

Chapter 4

The right-wing media enablers of anti-Islam propaganda

Spreading anti-Muslim hate in America depends on a well-developed right-wing media echo chamber to amplify a few marginal voices. The think tank misinformation experts and grassroots and religious-right organizations profiled in this report boast a symbiotic relationship with a loosely aligned, ideologically-akin group of right-wing blogs, magazines, radio stations, newspapers, and television news shows to spread their anti-Islam messages and myths. The media outlets, in turn, give members of this network the exposure needed to amplify their message, reach larger audiences, drive fundraising numbers, and grow their membership base.

Some well-established conservative media outlets are a key part of this echo chamber, mixing coverage of alarmist threats posed by the mere existence of Muslims in America with other news stories. Chief among the media partners are the Fox News empire,¹ the influential conservative magazine *National Review* and its website,² a host of right-wing radio hosts, *The Washington Times* newspaper and website,³ and the Christian Broadcasting Network and website.⁴

They tout Frank Gaffney, David Yerushalmi, Daniel Pipes, Robert Spencer, Steven Emerson, and others as experts, and invite supposedly moderate Muslim and Arabs to endorse bigoted views. In so doing, these media organizations amplify harmful, anti-Muslim views to wide audiences. (See box on page 86) In this chapter we profile some of the right-wing media enablers, beginning with the websites, then hate radio, then the television outlets.

The websites

A network of right-wing websites and blogs are frequently the primary movers of anti-Muslim messages and myths. The two most influential are:

- David Horowitz Freedom Center websites and online magazines, including FrontPage Magazine,⁵ Jihad Watch,⁶ NewsReal Blog,⁷ and its various conferences
- Pamela Geller's Atlas Shrugs blog⁸

Let's look at each in turn.

Perpetuating the myth that most U.S. mosques are radical

Members of the Islamophobia network published articles or hit the airwaves this year and in 2010 to misinform our nation about Muslim American congregations. Here's a sampling.

- David Yerushalmi in *Middle East Quarterly* misinforms America that more than 80 percent of U.S. mosques advocate or promote violence.¹
- Frank Gaffney of the Center for Security Policy writes in *The Washington Times*:

*"Most mosques in the United States are actually engaged in—or at least supportive of—a totalitarian, seditious agenda they call Shariah. Its express purpose is undermining and ultimately forcibly replacing the U.S. government and its founding documents. In their place would be a "caliph" governing in accordance with Shariah's political-military-legal code."*²

- Islamophobia grassroots organizer Pamela Geller says that "4 out of 5 mosques preach hate" on CNN Sunday Morning.³
- Fox News commentator Bill O'Reilly, in an interview with Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN) on the O'Reilly Factor, cites Frank Gaffney to charge that "violent extremism and sharia law is being condoned in 75 percent of the American Muslim mosques."⁴
- Rep. Peter King (R-NY) says that "over 80 percent of the mosques in this country are controlled by radical Imams" on the Laura Ingraham Show.⁵

Endnotes

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- 2 Frank Gaffney, "GAFFNEY: United Shariah of America?" *The Washington Times*, June 7, 2011, available at <http://www.washington-times.com/news/2011/jun/7/united-shariah-of-america/?page=all#pagebreak>.
- 3 "CNN Sunday Morning," Transcript, CNN, June 6, 2010, available at <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1006/06/sm.02.html>.
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- 5 Scott Keyes, "Rep. Peter King: 80 Percent Of Mosques In This Country Are Controlled By Radical Imams," *ThinkProgress.org*, January 25, 2011, available at <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2011/01/25/140549/king-radical-mosques/>.

David Horowitz Freedom Center

The David Horowitz Freedom Center is a well-funded key player in amplifying the alleged threats of Muslim extremism in America. Founded in 1988 by Horowitz, age 72, a former New Left radical of the 1960s turned radical-right enthusiast,⁹ the Freedom Center is one of the main organizations that “helped spread bigoted ideas into American life,” according to the nonpartisan Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate groups in America.¹⁰ Norway terrorist Anders Breivik cited a number of anti-Muslim U.S. players in his manifesto, including Horowitz.¹¹

The Freedom Center allegedly “combats the efforts of the radical left and its Islamist allies to destroy American values and disarm this country as it attempts to defend itself in a time of terror.”¹² From 2002 to 2009, the center had \$36 million in revenue to do this work.¹³ Horowitz’s claims are spurious and familiar. He echoes many Islamophobia voices in warning that mainstream Muslim American organizations “are all fronts of the Muslim Brotherhood” and that 80 percent of U.S. mosques are filled with hate against Jews and Americans.¹⁴

In a speech at Brooklyn College, Horowitz said that Islam is a religion that “middle eastern Muslims are ‘Islamic Nazis’ who ‘want to kill Jews, that’s their agenda,’ and he added that ‘all Muslim associations are fronts for the Muslim Brotherhood.’”¹⁵ Horowitz has gone even further than his conspiracy-minded colleagues by alleging that Islamic extremism has infiltrated our education system, beginning in kindergarten.¹⁶

Here are his main promotional vehicles.

