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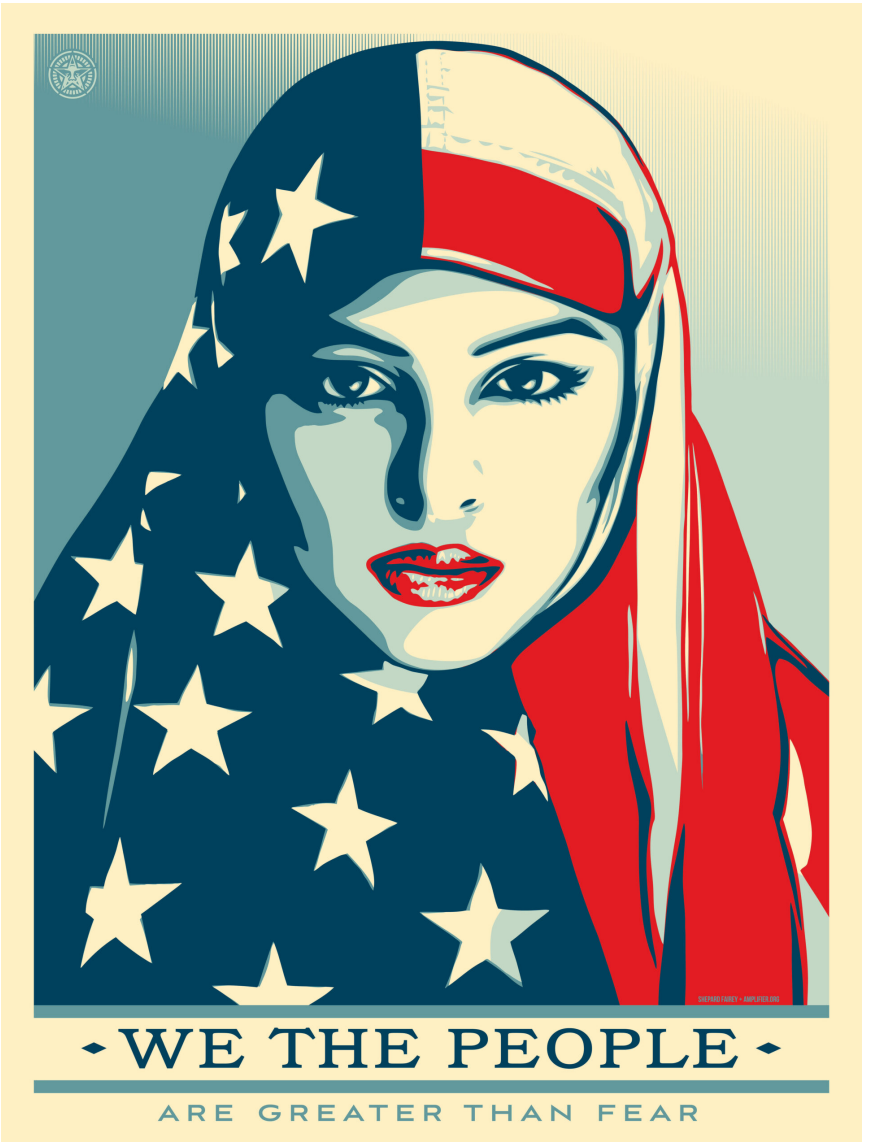
On January 20, 2017, the day of the United States' presidential inauguration of Donald Trump, the Amplifier Foundation used crowdsourced funds to buy full-page ads in major newspapers featuring their "We the People" art campaign.[1] Large signs were prohibited in Washington, DC, on inauguration day, so Amplifier, an organization that uses art to "amplify" grassroots movements, alternatively armed anti-Trump protesters with newspapers distributed throughout the city. The detachable ads were carried as posters, each featuring an individual from a marginalized demographic with an inclusive slogan. One depicts a Bangladeshi Muslim American woman wearing a hijab in the style of the US flag with the caption "We the People Are Greater Than Fear." It became one of the most recorded protest iconographies in US media during 2017, appearing abundantly across anti-inauguration demonstrations, the Women's March on Washington, pro-immigration protests, storefronts, commodity paraphernalia, and global social media. Trans/national news outlets named it "the face of the Trump resistance,"[2] and it remains a familiar icon signaling "Muslim American," as an increasingly legible civic subject in the popular sphere. Some Muslims rebuked the poster for desanctifying the hijab through the US flag, perceived as symbol of the state's settler-imperial violence.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, Muslim women have undergone a neoliberal revision in US culture and politics. While dominantly cast as imperiled subjects of Islam before and after 9/11, they are increasingly touted as US civic and market icons through interbedded domains of religious and racial (or, "religio-racial"[3]) activism, politics, and commodity cultures. In visual cultures they often wear gendered Islamic headscarves, reading manifestly as Muslim women while participating in "secular" institutions like the state or market. Examples include representations of politicians like Ilhan


WE THE PEOPLE
ARE GREATER THAN FEAR

Omar and athletes like Ibtihaj Muhammad, both Black Muslim Americans, as well as dominantly Arab/South Asian hijabi actresses in advertisements by Muslim-owned and mainstream corporations like L'Oréal and Nike (which, Kayla Wheeler argues, incorporate Islam into US markets while reproducing racial disparities among Muslims).[4] Joe Biden also met media criticism when his 2020 presidential campaign falsely claimed the image of a hijabi South Asian American as a supporter. While actually a supporter of candidate Bernie Sanders, the Biden campaign copied her image in an advertisement, removing it from context—a rally she attended denouncing Biden's environmental policies.[5] Such instances reveal ongoing political and market stakes in visibility politics, despite their criticisms.

