



# Being and Belonging: Muslims in the United States since 9/11

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The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, instantly transformed many ordinary Muslim and Arab Americans into suspected terrorists. In the weeks and months following the attacks, Muslims in the United States faced a frighteningly altered social climate consisting of heightened surveillance, interrogation, and harassment. In the long run, however, the backlash has been more complicated. In *Being and Belonging*, Katherine Pratt Ewing leads a group of anthropologists, sociologists, and cultural studies experts in exploring how the events of September 11th have affected the quest for belonging and identity among Muslims in America—for better and for worse.

From Chicago to Detroit to San Francisco, *Being and Belonging* takes readers on an extensive tour of Muslim America—inside mosques, through high school hallways, and along inner city streets. Jen’nan Ghazal Read compares the experiences of Arab Muslims and Arab Christians in Houston and finds that the events of 9/11 created a “cultural wedge” dividing Arab Americans along religious lines. While Arab Christians highlighted their religious affiliation as a means of distancing themselves from the perceived terrorist sympathies of Islam, Muslims quickly found that their religious affiliation served as a barrier, rather than a bridge, to social and political integration. Katherine Pratt Ewing and Marguerite Hoyler document the way South Asian Muslim youth in Raleigh, North Carolina, actively contested the prevailing notion that one cannot be both Muslim and American by asserting their religious identities more powerfully than they might have before the terrorist acts, while still identifying themselves as fully American. Sally Howell and Amaney Jamal distinguish between national and local responses to terrorism. In striking contrast to the erosion of civil rights, ethnic profiling, and surveillance set into motion by the federal government, well-established Muslim community leaders in Detroit used their influence in law enforcement, media, and social services to empower the community and protect civil rights. Craig Joseph and Barnaby Riedel analyze how an Islamic private school in Chicago responded to both September 11 and the increasing ethnic diversity of its student body by adopting a secular character education program to instruct children in universal values rather than religious doctrine. In a series of poignant interviews, the school’s students articulate a clear understanding that while 9/11 left deep wounds on their community, it also created a valuable opportunity to teach the nation about Islam.

The rich ethnographies in this volume link 9/11 and its effects to the experiences of a group that was struggling to be included in the American mainstream long before that fateful day. Many Muslim communities never had a chance to tell their stories after September 11. In *Being and Belonging*, they get that chance.

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