FrontPage Magazine and Jihad Watch

Horowitz boasts two online magazines, FrontPage Magazine and Jihad Watch, directed by Robert Spencer.¹⁷ Through these vehicles, Horowitz gives an amplified voice to a cadre of fellow anti-Muslim bigots and their schemes of conspiracies and threats. Frank Gaffney, Daniel Pipes, Robert Spencer, and other familiar names use the magazine and website to promote their latest litany of over-hyped dangers.

For instance, they used FrontPage Magazine to promote their overhyped Stop the Madrassa Community Coalition, which aimed to shut down a New York City public school simply because it taught Arabic language and culture.¹⁸ The school was the Khalil Gibran International Academy, named after the Lebanese Christian poet.

Horowitz and his colleagues claim that President Obama's outreach to global Muslim-majority countries is proof of his radical Islamist agenda.

The magazine and website also frequently target President Barack Obama. Robert Spencer uses the website to deliberately misconstrue President Obama's support of Egyptian democracy as an endorsement of the Muslim Brotherhood and their Islamist agenda,¹⁹ and Pipes used the magazine to promote the lie that President Obama was once a practicing Muslim.²⁰ On top of that, Horowitz and his colleagues claim that President Obama's outreach to global Muslim-majority countries is proof of his radical Islamist agenda.

In a pamphlet titled "Obama and Islam," Horowitz and Spencer say that, "In fact, Obama's statement represents something far more disturbing than naivete: a conscious effort to appease Islamic supremacism in Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East, and an energetic willingness to pander to the Islamic world in general."²¹

And finally, no anti-Muslim magazine or website would be complete without the predictable attacks on Sharia. It's no surprise that Pipes used these vehicles to support Oklahoma's Sharia ban in 2010. According to Pipes, such bans are "neither discriminatory nor superfluous," since "laws that ban the Sharia are essential to preserving the constitutional order."²²

NewsReal Blog

The David Horowitz Freedom Center also operates its own blog, NewsReal, which, among other things, promotes the myth that an array of political organizations on both the left and the right have been infiltrated by Muslim extremists. For instance, the blog repeats Frank Gaffney's discredited and outlandish conspiracy theory that the Conservative Political Action Conference has been infiltrated by the Muslim Brotherhood.²³

One of Horowitz's strategies is to frame his arguments in terms of constitutional protections and freedoms, especially those of the First Amendment. Earlier this year, he wrote on NewsReal Blog that "The frontline battle against Islamic totalitarianism is the battle to defend the First Amendment—the right of assembly and free speech."²⁴ Never mind the fact that Horowitz's First Amendment defense against "Islamic totalitarians" denies First Amendment rights to Muslims to build houses of worship²⁵ and pray according to their faith.

Islamofascism Awareness Week

Horowitz also uses his websites to promote the center's Terrorism Awareness Project. Built on the fear of an Islamic crusade against the West,²⁶ the center and Horowitz have been organizing Islamofascism Awareness Week programs on

hundreds of campuses across the country.²⁷ They have an online guide²⁸ for student organizations to host the week-long event and provide speakers. The guide peddles myths and conspiracy threats, including one that mainstream Muslim groups and organizations are actually fronts for Islamist extremists. Speakers including Robert Spencer, Daniel Pipes, and Nonie Darwish echo and amplify these myths and threats.

Wednesday Morning Club and Restoration Weekend

Horowitz's center also pushes out anti-Muslim messages and threats through his Wednesday Morning Club, a lunch forum that provides a platform for conservative politicians, media personalities, and others.²⁹ He recently hosted right-wing activist Andrew Breitbart, whose media site houses Frank Gaffney's blog, peddling Breitbart's alarmist Sharia fears.³⁰

In addition, Horowitz hosts Restoration Weekend,³¹ an annual elite conference in Palm Beach, Florida, whose participants have included Rep. Michele Bachmann and former Speaker of the House and Fox News commentator Newt Gingrich, along with the usual anti-Muslim suspects, including Frank Gaffney, Robert Spencer, Pamela Geller, and Rev. John Hagee, a leader of the religious right.³²

Because his media outlets give Horowitz power and influence, he is often invited to voice his views through other conservative media outlets. He has appeared in the pages of *The Washington Times* and on Fox News. Here's an example from Fox News of his raw bigotry and unsubstantiated conspiratorial views about mainstream Muslim student groups. "The point here is that there are 150 Muslim students' associations," Horowitz said, "which are coddled by university administrations and treated as though they were ethnic or religious groups, when they are political groups that are arms of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is the fountainhead of the terrorist jihad against the West."³³

Pamela Geller

Pamela Geller began her publishing career at *The New York Daily News* and then became associate publisher of *The New York Observer* from 1989 to 1994. She quit that job to stay home with her four children³⁴ and a decade later founded her blog, Atlas Shrugs.³⁵ The blog is named after novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand's, *Atlas Shrugged*. *The Fountainhead*, *Atlas Shrugged*, and other Rand novels promote an extreme philosophy of selfishness and undiluted libertarianism, and are wor-

shipped by the right wing—and by Geller, who calls Rand “the greatest philosopher in human history” and says the goals of her blog are “clearly defined by Rand’s philosophy.”³⁶ In addition to being a media player, Geller is an active grassroots organizer for anti-Muslim causes (as detailed in Chapter 3 of our report).

