

## Habib in the Hood

### Mobilizing History and Prayer towards Anti-Racist Praxis

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On a cool spring evening in 2011, a Muslim community center in the Bay Area suburb of Fremont, California hosts a Yemeni scholar who is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. Hundreds of people wait in line—with anticipation, excitement, apprehension—to enter this “third space,” a converted industrial space in an office park between two interstate freeways.<sup>1</sup> Habib Umar bin Hafiz eventually arrives in a black SUV with an entourage of his mostly American-born students. Habib Umar is the director of Dar Al-Mustafa Seminary in Tarim, Yemen, where Muslims from around the world go to study Islam.<sup>2</sup> His students welcome him with a traditional *nashid*, a melodic hymn in praise of the Prophet Muhammad, accompanied by a *daf* drum. Following his entrance, those gathered outside proceed inside, remove their shoes, and find vacant pockets of light green carpeting to sit upon. Arabic calligraphy on the wall says *Barakat Muhammad*, Blessings of Muhammad. Women are seated together on the right side of the room, while men are seated together on the left side, all facing an elevated platform with cushions and a small table with gold and orange floral arrangements.

Sitting at the edge of the platform, the black American Imam Zaid Shakir holds a wireless microphone and begins introducing Habib Umar and his “Tranquility Amidst Turbulence” tour by describing the multiracial and multiethnic gathering seated before him:

So who are we? Who is this community? This community is. . . displayed here. This community of the descendants of Bilal al-Habashi, *Radi Allahu anhu* [May God be pleased with him]. So we see in this community Africans, both those who have come here voluntarily and those whose ancestors came here involuntarily. We see the descendants of Salman al-Farsi; we see many Asians in

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our ranks—from South Asia, from Central Asia, from Southeast Asia, and they are the descendants of Salman. . . We have here the descendants of Suhaib al-Roumi; we have many Europeans: Muslims who have converted to Islam, Muslims who have emigrated here from Bosnia or Albania or other parts of Europe. We have here the grandsons and the granddaughters of the Arabs, the grandsons and granddaughters of Abu Bakr and Umar, Uthman, and Ali. *Radi Allahu anhum ijma'in* [May God be pleased with them all]. That's who we are.

Shakir traces genealogical lines from the seventh-century first generation of Muslims who gathered around the Prophet Muhammad to the black, African, Asian, white, and Arab Muslims who have arrived to receive teaching from the Prophet's twenty-first-century descendant Habib Umar.<sup>3</sup> In Shakir's invocation of the first community of Muslims, the *Sahaba* (Companions) of the Prophet Muhammad are distributed across modern racial and ethnic categories—Bilal al-Habashi (black African), Salman al-Farsi (Asian), Suhaib Al-Roumi (white European), Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali (Arab).

Shakir's efforts to bind his audience through a common lineage and legacy of the first Companions generates connections and possibilities, as well as limits and omissions, that are useful for thinking about Muslim companionship towards anti-racist and liberatory praxes. Similar to the multi-ethnic relationalities and solidarities that constituted Asian American identities and racial projects from their emergence in the 1960s, a multiracial and multiethnic formation of Muslim companionship exists within and across Asian American, Arab American, African American, Latinx, and indigenous identities and projects. Throughout the "Tranquility Amidst Turbulence" tour, Shakir, Habib Umar, and others invoked the Companions and other historical figures like Malcolm X, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (1925-1965), and the African Muslims who were transported to and enslaved in the Americas throughout the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, in order to localize and historicize Muslim experiences in the Americas.

In this article, I engage with these invocations to make two theoretical interventions. Firstly, Islamic companionship and legacies of suffering and liberatory praxis offer Muslims and others "liberatory lineages" that enable an analysis of their material relations towards a relational formation beyond solidarity and allyship.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, while these Muslim leaders enact an anti-racist praxis during the tour, I consider the indeterminacies and

occlusions that emerge in the move from theory to praxis on a wider level.

In “the selection and reselection of ancestors,” we find “lived expressions (including opacities) of unbounded participatory openness” that produce what Ruthie Gilmore calls “infrastructures of feeling.”<sup>5</sup> These infrastructures provide the affective and material foundations and possibilities for recognizing and responding to our being related through common space and proximity. Shakir produces and calls upon infrastructures of feeling around the seventh-century Sahaba, the Companions, to describe the twenty-first century multiracial and multiethnic Muslim community seated before him; this is significant for a number of reasons. First, in Islam, the Sahaba were people who saw or spent time with the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>6</sup> Their stories about how he lived and what he said are a significant corpus of Islamic knowledge that informs how Muslims live their everyday lives and shape their social relations.

Second, from its beginning the first Muslim community transcended tribal lines and kinship networks and was initially constituted by women, the enslaved, and youth. The first Muslim community reflects Shakir’s contemporary multiracial, multiethnic, and multinational audience; their social relations are informed both by Islam and the socioeconomic, gendered, and racialized structure of the societies in which they live. In the seventh century, becoming Muslim meant subsuming (though not necessarily breaking) traditional ties of kin, tribe, and geography for the reordering of life within Islam and with the community of the Prophet Muhammad. Throughout the twentieth century, African Americans were particularly attracted to Islam for its anti-racist and liberatory potential and for its ties to the African continent.<sup>7</sup> Islam was mobilized globally for its political potential as well. For Muslims who immigrated from Muslim-majority countries to the United States, Islam increasingly—though not always—became tied to the maintenance of ethnic identities and traditions. While both resistant to and complicit with assimilation and model minority discourses, Muslim immigrants often conflated ethnic cultural expressions (like food or dress) and structures (of gender and capital) with Islamic authenticity at the expense of Muslim heterogeneity. “Ethnic particularism” often manifests as an “ethnoreligious hegemony” that identifies blackness as un-Islamic and furthers white supremacist logics of anti-black and anti-immigrant racisms *within* Muslim communities, which leads to the significance of the next point.<sup>8</sup>

Third, Shakir addresses Arabs in the room as the spiritual and regional descendants of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali, the four Rightly Guided Caliphs (in Sunni Islam) who would become leaders of the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Although the Prophet was Arab and Shakir is introducing an Arab descendent of the Prophet to a room in which other descendants are also sitting, he pointedly demonstrates that everyone in the room is a descendant of the Prophet's Companions and is therefore connected to the Prophet through this first community of Muslims. This small rhetorical gesture forestalls any claim to racial/ethnic hierarchy or privilege in Islam, despite its historical foundations amongst *Arabs* in the Arabian Peninsula and in the *Arabic* language. According to Shakir, whether they were born into Muslim families or had converted to Islam, they were all on equal footing as companions in relation to the Prophet Muhammad.

