasam accounts her own experience as a refugee escaping violence:

and dangerous circumstances displaced people experience. It is obvious that the only reason individuals would place themselves in these precarious situations is to escape a reality that is far more dangerous and violent.

I was moved by the focus on the faces of the male "refugees" in the video. In our current political discourse, male refugees are vilified the most, considered terrorist threats to our American security. However, by

change before. In the music video for Born Free (note: NSFW), she challenged our understanding of the police state by creating a world in which red-haired men are the oppressed and criminalized minority. The music video was banned from Youtube because of its graphic depiction of young red-haired men being brutally murdered by armed officials². Many have reflected the music video's similarity to the Irish, Palestinian, and Black experiences for freedom from oppression. Certain scenes

I mean, we attempted to leave about four or five times, and every time we'd get stopped. They would stop the bus and take all the men off the bus and, you know, we never saw them again. It took us a while to leave. I still have all those memories¹.

In the controversial music video for her latest single, "Borders", M.I.A. humanizes the refugee crisis of both past and present. Set to captivating imagery yet intentionally basic lyrics, the video immediately unsettles the viewer. Dark-skinned men climb wire fences, create a boat made of humans, and trudge through the ocean- reflecting the experiences of thousands of refugees across the globe, particularly those denied entry into Europe. As a refugee herself, M.I.A. challenges the viewer to watch the desperation

criminalizing these people as an entire population, we strip them of their humanity. By focusing on these solemn young men, M.I.A. artistically humanizes these individuals while simultaneously exposing their disposability. They are vulnerable, and they are voiceless. M.I.A., in this way, challenges the criminalization of displaced peoples and the overarching capital and colonial systems that contribute to mass displacement.

M.I.A. has used her platform to inspire thought and social

intentionally echo the brutality depicted on the streets of America, where state-sanctioned violence against Black people is commonplace. Both Born Free and Borders are both difficult to watch and seem like dark, stylized fantasies within Arulpragasam's mind. However, both stylistic interpretations conjure a distressing reality -- that violence and displacement is commonplace in a world ravaged by military and economic warfare. ■

BORDERS-WHAT'S UP WITH THAT
POLITICS-WHAT'S UP WITH THAT
POLICE SHOTS-WHAT'S UP WITH THAT
IDENTITIES-WHAT'S UP WITH THAT
YOUR PRIVILEGE-WHAT'S UP WITH THAT
BROKE PEOPLE-WHAT'S UP WITH THAT

The Refugee/

BY SARA KHAN

M.I.A

BOAT PEOPLE-WHAT'S UP WITH THAT
THE REALNESS-WHAT'S UP WITH THAT
THE NEW WORLD-WHAT'S UP WITH THAT
AM GONNA KEEP UP ON ALL THAT
[BORDERS, M.I.A. (INTERSCOPE)]

#FreedomGiving in the Age of Disposability

BY NIKHIL UMESH

This past November, while many across the U.S. prepared feasts and congregated with loved ones, more than 100 immigrant detainees went on hunger strike. Called #FreedomGiving, detainees were playing on the irony of a national holiday around supposed values of gratitude and thanks, while many were caged behind bars, living through indefinite detention, and facing almost certain deportation.

The resistance began in Texas on October 14, when 54 South Asian detainees seeking asylum went on a hunger strike, demanding to be released from the El Paso Processing Center. Four days later, 14 men from India and Bangladesh at the Lasalle Detention Center in Louisiana called for their release from detention.

Building on this deep solidarity, 27 women from T. Don Hutto Center in Texas launched their own strike. And finally, at the Adelanto Detention Center, California's largest center, 390

people executed another wave in early November.

#FreedomGiving was coordinated among three detention centers in California and Alabama, with the strikers coming from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Many of the people putting their lives on the line were refugees of a transnational migration crisis, the product of political upheaval in Bangladesh. Refugees were targeted for their affiliation with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the current opposition, leading them to seek refuge through trafficking networks. Not expecting to be detained upon entry to the U.S., refugees made the harrowing journey from Asia to Central America to the Mexico-U.S. border.