Geller’s many commentaries, blog posts, and media appearances promote a slew of conspiratorial claims. They include: President Obama is a Muslim;³⁷ Arabic is not just a language but actually a spearhead for anti-Americanism;³⁸ radical Islam has infiltrated our government, which is being run by Islamic supremacists;³⁹ and Muslims are engaged in stealth cultural jihad by wearing their head scarves at Disneyland.⁴⁰

Geller, however, is best known as the public face of the protest against the Park51 community center in lower New York City, which she named “Mega Mosque at Ground Zero”⁴¹ and referred to as “the ultimate flag of conquest” and “a shrine to the very ideology that inspired the jihadist attacks at ground zero.”⁴²

More recently, Geller has been linked in the news to confessed Norway terrorist Anders Breivik, since he cited her 12 times in his manifesto.⁴³ Geller quickly defended herself against any connection, but then went on to condemn the Norwegian Labour Party summer youth camp, whose children had been attacked by Breivik. Geller called the camp part of an anti-Israel “indoctrination training center.”⁴⁴

She further claimed that the children and young people who were killed by Breivik would have grown up to become “leaders of the party responsible for flooding Norway with Muslims who refuse to assimilate, who commit major violence against Norwegian natives including violent gang rapes, with impunity, and who live on the dole.”⁴⁵ Not yet done with her slanderous attacks, Geller posted a camp picture of the children, likely featuring many of the victims. The caption read: “Note the faces which are more Middle [sic] Eastern or mixed than pure Norwegian.”⁴⁶

So let’s review some of Geller’s outrageous and racist claims.

Muslims and Islam, Nazism and Communism

Geller reinvigorates disbanded right-wing rhetoric about communist infiltration and fascist dangers. One of her most extremist claims is that Adolf Hitler

and Nazism were inspired by Islam.⁴⁷ Because of this, Geller warns that “devout Muslims should be prohibited from military service.”⁴⁸

Geller’s replacement villain for communism is the Muslim Brotherhood.⁴⁹ Like Gaffney, she claims that the Conservative Political Action Conference has been “corrupted and compromised” because one of its members is Suhail Khan, a Republican who served in the George W. Bush administration, has been part of CPAC for 20 years, and happens to be Muslim American.⁵⁰

Geller also sees the enemy Islam infiltrating President Obama’s administration.⁵¹ Beyond that, Geller is convinced that President Obama has been, or continues to be, a practicing Muslim.⁵² Geller says President Obama is a “muhammadan” who “wants jihad to win.”⁵³ And she claims that he is “essentially backing Al Qaeda in Libya.”⁵⁴ Basically, according to Geller “everything this president has done so far has helped foster America’s submission to Islam.”⁵⁵

Geller’s ties to the network

Pamela Geller is deeply connected to the major players in the Islamophobia network. Her personal attorney is David Yerushalmi,⁵⁶ who has provided legal counsel for two of her organizations: Stop Islamization of America and Stop the Madrasa Community Coalition,⁵⁷ profiled in the previous chapter. For her part, Geller has promoted Yerushalmi’s anti-Sharia legislation in a number of state campaigns.⁵⁸ On March 2011, for example, Alaskan Representative Carl Gatto (R-Palmer) invited both Yerushalmi and Geller to testify before the House State Affairs Committee on the necessity of banning Sharia and foreign law to protect the state and the U.S Constitution.⁵⁹

Due to her prolific activities, Geller won the 2010 Annie Taylor Award, given by the David Horowitz Freedom Center. Geller said the award represented the “culmination of years of work that defines me.”⁶⁰

In addition to these connections, Geller supports Brigitte Gabriel, founder of ACT! for America. After Gabriel had a confrontational appearance on comedian Bill Maher’s TV talk show, Geller came to her defense, writing a piece, “Standing Up For Brigitte.”⁶¹ Subsequently, several ACT! for America chapters invited Geller to speak. In February of this year, Geller gave a speech to ACT!’s Omaha chapter and erroneously spread the word that the American Bar Association has decided to fight for Sharia law in America.⁶²

Hate radio

Anti-Muslim websites work in tandem with popular radio talk-show hosts who repeat and amplify the alarmist threats and conspiracy theories promoted by the blogs and their supporters. The industry of “hate radio” includes nationally known personalities such as Rush Limbaugh, Michael Savage, Glenn Beck, and others. Together, they use their programs as bully pulpits to preach anti-Muslim messages of intolerance and hate.