Fourth, Shakir suggests that the Sahaba are a model for Muslims in terms of how to relate with each other. A *sahib* (the singular form of Sahaba) is a companion, an associate, a comrade, a fellow, or a friend; a fellow traveler.<sup>9</sup> Shakir proposes that being *in common* space because they are *in common* faith—whether in the seventh century or today—demonstrates relations of proximity and companionship that engage, rather than subsume, difference.<sup>10</sup> I build upon this formulation below to consider how companionship functions as a Muslim way of knowing and being with difference that configures Arab, Asian, and other racial and ethnic formations beyond the conditional and temporal modes of solidarity and allyship, towards a form of relationality and responsibility that requires *more*.

Finally, Shakir's genealogical mapping does not account for the Latinx, Native American, and indigenous converts in the room. This omission reveals the limits of Shakir's translation, how tribal and regional affinities, as well as geographies, were defined in the seventh century as compared to the contingencies of how boundaries of geographies, bodies, and identities are defined today. How would accounting for indigeneity and migration through the Sahaba change the potentialities of this companionship narrative? Could it be told differently to account for the settler colonial, imperial, and white supremacist logics that shape the material and ideological conditions of everyday Muslim life in North America? The first generation of Muslims sought refuge, provided refuge, and became refugees; their nar-

ratives of vulnerability and mobility, as well as possession and dispossession, could extend the potentiality of what this legacy of companionship may offer.

### Critical Relationalities, from the Ummah to Companions

Forms of Muslim, third world, and/or Arab solidarity and internationalism have been an important part of American and global histories, Palestine being perhaps the most emblematic of such solidarities.<sup>11</sup> There are numerous historical examples of Afro-Asian-Arab solidarities that were based in an ethical, cultural, and political amalgam of religious, leftist, third-worldist, ethno-nationalist, and anti-imperial thinking and praxis.<sup>12</sup> These ranged from the Ahmadi movement's affinity with African Americans to June Jordan's poetic and political connections to Palestine, Japan, and beyond, as well as the work of the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), which was founded in Havana, Cuba in 1966.<sup>13</sup> In a more contemporary vein, Su'ad Abdul Khabeer and others have shown how hip hop music carries its own Muslim genealogies and epistemologies that likewise return or "loop" back to Muslim communities as "Muslim Cool," where blackness and hip hop are mobilized in complex and contradictory ways.<sup>14</sup> Such internationalist and global consciousness has been important in shaping how Muslims in the United States exercise dissent and critique towards the nation-state, empire, and white supremacist logics of anti-blackness and immigrant assimilation.

Because Islam situates Muslims as a collectivity, discourses of allyship and solidarity may be inadequate terms for articulating how an anti-racist and anti-imperial praxis *within* the Muslim *ummah*—or "the global community of believers"<sup>15</sup>—should be practiced and articulated. Solidarity and allyship continue to be important frameworks for cultivating a "sense of unity" between "different" political actors, especially in transnational contexts in which power differentials are exponentially felt. However, as Laleh Khalili has pointed out, we must consider such relations in time, allowing for a fluidity in which "transformations of power, interests, and identities of actors," as well as political conditions, may change relations "from mutuality or alliance to co-optation or leadership."<sup>16</sup> While the terms of companionship are subject to change, I suggest that in its ideal form, it reconfigures a relationship to suffering and liberatory praxis that is affectively different. Companionship and "kinship by faith" thus become use-

ful frameworks for reshaping relations across race, ethnicity, and nation towards suffering with and for one another.<sup>17</sup>

Imam Zaid Shakir describes a companionship produced through a kinship by faith in which individuals are bound, not by genealogies of blood, tribe, or race, but by a specific attachment to Islam as a tradition of beliefs, practices, and knowledges. This form of spiritual or sacred kinship is often articulated through a notion of the ummah, or what Jamillah Karim calls “ummah ideals,” a “double commitment to both brotherhood and sisterhood and justice. . .to both harmony and equality at the same time.”<sup>18</sup> While the ummah concept ideally encourages Muslims “to know each other” across forms of difference, notions of the ummah, as Karim and others have shown, do not automatically enjoin or inform Muslims to be anti-racist, or to question and resist white supremacist logics of anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and assimilation in the United States and globally.<sup>19</sup> As Hortense Spillers has argued, the “*feeling* of kinship,” even amongst blood relations, must be “‘cultivated’ under actual material conditions.” Spillers describes how structures and legacies of chattel slavery ungendered African American women, while also undoing kinship as an affective and psychological relation. Motherhood, domestic femininity, and protection were denied to those deemed property within a patriarchal social structure that defined gender along precisely those terms; because vertical kinship (through blood relations) was so often disrupted, African Americans formed horizontal relations of care and kin. Spillers demonstrates post-slavery continuities in the example of Malcolm X and his family who, after being dispersed and separated from each other, showed “symptoms of estrangement and ‘disremembering’.”<sup>20</sup> That their sibling relations are reassembled (though later ruptured once again) through their becoming Muslims within the Nation of Islam brings the proximity of kinship by blood and kinship by faith into relief.

Ongoing debates about “what Islam says” about justice and what Muslims should do about it exemplify the stakes of how we theorize difference and intersubjectivity towards enacting critical relationalities (ummah, solidarity, allyship, companionship, accomplice) and social justice.<sup>21</sup> Racism, or ethnoreligious hegemony within Muslim communities, has historical and socioeconomic contingencies, which ranges from skepticism or fetishism of black Muslim authenticity, knowledge, experience, and leadership; to a colorism that privileges lighter skin and par-

ticular ethnicities (for marriage partners in particular); to white privilege for white converts and Arab privilege in a global racial formation (especially in regards to Southeast Asian and South Asian labor migrants in the Middle East).<sup>22</sup> What are the material conditions that determine the limits and possibilities of ummah ideals, Muslim Cool, and Islamic notions of justice? How might they mobilize Muslims to reject white supremacist or settler colonial structures of belief and practice? Can articulations and genealogies of companionship and kinship by faith do additional affective and intellectual labor towards an infrastructure of feeling in which all labor and potentially suffer for an anti-racist praxis? What structural transformations and practices need to be put in place to cultivate companionship, and what would this companionship then look like?<sup>23</sup>