These highly invested iconographies of Muslim American women are both distinct from and extensions of liberal colonial tropes of Euro-American foreign policy and imperial feminisms, which depict Muslim women in need of "saving" and Islam in need of "reformation." Rather than a narrative of progress, they reflect what Chandan Reddy calls modern liberalism's "freedom with violence," wherein state-conferred freedom from violence and regulation for some is enabled through the violence and regulation of Others.[6] (Neo)liberalism's differential violence and regulations are buttressed not only by their narrative disavowal, as Reddy and others argue, but also by their apparent revision[7] in visual cultures. *Greater Than Fear*'s popularization seemingly signifies Muslim Americans' "mainstreaming" within US cultures and Islam's destigmatization within progressive movements. Yet it depicts the imbrication of US patriotism in/as Islamic practice, multiplying US nationalism under the sign of Islam, while the state racially manages Muslims.

Figure 1.
"We the People Are Greater than Fear," 2017, the Amplifier Foundation, designed by Shepard Fairey, based on the photograph "I Am America," 2007, by Ridwan Adhami. Adhami's source photo may be viewed on his website: https://www.ridwanadhami.com/iamamerica.

The white American graphic artist Shepard Fairey designed *Greater Than Fear*, drawing on populist visual traditions of the protest poster and melding Islamic symbols with Americana-styled agitprop. He sourced and significantly altered the Syrian American artist Ridwan Adhami's 2007 photograph commissioned by a US Muslim periodical. While the present essay focuses on Fairey's poster, I compare the source photo to consider disparities and continuities in gendered-racial and secular aesthetics. Scholars suggest that Fairey's poster displaces difference through a racially ambiguated and nationalized Muslim American woman.[8] I add that difference is displaced not through abstraction

but through a conspicuous aesthetics of Muslim America as racially "brown," feminized, and normatively secular.

Scholars argue modern secularism is the nation-state's categorical and majoritarian production of religion, rather than religious neutralization.[9] In the US, Tracy Fessenden describes a "Protestant-secular continuum" in how religion and secularism are signified and deployed in law, politics, culture, and knowledge.[10] Secularism is also racialized in application, so religious freedom or dissent in US legal and national conventions are contingent on proximities to whiteness while religious legibility is associated with Protestant norms—thereby not only disciplining other religions, like Islam, into Protestant epistemes, but also rendering illegible non-Christian claims to religious freedom like Indigenous sacred land ecologies.[11] Further, secularism's perpetuation rather than resolution of gender-sexual inequalities, from the moral regimes of religion to the biopolitical apparatuses of the state, is widely observed.[12] Examining the intersections of race, gender, and secularism in US politics and aesthetics, I argue that *Greater Than Fear* incorporates Islam into the state's rhetoric of religion, revealing secularism as a project of gendered-racial management. Beyond marking a white-Protestant-secular teleology, I consider the *shifting* gendered-racial and religious terms and aesthetics of (neo)liberal secularisms in the US.

I begin by situating the poster within uneven neoliberal art markets that commodify dissent as well as genealogies of secular arts and civil religion, which racially imbricate Islam into an aesthetic of the US state and its resistances. I focus on the poster's widespread reproduction in the Women's March, where Islam, Muslim women, and Muslim and transnational feminist issues like Palestinian liberation became subjects of contention. I then compare Fairey's poster and Adhami's source photo. Adhami's intra-communal photo, Fairey's mainstream poster, and disseminations at the March are distinct events, so it is important to note that an image's significations are neither controlled by nor reduced to its circulations. Yet its mass mobilization across these contexts indicates unprecedented momentum in the ideological production of "Muslim American" womanhood in the twenty-first century. Rather than measuring "good vs. bad" circulations, this essay asks what kind of "Muslim American" resistance is legible and promulgated in entwined sites of (neo)liberal politics, civic feminisms, and popular art markets. I conclude with some foreclosures in imagining the religio-racial state category "Muslim American" as a subject of religious or feminist liberation.

Making Muslim American Iconography

Protest Aesthetics in Neoliberal Markets

The Amplifier Foundation, founded in 2015 by the *National Geographic* photographer Aaron Huey, is a design lab that produces open-source art for political campaigns and merchandise. Amplifier's mission statement interconnects graphic arts, digital technologies, and commodity activisms toward relating popular arts with political subjectivities: "We flip artists into activists, and observers into participants. . . . Our goal is to reclaim and rebuild an American identity rooted in equality, dignity, diversity, truth, and beauty."[13] Scholars argue that the modern concept of the "artist activist" is both entrenched in and challenged by neoliberalism wherein art, activism, and art activisms become modes of capitalist reproduction.[14] Artistic and ideological dissent, including these liberal humanist ideals espoused by Amplifier, are adopted within neoliberal markets as their representational grammars. Art activism's commodification does *not* nullify protest within or through capital but reveals the contradictions of activist commodities themselves. For instance, Amplifier's images replicate simultaneously as commodity paraphernalia (sold by them and various companies) and as open-source protest art. It is, nevertheless, necessary to attenuate disparities of capital and authority within art activist markets, which may distinguish how the marketplace itself authorizes certain aesthetic and political frameworks of protest over others.

For their 2017 "We the People" campaign, Amplifier commissioned posters from the Latinx artists Ernesto Yerena and Jessica Sabogal in addition to Fairey.[15] Fairey was the dominant spokesperson, and his posters received the widest distributions.[16] In addition to the Muslim poster, Fairey depicts a Latinx subject with the text "We the People Defend Dignity" and a Black child with the caption "We the People Protect Each Other," while Yerena and Sabogal also include Indigenous and queer representations—renarrating who constitutes the American "we" in the opening lines of the US Constitution. Fairey describes Amplifier's campaign as a retort to Donald Trump's racist, anti-Muslim, misogynistic, and homophobic rhetoric during his 2016 presidential run. He says, "Whether you're Muslim, Latino or Black, we're all Americans. I want this campaign to be about us seeing ourselves in each other . . ."[17]

While Fairey contributed to a powerful intervention against Trump's election, it is meaningful to situate visual contexts for "all Americans . . . seeing ourselves in each other"—which is not reducible to Fairey's optics but to the liberal national terms of this campaign's frame of visuality and inclusion. In

other words, how Americans see one another as American is contingent. Notably, *Greater Than Fear*'s slogan implicitly positions the Muslim American subject within a non-Muslim American frame of visuality—both implicating and disavowing Muslims as subjects of the fear that "we . . . are greater than." In post-9/11 media, Nazia Kazi analyzes a disciplinary binary of "Islamophobia/Islamophilia"[18] that dominantly regulates how Muslims and Muslim Americans are depicted in the mainstream: politically radical and nonsecular Muslims are represented outside or against the nation, whereas demonstrably patriotic and normatively secular Muslims are not only incorporable but embraced as model minorities.