‘The Rush Limbaugh Show’

Rush Limbaugh hosts the most popular radio talk show in America. “The Rush Limbaugh Show”⁶³ is carried by more than 600 radio stations nationwide and is broadcast to more than 15 million listeners a week.⁶⁴ Limbaugh, age 60, calls himself “America’s anchorman” and “America’s truth detector.” He uses his highly influential radio pulpit to spread the word, and one of his favorite messages is casting suspicion on President Obama’s religious identity. Limbaugh has called Obama “Imam Obamadinejad,”⁶⁵ said the president is into caliphate building, and that he might think of himself as the 12th imam.⁶⁶

Such claims have an effect. In 2010, nearly 18 percent of Americans incorrectly believed that President Obama was a Muslim, due in no small part to the media orchestration of such claims.⁶⁷

Limbaugh joins Pamela Geller and others as a vociferous critic of the Park51 community center in New York City. During the protests last summer, he compared Muslims building the community center to the Klu Klux Klan establishing a “memorial at Gettysburg.”⁶⁸ Limbaugh also charged that the community center was a “recruiting tool for foreign extremists,” and repeated the talking point that organizers want the center to be a “victory monument at Ground Zero.”⁶⁹ Unfortunately Limbaugh’s microphone will stay on for years to come. In 2008, he signed an eight-year, \$400 million renewal contract with Clear Channel.⁷⁰

‘The Sean Hannity Show’

The nation’s second most popular talk show is “The Sean Hannity Show,” a nationally syndicated talk-radio show that airs on Premiere Radio Networks

and is hosted by Sean Hannity.⁷¹ Hannity, age 49, also hosts a cable-TV news show, “Hannity,” on Fox News. Nearly 14 million listeners tune into Hannity’s radio show each week⁷² to hear guests repeat the same talking points and conspiracy theories that can be heard on Limbaugh, Fox News, and other places. Questions abound about President Obama’s religious affiliation,⁷³ the Muslim Brotherhood infiltrating the Conservative Political Action Committee,⁷⁴ and threats of homegrown terrorism in our midst.⁷⁵ Listening to Hannity, one could hear Rep. Peter King (R-NY) agree with his host that 85 percent of mosques in America are run by Islamic fundamentalists after Hannity cited Steven Emerson and Daniel Pipes to prove his point.⁷⁶

‘The Savage Nation’

Mike Savage hosts “The Savage Nation,” another top-rated national radio program, which is syndicated through Talk Radio Network.⁷⁷ More than 350 radio stations broadcast his show to nearly 9 million weekly listeners, putting him just behind Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity in ratings.⁷⁸ Savage, 69, is known for his angry diatribes against minorities, including Muslims. On April 17, 2006, for example, he told listeners that Americans should “kill 100 million” Muslims.⁷⁹ In October 2007 he said, “I don’t wanna hear one more word about Islam. Take your religion and shove it up your behind. I’m sick of you.” He then suggested that American Muslims be deported.⁸⁰

Along with Limbaugh, Savage promotes the myth that President Obama could be a secret Muslim. Before Obama was elected, Savage called him “Senator Barack Madrassas Obama.”⁸¹ During the 2008 campaign, Savage said, “Now we have an unknown stealth candidate who went to a madrasa in Indonesia and, in fact, was a Muslim.”⁸² Seeking to get “the facts,” Savage insisted that “[w]e have a right to know if he’s a so-called friendly Muslim or one who aspires to more radical teachings.”⁸³

‘The Glenn Beck Program’

Glenn Beck also has a popular radio show that is broadcast by more than 400 stations and syndicated by Premiere Radio Networks.⁸⁴ Beck’s show ties with Savage’s show for third place for national radio talk shows with more than 9 million listeners weekly.⁸⁵ Beck, 47, conjures fears equating Muslims with terrorists and brings religion into the mix. Last December, he speculated on his show

Mike Savage once told listeners that Americans should “kill 100 million” Muslims.

Middle East Media and Research Institute

The Islamophobia network's go-to place for selective translations of Islamist rhetoric abroad

The Middle East Media and Research Institute is a Middle Eastern press-monitoring agency created by former members of Israeli Defense Forces that supplies translations relied upon by many members of the Islamophobia network. The translation service was created in February 1998 as an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization “to inform the debate over U.S. policy in the Middle East.”¹

MEMRI offers research on media in the Arab world, which those in the Islamophobia network depend on to make the case that Islam is inherently violent and promotes extremism. Jihad Watch's Robert Spencer hails MEMRI as “a goldmine of translated material from the Arabic speaking world which really gives one some amazing insights into what our opponents in the war on terror are thinking.”² Frank Gaffney at the Center for Security Policy calls MEMRI “indispensable” and relies on its translations to exaggerate the threat of the Muslim Brotherhood and radical Islam's infiltration of America.³ And the anti-Muslim grassroots organization ACT! for America uses a MEMRI-supplied video of a Muslim woman being stoned in Sudan as evidence of the brutality of Sharia law.⁴