While this article is based on ethnographic work in one faith community, it considers the epistemological possibilities and challenges of thinking *with* Muslims and *with* Islam as an intellectual tradition with its own terminology, concepts, histories, and practices of social justice produced in relation to other faiths and secularisms. I began with how notions of companionship and a legacy of kinship by faith suggest other modalities for relationality and social transformation. In the following section, I expand upon that argument as we accompany the tour to the resting place of Malcolm X—El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz—where “visitors stand in the presence of those they visit” to take in “the history with the cure,” a history of Islam and race in the United States, as well as Shabazz’s theory and praxis of black liberation as cure.<sup>24</sup> Then we return to the green carpet in Fremont, where Shakir recalls the history of enslaved African Muslims in the Americas to draw contemporary Muslims across racial, ethnic, and national difference into legacies of suffering and struggles to maintain Islam. He draws on Quranic verses to comment on contemporary anti-Muslim rhetoric and legislation, and narrate God’s promises to believers. Figures of the historical past—known and unknown—are made present and relevant in the rhythms of devotional time. We continue, as Saidiya Hartman proposes, to “live in the time of slavery” via its future, the “perilous conditions of the present” that some populations continue to experience as privilege.<sup>25</sup> Shakir suggests that Muslim prayers made and charity given in the midst of slavery continue to exert agency and a metaphysical force in the present, bringing Habib Umar (a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad) to the United States.<sup>26</sup> These acts of faith, including sixteenth- to

nineteenth-century prayers and Malcolm X's liberatory praxis, enjoin contemporary Muslims to recognize and respond to this legacy as their own. A critical connection is made across time through place and shared faith, guiding contemporary Muslims where and when their faith is again besieged.<sup>27</sup>

### History with the Cure

In spring 2011, the "Tranquility Amidst Turbulence" tour traveled to urban centers across Canada and the United States; the locations of the tour were based on where Habib Umar's Arab, black, Asian, white, and Latinx American students came from. He wanted to see and visit their communities, to learn about the places and people who produced them. They were now his translators and hosts in Toronto, Atlanta, Detroit, Chicago, Washington D.C., New York, San Diego, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area.

In Tarim, Yemen, where Habib Umar is from, a tradition of touring graves and learning the genealogies of Sufi saints localizes and historicizes Islam in the region, while also cultivating a sense of community; "the point was to get along, to have hearts that were clean" for all who engage in acts of pilgrimage.<sup>28</sup> Written manuals instructing pilgrims on whom to visit and how also narrate the history of Tarim as a destination. These visitations produce the region as an origin for its diaspora: "what is available is a cure for this world and the next, salve and salvation. One takes in the history with the cure."<sup>29</sup> Yemen, as an origin, as an "archive" for Islam was what initially drew students there, as Tarim is imagined by young American Muslims as a place to learn and live an "authentic" Islam.<sup>30</sup> In turn, the students return home and bring their teachers with them, connecting people and practices in Tarim to people and places in North America. In the United States, the tour begins at the grave of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, 18 miles north of Harlem. This is Habib Umar and his students' pilgrimage to another destination that becomes an origin, an archive of Islam *in* the United States that recalibrates aspirations for Islamic origins in the Arabian peninsula towards Islamic origins in the Americas, which are sites of black suffering and liberatory praxis.

Habib Umar's visitation to El-Shabazz's grave is a recognition and a blessing of a status that Malcolm X already holds in the hearts and minds of many American Muslims.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, this is an important intervention that challenges the idea that Arabs and Muslims from historically Muslim lands are the only sources



of authentic knowledge and practices of Islam. These visitations recognize El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz as a *wali* (saint) and *shahid* (martyr), understood as a custodian, protector, or friend based on his life experience, closeness or affinity with God, and spiritual force beyond his earthly presence.<sup>32</sup> By remembering him and being present with him, whether through grave visitation or rhetorical reference, Muslims cultivate bonds of kinship with both El-Shabazz as ancestor and with each other. His grave, alongside the continued force of his words, image, biography, complexity, and contradictions, facilitate a historical grounding and legacy of how to be Muslim in a multiracial and multiethnic United States.

Malcolm X and his *Autobiography* continue to inspire as examples of personal and political transformation.<sup>33</sup> Muslims claim him *spiritually*, as the God-fearing El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. He is given a “standing with Allah,” and by calling upon his memory and his spiritual force, Muslims produce him as ancestor for a multiracial and multiethnic ummah. Notably, Manning Marable’s biography of Malcolm X was released during the “Tranquility Amidst Turbulence” tour, and the ensuing controversy about the book (its veracity, ethics, and sources) was much talked about as people carpooled around the Bay Area to attend Habib Umar’s events.<sup>34</sup> Of particular note, Marable’s consideration of Malcolm being “almost sacred” and “not a saint” (within the definitions of Christianity) does not account for his meaning within Islam. El-Shabazz was “present” through the visitation to his grave, the build-up to, and the controversy of the new biography (which Imam Zaid Shakir had just received from one of his students), and the passing of its author Manning Marable a day before its release. In addition, the first of five hearings on the “Radicalization of American Muslims in the U.S.,” called by Representative Peter King, was just held. For many in the community, there was a convergence of forces at work in this time of attack, controversy, and blessings.

Claiming Malcolm spiritually means different things for different people, and accounting for different interpretations of the “archive,” its potential limits, omissions, and contradictions, is an ongoing task.<sup>35</sup> His legacy can be through an anti-racist and internationalist liberatory praxis grounded in deep belief, but it has also proven susceptible to reform narratives that incorporate Malcolm into a civil rights history of American redemption. The anxiety about Malcolm’s sexuality (and what sources Marable used to discuss it) gestures towards how Malcolm has been a

redemptive figure for black masculinity and the black Muslim family.<sup>36</sup> Can approaching Malcolm as an ancestor produce alternative understandings and praxes for how sexuality, the family, religious authority, and the public and the private are figured so that they disrupt, rather than reinforce, the logics and structures of white supremacy, patriarchy, and the vulnerabilities to premature death they engender?<sup>37</sup>

### Habib in the Hood

The enshrining of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz and the “Tranquility Amidst Turbulence” tour position the American inner city as a critical space and *source* of Islamic consciousness, practice, knowledge, and renewal. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the tour presented events at over eight sites—non-profits; urban and suburban mosques; and educational institutions, ranging from Zaytuna College, an emergent Muslim liberal arts college in Berkeley, to a public high school in East Oakland. Traversing increasingly gentrified, though still diverse, inner city spaces and suburban spaces largely populated by Arab and South Asian families, Imam Zaid Shakir dubbed Habib Umar’s stop in East Oakland, “Habib in the Hood.” Habib Umar, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, being in the hood with four black imams on stage with him, produced critical spaces of intervention, connection, and meaning as a form of anti-racist praxis.