Liberal nationalism's mode of recognition is shaped by the terms that define liberal politics, like citizenship, rights, secularism, and freedom—the very categories by which the liberal nation-state has unequally governed people via race, religion, gender, sexuality, and class. Liberalism itself is enshrined in modern Euro-American ideologies of "freedom" conferred unevenly by state protections and capitalist markets, and which are continuous though particularly marketized under neoliberalism.[19] (I, thus, reference ideological continuities or flexible modes of gendered-racial and secular "(neo)liberalisms" in this essay.) Jodi Melamed identifies multicultural neoliberalisms in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as formal (putatively "equal") incorporations of racialized subjects through legal, cultural, and market means while sustaining the unequal structures of states and capital.[20] As exemplified by "We the People," resistance is also conditioned by these terms of legibility so that "official" redress is possible only through the always already exclusionary logics of citizenship, rights, secularism, visibility, and capital.[21]

Fairey styled *Greater Than Fear* after his 2008 *Hope* poster of then presidential candidate Barack Obama. *Hope* was a visual slogan not only for Obama's campaign but also for ubiquitous discourses of "post-racial" liberalism surrounding his victory. Keith Feldman suggests that post-raciality-as-whiteness is visually structured within Fairey's oeuvre, particularly "as it emerges from street art practices of commodity activism that obscure the structures of racial capitalism."[22] Fairey acquired commercial visibility through his company OBEY and later through corporate collaborations. He generally re/produces artworks (sometimes sourcing other artists) of trans/national, often marginalized figures of protest or leftist satire into merchandise and branding aesthetics. His commodification of disenfranchised experiences—while subsuming disparities of power in who produces and profits from that commodity—reflects scholars' and artists' critiques of how difference is merchandised in creative markets.

Specifically, race and other markers of marginalized identity become objects of creative capital while they are also forms of labor power for underrepresented artists within gendered-racialized markets. For Amplifier's campaign, Fairey recruited source material from artists who somehow embody the marginalized identities of their aesthetic subjects, which suggests his acknowledgment of inequalities in political positionality. He solicited contracts from artists to assure creative license in the graphic revisions[23] (perhaps due to his copyright battles with the Associated Press over the source image for *Hope*[24]).

Sarah Banet-Weiser and Marita Sturken argue that Fairey's self-produced "rebellious" aesthetic exemplifies neoliberal creative markets that dispel notions of authenticity toward economizing subjectivities, including of dissent.[25] Fairey deliberately sustains an artistic identity through stylistic choices engaged in disenfranchised histories and guerrilla political aesthetics. This distinction is important because political styles' dehistoricized abstraction is a common feature in both postmodern and branding arts. Rather than individualizing Fairey through a "cultural appropriation" critique, a material analysis of cultural capital accounts for inequities in neoliberal markets' resourcing of difference and the "entrepreneurialization of arts and culture."[26] Fairey represents a small percentage of visual artists who successfully and flexibly operate across commercial and fine art markets—an even rarer prospect for nonwhite artists.[27] *Greater Than Fear* circulated across popular markets and media as well as institutional galleries like the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Protest Aesthetics and Historical Revisionisms

Fairey used graphic technologies to alter Adhami's photograph in geometric and sculptural figuration, blocked coloration, and austere stylization in order to revise and repurpose the image toward its basic communicative elements as a social object: a protest poster. Only the figure's US flag-hijab is true to the source photo. Aesthetically continuous with *Hope*, Fairey colored the entire palette in blue, red, and white tones, with the slogan captured in stencil-like text beneath the central figure. Both posters utilize constructivist methods, a functional and appropriative aesthetic associated with Soviet agitprop, alongside US symbolism and postmodern branding styles—which others analyze in *Hope*.[28] These visual genealogies at once bridge commodity, socialist, and US national aesthetics, implicating a populist form that negotiates and potentially undermines a hegemonic aesthetic of the state. In citing *Hope*, Fairey also connotes a "post-Obama" genealogy of progressivist meaning in which Muslim American subjectivity is apparently incorporated.

Sturken interprets *Hope*'s ubiquity as signaling "a new aesthetics of patriotism," which departs from straightforward symbols of nationalist art. Specifically, irony is patriotism's subtext vis-à-vis the interplay between traditional/unironic US patriotic imagery (i.e., a leader draped in national colors) and nontraditional Soviet constructivist styles that have a relationship to Marxist histories.[29] While I take Sturken's analysis as formally foundational to both posters, I question if a critical patriotic aesthetic is innovated by *Hope* or if it may be positioned within long histories of revising national visual cultures—and ways of seeing the nation—through ironic, resistant, minoritarian, transnational, or even abject iconographies *as* iterative of US art, while/as marking its differences. For instance, US art markets and art history canons have institutionalized and effectively nationalized the pop art movement's ironization of commodity and national fetishisms as well as street artists' antistate, anticapitalist, and ironic branding aesthetics (i.e., Jean-Michel Basquiat)[30]—all of which influenced Fairey's style.

Through *Hope*'s visual lineage, the depiction of a Muslim American subject of nationalism *and* dissent is a continuous project of seeing and revising the liberal state by absorbing difference. Much like *Hope*'s merger of patriotic and protest aesthetics, the simultaneous nostalgia for and disruption of national symbolism compounds in this discernibly "Muslim American" iconography. Fairey's visual pastiche invokes the optimistic racial progressivism of *Hope* through not only apparent citation but also the repetitions of patriotic colors, the figures' powerful gazes, and defiant slogans that engage communal affect. Here, the slogan convokes an evolution from post-9/11 Islamophobia. Yet "fear" instead of racism is admonished, conceptualizing Islamophobia as prejudicial rather than materially structured in the racialized policing and killing of Muslims.