The Middle East Forum's Daniel Pipes also relies on MEMRI for his propaganda,⁵ as does Steve Emerson, executive director of The Investigative Project, who also serves as a director at MEMRI.⁶ Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik cited MEMRI 16 times in his manifesto.⁷

MEMRI was founded by Israeli-born, American academic Meyrav Wurmser, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, and Col. Yigal Carmon, who spent more than 20 years in the Israeli intelligence and served as a terrorism adviser to two of Israel's prime ministers, Yitzhak Shamir and Yitzhak Rabin.⁸ Wurmser co-authored the 1996 report, “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm,” prepared for then-incoming Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which suggested reshaping Israel's strategic environment in the Middle East by abandoning the traditional “land for peace” negotia-

tions with Palestinians and proposing the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.⁹

MEMRI is respected in some circles for its work to combat hate language and anti-Semitism,¹⁰ but it is also criticized for its selective translations. The institute contends that it highlights moderate Muslim voices on its Reform blog.¹¹ Yet MEMRI's selective translations of Arab media fan the flames of Islamophobia. MEMRI's editorial bias in its selection of media sources creates the impression that Arab media is full of anti-Western bias and urges Muslims in the West to commit acts of violence and terrorism.

One case in point: A sample of the videos on the front page of MEMRITV.org's “Islamists in the West”¹² section shows 19 new videos with topics ranging from “Belgian Islamist Abou Imran, of Shariah4 Belgium: We Will Conquer the White House, Europe Will Be Dominated by Islam”¹³ to “American Jihadist Operating From Somalia, Abu Mansour Al-Amriki, Calls to Attack America, in Two New Jihadi Songs – ‘Send Me A Cruise,’ and ‘Make Jihad with Me.’”¹⁴ Problem is, 12 of the 19 videos—including the two listed above—list “The Internet” as the source, instead of any verifiable news source.

Or consider George Washington University Professor Marc Lynch's response to MEMRI's 2004 report that Osama bin Laden promised to only attack American states that voted for George W. Bush.¹⁵ Lynch wrote that “MEMRI is cherry-picking a couple of statements on fringe websites to support its own, highly partisan, interpretation. Actually, to be totally clear, they are relying on ONE statement on ONE radical website, which could have been posted by ANYBODY.”¹⁶

Indeed, MEMRI is plagued by accusations that it selectively translates television news clips from the Muslim world. Former CIA case officer Vince Cannistraro has said that “they (MEMRI) are selective and act as propagandists for their political point of view, which is the extreme-

right of Likud.”¹⁷ Laila Lalami, writing in *The Nation*, states that MEMRI “consistently picks the most violent, hateful rubbish it can find, translates it and distributes it in e-mail newsletters to media and members of Congress in Washington.”¹⁸

Most disturbingly, the translations found in the inflammatory, anti-Muslim documentary “Obsession: Radical Islam’s War Against the West” were provided by MEMRI.¹⁹ The film’s website also features MEMRI as a resource under the link for “Radical Islam and Terrorism Today,”²⁰ which demonstrates once again how important MEMRI’s translations are for Islamophobic propaganda in the United States. The Clarion Fund was responsible for producing and disseminating the anti-Muslim movie to 28 battleground states in 2008.²¹

Endnotes

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- 13 “#2695 - Belgian Islamist Abu Imran, of Shariah4Belgium: We Will Conquer the White House, Europe Will Be Dominated by Islam,” The Middle East Media Research Institute, available at <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/2695.htm> (last accessed August 16, 2011).
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- 16 Marc Lynch, “MEMRI’s disgusting partisanship,” Abu Aardvark, available at http://abuaardvark.typepad.com/abuaardvark/2004/11/memris_disgusti.html (last accessed August 16, 2011).
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about the number of American Muslims who might be terrorists, saying: “Let’s say it’s half a percent of the U.S. population. That’s being generous. What’s that number? What is the number of Islamic terrorists, 1 percent? I think it’s closer to 10 percent.”⁸⁶

In February, one of Beck’s guests was Joel Richardson, the apocalyptic author of the book *The Islamic Antichrist*. Richardson was on the show to discuss “Islam’s Mahdi, the Antichrist, the Middle East and Bible prophecy.” According to Richardson, the “Antichrist” will be a Muslim and Islam will be Satan’s “primary vehicle” to usher the end of times.⁸⁷