Critically, a sizeable number of those detained had already passed their "credible fear" interviews -- meaning they had successfully made the case that they would be at considerable threat of death if they were deported back to their home countries. However, for many, their claims to asylum are nullified by the U.S. labeling the BNP a "third tier" ▶



terrorist organization -- a branding disputed by various human rights groups.

Hidden from the public, not knowing English, and with no access to attorneys, detainees were put in the position of having to sacrifice their bodies in order to gain an ounce of public attention.

When I found about the hunger strikes on Thanksgiving, a question that popped into my head was: Why are we suddenly facing a “refugee crisis” that is so global in scope? And I began to wonder whether the conditions facing South Asian refugees are connected to the ongoing mass imprisonment of African Americans in the U.S. and recent flux of Central American refugees, too. To make sense of these connections, I felt that some history behind penal institutions and its economic underpinnings needed to be understood.

Prison abolitionist and scholar Angela Davis has referred to our prison system as the reform of slavery. Although commonly thought to fully abolish slavery, many miss the 13th Amendment’s addendum of “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist.” In the post-Reconstruction South, the convict-leasing system and chain gangs functioned as replacements to the plantation system, with the “duly convicted” extending slavery’s practice of labor extraction and the treatment of humans as chattel.

However, the penal system has involved over the years, and in the

case of the South Asian detainees and other incarcerated peoples, forced labor is not a distinguishing or universal characteristic of the system. Professor Dylan Rodriguez, in conversation with Angela Davis, makes note of this phenomenon: “People frequently forget that the majority of imprisoned people are not workers, and that work is itself made available only as a “privilege” for the most favored prisoners. The logic of the prison-industrial complex is closer to what you, George Jackson, and others were forecasting back then as mass containment, the effective elimination of large numbers of (poor, black) people from the realm of civil society.” This logic of “elimination” must be understood within the context of the fact that capitalism, our reigning social and economic structure, is in trouble, with productive growth on the decline. The global capitalist crisis that erupted in 2008 is symptomatic of this, as what we refer to as the “Housing Bubble” was little more than transnational corporations vying to continue uninterrupted capital accumulation in an era of minimal growth, relying on a speculative economy, rather than physical commodity production.

El Kilombo Intergalactico, a community-based collective out of Durham, NC, maps out these current dynamics, referring to our current economy as a “fictitious economy,” which is trying to make up for this decreased growth through, “things like the extension of private credit (e.g. student loans, credit cards, mortgages), the growth of public

debt (deficit spending, TARP, money printing), and the creation of ‘unique’ commodities that can be sold for prices much higher than it costs to produce them (‘single origin’ coffees, specialty cupcakes, microbrews, boutique gyms, etc.).”

Kali Akuno of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement similarly writes that “The increasingly automated and computerized dynamics of this expansion has resulted in millions, if not billions, of people being displaced through two broad processes: one, from “traditional” methods of life sustaining production (mainly farming), and the other from their “traditional” or ancestral homelands and regions (with people being forced to move to large cities and “foreign” territories in order to survive).”

El Kilombo points out that a symptom of this dynamic is the elimination of productive labor, which creates a “growing global population of ‘surplus’ humanity that, lacking any integrative social function, must be violently warehoused and controlled.”

Thus, we are living through a distinct era in our system of global capitalism where the rapid advancement and growth of financialization, speculative real estate, and other means to accumulate capital without physical commodity production is having devastating global effect. People who were once “useful” to the dynamics of capital and value production, since they cannot be easily absorbed, are facing massive levels of displacement, repression,

►

Dismantling the American Dream (and Border Imperialism)

BY CHIRAAYU GOSRANI



Chiraayu Gosrani

The author with his family.

In summer 1998, my family's wait was over. Nearly thirteen years had passed since my parents filed for permanent resident visas, and at last their prayers had been answered -- we were headed to America. Like countless other immigrants to the United States that came before and after them, my parents wanted to "make it" in America. But what does "making it" in America really mean? Why is this the immigrant narrative we choose to project?

My family and countless other

immigrant families are assimilated into believing that our immigration is linked to our material betterment. We migrate for a better life. We migrate in pursuit of a dream. We migrate to a "promised" land of freedom, prosperity and opportunity. Our immigrant narrative has been erected upon an ethos of success earned through hard work, while our migration as South Asian folks has been historicized as benign, monolithic and apolitical. We are tokenized as proof that the American Dream and Western prosperity are alive

and well.