Greater Than Fear not only mimics *Hope* but visually resonates with Obama-era politics that instrumentalized Muslim Americans as guardians of national security. Diverging from his predecessor's alienation of Muslims, Obama mobilized Muslim Americans toward intra-community and religious surveilling to "moderate" Islam against "homegrown extremism." Including Muslim Americans in the state's enforcement of anti-Muslim violence not only is a consistent logic of liberalism but also, through the politics of inclusion, elides how racial and secular regulations work in tandem. Obama broadened the scope of the 2011 Countering Violent Extremism program in profiling and monitoring Muslims, mosques, and Islamic organizations through ambiguous interpretations of "radical" religiosity. His administration also expanded deportations and indefinite detentions via terrorism charges, particularly against Black and

brown Muslims, while codifying these practices in the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act.[31] The Obama presidency established many of the racial and religious enforcements of national security that the Trump administration used toward its own explicit brand of white Christian nationalism.

In *Greater Than Fear*, a nostalgic Obama-era revisionism in concert with patriotic, protest, and consumer aesthetics constitutes the visual economy by which a Muslim American woman is integrated into an iconographic lineage of progressive nationalism and civic redress. The synchronously nostalgic and progressive visual economy is apparently disjunctive, as one wonders about the historical "when" that embraced Muslim Americans as virtuous citizens. Rather, the incorporation of second-class citizens and their redressive politics as part of national cultures of "official antiracism"[32] is continuous with late twentieth-century policies (and markets) of neoliberal multiculturalism and secularism.[33]

Secular Arts, Civil Religion, and the US-State's Islamic Aesthetic

While *Greater Than Fear* offered a sense of visual refreshment against Islamophobic and Christian nationalist discourses, the secular merger of religious and state iconography it visualizes is not "new" but, rather, formalized in US lineages of national art and civil religion. Historically, national—specifically, patriotic/nationalist[34]—iconography functioned to identify the nation's boundaries and discipline liberal values. US national iconography descends from European national arts, which emerged in relation to the modern secularization of Christian iconography.[35] Thus (Anglo-)Christian visual aesthetics were continuous within the national symbology of US art: canonical eighteenth-century paintings by artists like John Trumbull showcase US revolutionary leaders stylized as Christ-like saviors and moral subjects; commodity memorabilia commemorate these paintings too.[36] Given these genealogies interbed religious and state ideologies as mutually formative functions of national iconography, US visual cultures historically wedded Anglo-Christianity and secularity. In the transition to secular national arts, the "sacred" was not effaced but rather incorporated the state.

This does not negate the continuing presence of religion (or religious critique) within secular national arts—there are many examples[37]—but demonstrates their historical-ideological suturing. I suggest that *Greater Than Fear* extends this suturing by positioning Islam as an expression of secular national iconography. In the mass legibility and exceptional popularity of this particular Islamic-inflected American iconography, I also distinguish *Greater Than Fear*

according to what scholars describe as Islam's resignification within secular state frameworks of religious expression (and critique).[38] For example, visually binding the US state to Islamic practice implicates national *and* religious reformation, especially given Islam's global ethical frame. Furthermore, the regulative incorporation of Islam into a multicultural secular imaginary of the US state compels attention to the flexible terms and aesthetics of secularism as a mode of gendered-racialization.

Secular visual cultures also contribute to a broader tradition of civil religion, or the attribution of sacred values and rituals to the state. Civil religion includes the symbols, aesthetics, monuments, moral discourses, and public rituals of nationalism.[39] While Robert Bellah coined the concept as a pluralistic investment in political religion, Edward Curtis notes that the ideologies of US civil religion (essentially, American exceptionalism) are bonded to the nation's practices of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and Protestantism. Examining Eisenhower-era religious politics, Curtis adds that Cold War liberalisms absorbed non-Christians into civil religion—not erasing but *managing* religion through public faith in the nation.[40]

While *Greater Than Fear* expands the repertoires of nationalist art and civil religion, the flag-hijab is not unusual as a religious device in US symbology but, rather, as a non-Christian device espoused by the nation. The flag-hijab "secularizes" Muslim expression by managing Islamic piety toward civil religion. Simultaneously, US nationalism multiplies through the sign of Islam. It is unsurprising, then, that actual US flag-hijabs were worn not only by liberal Muslims at the Women's March in 2017 but also by a conservative Muslim guest on the right-wing network Fox News in 2015.[41] Similarly, in the aftermath of 9/11, Muslims increasingly dressed their homes and bodies with US flags as secular performances of patriotism. Civil religion's flexibility is motivated by its reproduction of the nation-state, which is challenged by what scholars like Melani McAlister observe as religion's increasingly "normative call for a transnational (and post-national) identity."[42] A US flag-hijab revises civil religion toward marking and containing Islamic difference while reconstituting the proper-sacred: the nation-state.

Muslim American Iconography in Circulation

Greater Than Fear in/and the Women's March

Greater Than Fear was ubiquitous at the Women's Marches in 2017 (and appeared in following years), one of the largest protests in US history organized

for the day after Trump's presidential inauguration. Alongside several symbols of gender and sexual difference—like "pussy hats" and rainbow flags—marchers carried Fairey's poster and wore US flag-hijabs, emblemizing feminist amendments to heteronormative and secular liberalism. The poster also mimicked what some considered the March's liberal feminism, wherein freedom and other liberal values are invested in rights and state-conferred measures of protection.[43] In this sense, liberal feminism's limits include that which is historically foreclosed by Western liberalism (i.e., Islam) or disproportionally exempted from state protections (i.e., Black women, transgender people, and those subject to US colonialism and imperialism).