Multiple diasporic formations come together in the Muslim spaces of the Bay Area. African Americans and their descendants who migrated northwest in the Great Migration come together with refugees, immigrants, and their descendants from throughout Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas, and the Caribbean.<sup>38</sup> Caribbean, Latinx, and indigenous Muslim converts’ genealogical connections gesture towards alternative settler colonial histories, Muslim and indigenous collaborations and antagonisms during the era of slavery, and the ways that Islam was spread amongst indigenous populations globally.<sup>39</sup> In the Bay Area, as elsewhere, individual and communal identities form in relation to the racial, religious, and geographic contours of American culture, empire, and law.<sup>40</sup> Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, discriminatory laws that designated citizenship based on whiteness and blackness required Arab, West Asian, and South Asian immigrants to distinguish themselves as not “Asiatic” as it was understood by exclusion laws targeting the Chinese and Japanese. While this led many to pursue the legal category of

“white,” this did not mean that all the privileges of “whiteness” accompanied such status, nor that all immigrants necessarily aspired to it. A “Muslim first” identity and politics has emerged among second- and third-generation Arab and Asian Muslims who may not reject ethnic particularism, but who find agency in authoring their complex positions between whiteness and blackness and the ever-intensifying racialization of Muslims.<sup>41</sup>

In working class black neighborhoods, the Nation of Islam, representing discipline, security, black nationalism, racial uplift, and economic self-determination, signified who Muslims were and what Islam was, even when there were other predominantly black and more orthodox Muslim collectivities and movements at the time as well. After immigration patterns shifted post-1965, many Arabs (not all of whom were Muslim) as well as Iranians and other Asians began operating corner stores, gas stations, and liquor stores in these same neighborhoods.<sup>42</sup> In the Bay Area, conceptions of who Muslims were and what they did began to shift, so much so that, upon introducing himself as Muslim to some men on a basketball court, Yusuf, a former student of Habib Umar and a local leader, was asked, “Are you a bow-tie Muslim or liquor store Muslim?” In telling this story to a group of students, Yusuf discussed how important it was to exemplify Prophetic teachings in all one’s dealings, as this would form the impressions people had of Islam and Muslims. The sometimes antagonistic relationship between black communities and non-black Muslim business operators often extended into racism within Muslim communities across ethnic and racial lines. Such tensions, along with structures of anti-black and anti-Muslim racism in the media, war and security infrastructures, and socioeconomic exploitation and abandonment, provided the “turbulent” social background and impetus for the tour.

That Shakir refers back to the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad instead of a history of civil rights sets the terms for Muslim unity beyond American multiculturalism towards a more expansive geography and temporality. I draw attention to a sense of bound geographies and identities not to reinforce them, but rather, in Lisa Lowe’s words, to “focus on relation across differences rather than equivalence, on the convergence of asymmetries rather than the imperatives of identity.”<sup>43</sup> In traversing racial, ethnic, and class boundaries throughout the Bay Area, the tour reshapes the logics of what Ruth Gilmore describes as “distinct yet densely interconnected political geographies,” as well as

the ways that particular diasporas and populations are distributed and related to each other within them.<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, as Muslims assert their rights to practice their faith in the United States through these practices of historicization and localization, how do they avoid what Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd terms as the “coerced complicity” of reproducing the structure and ongoing process of settler colonialism by identifying native difference as another form of racial difference?<sup>45</sup> Byrd proposes to “be in transit. . .to be active presence in a world of relational movements and countermovements. . .to exist relationally, multiply.”<sup>46</sup> To be in transit is to be a traveler. One well-known saying of the Prophet Muhammad is “be in the world as if you were a stranger or a traveler along the path.” Indeed, the figure of the traveler is significant within Islam, which is often referred to as the Straight Path. Most interpretations understand the “world” as the worldly aspects of life: wealth, property, prestige. One must use time (and wealth) well, with the understanding that one can pass on to the next world at any moment. To be traveling companions transiting through this world accentuates the proximities and distances of defining and being in common space. Habib Umar, being and walking in the ‘hood (and in the airport), attended to tensions of proximity and distance and the fears that motivated them; he demonstrates that, rather than fear, companionship and being together in transit should be the governing principles of everyday life.

An oft-quoted verse of the Qur’an states: “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted.”<sup>47</sup> The verse is commonly interpreted to mean that a descendant’s blood line is only as good as their deeds and that any Muslim who comes from a historically Muslim territory is judged on conduct before ethnic origin. Considering the deference that Shakir showed Habib Umar—he rushed to him, lowered himself, and kissed his hand—it is clear that Shakir believed Habib Umar to be of knowledgeable and righteous descendants. Habib Umar and others returned the deference, praising Shakir in his teaching and ensuring that Shakir sat with Umar and his translator, while the rest of the audience sat facing them on the floor.<sup>48</sup>

Shakir continued his introduction by describing who called Habib Umar to the United States:

There is not a place on the face of this earth where people are converting to Islam like they are converting to Islam in America. We should never lose sight of that fact, because sometimes we forget, sometimes we forget. Our community [has] rich Muslims; there are poor Muslims, and we should never forget the poor Muslims, because that's why Habib Umar is here, it's the poor Muslims. We said he was called by people—they weren't even poor! They were slaves! A poor person owns something; they didn't even own themselves, but they owned their faith, and they fought to hold onto their faith.