It is easy for us to act complacent in our own racialization. Instead, we must situate our movement and migration within the expanse of capitalism, white supremacy and empire -- what radical theorist and immigrant rights activist Harsha Walia collectively refers to as border imperialism. Our movement is in fact our displacement. The global political economy of capitalism and colonialism has violently dispossessed communities in the Global South through state-sanctioned warfare, ►

the fortification of borders and the exploitation of labor.

The British-led partition of South Asia in 1947 uprooted fifteen million people, killed over a million and led to religious and ethnic conflicts on the sub-continent that still persist today. The fortification of borders did not, however, contain Western corporations from profiting off deregulated labor conditions. Workers in Bengali garment factories, a majority of whom are women, are routinely denied living wages and subject to poor working conditions so that corporations can keep prices low for Western markets. The global circulation of capital perpetuates poverty and poor conditions of living in the Global South, which then buttresses the displacement of these communities.

The American mantra of freedom has been forever grounded upon the violent transgression upon communities in the Global South. In the aftermath of Western invasion, occupation and destabilization, the world's largest refugee populations today come from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, American agribusiness leverages neoliberal trade policies to plunder agri-dependent economies across the world. Displaced peoples from Afghanistan to Bengal to the Caribbean have sought asylum in the Western states whose prosperity has been built upon their destitution.

Border imperialism, however, is two-fold. It manifests itself in not only the mass displacement of communities in the Global South, but also in the simultaneous

regulation of South-to-North migration and surveillance of immigrant communities. The free flow of capital and Western supremacy juxtaposes the unfree flow of people displaced by capital and colonial violence.

Immigration policy controls, criminalizes and racializes migrants and their communities. Borders in the form of heavily surveilled walls and fences bar those who have been coercively displaced by capitalism, including millions of Mexican, Latin American and Caribbean origin. Borders inhibit the migration of refugees who have been displaced by Western-led military conflict. Less than 90,000 of the over eight million Iraqi and Syrian refugees have been admitted into the United States since 2007. Borders render displaced peoples "illegal" and "criminal" for accessing health care, education and other public services.

Those granted access to the West and Western institutions are those best positioned to perpetuate its fable of "making it" success. Among South Asian immigrants to the United States, those offered visas and paths to citizenship are not those most affected by Western violence and exploitation, but rather the affluent and educated. Nearly 75% of Indian immigrants granted U.S. visas have at least a bachelor's degree, while Bangladesh has among the lowest immigration rates to the U.S.

Within the fabric of America, South Asian immigrants are sewn as a monolith of "making it" success despite the classist nature of our migration. Our racialization along class lines is used to contrast

the racialization of Black and Indigenous peoples as culturally and intellectually "deficient" despite the white supremacist state constructed upon a Settler/Savage/Slave racial triangle. Indian and Asian immigrants are tokenized as entrepreneurial, professional and assimilated, while Black and Indigenous people are depicted as lazy, criminal and pathological. Though we are not white, we are still settlers in colonized and racialized space, and thus complicit in maintaining the anti-Black racial order.

When we present our immigrant narratives, we do not think critically about what we leave untold. Saying that my parents and I immigrated to the United States in pursuit of a dream is over simplistic.

Border imperialism circumscribes my past, present and future. I come from a family of immigrants my great-grandparents immigrated from Gujarat to Kenya; my parents and grandparents, from Kenya to England; my brother and I, from England to the United States. Through our movement, border imperialism has rendered generations of my family and countless other South Asian immigrant families a dual existence as not just colonized and displaced peoples, but also consumers of colonized space. The freedom, opportunity and prosperity that we have been afforded is predicated upon the exploitation, displacement and destitution of humanity and ourselves in turn. It is this untold and complex narrative of immigration that needs a voice. ■

Native Roots

BY **SHILPA KANCHARLA**



Their skin was not sandal like mine was,
Their foreheads were not dotted with vermillion.
Their eyes were not as round and curious as
mine were,
Their brows did not raise questions.

