

Malcolm X

Let Us Be Moors

Islam, Race, and “Connected Histories”¹

Hisham D. Aidi

S*eamos moros!*” wrote the Cuban poet and nationalist Jose Martí in 1893, in support of the Berber uprising against Spanish rule in northern Morocco. “Let us be Moors . . . the revolt in the Rif . . . is not an isolated incident, but an outbreak of the change and realignment that have entered the world. Let us be Moors . . . we [Cubans] who will probably die by the hand of Spain.”² Writing at a time when the scramble for Africa and Asia was at full throttle, Martí was accentuating connections between those great power forays and Spanish depredations in Cuba, even as the rebellion of 1895 germinated on his island.

Throughout the past century, particularly during the Cold War, Latin American leaders from Cuba’s Fidel Castro to Argentina’s Juan Peron would express support for Arab political causes, and call for Arab–Latin solidarity in the face of imperial domination, often highlighting cultural links to the Arab world through Moorish Spain. Castro, in particular, made a philo-Arab pan-Africanism central to his regime’s ideology and policy initiatives. In his famous 1959 speech on race, the *jefe maximo* underlined Cuba’s African and Moorish origins. “We all have lighter or darker skin. Lighter skin implies descent from Spaniards who themselves were colonized by the Moors that came from Africa. Those who are more or less dark-skinned came directly from Africa. Moreover, nobody can consider himself as being of pure, much less superior, race.”³

With the launching of the “war on terror,” and particularly with the invasion of Iraq, political leaders and activists in Latin America have been warning of a new imperial age and again declaring solidarity with the Arab world. Some refer rather quixotically to a Moorish past. Linking the war on Iraq to Plan Colombia and to the Bush administration’s alleged support for a coup against him, the erratic Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez has repeatedly urged his countrymen to “return to their Arab roots,” and attempted to mobilize the country’s mestizo and Black majority against white supremacy. “They call me the monkey or Black,” Chavez says of his domestic and international opponents. “They can’t stand that someone like me was elected.”⁴

In less contentious terms, Brazil’s left-leaning President Lula da Silva visited the Middle

East in early December 2003 to seek “more objective” relations with the Arab world, to call for an “independent, democratic Palestinian state” and to launch a common market with the Arab world as an alternative to the North American market (particularly with many in Arab countries boycotting American products).⁵ Brazil’s largest trade union federation strongly denounced post–September 11 U.S. intervention in Colombia, Venezuela, and the Middle East, praising the protest movements that have appeared against U.S. and Israeli “militarism” and calling on Brazilian workers to join in the struggle “against Sharon’s Nazi–Zionist aggression against the Palestinian people” and in support of the *intifada*.⁶

The Other September 11 Effect

In the age of the “war on terror,” such expressions from the Western world of affinity with the Arab world are not confined to statements of political solidarity. In Latin America, Europe, and the U.S., for example, there has been a sharp increase in conversion to Islam. At the first world congress of Spanish-speaking Muslims held in Seville in April 2003, the scholar Mansur Escudero, citing “globalization,” said that there were 10 to 12 million Spanish speakers among the world’s 1.2 billion Muslims.⁷ In the U.S., researchers note that usually 25,000 people a year become Muslim, but by several accounts that number has quadrupled since September 11.⁸ In Europe, an Islamic center in Holland reported a tenfold increase and the New Muslims Project in England reported a “steady stream” of new converts.⁹ Several analysts have noted that in the United Kingdom, many converts are coming from middle-class and professional backgrounds, not simply through the prison system or ghetto mosques, as is commonly believed.¹⁰ The Muslim population in Spain is also growing, due to conversion, as well as immigration and intermarriage.¹¹