Several marchers and social media accounts embraced the poster's presumed coupling of women's and immigrant rights as a reproach to Trump's election promise to ban Muslim migrants. Ahmed, the image's model, attended the March and affirmed the poster's resonances with the movement's pluralism: "I am American and I am Muslim, and I am very proud of both."[44] Ahmed also celebrated the poster's circulation within "sister marches" across continents—illustrating transnational consumptions of not only American cultural power[45] but also "Muslim American" cultural power through this century's increasing globalization of US-based Muslim consumer practices, ideologies, and social movements.

In a feminist forum, the scholar Joyce Zonana complicates the US flag-hijab as a displacement of Western feminisms and as redressive to histories of white women's orientalism. She notes the representational limitations of an Americanized hijab but also endorses it "as a part of the larger effort to create multiple, complex images of Muslims and of the United States."[46] These points reflect the striking momentum around this decade's rise in positive Muslim American media depictions, distinguished from the preceding decade's predominant "terrorist/victim/alien" tropes. It is concurrently important to reckon with a pervasive form of reparative images that Evelyn Alsultany calls "simplified complex representations,"[47] wherein Muslim exclusion is conditionally remedied through representations of Muslim alignments with the state. The journalist Nadja Sayej records heterogeneous Muslim responses to Fairey's poster, including those that affirmed Muslim American nationalism as redressive politics, rejected the ongoing disavowal of anti-Muslim violence through multicultural American exceptionalisms, and narrated gendered relationships to the hijab at once mediated by state, imperial, secular, and pious ideologies.[48] Like the poster, these varied perspectives require interpretation beyond a liberal universalist conception of agency and instead—following scholars like Saba Mahmood,

Lila Abu-Lughod, Joan Scott, and Sahar Ghumkhor[49]—multiple contexts of power organized through the veiled body and its representation.

Muslims who rebuked the poster's circulation in the March cited its depiction of US nationalism as a logic of proper (secular) Muslimness and feminism. Some invoked Muslim feminisms through Islamic principles of global justice and community, exceeding the bounds of the state: the fashion writer and activist Hoda Katebi wrote "Please keep your American flags off my hijab," criticizing the substitution of the hijab with a flag that commemorates a state produced by ongoing settler colonialism and imperialism. Katebi also refuses the commercialization of a garment that for wearers may signify a rejection of capitalism and white Euro-American expressions of gender and feminism.[50] The activist and attorney Melody Moezzi added "I am a Muslim woman, not a prop,"[51] disarticulating gendered practices of piety from consumer and state citizenships. (It is worth noting here that non-Western, Islamic states and markets also conscript the hijab in gendered epistemes of political modernity—a point to which I will return.) The scholar Aqdas Aftab questions what gendered-racial state structures remain unseen through visual projects that superficially embrace Muslims as symbols of the US state.[52]

These critiques of *Greater Than Fear* paralleled some concerns that the March's approaches to "unity" feminism[53] were synonymous with white and nationalist feminisms.[54] The inaugural March assembled a politically diverse community, so such concerns may reflect paradigmatic issues in broadscale organizing (i.e., consensus building, messaging, social centers/peripheries) as well as issues specific to feminism. March cochair Linda Sarsour described the movement's ambition as plural and intersectional: "I think it has been the downfall of the progressive movement in the United States that we have not figured out how to organize all the different progressive social justice movements into one intersectional movement."[55] The March's conflicted reception is not unique but rehearses common tensions in intersectional approaches to US-based feminism, which may reify identities, norms, and differences despite attempts to challenge them—particularly through feminist relationships to the state, foreign policy, racisms, working-class issues, and gender itself. For instance, some believed the March did not effectively center issues of white supremacy, anti-Black state violence, queer and transgender rights, or imperialism. The activist and scholar Yasmin Nair wrote "March as Feminists, Not as Women,"[56] pointing out the gender-essential limits of "woman" as a category of organizing while "feminist" addresses the political-economic structures of gendered inequality. Here, Nair disputes one of the March's inaugural gendered-

civic slogans: "The rise of the woman = the rise of the nation." Similarly, the scholar Zoé Samudzi proposed a feminist framework of solidarity rather than the March's appeal to "unity," adding that claims toward "unity" and "progress" often silence those most marginalized, potentially casting them as impediments to union.[57]

The scholar and activist Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor responded to criticisms of the March's liberalism by noting that organizing a large-scale movement requires the incorporation and possible transformation of those perspectives that the feminist Left may not consider radical. Taylor contextualizes the March against Trumpism and within mainstream feminist and progressive movements as "the first of a million steps," adding: "Should the marches have been more multiracial and working class? Yes! But you are not a serious organizer if that's where your answer to the question ends."[58] Taylor challenges those on the Left to "do something about" the liberal frameworks of the March by implementing political critiques within broad constituencies in order to "build the kind of movement we want." In the spirit of Taylor's proposition—albeit momentarily exercised here in an academic forum, while in conversation with transnational feminist praxes—I next turn to one point of contention (which mimics debates around *Greater Than Fear*) and that may broaden "the question" rather than foreclose it: how civic feminist organizing contends with inter/nationalisms and imperialism.

Civic Feminist Organizing and Its Discontents

From 2017 to 2019, institutional and social media converged on allegations of anti-Semitism against March leaders.[59] Two cochairs at the center of allegations, African American Tamika Mallory and Palestinian Muslim American Linda Sarsour, ultimately resigned their posts in 2019 without specifying a relationship to these accusations. Though media reports still widely narrated a schism within the March,[60] particularly after March cofounder Teresa Shook publicly called on their resignation for allowing "hateful, racist rhetoric to become a part of the platform."[61] Anti-Semitism allegations catapulted through anti-Blackness and Islamophobia after Mallory, a Black Christian, shared a photograph of herself at a Nation of Islam (NOI) event with its leader Louis Farrakhan, who regularly expresses patriarchal, anti-Semitic, homophobic, and transphobic views. An organization broader than Farrakhan, the NOI has supported Black Americans through social services ranging food assistance, environmentalism, and anticarceral advocacy since the 1930s, in the absence of state welfare. News and social media intimated that Mallory's connection

with Farrakhan related to some March leaders' political stances, as presumable evidence of broader anti-Semitism in the March. Namely, Mallory and Sarsour faced backlash for their individual condemnations of Israeli settler colonialism in Palestine and the US's imperial support through military aid.[62] (This was not a March platform.)