They treated me as if I was an exotic flower of
paradise
But little did they understand that I was like
them,
But I just came in a different hue,
So when autumn came and my duller colors
showed,
They did not know how to react.

I still yearn for the soft zephyrs of my mother-
land,
The silken dew painted on the morning grass,
And for the whispers of safety and comfort
When I run into the open arms of the orange
horizon.

Despite all the odds,
I made a home in this odd place.
I called this land mine.
I dream of the ancient days.

I will write chapters on creamy paper with my
tan hands
And set warm fire with my words to shelter
those who need it
Because some feel that they still do not have
a place
In this alienated place.

Despite all the odds,
I am proud of my roots and I will not atrophy
Or be uprooted by those who think I am a
weed.
My soul is tied to the earth
And I am proud of who I am.



Paintings of Hindu Goddesses and aphorisms from the Bhagavad Gita decorate the stores and cement walls that I pass as I navigate through Mumbai. Although I feel a sense of cultural familiarity as I walk by, I never feel as though I can identify with the religious surroundings I find myself in. However, the second I step into my grandparents' home, everything changes. The walls are lined with verses from the Qur'an, pictures of holy Islamic sites, and portraits of famous Muslim leaders. This closed-in microcosm is one of the only places that I can truly understand my complex Indian identity.

Staying with my father's Shia Muslim family in Mumbai has strongly shaped how I experience and perceive India every time I visit. The customs, beliefs, and conventions that my grandparents practice are completely intertwined with the Indian culture I experience in Mumbai. I don't just eat Indian food. I eat Indian food whose meat was obtained through purely Islamic

practices. I don't just buy Indian clothes. I buy Indian clothes that are considered Islamically permissible. In this way, the bond between my Muslim identity and my Indian identity are inseparable.

While this bond between my Muslim and Indian identities in Mumbai is so strong, I don't typically get to explore this connection comfortably outside of my grandparents' house. There are no mosques or religious centers nearby. There aren't many Muslims in the area either. Even when I leave the comfort of my grandparents' home to do simple things like shop, I feel out of place. Many shop owners can't understand why I, as a Muslim, would want more conservative Indian clothing, when less

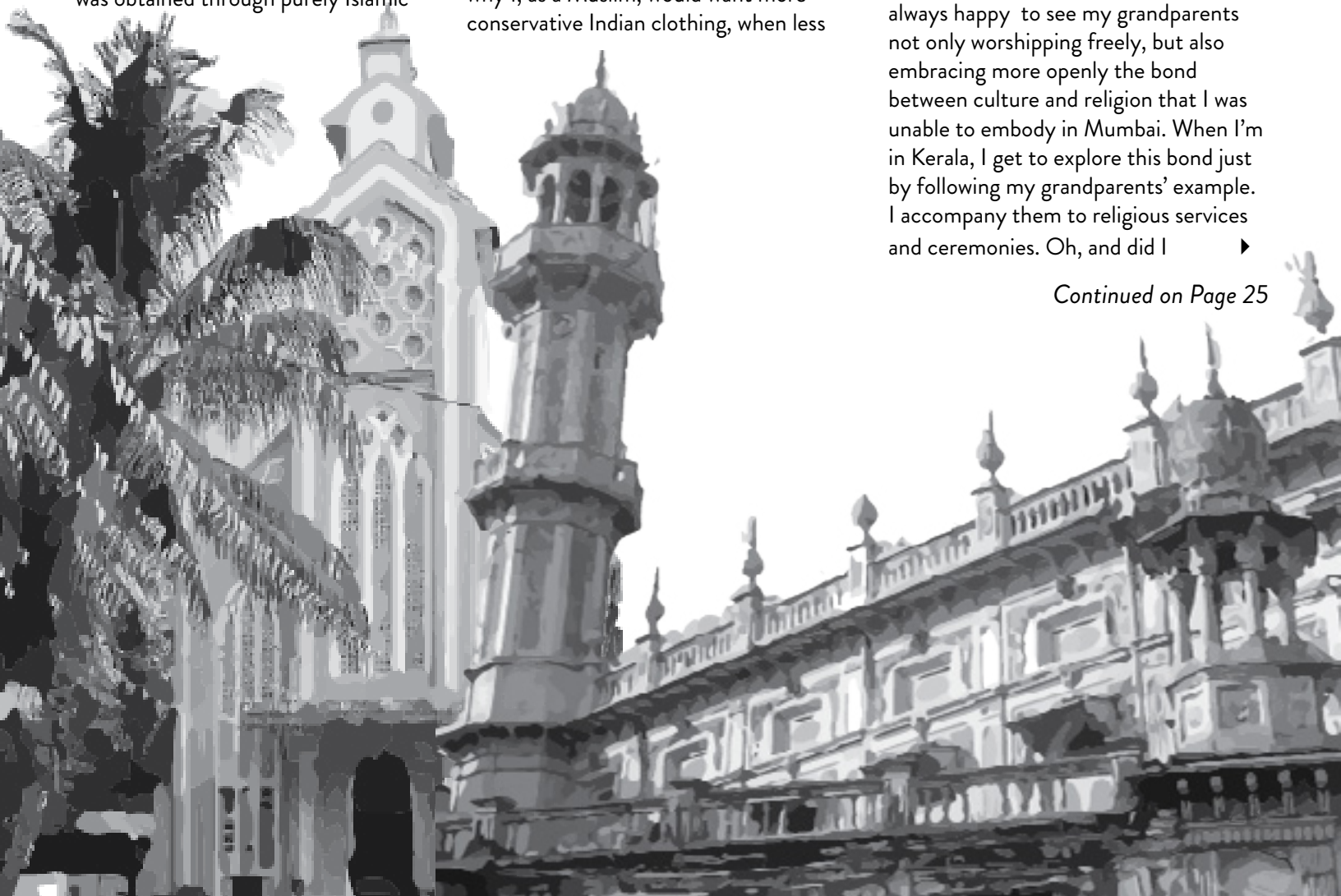
conservative clothing styles are in fashion. I subsequently sometimes feel like I don't belong there, like being a Muslim and Indian isn't as accepted or understood. It's difficult to understand my identity as a Muslim Indian woman when my surrounding environment doesn't accommodate it at all.

