Muslim America

Dieser Vorschlag bezieht sich auf Hanif Kureishi: My Son the Fanatic und Zadie Smith: The Embassy of Cambodia.

Aufgaben

Der vorliegende Vorschlag enthält in Aufgabe 3 alternative Arbeitsanweisungen.

1 Outline Lalami's personal experiences as a Muslim living in the USA and the Muslim attitudes towards the USA mentioned in the excerpt. (Material)

(25 BE)

2 Relate the excerpt (Material) to Hanif Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic" and Zadie Smith's "The Embassy of Cambodia".

(40 BE)

3 Choose one of the following tasks:

3.1 "All immigrants walk around with a scar left behind by their crossing into a new country, an invisible mark of the exile that became their condition when they were uprooted." (Material)

Assess the validity of this statement. Refer to your course studies.

or

3.2 You are taking part in an international student project on the representation of Muslims and/or people of color in the media.

Write a blog entry for the project's website, commenting on the power of the media to perpetuate stereotypes regarding Muslims and/or people of color.

(35 BE)

Material

Laila Lalami: I'm a Muslim and Arab American. Will I Ever Be an Equal Citizen? (2020)

[…] "Go back home!" the note said.

As it happened, I was already home, curled up on the sofa and scrolling through notifications on my mobile phone. Earlier that day, I tweeted a snapshot of a handwritten index card someone handed me at a lecture I gave in upstate New York in 2016, asking me what advice I would give to young Muslim Americans who did not feel safe in their communities after that year's election[1]. I wasn't sure I had much advice for how to handle that feeling, because at times I struggled with it myself. Perhaps, I thought, others on social media might have something useful to contribute. Instead, a stranger gave that short, blunt reply: "Go where you feel safe. Go back home!"

The sentiment wasn't new to me. I'd heard it before, and not just from online trolls who believed they had the supreme right to decide who belongs in the United States. Last year, I recoiled in alarm when I watched footage of a protester in the crowd outside a Border Patrol facility in Clint, Texas, yelling at Representative Rashida Tlaib of Michigan to go back to her country. Tlaib was part of a congressional delegation visiting the detention facility to learn more about the treatment of migrants and asylum seekers under the Trump administration's family-separation policy. When the representative came out to speak with reporters, someone shouted at her, "We don't want Muslims here!" That same xenophobic impulse finds its voice each time the president fires another salvo in his ongoing conflict with Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota. In the last few months, he has called her "a horrible woman who hates our country" and a "hate-filled, America-bashing socialist."

Moments like these serve as a reminder to Muslims that our belonging in the United States is not secure but conditional: At the slightest sign of political disagreement, some Americans are eager to deny or revoke our citizenship. Whether we are immigrants, refugees or natural-born citizens, ordinary constituents or members of Congress, we continue to be seen as unwanted latecomers in a "Judeo-Christian nation." […]

Over the last three decades, the United States has repeatedly tested the boundaries of citizenship: when it built a warrantless surveillance system that targeted certain communities; when it debated changes to its immigration system; and when it elected to the presidency a man who promised a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims" entering the country. Each time, Muslim and Arab Americans have teetered on the edge of belonging and unbelonging: They may be citizens, but they are also perpetual suspects […].

[…] All immigrants walk around with a scar left behind by their crossing into a new country, an invisible mark of the exile that became their condition when they were uprooted. Their children grow up without grandparents, without aunts and uncles and cousins, without a reservoir of collective family memory passed down through generations.

But while immigrants nurse this immense loss, they also face intense pressure to shed their past and assimilate into the mainstream. A few years ago, the president suggested that Muslims were failing at this task, and that their "assimilation has been very hard. It's almost – I won't say nonexistent, but it gets to be pretty close. And I'm talking about second and third generation. For some reason, there's no real assimilation."

In fact, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted shortly after Trump's election, the overwhelming majority of Muslim Americans feel pride in their national and religious identities, are

[1] that year's election – the presidential election of 2016, won by Donald J. Trump (2017–2021)

satisfied with their lives and believe in the national myth of the American dream. They display the same commitment to religion as Christians and attend religious services at the same rates as Christians. They rank being a good parent as a more important goal than leading a religious life or having a high-paying career, a choice that mirrors patterns among the general population. Although many report experiences of discrimination, the majority feel that non-Muslims are either friendly or neutral toward them. Looking at the demographic data, and particularly the direction of trends over time, the path of Muslim assimilation seems pretty typical, echoing that of other ethnic and religious groups.

And yet the pressure to assimilate continues. In May 2015, more than 200 activists, most of them armed, showed up outside mosques in Phoenix to protest – well, it's unclear what they were protesting, other than the very presence of Muslims and their places of worship in their community. Under the nativist view, which has only gained ground in recent years, assimilation means complete subordination to the dominant culture and the expulsion of anyone perceived as different.

Immigrants live their lives in the particular, but find it reflected back to them in the generic, whether in the speeches of ambitious politicians or the plotlines of Hollywood movies, in multiculturalists' praise for their contributions or nativist warnings about their undesirable influence. Their success is attributed to America, its countless opportunities, the uniqueness of its melting pot; their failure belongs only to their country of origin, their race or their culture. […]

Earlier this month, I received yet another note from a stranger: "You apparently dislike America," she wrote in an email. "Why don't you go back to Morocco?" I was struck by the possessive rage that underlaid this message. What she failed to understand is that my criticism is not an act of hate, but an act of care. What rights and freedoms I have are tethered to those around me. Instead of swaddling myself with the flag and parroting praise for the U.S., I would rather do the patient, necessary work of fighting for justice and equality. That, to me, is the "true faith and allegiance" of the oath of citizenship.

(950 Wörter)

Laila Lalami: I'm a Muslim and Arab American. Will I Ever Be an Equal Citizen?, in: New York Times, 17.09.2020, URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/17/magazine/im-a-muslim-and-arab-american-will-i-ever-be-an-equal-citizen.html (abgerufen am 18.06.2023).

Hinweis
Laila Lalami (*1968) is a first-generation Moroccan-American, she works as an author and journalist.