Different explanations have been advanced to account for this intriguing phenomenon, known as “the other September 11 effect”—the primary effects being anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant backlash and infringements upon civil liberties. Commenting on how the accused “dirty bomber” Jose Padilla and the shoe bomber Richard Reid converted to Islam, French scholar Olivier Roy observes, “Twenty years ago such individuals would have joined radical leftist movements, which have now disappeared or become ‘bourgeois’. . . . Now only two Western movements of radical protest claim to be ‘internationalist’: the anti-globalization movement and radical Islamists. To convert to Islam today is a way for a European rebel to find a cause; it has little to do with theology.”¹² This portrayal of Islam as an outlet for the West’s political malcontents ignores the powerful allure of certain aspects of Islamic theology, and begs the question of why for at least a century, even when communism was still in vogue, minorities in the West have seen Islam as a particularly attractive alternative. Roy’s formulation also neglects the critical elements of racism and racialization. At least since Malcolm X, internationalist Islam has been seen as a response to Western racism and imperialism.

Though Westerners of different social and ethnic backgrounds are gravitating toward Islam, it is mostly the ethnically marginalized of the West—historically, mostly Black, but nowadays also Latino, Native American, Arab, and South Asian minorities—who, often attracted by the purported universalism and colorblindness of Islamic history and theology, are asserting membership in a transnational *umma* and thereby challenging or “exiting” the white West. Even for white converts, like John Walker Lindh, becoming Muslim involves a process of racialization—renouncing their whiteness—because while the West stands for racism and white supremacy on a global scale, Islam is seen to represent tolerance and anti-imperialism. This process of racialization is also occurring in diasporic Muslim communities in the West, which are growing increasingly race-con-

scious and “Black” as anti-Muslim racism increases. To cope, Muslims in the diaspora are absorbing lessons from the African-American freedom movement, including from strains of African-American Islam.

Over the past two years, Islam has provided an anti-imperial idiom and imaginary community of belonging for many subordinate groups in the West, as Islamic culture and art stream into the West through minority and diaspora communities, and often in fusion with African-American art forms, are slowly seeping into the cultural mainstream. Subsequently, many of the cultural and protest movements—anti-globalization, anti-imperialist, anti-racist—in the West today have Islamic and/or African-American undercurrents. At a time of military conflict and extreme ideological polarization between the West and the Muslim world, Islamic culture is permeating political and cultural currents, remaking identities and creating cultural linkages between Westerners and the Muslim world.

In sum, this article is about imagination and “culturalism” post-9/11. I consider why certain segments of the West are now choosing to remember their connections to the Muslim world, and how the “remembering” and “imagined solidarity” is being expressed culturally and politically. I look at the conversion trends and the craze for Arab culture that has swept parts of Latin America and the United States in the past two years, but focus on the cultural movements of “Islamic hip-hop” and the Arab European League that use the “frames” and “repertoires” of Islam and the African-American struggle as examples of the political potential of “imagined solidarities,” and as instances of what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has called “culturalism:” “[the] deliberate, strategic and populist mobilization of cultural material [and] cultural differences in the service of a larger national or transnational politics.”¹³ I also examine how Islamic culture and motifs are becoming central to the worldwide anti-globalization and anti-war movement, and providing the cultural building blocks for an international “counter-modernity” movement.

Latino Back Channels

Recent journalistic accounts have noted the growing rate of conversion to Islam in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, and the often violent clashes between Christian and Spanish Muslim missionaries proselytizing among the indigenous Mayan community. The Muslim campaign in Chiapas is led by a Spaniard from Granada, Aureliano Perez, member of an international Sufi order called al-Murabitun, though he is contending with a rival missionary, Omar Weston, the Nation of Islam’s local representative. Particularly interesting about the several hundred Mayan Muslims is the view of some of the converts that, though some of the missionaries are Spanish like the conquistadors, their embrace of Islam is a historic remedy for the Spanish conquest and the consequent oppression. “Five hundred years ago, they came to destroy us,” said Anastasio Gomez Gomez, 21, who now goes by Ibrahim. “Five hundred years later, other Spaniards came to return a knowledge that was taken away from us.”¹⁴