Another place in India where I explore my complex Indian identity is Kerala. My maternal grandparents live in a rural, quiet area in Kerala. Their community known for having a higher level of religious tolerance. As a result, I have always reveled in seeing many different religious temples, churches, and mosques in close proximity. I'm always happy to see my grandparents not only worshipping freely, but also embracing more openly the bond between culture and religion that I was unable to embody in Mumbai. When I'm in Kerala, I get to explore this bond just by following my grandparents' example. I accompany them to religious services and ceremonies. Oh, and did I

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A Double Minority in “Homogenous” India

BY MARIYA HUSAIN



Islamophobia and Anti-Blackness

Continued from Page 6

Security and its hefty budget has beefed up U.S. border patrol and funded the riot gear and assault weapons that ordinary local police departments now possess.

Following the disastrous Iraq War, surplus military equipment was returned to domestic police departments, including firearms used by the Durham PD and military vehicles used by departments across the Triangle. The consequences of the national military transfer program have included the increased use of deadly force in police-civilian encounters and the use of military tactics to suppress public protest. These trends have unequally impacted black and other minority communities, intimately linking anti-blackness and Islamophobia in ways we must understand to effectively challenge both.

Despite widespread criticism of the recent wars and policies expanding police powers among both major political parties, politicians continue to use Islamophobic rhetoric for political gain. After the Paris attacks, Governor Pat McCrory and members of the state legislature quickly passed opportunistic legislation discriminating against refugees from Syria and 33 additional countries.

Ten months earlier, McCrory had offered public condolences to the families of Deah Barakat, Yusor Abu-Salha, and Razan Abu-Salha, three students who were murdered

at their apartment complex in Chapel Hill. The Department of Justice launched a federal hate crimes investigation into the murders. Barakat, a Syrian American dental student at UNC, had been widely praised for his charity work for Syrian refugees—a population that will now likely be denied resettlement opportunities locally.