Levin, Fischer, and Gaffney

Then there’s Mark Levin, who hosts the syndicated radio program “The Mark Levin Show.” Levin has frequently contributed legal opinions to “The Rush Limbaugh Show” and “The Sean Hannity Show,” where Hannity nicknamed him “The Great One.”⁸⁸ Levin, age 54, is the fourth most popular radio host in America, averaging more than 8.5 million listeners weekly.⁸⁹ Levin joins the line-up of talk show hosts giving the microphone to biased voices against Islam, such as Zudhi Jasser, who repeated talking points and conspiracy theories that the Park51 community center in New York City is an example of Islamic extremism that seeks to “create Islamic states.”⁹⁰

The religious right boasts virulent anti-Muslim radio host Bryan Fischer, the director of issues analysis for the American Family Association and host of “Focal Point” on American Family Radio. Fischer is also a blogger for the AFA-sponsored blog *Rightly Concerned*.⁹¹ Some of Fischer’s rants are filled with raw hate. For instance, he says that Muslim Americas have no First Amendment rights,⁹² are stupid due to inbreeding,⁹³ and should be deported and halted from immigrating to this country.⁹⁴ Fischer also supports banning mosques.⁹⁵

Fischer adds his voice to the chorus of those who insist that “President Obama cannot possibly be a Christian.”⁹⁶ He is adamant in his belief that practicing American Muslims cannot adopt American “values,” and says we should “only admit to our shores those who will strengthen our nation and assimilate themselves into it, adopting our flag, our history, our heroes, and our values. This is something that devout Muslims simply cannot do.”⁹⁷

Frank Gaffney has influence not only through his think tank and his Big Peace⁹⁸ blog, but also through his radio show, “Secure Freedom Radio.” Promising to “find innovative ways to secure our homeland from threats, foreign and domestic,” the show promotes the usual anti-Muslim conspiracy theories and beats the drum against the impending threat of Sharia.⁹⁹

Last November Gaffney invited Rep. Michele Bachmann to discuss ways to fight the impending onslaught of Sharia in America.¹⁰⁰ That same month, he invited then-Rep.-elect Allen West, of Florida’s 22nd district, to examine “whether or not the new Congress will get right on the threat posed by Sharia.”¹⁰¹ In June, Gaffney invited David Yerushalmi to talk about the threat of Sharia infiltrating American courts.¹⁰²

The right-wing mainstream news enablers of Islamophobia

Fox News has one of the biggest and most influential megaphones in TV news.¹⁰³ It uses this megaphone to amplify anti-Muslim alarmist threats and conspiracy theories on a regular basis. Virtually all the leading Islamophobia players have made recurring appearances on popular Fox News programs, such as “Hannity,”¹⁰⁴ “The O’Reilly Factor,”¹⁰⁵ and “Fox & Friends.”¹⁰⁶ The cable news network also featured former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich as a commentator, which he uses to promote his increasingly Islamophobic opinions, such as his call for curbs on freedom of speech to keep terrorists from spreading their message after six imams were mistakenly removed from a Minneapolis flight in 2006.¹⁰⁷

On these shows, players echo one another’s warnings and repeat with serious certainty the same threats they warned about on radio shows and in blogs, newspapers, online magazines, and more. Their staple threats include: Muslims imposing Sharia in America, Muslims establishing a global caliphate, Muslims engaging in homegrown jihad, and Muslims infiltrating President Obama’s administration to promote dangerous Islamist agendas.

Gingrich in particular has made Sharia law his hobby horse. In September last year, for example, he told the audience at a Value Voters Summit in Washington, D.C., “We should have a federal law that says sharia law cannot be recognized by any court in the United States.” Such a law will let judges know, Gingrich went on, that “no judge will remain in office that tried to use sharia law.”¹⁰⁸ These words prompted a standing ovation from the crowd.

Gingrich, age 68, is helping shift this once-fringe conspiracy about Sharia into the mainstream. He's doing so not just by spouting the network's talking points but also by endorsing their products: For instance, Gingrich narrated the fearmongering documentary "America at Risk," produced by the conservative Citizens United Productions, which warns of the threat of Sharia and Islamic extremism infiltrating America.¹⁰⁹ Unsurprisingly, the documentary features Center for Security Policy's Frank Gaffney. Gingrich screened the movie at David Horowitz's Restoration Weekend in November 2010.¹¹⁰

Gingrich's rhetoric has escalated to levels to where it is no longer logically consistent. In March, Gingrich bizarrely worried aloud that his two children would grow up in a "secular atheist country, potentially dominated by radical Islamists," suggesting that the country would be simultaneously run by Islamists and atheists.¹¹¹

Gingrich bizarrely worried aloud that his two children would grow up in a "secular atheist country, potentially dominated by radical Islamists."

Sadly, these scare tactics are working. It is not surprising that when alarmist threats are repeated with enough frequency through multiple outlets to millions of people with no rebuttal by like-minded leaders, that those threats become conventional wisdom. And so, the nonpartisan Public Religion Research Institute found in a recent poll that there was a strong correlation between holding erroneous views about Muslims and Islam and watching Fox News.¹¹² These are correlative, not necessarily causative findings, but they are striking.