Mainstream media emphasized the March alliance with Farrakhan as an analogue for *particularly* Black and Muslim anti-Semitism, including CNN anchor Jake Tapper[63] and an *Atlantic* editorial titled "The Women's March Has a Farrakhan Problem."[64] They condemn the March, political Left, NOI, and critiques of Israel as anti-Semitic but neglect state-sanctioned anti-Semitism, including by then president Trump. Despite being a marginal figure, Farrakhan's image is frequently summoned in US media as a barometer of anti-Semitism for Black public figures, including against Obama for whom denouncing Farrakhan was a "test" against claims that he was secretly Muslim.[65] This persistent "Farrakhan test" minimizes state/systemic anti-Semitism and instead redeploys it against Black people while erasing Black Jews and homogenizing Black Muslims. Black scholars, writers, and activists have critiqued Farrakhan's views while attending to the diverse contributions of the NOI to civil rights histories.[66] The Women's March itself follows the heterogeneous lineages of Black civil rights organizing. The 2017 Women's March was inspired by and nearly named after[67] the 1997 Million Woman March, a Black-women-led response to the 1995 Million Man March convoked by Farrakhan.

These nuances do not disregard the problem of anti-Semitism, including within leftist politics or other racialized communities. Rather, co-optations of anti-Semitism as litmus tests for Black and/or Muslim public figures and as a charge against political dissent reveal how state-officiated rhetorics of antiracism are adaptable and may be used to discipline protest against the state. It also extends a prevalent discourse in right-wing politics and media,[68] which instrumentalize anti-Semitism as Black, Muslim, Arab, and Left problems—for instance, through Somali and Palestinian Muslim American politicians like Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib[69]—and especially when they criticize Israel's policies. This politicization of anti-Semitism does not resolve the problem itself but revises its origins and displaces its most violent expressions, which historically/still is a logic of white Christian supremacies.[70]

The March's public response condemned Farrakhan and anti-Semitism while supporting Mallory but did not address Palestine or Israel. The March revised its "Unity Principles"[71] to, importantly, acknowledge anti-Semitism but disregarded internationalism, colonialism/imperialism, and militarism

as objects of feminist protest. By 2019, the March expanded its board with new members, including the Palestinian Muslim American organizer Samia Assed and the Pakistani Muslim American civil rights attorney Zahra Billoo. As advocates for Palestinian self-determination, their inclusion indicated recognition of anti-imperial transnational feminisms. Both met allegations of anti-Semitism in institutional and social media that year. Billoo, a well-known activist in US Muslim communities, faced greatest scrutiny for her social media posts that explicitly condemned Israel's settler colonialism and settler-imperial alignments between Israel-US militarisms. The Anti-Defamation League, a nongovernmental organization based on combatting anti-Semitism and also widely accused of anti-Muslim racism and equating criticisms of Israel with anti-Semitism,[72] demanded Billoo's dismissal from the March.[73] The March board decided that her views were "incompatible with the values and mission of the organization," and Billoo was voted off the board.[74] Muslim and Middle Eastern media covered public critiques of the March for Islamophobia and discounting a major object of Palestinian, Muslim, and transnational feminisms, which include colonized and imperialized sites like Palestine.[75]

The March is one of the largest feminist movements in the US, with a board that is dominated by nonwhite people, includes Jewish and Muslim members, incorporates an anticolonial principle of Indigenous land rights, increased queer representation, and formally acknowledged initial shortcomings in addressing racism by revising its mission and leadership. Yet reports of dwindling participation and public perception suggest that the organization prioritizes cis-gender, white feminist, and establishment (Democratic Party) concerns.[76] So, debates on Islamophobia, Palestine/Israel, and imperialism are not limited to the March's representational diversity but the objects of feminist movement within *and invested in* the US.

The March's "Guiding Vision and Definition of Principles" (as of 2018–19) specify racial, gender, Indigenous, LGBTQ, and immigrant justices as related projects, reflecting an intersectional praxis. The document ends with a comparatively nonspecific recognition that "we must work together to end war." In this impressively comprehensive mission, there is not a meaningful internationalist agenda or reference to how these issues relate to the US's imperialism and militarism,[77] which globally, historically, and materially entangle the US-based racial, immigration, and Indigenous issues that the March emphasizes. This is also a crucial point given feminism may reproduce imperialism and militarism. For example, the George W. Bush administration's claim to liberate Muslim women during the 2001 US-led invasion of Afghanistan was sup-

ported by the Feminist Majority Foundation among others, even as Afghan women decried war.[78] Stating "civil rights are our birthright" (itself a national ideology of wedding state-conferred concepts as biologically endowed), the mission centers state reform for US-based populations. While such rights-based activisms are necessitated by statist civic politics, they need not disregard how the US variously mobilizes civil rights and protections through and toward the imperial administration of violence and interventions abroad,[79] including multiple military operations raging in the name of state security during the era of the March. The (dis)placement of internationalism in US progressive movements is a matter[80] not reducible to the March. Its civic emphasis may also be attributed to the Trump era, when many progressive politics mobilized multicultural nationalism against white populism.

Transnational Black, Indigenous, and Third World feminisms caution against consolidating differential scales (i.e., as unified by nationalism or gender) and instead define shared struggle through complicity and solidarity, including when one's right/protection harms another.[81] Following these traditions, US-based Muslim organizers contend with how their civic organizing against anti-Muslim racism and for Muslim women's rights connects to, and can possibly reproduce, the target of Muslims elsewhere—in the form of military, carceral, border, and secular violences at home *and* overseas. Examples include Vigilant Love and Justice for Muslims' abolitionist platforms.[82] Similarly, US-based Palestinian feminists advocate that gender justice is not only acknowledging solidarities but organizing against the state's imperial policies and partnerships, including US-Israel. An example is the Palestinian Feminist Collective, which formed in 2021 in response "to institutional attempts to exclude Palestinian feminists from organizing spaces like the Women's March."[83] These organizations and praxes entwine, in complicity and solidarity, an internationalist agenda within US-based feminist organizing.