Given the entanglement of Islamophobia with broader currents of racism and state violence, it is necessary for UNC administrators to facilitate a change in the campus environment. Administrators should publicly contest Islamophobic speech on campus and directed at the institution by outside groups. They should explore developing additional resources to serve Muslim, South Asian, Arab American, and black students and their organizations, especially during moments of international crisis that further entrench Islamophobia; expand service opportunities to extend the benefits of research to minority communities locally; study the specific challenges faced by graduate students of color, especially those researching issues of Islamophobia, anti-blackness and other forms of structural racism; and conduct a review of university connections to security and defense agencies that intensify racial profiling and police militarization. The university should cancel and prohibit contracts that contribute to illegal activities of state and federal security agencies such as the NSA's domestic spying operations and the CIA's assassination programs. Finally, the university should make strong

commitments to establishing new curricular and hiring commitments in the neglected fields of Asian American and Arab American Studies and should defend and expand related programs such as Latina/o Studies, American Indian Studies, and African, African American, and Diaspora Studies.

Students and faculty must also do the difficult work of studying, debating, and challenging the complex political, social, and economic bases of racism on campus and beyond. ■

Not for Your Consumption

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She explicitly states, "You see, culture is happy to speak about and objectify the parts of the body that can be sexually consumed by others, but the moment we talk about something that is not for the enjoyment of others, like a period, everyone becomes deeply uncomfortable."

Although some may view these acts as attention seeking or petty, one must realize the implications of period shaming and the impacts it has upon women's self worth and well being. These South Asian women are making contributions to normalize the stigma of periods in a culture that strives to ignore its bright scarlet presence.

These two brave women who represent the diverse nature of the South Asian diaspora are striving to break down cultural stigmas,

stigmas that have been upheld for hundreds of years. Chipping at the hardened stone wall of patriarchal dogma, Rupī Kaur and Kiran Gandhi are representing the transformative nature of open thought and discussion about menses; a topic that we learned to cause us shame. ■

Reclaiming Dinesh

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the loneliness of the Ohio winter, with late-night international phone calls providing the only link to that reality. The truth is always more complicated than the foolish simpleness of statements like “it’s great they left.” I wouldn’t exist if they hadn’t left. I’m thankful for my grandparents’ struggle and ability to transform their lives here into a home for me two generations later. My privileges are in part caused by their sacrifices. But their story should never be co-opted for the purpose of supporting the good immigrant narrative. What would the woman, my dentist, and others like them think if the circumstances were a bit different? If I were the descendant of a brown family fleeing civil war from a region labeled as full of “insurgents,” “warlords,” and “terrorists” by governments around the world. A few years later, and this could have been my Tamil family’s fate, as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam took control of areas in the north and east of the country and prompted a decades-long war. Now, 32 years after the start of that war, this is the true fate of millions leaving behind homes

characterized in part by abject poverty and crippling oppression, but homes all the same, the good memories wrapped up inseparably with the bad. Among them now are Syrians and Central Americans whose desperation has been met with an open bigotry and hate speech, the latest in the American legacy of “bad immigrant” stories to juxtapose with the “good” ones. I don’t pretend to speak for the people facing these circumstances or the reality of the pain they face. It’s hard enough to speak to my own history.

But maybe that’s because so often, when I try, someone is waiting with their good immigrant story. Ready to give me a pat on the back and make me an example of another one who “made it,” already having supplanted my story they’ll never bother to hear with the one they’ve made up for me.

Fresh out the Closet

Continued from Page 12

since she is not like the others, to which she tries to respond that she does not believe in this binary. Her dad on the other hand tells her, “I don’t care if you have a boyfriend, girlfriend or dog; your career is your first priority,” which could be taken as a back-handed blessing or just a misinterpretation (School). In either case, “coming out” to her family is not really an option, and it would only result in misunderstandings which would quickly turn into talks about generational family struggles. Another respondent who identifies as pansexual, gender fluid and Punjabi got their nostril pierced

shortly after blooming into their sexuality, to which their father thinks that they are a womyn because they do not fit the “macho” Punjabi male stereotype. They said that in order to be fulfilled individually while protecting their family, they have to move out, but they can “still be Punjabi without having a relationship with their parents” (Dating Site). A Desi can be a bad child, but never bad to their parents.