Specifically, the poll found that:

- Americans who most trust Fox News are more likely to believe that Muslims want to establish Sharia law, have not done enough to oppose extremism, and believe investigating Muslim extremism is a good idea.¹¹³
- Nearly twice as many Republicans as Democrats believe that Muslims want to establish Sharia law in America, 31 percent to 15 percent. One-third of white evangelical Christians believe this compared to 20 percent of white protestants and 22 percent of white Catholics.¹¹⁴
- More than three-quarters of those who most trust Fox News believe that Rep. Peter King's congressional hearings on Muslim radicalization were a good idea, compared to just 45 percent of those who most trust CNN, and 28 percent of those who most trust public television.¹¹⁵

The Christian Broadcasting Network

The Christian Broadcasting Network has less national influence than Fox News, but great influence among conservative religious viewers. CBN is a powerful amplifier of anti-Muslim views to Christian audiences, promoting in some cases even more extreme views than Fox News.

Multimillionaire televangelist Pat Robertson founded the network in 1961, and since then has promoted wild claims against Muslims and Islam. On his “700 Club” TV show, Robertson compared Muslims to Nazis and called Islam “a violent political system bent on the overthrow of the governments of the world and world domination.”¹¹⁶ Robertson recently joined the anti-Sharia forces, asking, “Why can’t we speak out against an institution [Islam] that is intent on dominating us and imposing Sharia law and making us part of a universal Caliphate?”¹¹⁷

Another on-air personality at the Christian Broadcasting Network is Erick Stakelbeck, who hosts a show, “Stakelbeck on Terror.”¹¹⁸ Stakelbeck once worked as a senior writer and analyst at Steven Emerson’s Investigative Project on Terrorism,¹¹⁹ and he uses his show to repeat Emerson’s fear-mongering claims, including quoting Emerson and using misinformation from his organization.¹²⁰ In June, Stakelbeck invited Frank Gaffney and Lt. Gen. William G. “Jerry” Boykin onto his show to discuss “Sharia’s Threat to America.”¹²¹

In June 2003, while in uniform, Lt. Gen. Boykin violated Department of Defense regulations by publicly stating that the military was recruiting a “spiritual army” to fight Islam,¹²² and that Muslims hated America. He also bragged that his God was “a real God” while the Muslim God was “an idol.”¹²³

Not surprisingly, Frank Gaffney appeared on Bryan Fischer’s American Family Association radio show to defend the general when he was reprimanded by the military. Gaffney claimed that Boykin “clearly put his finger on the truth when he said his God is bigger than the god of Islam.”¹²⁴ Gaffney later appointed Boykin as a “Team Leader” and co-author of his organization’s report, “Sharia: The Threat To America.”¹²⁵

National Review

National Review is a biweekly magazine founded in 1955 by influential conservative William F. Buckley Jr. It calls itself “America’s most widely read and influential magazine and website for conservative news, commentary, and opinion.”¹²⁶ While *National Review* speaks to a more mainstream conservative audience than many of the media outlets described in this chapter, it also features writers and articles that raise alarmist warnings and threats about Muslims and Islam, though often in less apocalyptic language.

The magazine publishes Andrew McCarthy, the author of *The Grand Jihad: How Islam and the Left Sabotage America* and co-author of the Center for Security Policy’s report on the threat of Sharia to America. In his columns for the magazine, McCarthy perpetuates claims of a Sharia threat.¹²⁷

National Review also publishes pieces by Daniel Pipes in the magazine and on the website. In 1990 Pipes wrote: “Western European societies are unprepared for the massive immigration of brown-skinned peoples cooking strange foods and maintaining different standards of hygiene ... All immigrants bring exotic customs and attitudes, but Muslim customs are more troublesome than most.”¹²⁸

The Washington Times and the Clarion Fund

Then there is *The Washington Times*—a conservative daily newspaper and website created by Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church.¹²⁹ *The Washington Times* promotes socially and politically conservative views and often features members of the Islamophobia network profiled in this report.¹³⁰ Despite its small readership, *The Washington Times* punches well above its weight in the national media because many of the views it raises and voices it carries are picked up by media outlets with powerful megaphones, such as Fox News and conservative talk-radio shows, helping spread anti-Muslim messages into the larger public sphere. *The Washington Times*, for example, helped promote a flawed study about U.S. mosques written by David Yerushalmi.¹³¹ The newspaper’s editorial page added to attacks against Park51 in August of 2010.¹³² And columnists from *The Washington Times* have contributed to the myth that President Obama is a Muslim.¹³³