The view of 1492 as a tragic date signaling the end of a glorious era, and the related idea that conversion to Islam entails a reclaiming of that past, is common among the Latino Muslim community in the U.S. That community, estimated in 2000 at 30,000 to 40,000 members, has grown in the past two years, with Latino Muslim centers and *da’wa* (proselytizing) organizations in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Fresno, and Houston.¹⁵ The banner hanging at the Alianza Islamica center in the South Bronx celebrates the African and Islamic roots of Latin America: against a red, white, and blue backdrop stands a sword-wielding Moor, flanked by a Taino Indian and a Black African. The Spanish conquistador is conspicuously absent. Imam (Omar Abduraheem) Ocasio of the Alianza

Islamica speaks passionately about the continuity between Moorish Spain and Latin America: “Most of the people who came to Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean were from southern Spain, Andalusia—they were Moriscos, Moors forcefully converted to Christianity. The leaders, army generals, *curas* [priests] were white men from northern Spain...*sangre azul*, as they were called. The southerners, who did the menial jobs, . . . servants, artisans, foot soldiers, . . . were of mixed Arab and African descent. They were stripped of their religion, culture, brought to the so-called New World where they were enslaved with African slaves. . . . But the Moriscos never lost their culture . . . we are the cultural descendants of the Moors.”¹⁶ The Puerto Rican imam writes, “Islamically inspired values were conveyed ever so subtly in the Trojan horse of Spanish heritage throughout the centuries and, after 500 years, Latinos were now ready to return.”¹⁷

In the past two years, Islam and the Arab-Muslim world seem to have entered even more poignantly into the Latin American imagination, gaining a presence in political discourse and strongly influencing Hispanic popular culture. This Arab cultural invasion of Latin America, which has reverberated in mainstream American culture, is often attributed to the Brazilian *telenovela* *El Clon* and Lebanese-Colombian pop icon Shakira.

El Clon, the highest-rated soap opera ever shown on Telemundo, a U.S. Spanish-language channel, reportedly reaches 2.8 million Hispanic households in the U.S., as well as 85 million people in Brazil and tens of millions across Latin America. The series, which began broadcasting shortly after September 11, tells the story of Jade, a young Brazilian Muslim who returns to her mother’s homeland of Morocco after her mother’s death in Brazil. There she falls in love and settles down with Lucas, a Christian Brazilian, and adapts to life in an extended family setting in the old city of Fez. Filmed in Rio de Janeiro and Fez, the *telenovela* offers a profusion of Orientalist imagery—from veiled belly dancers swaying seductively behind ornate latticework to dazzling shots of Marrakesh and Fez spliced with footage of scantily clad women on Rio’s beaches—and of course, incessant supplications of “*Ay, por favor, Allah!*” from Jade’s neighbors in the medina. The Moroccan ambassador to Brazil, in a letter to a São Paulo newspaper, criticized the series for its egregious “cultural errors,” “gross falsification” and “mediocre images” promoting stereotypes of Muslim women as submissive and men as polygamists leading lives of “luxury and indolence.”

Despite the kitsch, *El Clon* has triggered what *Latin Trade* called “Mideast fever” across Latin America. Belly dancing and “Middle Eastern-style jewelry” became “the rage in Rio and São Paulo,” Brazilians began throwing “A Thousand and One Nights” parties, “Talk to a Sheikh” chat rooms cropped up online and two new agencies opened up to offer package tours to North Africa. (In his letter, the Moroccan ambassador acknowledged that Brazilian tourism to Morocco had increased by 300 percent thanks to *El Clon*.) A journalist visiting Quito, Ecuador, found viewers of the series “wide-eyed and drop-jawed for all things Arab.”¹⁸ Even in the U.S., where *El Clon*’s broadcast was almost blocked due to alleged potential controversy, it has exerted cultural influence upon the Latino community and others. In New York, observers note the *El Clon*-triggered fashion for Arab jewelry and hip scarves, the overflowing belly dancing classes, and a recently opened beauty parlor called *El Clon* in Queens.¹⁹