These contentions with/in the March exceed the subject of this essay—a poster—but they also echo and contextualize the debates over *Greater Than Fear* as an object of liberal nationalisms, neoliberal commodity cultures, and civic feminisms. Protest posters are socially and politically communicative instruments that rarely circulate without some semiotic consensus, certainly not in mass. In this case, *Greater Than Fear* was not only ubiquitous at the March but also visually metonymic with a nationalist interpretation of the March and its platform. The March organization did not make the poster, nor did all marchers align with its image. Yet it is important to consider the historical contexts that gave meaning to an emblem of Muslim American women's

dissent, which became associated with a movement that *both* challenged and reproduced limitations of civic feminist dissent. Its aesthetics, secularizing and nationalizing gendered Muslim dissent, communicates liberalism and its limits—and it is as prescriptive as it is iconic.

Muslim American Iconographies in Contention

Fairey's formal revisions of the source artwork for his poster developed another point of popular yet underanalyzed friction in the mass circulation of *Greater Than Fear*. Before becoming a prevalent icon of multicultural nationalism and feminist protest against the Trump era, Adhami's source photo was produced for a US Muslim context—factors that do not nullify but multiply the gendered, religio-racial contests over what a "Muslim American" and a Muslim resistance look like. The photograph "I Am America" was commissioned in 2007 by the independent US Muslim publication *Illume*[84] for an issue about the sixth anniversary of 9/11 and its impacts on Muslims. When Fairey solicited an image of a Muslim and Muslim-made representation, Adhami offered several, and Fairey ultimately selected the *Illume* photograph.[85]

In interviews during late 2017 Adhami explains that, although he supports the Amplifier project and believes his image "has a life of its own . . . with many interpretations," his photograph's political aesthetics were displaced in Fairey's design. He argues that staging a Bangladeshi Muslim woman in a US-flag hijab was conceived for a Muslim audience. "I wouldn't have made these decisions for a primarily white audience," Adhami says. "It was made for our community . . . by one of us . . . I wrote about it as something unapologetic and not as a question for inclusion. . . . I also shot it near Wall Street. These contexts are important because then the flag and hijab are used symbols, not Munira or what she represents."[86] Here, Adhami describes his public statement:

> "To take it up a notch I wanted to shoot the photo at the World Trade Center site, near Wall Street in the financial district in Manhattan, NYC. That point [h]as [*sic*] long been lost and can barely be seen in the background of the image. But it was important to be there, doing it there in itself was a statement. I remember getting all types of weird looks and a few sly comments while shooting, 'What are they doing?' or 'You can't use a flag like that.' I was a New Yorker, the subject Munira was a New Yorker, we are both Muslim, the city was ours, the nation was ours, the religion was ours. There was no separating all those facts as many tried and still try to do."[87]

Adhami's staging elements are, in his estimation, essential to properly contextualizing his critique. He staged the photograph in the New York stock exchange

and near the "Ground Zero" site of the 9/11 attacks. The setting is established in Adhami's landscape but erased in Fairey's poster. In the photograph, behind the tight framing around Ahmed's flag-draped head, two discernible buildings recede—one, the stock exchange and the other, now ironically, a building owned by Trump. Adhami describes the placement as "saying something about the way in which treatment of Muslims is part of this country's racist history, which is symbolized in this space. . . . It means something that two people who are Muslims and Americans are saying this, in this place."[88] Adhami suggests that his photograph not only depicts Muslim American counternationalism but also its impossibility. ("Counter/nationalism" is not his analysis but mine; he prefers "identity.")[89] He argues the ironic subtext is visualized oppositionally through the flag-hijab against the landscape, which simultaneously evokes US financial empire built on settler colonialism, slave labor, and racial capitalism[90] (the stock exchange and Wall Street) as well as the ruins that symbolize the violence of US empire (near Ground Zero). Using the US flag as a hijab, in his view, is about critically counterposing multiple icons of "sacred" belonging, nationalist and religious.

Adhami contends that his photo tensely stages "unapologetic . . . Muslim American identity" in figural dispute with a landscape that dispels its realization. Any such critical figuration is formally and historically revised in Fairey's poster. What may challenge Adhami's subtext is the seeming visual equivalence of the US flag and hijab. As symbolic and material things, how the US flag and Islamic hijab emerge in national and global politics reflect asymmetrical relations to power—evidenced when Adhami and Ahmed's onlookers are offended by the sacrilegious "misuse" of the flag rather than the hijab.[91] The distinctions between Adhami's and Fairey's artworks demonstrate other nuances: the plurality of investments in Muslim American counternationalisms in relation to state legibility; the continuities in mobilizing national aspirations through gendered symbols/figures; and the gendered-racial disparities of visibility within popular art markets.

To stage a photograph that embraces an "apparent" figuration of Muslim America, Adhami made deliberate decisions in selecting a Muslim model "who was a woman . . . who was brown . . . and who was 'raw' . . . without makeup or adornments." He added that *not* selecting a "light-skinned Arab Muslim woman was intentional and my audience would get that."[92] Adhami signals hijabi, "raw," and "brown" racial aesthetics as positivist revisions of Muslim difference against the white supremacist and secular symbolisms of the US flag. He suggests that a manifestly brown South Asian as opposed to a "light-skinned Arab" woman captures the variance of racisms toward and within

Muslim communities in the US. Indeed, individual proximities to whiteness and embodied symbols of Islam inflect different Muslims' susceptibilities to state and social racisms. His point also hinges on histories of US law that read Arabs as conditionally white, and often through colorism and religion.[93] To express these intra-Muslim racial disparities, however, he might have photographed a Black model. While Adhami describes his oeuvre as influenced by the foundationally Black histories of American Islams,[94] US Muslim periodicals dominantly imagine "Muslim America" through Arab and South Asian genealogies. Scholars like Su'ad Abdul Khabeer argue that late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century US foreign policy, immigration trends, and Muslim hypervisibility in media also shifted mainstream perceptions of who represents "Muslim America"—from Black to Arab and South Asian.[95]