Shakir continues a roll call of ancestors, ranging from the Companions to the Muslim scholars who crossed the Atlantic in the Middle Passage. He alludes to voluntary and involuntary movements driven by war, capital, occupation, poverty, and hope, which continue to shape the American landscape and the distribution and relations of people within it. Throughout the tour, Shakir describes this contemporary moment as one prophesied and prayed towards, besieged and blessed. The living and the dead come together through text and remembrance, in person and as ancestral traces. Cure and History. If the history is taken as part of the cure, then Shakir is administering a dose, as well as its instructions; one can neither forget history, nor its ramifications. In Shakir's narrative, it is the devotional force of enslaved Muslims in the Americas centuries earlier whose prayers have been answered. These prayers called for Habib Umar and the Prophetic presence he embodies to be made manifest on American soil at a critical moment for Islam in America:

And some of them were *Awliya*;<sup>49</sup> some of them had a standing with Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* [May He be glorified and exalted], and they prayed for this day, they prayed for one day, one day, they prayed one day there would be free men and free women in this land that say "*la ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadun rasul Allah*" ["There is no god, but God, and Muhammad is His Messenger"]. They prayed that one day there would be people who would come here, and they would bring the light into this darkness, and they would touch the hearts of people, and they would do it at a time when Islam is besieged, when the Prophet of Islam is ridiculed, when the religion of Islam is defamed, and they would be living proof of the power that Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* says, when He says, "*Yuriduna liyut fi'u nurAllahi bi'afwahihim waAllahu mutimmu nurihi walou karihal-kafirun, walou karihal-kafirun, walou karihal-kafirun.*"<sup>50</sup>

That Allah would complete his light even though those who reject this religion, who fight this religion, who hate this religion, even though they despise it. *La ilaha illa Allah*, those are the people of *RasulAllah*, *salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam* [the Messenger of God, peace be upon him]. Never forget them. Never forget them because if we forget them, we will forget our way.<sup>51</sup>

Shakir invokes centuries-old prayers as they break dawn on an entrenched history, still present in its traces. There is an intensity, stillness, an indescribable making present, not plain but complex, an upheaval and a sigh, a storm and then a calm, a summoning—more than emotion, something vast and contained, something expressed in the space of translation insurmountable.

Shakir is reminded and reminds that when Islam and the Prophet are under attack, Allah will “complete his light.” To never forget the poor Muslims, the less than poor Muslims who were deemed property, Shakir invokes his audience to likewise heed these prayers, these presences; they are not only his ancestors as an African American, but theirs. What happens if Afghan, Yemeni, African, and Iraqi war refugees; Arab and South Asian tech entrepreneurs, engineers, doctors, gas station and liquor store owners, janitors, and taxi drivers; their American-born children; white, Latinx, and indigenous converts; and black American Muslims of diverse experiences come to see each other as companions, Malcolm X as their saint, and enslaved African Muslims as their ancestors whose prayers brought Habib Umar to North America? Does El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz’s commitment to black liberation, anti-imperialism, anti-racism, and global solidarity become their legacy? Does his ability to reflect and change his beliefs (about leadership, nationalism, women, and social justice) become an ethical model? As history and devotional time are brought to bear on being in common space, what do the prayers of enslaved Muslims, the graves—marked and unmarked—of multiple migrations and colonialisms, require of contemporary Muslims who tread this soil, enriched by slavery, labor exploitation, and genocide?

### A Different Metaphysics

The historic, geographic, and mystic convergences of the “Tranquility Amidst Turbulence” tour offered Imam Zaid Shakir, Habib Umar bin Hafiz, and their students an opportunity to devotionally articulate and engender both global and local relationships across time and space. Through a Prophetic presence embodied in Habib Umar as a knowledgeable descendant of the Prophet Muhammad,

this tour figures the Companions of the Prophet, the enslaved African Muslims in the Americas, and Malcolm X/El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz as spiritual ancestors to contemporary Muslim communities in the Americas. These devotional exercises simultaneously reinforce and transgress modern boundaries of nation, race, and time towards liberatory lineages that offer alternative ways to be in the world as Muslims and companions, both within the ummah and beyond it.

A diversity of visions and genealogies have dialectically driven so many of our movements for and analyses of social change. Arab American studies, critical Muslim studies, Asian American studies, and other ethnic studies formations cohere and come apart across and through the materiality of difference, yet our citational, reading, teaching, and political practices also demonstrate how capacious our ancestral lineages and intellectual genealogies are. As we think about Arab American studies in relation to Asian American studies, both pan-religious and often areligious formations, we should also consider what it means to engage with Islam (and other faith-based formations) as an epistemological and ontological framework. Putting theories and praxes in relation means being open to potential and mutual transformation, towards what M. Jacqui Alexander calls a “different metaphysics” of “living intersubjectivity premised in relationality and solidarity.”<sup>52</sup>

When Audre Lorde reflects on Malcolm X as ancestor, she finds a place for herself in his social justice vision as a black lesbian. Lorde calls for a deep understanding of the lessons of the past, as well as a deep investigation of the “particulars of our lives.” She asks, “In what way do I contribute to the subjugation of any part of those who I define as my people?”<sup>53</sup> Lorde considers what it means to live with that question, and to expand “my people” across place and through time. The “Muslim ban” and its related anti-Muslim rhetoric and ongoing wars, occupations, and refugee situations use the same secular liberal humanist logics to figure Muslims as sympathetic “victims” and as potential threats to be feared and killed. To engage Muslims as companions and to accompany them towards liberation involves articulating a relationality and solidarity—a different metaphysics—that incorporates (or not) a myriad of other desires, ethics, beliefs, and relations of power that may envision justice differently. Melanie Yazzie and Cutcha Risling Baldy similarly call us to a “radical relationality” that connects “materiality, kinship, corporeality, affect, land/body connection, and multidimensional connectivity.”<sup>54</sup> Drawing upon

indigenous feminisms and decolonial praxis, they articulate a relationality that expands kinship to consider accountability and care-taking between humans, land, and water.