Through the Latino back channel, the impact of Shakira in bringing Arab culture to the MTV audience has also been considerable. The Lebanese-Colombian singer was bombarded with questions by the media about her views “as an Arab” on the September 11 attacks, and advised to drop the belly dancing and the Arabic riffs from her music because it could hurt her album sales, but she refused. “I would have to rip out my heart or my insides in order to be able to please them,” said the songstress, and expressed horror at hate crimes against “everything that’s Arab, or seems Arab.”²⁰ During the run-up to the Iraq war, Shakira’s performances took on an explicitly political tone, with her dancers

wearing masks of Tony Blair, George W. Bush, and Fidel Castro. Backdrop screens flashed images of Bush and Saddam Hussein as two puppets playing a sinister game of chess, with the Grim Reaper as the puppeteer. She also undertook a highly publicized tour of the Middle East (though her concerts in Casablanca, Tunis, and Beirut were postponed), during which she visited her father's ancestral village in the Bekaa Valley. Viewers across the region were delighted when Shakira appeared on Egyptian television singing the tunes of Fairuz. In Europe, the U.S., South America, and even the Middle East, the belly-dancing star has fostered a reported mania for hip scarves with coins and tassels. In a random check of Cairo nightclubs, Egyptian government officials confiscated twenty-six Shakira outfits, "weighing no more than 150 grams [5 ounces]," and deemed "scandalous,"²¹ but local filmmakers are currently negotiating with government officials over rights to a film project called *Shakira fi al-Munira*, about a young Egyptian girl infatuated with the Colombian chanteuse.

While the craze for Arab culture has occurred in the wake of September 11 and the ensuing war on terrorism, it is not necessarily political. Commenting on the popularity of *shawarma* and hookahs in Quito, one journalist observes that "the new fascination with Arabia comes at a time when there are new reasons for anti-American sentiment"—the recent policy of currency dollarization—but adds reassuringly that, "*El Clon*'s following surely won't produce a new sect of Islamic fundamentalist terrorists in Latin America."²² It is also not clear that conversion to Islam necessarily constitutes political or cultural resistance. Referring to the vogue for Islam and Arabic among Spanish youth, one Catalan journalist wryly observes: "It will take more than teenagers converting to an Islam lite to stop [Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria] Aznar's Christian nationalism and Castilian imperialism. We need a civil dialogue about our relations with the Orient."²³ Belly dancing and learning elementary Arabic may not be acts of resistance, but such activities create important, albeit imaginary cultural linkages which can be activated for political purposes. As Miles Copeland, head of the Mondo Melodia label, who will release a film on the American belly dancing craze in January 2004, told *PR Newswire*: "Belly dancing is about art, not politics—but in experiencing the art, you also experience the culture, and that becomes political in and of itself." Interest in Arab culture and conversions are bringing Islam into the imagination of Western youth, feeding powerful movements and cultures of protest.

From Harlem to the Casbah

In *No Name in the Street*, James Baldwin reflects on the "uneasy" reaction he would get when, while in France in 1948, he would "claim kinship" with the Algerians living there. "The fact that I had never seen the Algerian casbah was of no more relevance . . . than the fact that the Algerians had never seen Harlem. The Algerian and I were both, alike, victims of this history [of Europe in Africa], and I was still a part of Africa, even though I had been carried out of it nearly four hundred years before."²⁴ Most French-born Arabs have never been to Harlem but "claim kinship" with African Americans as they draw inspiration from the Black freedom struggle. Numerous French-Arab (Beur) intellectuals and activists have noted their indebtedness to African-American liberation thought, and the secular pro-integration Beur movement of the early 1980s organized campaigns and marches modeled on the U.S. civil rights struggle. But in the early 1990s, as the impoverished, ethnically segregated *banlieues* mushroomed around French cities, the discourse of *integration* began to give way to talk of self-imposed exclusion and warnings that the children of immigrants "had gone in a separate direction." The region of Lyons, where 100,000 gathered for the famous march for *integration* in 1983, is today cited by com-

mentators as evidence of the failure of assimilation. Lyons, by one account, has become a “ghetto of Arabs,” and fallen to Islamist influence, boasting six neighborhood boys in the U.S. military detention center at Guantanamo Bay.²⁶