The racialized aesthetic of Fairey's poster was a point of conflict among Muslim and feminist commentators across social media. They contended that Fairey's rouging of Ahmed's lips, structuring her rounded features, and thinning her eyebrows dramatically stylized her features according to Eurocentric standards of beauty that, according to Muslim activists like Katebi, had "whitewashed and sanitized" a nonwhite Muslim woman for US markets.[96] Continuous with earlier cited rebukes of the flag-hijab as an apparatus of nationalism or capital, these criticisms emphasize gendered-racial inequalities of access, capital, and signifying power in art markets. Fairey, on the other hand, interpreted Muslims' criticisms as about cultural appropriation, responding, "I'm not going to be intimidated by people or identity politics" and "if any group wants to not be disenfranchised, then understanding that there's going to be a learning curve for people who have disenfranchised them is important."[97] His comments illustrate the often-depoliticizing discourse of appropriating culture/identity, which may disguise material disparities in politics and markets, including Fairey's own signifying and market authorities in relation to his stated benevolence ("learning curve") toward the "disenfranchised."

Given images operate beyond artists' intentions, I account for the material and ideological distinctions and continuities between Fairey's and Adhami's works within those contexts they heavily circulated: civic politics, cultural markets, and US visual histories. The photo and poster agree in their "Muslim American" aesthetic of civil religion. Both artists visualized "alternative" multicultural secular nationalisms vis-à-vis gendered Islamic and state symbols. Each claimed a gendered-racial aesthetic toward embodying brown Muslim woman-as-nation. In consistent gendered terms, albeit differently positioned relations to racial and secular power, Fairey's refigured (or "whitewashed") Muslim subject becomes an American icon, and Adhami produces a "brown"

Muslim American counternationalist critique of the racial state. Fairey's design imagines a Muslim American woman as emblematic of the flexibly secular state; Adhami's ironic subtext positions Muslim American counternationalism against the violent emblems of the state. Fairey's poster is haunted by Euro-American visual histories that substantiate the liberal-imperial state through racialized women.[98] Adhami's photo recalls histories of gendered-racial and religious counternationalisms that express communion through distinct forms of womanhood, including in US Islams.[99]

Through the hijab, Muslim women continually face multiple metrics of gendered governmentality—whether requisite veiling in Iran, banned veiling in France, or "secularized" veiling as US civil religion. The specificity of each condition is crucial. The common factors include the regulative demands on women's bodies toward the legitimation of proper national, gender, or secular subjectivities *and* the shifting nature in how these subjectivities are imagined as legitimate. Even as all clothing is politicized, many scholars demonstrate that Islamic headdresses are exceptionalized across Global North and South discourses of modernity, thereby restaging colonial discourses of the body onto performances of modern (neo)liberal states (and their resistances).[100] While Muslim women powerfully objected to the commodification and nationalization of the hijab, the US media economy of minoritized politics placed them and the hijab itself in a peripheralized position of recuperation. That is, criticisms of US flag-hijabs as failed or false transgressions became positioned in subordinate terms wherein the hijab is signified in orientation with dominant Euro-American worldviews. In such a narrative economy these arguments, with intention or not, become assertions that proper hijabi transgression is through political expressions of antinationalism, anti-imperialism, or anticapitalism and not, for example, commodity activisms. Thus, the hijab is rehearsed (again) through liberal secular discourses of "choice"—rather than, for instance, religious episteme.[101] As an expression of dissent, the hijab then becomes locked in signification with Euro-American ideologies. Rey Chow describes this as reinforcing a world order where resistant identification and signification practices are produced in relation to Euro-American terms of difference.[102]

Muslim women may wear the hijab as rejections of Euro-American secularity, nationalism, imperialism, capitalism, and beauty. The hijab and other Islamic headdresses are also worn in variant expressions of lived Islams—by Muslim women and those who may not identify as women—through pious, devotional, conscripted, sartorial, ceremonial, obscure, and shifting performances. It is important to attend to these different epistemologies and contexts of veiling to displace fixed notions of religious and gendered subjectivity as forms of

governmentality. These nuances clarify how the excessive signification of the hijab extends to the excessive management of women's bodies as political vectors for manifesting and disciplining dominant ideologies of nation, culture, religion, and gender—as well as their resistances.

Conclusion: Muslim American Iconography as Foreclosure

Greater Than Fear illustrates how the mutual constitutions of US secular and gendered-racial (neo)liberalism converge on Muslim American iconographies of protest and inclusion while foreclosing the terms of Muslim protest and inclusion. The poster typifies the mass cultural and political interpellation of "Muslim American" women into shifting gendered-racialized formations of secular power in the twenty-first century. Through this iconography's circulations, I observed the apparent revisions of gendered, racial, and religious inequality within entwined sites of liberal inclusion: first, neoliberal creative economies that commodify racial/religious dissent as a logic of inclusive markets; second, Obama- and Trump-era discourses of racial and secular liberalism; third, US secular arts and civil religion that induct Islam as an aesthetic of the state; and, fourth, civic feminisms that conditionally incorporate Muslims.

Through secular and gendered-racial aesthetics, and within neoliberal activist markets, each of the discussed circulations imagines a Muslim American woman as constitutive of liberalism's in/capacities, including the liberal nation-state imagined as plural and equal (Fairey), as promise (Women's March), and as im/possibility (Adhami). As an exemplar of progressively gendered "Muslim America," the poster visualizes at once a false revisionism of ongoing anti-Muslim violence in/by the US and the boundaries of (neo)liberalism and civic feminisms. Simultaneously, what this image unsees are other Muslim bodies as well as those feminist, ethical, and political imaginaries that exceed the inclusionary costs of the nation.

Notes

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