A different metaphysics emerges from thinking with indigenous and women of color feminisms, yet we must also be attendant to forms of what Saba Mahmood calls “secular normativity” that posit a moral superiority to “secular visions” (or even feminist visions) of the world.<sup>55</sup> The limits of solidarity and allyship and the potential to subjugate our people become apparent when our political or social justice visions start to veer in different directions; relating to each other as companions and kin offers us a radical orientation of mercy (one of the most significant forms of Muslim relationality) that assists us in not becoming un-human, as when Muslim poet Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan says, “If you need me to prove my humanity, I’m not the one who is not human.”<sup>56</sup>

Manzoor-Khan concludes her poem, “This Is Not a Humanizing Poem,” with the thought that “there is nowhere else left to exist now” but in a space of radicality, where love is directed to and demanded for the most “filthy,” “sometimes violent,” and “wretched” among us.<sup>57</sup> To understand and practice companionship and kinship in such radical terms in a time of perpetual war and ongoing death and displacement is to be in relation with social justice visions that range from decolonization to mitigating reform. Recent “controversies” and debates amongst Muslims in North America about with whom and how to be in solidarity expose the limits and possibilities of companionship and kinship by faith when not accompanied by critical analyses of how race, gender, and power are structured and experienced.<sup>58</sup> The Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (MuslimARC), Muslims for Ferguson, and MPower Change are examples of organizations that have been founded and constituted by multiracial and multiethnic Muslims in the United States that have worked in coalition with other faith groups or are part of movements like #BlackLivesMatter.<sup>59</sup> Imam Zaid Shakir and many other Muslims visited and expressed their support and solidarity with the Water Protectors of Standing Rock based on kinship with indigenous Muslims, proximities to Native peoples, and colonial structures in Palestine, throughout the “Muslim world,” and the Americas.<sup>60</sup> These efforts build upon long histories of accompaniment and companionship centered on social justice,<sup>61</sup> and they coexist with Muslim kin who are in alliances that move in other directions.



Drawing attention to the uneven effects of racialization and structural racism continues to be a crucial aspect of recognizing the realities and entanglements of difference. It therefore remains important for ethnic studies scholars to engage deeply with religion and religious communities, to learn from how they theorize and produce the world and, if one is a believer, to be a part of these debates and discourses. It is imperative that we remain vigilant in the face of the very real traumas, injuries, and deaths that organized religions, scriptures, practitioners, and institutions cause and continue to cause in the name of religion. But we should also remain attentive to how people—our people—have also found hope, liberation, redemption, companionship, and renewal from these same structures of belief. In her discussion of the co-constitutive natures of love and terror, Asma Abbas discusses how “it is through loving, desiring, and being attached that one suffers with and for another, becomes available to another as an ethical-political subject, and musters the energy to sustain or interrupt reality.”<sup>62</sup> To recalibrate the fears (terrors) and attachments (loves) of black, Muslim, indigenous, immigrant, racialized, and gendered subjects becomes the necessary groundwork towards “shedding the aesthetic and sensual pathologies” that we have inherited from colonialism, liberalism, and capitalism.<sup>63</sup> I propose that articulations of companionship and genealogies of liberatory praxis and suffering offer modalities through which this essential shedding and recalibrating may be done.

The events I describe plot a different metaphysics of relationality by situating the figures of Malcolm X, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, enslaved African Muslims in the Americas, and the first generation of Muslim Companions as ancestors to all Muslims, whether they are Asian, African, or Arab, Latinx or indigenous. Such genealogies and locations also suggest that there are other potential liberatory lineages and radical relationalities that account for land, water, and others. Malcolm X himself made such connections through his proximate relations with activists like Yuri Kochiyama, who introduced him to Japanese survivors of the American nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the ways his travels in Egypt and Gaza connected him to the decolonial struggle of the Palestinians.<sup>64</sup> Such kinship and decolonial praxes offer an alternative orientation towards understanding how individuals and communities are bound to each other, with sets of rights and responsibilities not bestowed by and through the state, in their pursuits of justice. In closing, I

draw our attention to the first of the Companions, the Prophet Muhammad's first wife, Khadijah, who guided her husband to realize that he was indeed receiving revelation. She was the first Muslim, believing in the message of these revelations even before the Prophet himself. By recognizing her as ancestor and model for companionship, Muslims—can we all be Muslims for a minute?—are all called upon to guide each other to truth and to accompany each other in transforming our worlds as we travel together within them.

## Notes

1. A "third space" or "third place" in American Muslim discourse refers to an intentional site—less contested than a mosque, school, or home—where people learn about Islam, build community, and explore ways of living Islam.
2. A *sayyid*—descendent of the Prophet Muhammad—Habib Umar opened Dar al-Mustafa seminary in 1996 and Dar al-Zahraa seminary for women a year later. Once students reach a certain level in their studies, they are "dispatched to disseminate 'correct' Islam," whether in the surrounding areas or abroad. Students from the United States and Europe have been attending his seminaries, either for short stays in the intensive summer program or for many years. However, recent unrest and scrutiny of Muslims from the West upon return has limited travel. See Alexander Knysh, "The 'Tariqa' on a Landcruiser: The Resurgence of Sufism in Yemen," *The Middle East Journal* (2001): 399-414.
3. I include both black and African to account for those who consciously identify as either or both. "Black" refers to a racial identity oriented around blackness as a culture and discourse produced through and beyond particular bodies both in the United States and in diaspora. "African" refers to a regional and ethnic identity that narrates African descent, as well as an African immigrant experience.
4. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence," Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin, eds., *Futures of Black Radicalism* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2017): 237.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Sahaba means "one who saw Muhammad, and whose companionship with him was long, even if he [has] not related anything from him; or, as some say, even if his companionship with him was not long." See Edward William Lane and Stanley Lane-Poole, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968): 1653. The Sahaba are traditionally thought to be the Muslims that spent time with the Prophet, but there were also non-Muslims in the community: those who were Jewish, Christian, Coptic (a form of Christianity), with whom Muslims engaged in marriage, trade, and political alliances.
7. Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, "Africa as Tradition in U.S. African American Muslim Identity," *Journal of Africana Religions* 5:1 (2017): 26-49; Edward E. Curtis, *Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African-*