The generation of Black and Arab Muslim youth that came of age in crime-ridden *banlieues* that periodically explode into car-burning riots, and are monitored by a heavy-handed police force, is in no mood for integration. By some estimates, 50 to 60 percent of the French prison population is Muslim.²⁷ French commentators are increasingly wondering if they have developed a “race problem” like that of the U.S., with the attendant pathologies of ethnic ghettos, family breakdown, drugs, violence and, of particular concern these days, Islamism. As in the American ghetto, disintegrating family units have been replaced by new organizations—gangs, posses, and religious associations, particularly Islamic groups,²⁸ which provide services and patrol the *cites*, the housing projects where most immigrants live.

The confluence of Islam and urban marginality in France was displayed in a consummately post-colonial moment on October 6, 2001, when France and Algeria met in their first soccer match since the Algerian war of independence. The match was stopped prematurely when thousands of French-born Arab youth, seeing Algeria losing, raided the field chanting “Bin Laden! Bin Laden!” and hurled bottles at two female French ministers.²⁹ The ill-fated match, coming on the heels of September 11, led to hysterical warnings of an *intifada* simmering in the heart of France, an Islamic fifth column, the “unassimilability” of certain immigrants and, again, an American-style “race problem.” Like American pundits, the French are concerned about whether Islamic and Muslim organizations which have emerged in the *banlieues* will keep youths out of trouble or radicalize them. An American writing for the *Weekly Standard* notes, “It’s the Farrakhan problem. Mosques do rescue youths from delinquency, idleness and all sorts of other ills. But in so doing, they become power brokers in areas where almost all disputes are resolved by violence and the most tribal kind of woospeh [respect, in a French accent, supposedly]. And it is that mastery of a violent environment—not the social service record—that these groups call on when they make demands on the larger society.”³⁰

The French media has shown a keen interest in the rising conversion to Islam in the U.S. and Europe—and particularly in the overlap of Islam and race, or more specifically, ethnic awareness, mobilization, and self-segregation. An expose in an April 2003 edition of the magazine *L’Express* opened with the following statement: “Blacks, whites, Latinos, Asians . . . every year, 50,000 to 80,000 [Americans] convert to Islam. Internal enemies, members of the ‘axis of evil’?” The French government’s attempts to control Islamic mobilization in the *banlieues* through elections for a national Islamic council (aimed, in the words of the interior minister, at taking Islam out of “cellars and garages”) backfired when the conservative Union of Islamic Organizations, inspired by Egypt’s banned Muslim Brotherhood, won 14 out of 41 seats.

Zacarias Moussaoui, the “twentieth hijacker” awaiting trial in the U.S., in many ways embodies the story of Islam and racial exclusion in France. Although he did not grow up impoverished in the *cites*, by all accounts, the French-Moroccan harbored a deep racial rage. In his youth, Moussaoui was often ridiculed because of his dark skin and frizzy hair, and repeatedly called *negre* (nigger), but it was after the 1991 Gulf war that he became politicized. He began to consider himself “Black,” joining the “Kid Brothers”—a university group modeled after the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood—and came back from a stint in London deeply hostile toward whites. “He became a racist, a black racist, and he would use the pejorative African word *toubab* to describe white people,” said his brother.³¹ Moussaoui raged against Western permissiveness and imperialism in Algeria, Palestine, and Chechnya.³²

Richard Reid, the “shoe bomber,” who became radicalized in the same Brixton mosque