On top of family dynamics, living in a country, where white ideals are the norm, plays a large role in how queer America Desis express themselves while continuously struggling to fit into mainstream society. One respondent who identifies as gay, cisgender male, and Gujarati said that he has a hard time trying to express his gender in everyday life. In public, he says that he feels “the need to be masc, since fem gays are looked down upon,” while at home he can freely express himself by wearing kajal and dancing to Bollywood songs (Tumblr). Another respondent from Punjab says that he uses his queer identity to fit in with white people, and if he chooses to introduce himself as a gay cisgender male, it makes him feel marginally whiter (Dating Site). In specific, gay dating apps reflect these notions very clearly. In many instances, users will put “masc for masc” or “white men only” in their biographies, which indicates a preference for a very narrow concentration of the queer population. These ideas are then translated into the off-screen world, causing stereotypes to be personified while damaging the self-image and outer-image of queer Desis, and other groups of

colour alike.

The unfortunate truth is that even in such an advanced society, America lacks the basic social grounding to put queer Desis at the same pedestal as queer white people. There is a lot to be done, but the root of the problem lies in our people. Before seeing my grandmother for the last time, she told me an interesting fact when I asked her about gay men in India. She said that she “would not mind having a gay child; [they] are everywhere, and give blessings to those who need them.” Sure, a lot of culture was diluted in South Asia after colonialism, but the older generations are proof of how different times were. It is time to reclaim our identities, and rise above Desi parent logic, as well as mainstream queer culture. What we need is the truth, the brown truth fresh out the closet. ■

#FreedomGiving

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and various disposal projects such as Palestinians in Gaza, Rohingyas in Myanmar and Bangladesh, and Black Americans in the United States. Of course, differing histories of settler colonialism, slavery, and contemporary neoliberal governance structure these processes of disposal; however, the broader economic underpinnings of these systems should not be dismissed.

The logic of “elimination” that Dylan Rodriguez mentions is at work even here North Carolina’s Triangle -- we just have to take a look at which populations are being criminalized, displaced from

their homes and schools, and experiencing the brunt of material poverty.

At this point in time, right here in North Carolina, five Central American youth have been stolen from their families and are being detained at centers across the South, facing almost certain deportation back home, where due to extreme levels of violence they face possible death.

And here in Orange County, NC, there is plan to spend \$20 million to build a new, larger jail, where majority Black and Brown people will continue to be contained and criminalized. What will all of us in “progressive” Chapel Hill do about this?

As someone who has documentation as an immigrant, enjoys the benefits of a university degree, and lives in secure housing, it is imperative that I and people like me work together to interrogate how the advantages we have accrued are only the result of the disadvantage others are facing. The current capitalist dynamic does not have structural necessity for everyone to enjoy a quality education or have access to housing. A central tenet of the system is that accumulation on one end of the spectrum means disaccumulation on the other.

The resistance taken on by the hunger strikers these past few months is a powerful call to action for freedom fighters everywhere. It proves to us that when people’s lives and wellbeing are on the line, oftentimes folks don’t have choice but to fight back. For those of us

who feel we have a choice, this isn’t a time to sit back and relax. Rather, this is a moment to take risks, pressure power where it currently exists, build our own forms of community power, and create a path forward. ■

A Double Minority

Continued from Page 24

mention that they’re Catholic? Staying with my mother’s family in Kerala is certainly a unique experience. From the second I reach Kerala, I experience Indian culture through a Catholic lens. I stay with my great-uncle, a priest, at his Catholic refuge and eat amidst nuns and priests as they talk about their religious devotion, all while speaking in my mother’s native language, Malayalam. I eat quintessential South Indian food like dosa and idli, while making sure to not eat meat on Fridays as per their practices. I go to Sunday mass with my great-uncle and see people in church wearing saris and traditional Malayali attire. While I’m not Catholic, spending time with my family in Kerala has certainly helped me better understand how I can openly and comfortably embrace and understand how my Indian culture and religion can exist in harmony. Having my family identify between two religious minorities has contributed to making my Indian identity unique. While the dominant narrative of India includes images of Hindu temples, Holi, and slums, my experiences demonstrate that this narrative is not comprehensive. India, to me, conjures images of the comfort of my paternal grandparents’ home

amidst the disarray of distant Mumbai, Sunday mass with my mother's family in Kerala, and the delicious food that both my grandmothers make. ■

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