The Clarion Fund is a New York City-based nonprofit organization that aims “to educate Americans about issues of national security” by focusing on “the threats of Radical Islam.”¹³⁴ The organization was founded by Canadian-Israeli film pro-

ducer and Rabbi Raphael Shore.¹³⁵ Although very little is known about its funding sources,¹³⁶ evidence suggests that Chicago businessman Barre Seid may have contributed \$17 million to the Clarion Fund to help bankroll the production and dissemination of the inflammatory anti-Muslim movie, “Obsession: Radical Islam’s War on the West.” The film “reveals an ‘insider’s view’ of the hatred the Radicals are teaching, their incitement of global jihad, and their goal of world domination,” according to the movie’s own website.¹³⁷ During the 2008 presidential campaign, 28 million DVDs of the movie were sent to 28 swing states.¹³⁸ In addition, the film was cited in Breivik’s manifesto.¹³⁹

The Clarion Fund also produced a documentary, “The Third Jihad,” narrated by Zudhi Jasser and briefly used to train NYPD officers on counterterrorism. After seeing the video, a police officer said, “It was so ridiculously one-sided. It just made Muslims look like the enemy. It was straight propaganda.”¹⁴⁰

How the anti-Muslim media work together

These right-wing media outlets play a major role in pushing out a playlist of nonexistent Sharia threats, Islamic takeovers of the world, extremist Muslim infiltration into society and government, and more. As we demonstrate in the next chapter of this report, politicians at the national, state, and local levels rely on these media enablers to spread their anti-Muslim messages to conservative grassroots and religious-right groups, helping them to raise campaign funds and get voters to the polls.

By taking extreme anti-Islam views from fringe blogs to radio shows all the way to national television shows, anti-Muslim voices and views gain legitimacy and credibility. In Chapter 2 of this report, we detailed how a network of anti-Muslim forces created a set of false facts to raise a national controversy over the establishment of a Muslim community center in lower New York City—the so-called Ground Zero mosque. Here we detail the way in which the Islamophobia network’s media outlets so successfully manufactured hysteria surrounding the community center in the summer of 2010.

Pamela Geller introduced the controversy on December 8, 2009, in her blog, *Atlas Shrugs*.¹⁴¹ Within two weeks Geller was calling the community center the “mosque at Ground Zero,” even though it was not a mosque and was not located at Ground Zero.¹⁴²

Interestingly, Fox News was not initially opposed to the project. On Dec. 21, 2009, Fox News host Laura Ingraham invited Daisy Khan, the wife of Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, one of the center’s lead organizers, to discuss the proposed community center. Ingraham said, “I can’t find many people who really have a problem with it.” She added, “I like what you’re trying to do.”¹⁴³

Even so, Geller continued to manufacture hysteria around the center and its alleged proximity to Ground Zero. At a May 2010 Tea Party convention in Tennessee, Geller called the center “the ultimate flag of conquest” and “a shrine to the very ideology that inspired the jihadist attacks at Ground Zero.”¹⁴⁴ A few days later, she posted “Vote on Mega Mosque at Ground Zero” on her blog.¹⁴⁵

Geller claimed the Park51 organizers planned to “leverage” the mosque’s proximity to Ground Zero to proselytize and “grow the Muslim community.”¹⁴⁶ She also said that Imam Rauf “embraced” Sharia, which she described as “brutal policies that discriminate against women, gays, and religious minorities.”¹⁴⁷

Throughout the summer, the Islamophobia network was amplifying Geller’s accusations and pushing them out via radio shows and other outlets. On his radio show in August, Glenn Beck called the Park51 center “the 9-11 mosque.”¹⁴⁸ That same month, Rush Limbaugh told millions of listeners that the community center was a “recruiting tool for foreign extremists,” and a “victory monument at Ground Zero.”¹⁴⁹ And Geller went on Hannity’s Fox News show to declare the center a “provocative mega mosque” that aimed to “trample on the grief of 9-11 families and all Americans.”¹⁵⁰

Islamophobia leaders added to the frenzy, appearing on mainstream TV news channels to hold forth about the community center. Brigitte Gabriel, founder of ACT! for America, did her part when she appeared on Sean Hannity’s Fox News show and said the center was a “project to advance Islam” and a “slap in the face.” Gabriel also claimed that the “Muslim world operates on symbols, everything has to be symbolic. And this—they chose this place in particular because of the symbol it represents to the Arabic world.”¹⁵¹

Frank Gaffney
went on Fox
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In December 2010, well after the summer had ended and plans for the community center were being revised, Frank Gaffney went on Fox News and scolded the network for underestimating the threat of “stealth jihad” that mosques were introducing in America. Gaffney linked the “Ground Zero Mosque” to his favorite threat, Sharia, claiming that “a mosque that is used to promote a seditious program, which is what Sharia is... that is not a protected religious practice, that is in fact sedition.”¹⁵²

This example of how the Islamophobia network’s leaders and media enablers turned a local zoning case into a national controversy provides a reason as to why many right-wing politicians are so eager to parrot anti-Muslim attacks: They raise funds and get conservative voters to the polls. But as we show in the next chapter of this report, political opportunism is not the only reason for the popularity of Islamophobia among some politicians on the right.

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