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as Moussaoui, embodies the similarly distressing urban and racial situation in Britain. West Indian and South Asian youth live in benighted “mill and mosque” towns, devastated by capital flight in the late 1980s and 1990s, where the anti-immigrant British National Party is making inroads and race riots erupt frequently. Many of these youth have drifted towards radical Islamist groups. By all accounts, the petty thief and graffiti artist known as ENROL embraced Islam while in Feltham young offenders’ institution, to seek solace from racism. His father Robin tried to explain Reid’s odyssey to Islam as a result of the difficulty of being of mixed race. “Islam accepts you for who you are,” the father told CNN talk show host Larry King. “Even I was a Muslim for a little bit . . . because I was fed up with racial discrimination.” In an interview with the *Guardian*, Robin continued: “About ten years ago, I met up with Richard after not seeing him for a few years. He was a little bit downhearted. I suggested to him, ‘Why don’t you become a Muslim? They treated me all right.’”

The mixing of Islam and racial awareness in Europe is also leading to political mobilization. The Arab European League (AEL), headed by the fiery Lebanese-born Dyab Abou Jahjah, is explicitly modeled on the American civil rights movement, borrowing slogans (“By Any Means Necessary!”) and protest techniques from the Black Panthers and the Nation of Islam, and aiming to mobilize Arab and Muslim youth across Europe to lobby European governments to make Arabic one of the official languages of the European Union and to gain state funding for Islamic schools. Based in Brussels, but with chapters opening in France and Holland, the AEL has launched a cross-border Arab pride

movement, and organized marches against the U.S. war in Iraq and in solidarity with the Palestinian *intifada*. Known as the “Arab Malcolm X,” Abou Jahjah, who says he finds the ideas of integration “degrading,” admits being inspired by the slain African-American civil rights leader, who “was also against assimilation . . . fought for civil rights and was also inspired by Islam.”³³ “We’re a civil rights movement, not a club of fundamentalist fanatics who want to blow things up,” he told the *New York Times* on March 1, 2003. “In Europe, the immigrant organizations are Uncle Toms. We want to polarize people, to sharpen the discussion, to unmask the myth that the system is democratic for us.” The AEL has also organized Black Panther–style “Arab patrols” to “police the police.” Groups of unarmed Arab youths dressed in black follow the police around, carrying video cameras and flyers which read, “Bad cops: the AEL is watching you.” Fusing African-American, Islamic, and Arab elements in its style and rhetoric, the AEL has become a political force to be reckoned with, even prompting the Belgian government to attempting to ban its patrols on the basis of a 1930s law that proscribes private militias.

“Le Respect” and “Les Pitbulls”

Seul le beat aujourd'hui nous lie et nous unit.

(Today only the beat links and unites us.)

—Saliha, “Danse le Beat”

Hip-hop has emerged as the idiom for the urban activism of minority youth in Europe. For Muslim youth experiencing the crackdown on immigrants, as well as state withdrawal and welfare cuts, hip-hop offers a chance to express critiques, vent rage, declare solidarity with other marginalized youth (particularly African Americans), and display cultural pride—to show, as New York rapper DMX says, “who we be.”³⁴

If American rap has been criticized for its materialism, nihilism, and political nonchalance, French hip-hop offers trenchant critiques of racism, globalization, and imperialism. Numerous groups such as Yazid and La Fonky Family deal explicitly with the challenges of being Arab and Muslim in the West, and relations between Islam and the West. In their hit single, “Je Suis Si Triste” (“I’m So Sad”), the Marseilles-based rap crew 3eme Oeil (Third Eye), made up of the Comorian-born Boss One (Mohammed), Jo Popo (Mohammed), and Said, offer biting social commentary over an infectious, looping bass line. Decrying hate crimes against veiled Muslim women in France, condemning police brutality and mass incarceration (with a special shout out to Mumia Abu Jamal), the rappers focus their lyrical fire on the West’s “stranglehold” (*la main-mise*) on the East.