- American Islamic Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
8. Sherman A. Jackson previously argued that Muslims from the Middle East and Asia gain “legal whiteness” and impose an “immigrant hegemony” within Muslim communities. Khabeer prefers the term “ethnoreligious hegemony,” while Sylvia Chan-Malik considers Arab and Asian desires for maintaining cultural traditions and languages, “ethnic particularism.” They join other scholars in articulating how the racialization that Muslims experience in the United States, structured through white supremacy and settler colonialism, complicates how intra-Muslim conflict is experienced. Rather, Arabs and other immigrant populations are “not quite white” and are particularly impacted by U.S. imperialism both in the United States and abroad. Sherman A. Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking toward the Third Resurrection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Su’ad Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States* (New York: NYU Press, 2016); Sylvia Chan-Malik, “‘Common Cause’: On the Black-Immigrant Debate and Constructing the Muslim American,” *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion* 2:8 (2011): 39; Helen Hatab Samhan, “Not Quite White: Racial Classification and the Arab American Experience,” Michael Suleiman, ed., *Arabs in America: Building a New Future* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999); Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Amaney A. Jamal and Nadine Christine Naber, *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008); Neda Maghbouleh, *The Limits of Whiteness: Iranian Americans and the Everyday Politics of Race* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).
  9. Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic (Arab.-Engl.)* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1979).
  10. Kamala Visweswaran considers the commonality of different struggles against racism, from anti-black racism to the caste system, and how they inform each other in theory and practice. Kamala Visweswaran, *Un/Common Cultures: Racism and the Rearticulation of Cultural Difference* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). Chan-Malik also refers to “common cause” as one way in which “immigrant Muslims” and African American Muslims can recognize each other and redress grievances.
  11. Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Nadine Christine Naber, *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism* (New York: NYU Press, 2012); Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom beyond America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Keith P. Feldman, *A Shadow over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Sunaina Maira, *The 9/11 Generation: Youth, Rights, and Solidarity in the War on Terror* (New York: NYU Press, 2016).

12. Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007); Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen, eds., *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Manning Marable and Hishaam Aidi, eds., *Black Routes to Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Zareena A. Grewal, *Islam Is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).
13. Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Feldman; Prashad, *The Darker Nations*.
14. Khabeer, *Muslim Cool*; Daulatzai; Hishaam Aidi, *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2014); H. Samy Alim, "Re-Inventing Islam with Unique Modern Tones: Muslim Hip Hop Artists as Verbal Mujahidin," *Souls* 8:4 (2006): 45-58.
15. Grewal, *Islam Is a Foreign Country*.
16. Laleh Khalili, "'Standing with My Brother': Hizbullah, Palestinians, and the Limits of Solidarity," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49:2 (2007): 278.
17. Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).
18. Jamillah Ashira Karim, *American Muslim Women: Negotiating Race, Class, and Gender within the Ummah* (New York: NYU Press, 2009): 7.
19. See also Jackson; Khabeer, *Muslim Cool*; Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Omid Safi and Juliane Hammer, *The Cambridge Companion to American Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Chan-Malik, "'Common Cause'." The concept of "ummah" is often used to speak to issues of intra-Muslim racism, but Muslim leaders are often silent on how it can be mobilized to address issues of gender-based oppression and marginalization as well; scholars like Amina Wadud, Karim, and Khabeer, among others, do address this omission. Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Juliane Hammer, *American Muslim Women, Religious Authority, and Activism: More than a Prayer* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012).
20. Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17:2 (1987): 76. The Little and Shabazz families have no reprieve from the legacies of anti-black racisms, state intervention, and surveillance, as well as the inner power struggles of the Nation of Islam, reiterating that kinship relations are not natural, but cultivated and subject to material circumstance.
21. Recent debates amongst Muslims regarding "interfaith" efforts to educate Muslims about Israel and Palestine provides one such example. "American Muslim Religious Leaders Say No to MLI, Reiterate the Quranic Call to Justice and Peace," [boycottmli.wordpress.com](http://boycottmli.wordpress.com), January 31, 2015, available online at: <https://boycottmli.wordpress.com/2015/01/31/american-muslim-religious-leaders-say-no-to-mli-reiterate-the-quranic-call-to-justice-and-peace/>; "OpEd: A Principled Critique of the Muslim Leadership Initiative,"

- muslimmatters.org, July 1, 2015, available online at: <http://muslimmatters.org/2015/07/01/oped-a-principled-critique-of-the-muslim-leadership-initiative-mli/>.
22. Zareena A. Grewal, "Marriage in Colour: Race, Religion, and Spouse Selection in Four American Mosques," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32:2 (2009): 323-345; Jackson; Khabeer, *Muslim Cool*; Junaid Rana, *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
  23. I state at the outset that my notion of Islamic companionship is not prescriptive. It could lead Muslims on multiple trajectories that may conflict with one another.
  24. Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006): 205.
  25. Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Macmillan, 2008): 133.
  26. Sylviane Diouf discusses the evidence of West Africans and their descendants maintaining Muslim practices like prayer, fasting, dress, and giving charity despite the conditions of slavery. Shakir had just been teaching Diouf's book in his Islamic history class at Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California. Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: NYU Press, 1998).
  27. Most of the events described here take place in Northern California, and we can trace other (un)buried bodies in the legacies of the "Hispanification of Ohlone geography" that took place in the Spanish Colonial era (1770-1821). Les W. Field, Alan Leventhal, and Rosemary Cambra, "Mapping Erasure: The Power of Nominative Cartography in the Past and Present of the Muwekma Ohlones of the San Francisco Bay Area," Amy E. Den Ouden and Jean M. O'Brien, eds., *Recognition, Sovereignty Struggles, and Indigenous Rights in the United States: A Sourcebook* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013): 289. While Malcolm X is buried in New York, and slavery predominantly took place in the Southern and Eastern United States, bodies carry histories that accumulate with migrations. As Katherine McKittrick argues, bodies themselves are geographic place; Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006): ix.
  28. Ho, 222.
  29. *Ibid.*, 205.
  30. Grewal, *Islam Is a Foreign Country*, 82.
  31. Members of the Organization of Afro-American Unity and African American Muslims have been making pilgrimage to Malcolm's grave since his death in 1965. See also Aidi, *Rebel Music*.
  32. The term "saint," typically associated with Catholicism, is not a direct translation of "wali" or "shahid," which have disputed and multiple meanings. It does convey in English, however, a sense of the spiritual standing that El-Shabazz has with God in Islam, in terms of his martyrdom status and the effect that his life-story has had in "renewing" Islam in this century. The term also connotes something of his spiritual force as a model because he "embodied the meanings" of Prophetic guidance.