In addition to verbal release, hip-hop is also used to combat racism and to promote Black-white-Arab relations, as in the Urban Peace Festivals and spoken-word poetry events (*les slameurs*) organized by SOS Racisme. Hip-hop, interestingly, is also being used to counter Islamist influence in the *banlieues*. The Beurette leader Fadela Amara, who organized the march “*Ni putes ni soumises*” (“Neither whores nor submissive”)—a march that has now developed into a women’s rights organization affiliated with SOS Racisme—often invites Muslim female rappers to spread a feminist message. “*Ni putes, ni soumises*” aims to mobilize youth against ghettos and for equality, but also to counter the Islamist organizations such as the powerful Union of Islamic Organizations, which delivers services in the *cites* in exchange for veiling. Amara says discrimination and unemployment make many young men feel “excluded from the French project.” These youths, she says, often return to Islamic traditions, opposing gender mixing and women’s education, and sometimes assaulting women who do not dress according to their idea of modesty.³⁵ French Muslim rappers and R&B singers publicly and collectively condemned

the September 11 attacks, saying the terrorists were, in the words of Ideal J, a Franco-Haitian convert to Islam, “dishonoring the faith.” Al Malik of the New African Poets, a Congolose convert to Islam, noted the importance of rap and Islam to young ghetto dwellers: “Rap has opened a world to us, empowering us young men, and Islam has allowed us to flourish by teaching us respect for ‘the other.’ [But] the Taliban are instrumentalizing the religion.”³⁶

Attempts by some French Islamists to boycott American products—and market products like Mecca Cola—are failing since *banlieusards* remain loyal to American streetwear labels like Fubu and Phat Farm, often claiming that such clothing is an anti-American, but pro-Black statement. More recently, local *banlieue* streetwear clothing lines have appeared with names like Bullrot (a combination of pitbull and rottweiler) and Adedi (an acronym for *Association de differences*), the latter founded by a Moroccan, a Gabonese, and a Senegalese to combat racism and extremism, and to celebrate difference.³⁷

French commentators associate hip-hop with Islam, claiming that rap, like Islam, often brings rage, pathology, and dysfunction. The anti-immigrant National Front of Jean Le Pen and its splinter, the National Republican Movement, have historically denounced hip-hop. In March 2001, both far-right parties opposed the use of public funds to finance the first Hip-Hop Dance World Cup in Villepinte stating that “hip-hop is a movement belonging to immigrants of African origin installed in France and which constitutes a call to sedition against our institutions.”³⁸ More recently, however, the National Front has begun to use hip-hop as a way to spread its political message, “win back” French youth, and counter Arab and American influence in French culture. The white supremacist rap crew Basic Celto, affiliated with the National Republican Movement, has as its objective to break “immigrants’ monopoly” over hip-hop “which diffuses the immigrants’ complaints.” Basic Celto aims to promote a “national revolutionary” rap with a “Christian identity,” and to draw “*français d’origine*” away from immigrant influence.³⁹

But the allure of Islam, and Islam-inflected cultures like hip-hop and rai, to French youth continues to grow, prompting much editorial pondering. *Le Monde* ran a story on how Ramadan is increasingly observed in French schools, even by non-Muslims, and there have also been reports of many non-Muslim girls wearing headscarves in solidarity with Muslim schoolgirls sent home for wearing *le foulard*. Commenting on Le Pen’s remark that hip-hop is a dangerous musical genre which originated in the casbahs of Algeria, rapper Boss One (Mohammed) of 3eme Oeil, said: “For Le Pen, everything bad—rap, crime, AIDS—comes from Algeria or Islam.... The more Bush and Chirac attack Islam and say it’s bad, the more young people will think it’s good, and the more the oppressed will go to Islam and radical preachers. Especially here in America. Because life is hard in France, but we have a social safety net.”⁴⁰