33. Manning Marable, "Rediscovering Malcolm's Life: A Historian's Adventures in Living History," Manning Marable and Hishaam Aidi, eds., *Black Routes to Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 299-316; Hishaam Aidi, "The Political Uses of Malcolm X's Image," *The Nation*, July 12, 2016, available online at: <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-political-uses-of-malcolm-x-image/>. See also Edward E. Curtis IV and Sylvester A. Johnson, eds., "Special Issue: The Meaning of Malcolm X for Africana Religions: Fifty Years On," *Journal of Africana Religions* 3:1 (2015); Njoroje Njoroje, ed., "HE THE ONE WE ALL KNEW," *Biography* 36:3 (Summer 2013): 485-493.
34. Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011).
35. Zareena Grewal discusses the possible disappointments and contradictions that approaching the Middle East as archive engenders for Muslims who initially encounter it uncritically. She likewise discusses how black American Muslim histories offer lessons that many Muslim leaders in the U.S. have failed to heed; see Grewal, *Islam Is a Foreign Country*. Edward Curtis's recent work on Malcolm's travel journals discusses Malcolm's own negotiation of what the "Muslim world" offered as he developed his own understandings of Islam as liberatory theory and praxis. Edward E. Curtis IV, "My Heart Is in Cairo': Malcolm X, the Arab Cold War, and the Making of Islamic Liberation Ethics," *The Journal of American History* 102:3 (December 2015): 775-798.
36. Marable conjectures about Malcolm's sexual history before he joined the Nation of Islam, conjugal relations with his wife Betty, and potential indiscretions in *Malcolm X*. I contend that representations of Malcolm's heteronormativity or queerness offer redemption and models of praxes in wider ways than current discourses allow; Audre Lorde's claiming of Malcolm is a significant intervention towards a more liberatory framework. See "Learning from the Sixties" in Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984). See also Jared Ball and Todd Steven Burroughs, eds., *A Lie of Reinvention: Correcting Manning Marable's Malcolm X* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2012); Herb Boyd, et al., *By Any Means Necessary: Malcolm X—Real, Not Reinvented: Critical Conversations on Manning Marable's Biography of Malcolm X*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Chicago: Third World Press, 2012); Ron Simmons and Marlon Riggs, "Sexuality, Television, and Death: A Black Gay Dialogue on Malcolm X," Joe Wood, ed., *Malcolm X: In Our Own Image* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992): 135-154.
37. I am referencing Ruth Gilmore's definition of racism: "the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death." See Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007): 28. I discuss current practices and potentialities of Muslim invocations of Malcolm X further in Maryam Kashani, "The Audience Is Still Present: Invocations of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz by Muslims in the United States," Sohail Daulatzai and Junaid Rana, eds., *With Stones in Our Hands: Writings on Muslims, Racism, and Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018): 336-353.
38. Safi and Hammer, *The Cambridge Companion*; Hatem Bazian and Farid Senzai, "The Bay Area Muslim Study: Establishing Identity and Community" (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, 2013); Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the*

- Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Ghana-Bassiri.
39. Michael Angelo Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).
  40. Jamal and Naber; Steven Salaita, *Anti-Arab Racism in the USA: Where It Comes from and What It Means for Politics Today* (London: Pluto Press, 2006); Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito, *Muslims on the Americanization Path?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994).
  41. Naber, 111-158. Chan-Malik, Grewal, and Khabeer also describe some of the complexities of these subject positions.
  42. See Naber.
  43. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015): 11.
  44. Gilmore, 261.
  45. Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
  46. *Ibid.*, xvii.
  47. Qur'an 49:13; Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2002).
  48. The hierarchical and gendered aspects of the seating arrangements ideally signify honoring "sacred" knowledge and recognizing difference on multiple scales. The term *adab*, which can be translated as culture, literature, or proper behavior or decorum, is also translated by Islamic scholar Muhammad Naguib Al-Attas as "acting in conformity with justice" (See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F60oME7mM8>). Islamic notions of justice can also mean everything in its "proper" place. This is not always exercised in the most ethical, let alone Islamic, of ways, because of the contingency of Muslim everyday life in which it is not isolated from the misogynistic, exploitative, and white supremacist tendencies of modern societies as a whole. The challenge is to make space for notions of difference and justice that include hierarchies and gendered distinctions, while also ensuring the rights and responsibilities that are foundational for such distributions of power.
  49. "Awliya" is often translated as "saints," "wali" being the singular. Islam does not have a formal process of recognizing saints, but rather a tradition

of hagiographic texts that recounts the lives of those believed to be saints, or as Shakir mentions, those who “have a standing” with Allah.

50. Qur’an 61:8, he repeats the last phrase three times for emphasis.
51. After Shakir recites the Qur’anic verse in Arabic, he translates it into English. He recites the Arabic, whether or not people in the room can understand it because this is the language of the Qur’an, which is believed to have its own spiritual force that is untranslatable. He follows with the English translation because he wants everyone to understand.
52. M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005): 8.
53. Lorde, 139.
54. Melanie K. Yazzie and Cutcha Risling Baldy, “Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Water,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, Society* 6:2 (2018).
55. Saba Mahmood, “Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation,” *Public Culture* 18:2 (2006): 343, 347.
56. Suhaimah Manzoor-Khan, “This Is Not a Humanizing Poem” video, The Last Word Festival 2017—Poetry Slam Final, 2017, available online at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=14&v=G9Sz2BQdMF8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=14&v=G9Sz2BQdMF8). Manzoor-Khan, a student of postcolonial studies, seems to reference the critiques of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and other anti-colonial writers who posited that the processes and discourses of colonization dehumanized the colonizers, from the active participants to those in the metropole.
57. *Ibid.*
58. These debates range from whether and how to engage the #BlackLivesMatter movement, white supremacists, and Zionists, and concerns for how Marxist, feminist, queer, and other “secular” ideologies have “corrupted” Muslim aspirations for justice and processes of social transformation.
59. See, for example, MuslimARC, “#BlackLivesMatter Toolkit for Muslims—MuslimARC,” December 15, 2014, available online at: <http://www.muslimarc.org/blacklivesmatter/>.
60. Hindtrosppectives, “Why I Stand With Standing Rock #NoDAPL,” *Hindtrosppectives* (blog), September 14, 2016, available online at: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/hindtrosppectives/2016/09/why-i-stand-with-standing-rock-nodapl/>.
61. Junaid Rana and Diane C. Fujino, “Taking Risks, or the Question of Palestine Solidarity and Asian American Studies,” *American Quarterly* 67:4 (2015): 1027-1037.
62. Asma Abbas, “In Terror, in Love, out of Time,” Suvendrini Perera and Sherene Razack, eds., *At the Limits of Justice: Women of Colour on Terror* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014): 514.
63. *Ibid.*, 504.
64. Diane Carol Fujino, *Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Lubin.