Commentators have also blamed hip-hop for bringing social ills associated with the American ghetto to France. “[French-Arab youth] intentionally imitate belligerent Afro-American lifestyles, down to ‘in-your-face’ lyrics for booming rap music,” moaned one observer.⁴¹ Some have pointed to the “African-Americanization” of the speech patterns of French youth, noting that their verbal jousting is similar to that of “American rappers from black ghettos.”⁴² Indeed, the culture of France’s suburban ghettos is heavily influenced by the trends of the American inner city—the urban argot, street codes of conduct, and “honor system” are strikingly similar.⁴³ In January 2000, a law was passed creating a police unit to monitor the behavior of pitbulls and rottweilers in housing projects where, as in the U.S., such dogs had become very popular during the 1990s among urban youth.⁴⁴ The slurs used against Blacks (*negres*) and Arabs (in France, *bougnoles*, in Spain, *Moros* and in Belgium, *makkak*, which means white ape) have become commonly used terms of endearment among Muslim youth, as with the term nigger in the U.S. But clearly, Muslim European youth have not learned misogyny and rage from hip-hop or from African Ameri-

cans. The fact that hip-hop is being used by secular urban movements to counter Islamism and racism is an illustration of the growing racial consciousness of Muslim youth in Europe, the deep resonance of the African-American experience and how imagination can help construct a cultural world to resist state oppression and religious fanaticism.

Keepin' It *Halal*

Hip-hop's changed, ain't a black thing anymore G
 Young kids in Baghdad showing 2 on 3
Holla West Coast? Nah, West Bank for life
 Upside down, holla for my Moros alright
 Spit rhymes in Arabic on the same level like Jada
 You wouldn't know if you should head bang or belly dance playa
 I'm that type of sand nigga type of Johnny Cochran yaw dig
Ya stereotype me, I knock you out like Prince Naseem.
 —Outlandish, "El Moro"

The hip-hop movement has a powerful oppositional streak that makes it both attractive and troubling to political actors. Hip-hop's ability to jangle the hegemonic discourse was recently seen with Jay-Z's "Leave Iraq Alone" verse and Outkast's anti-war hit "Bombs Over Baghdad," denouncing the first Gulf War, which was yanked off the air by MTV and Clear Channel when bombs began raining on Baghdad in March 2003.⁴⁶ Hip-hop artists have strongly opposed the war, without fear of the social opprobrium visited upon the Dixie Chicks and other white pop stars. As hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons put it, "Rappers don't have to worry about anything. No one likes what they have to say anyway, so they're not afraid to speak up." But when hip-hop is infused with Islamic themes and political allusions, the establishment press has found it particularly unsettling. Hence the outrage over rapper Paris' recently released—and rapidly selling—*Sonic Jihad*, the cover of which features an airplane flying toward the White House, and the alleged purging of Arabic terms and references to Hussein from Tupac Shakur's recently released *Better Dayz*, though the slain rapper was referring not to the missing Iraqi dictator, but to Hussein Fatal, a member of his Outlawz posse, which also includes Khadafi, Castro, Komani, and Idi Amin.⁴⁷

In the fall of 2002, accused sniper John Muhammad, formerly of the Nation of Islam, sent notes to the police that referenced lyrics from rappers who are Five Percenters—a heterodox Black Muslim sect. The subsequent media frenzy triggered a soul-searching conversation within the Islamic hip-hop community that was rendered particularly urgent when Muslim hip-hoppers found themselves linked to the war on terror by Niger Innis, chairman of the conservative Congress of Racial Equality. (A similar uproar occurred more recently in the United Kingdom when a hip-hop group named Shaikh Terra and the Soul Salah crew released a video "Dirty Kuffar" ["Dirty Unbelievers"], in which they salute Hamas and Hizbullah and praise Osama Bin Laden; the "hate video" drew the attention of Labor MP Andrew Dismore who described the video as "disgust[ing]" and "inexcusable" and launched a police investigation into the radical Muslim group.)⁴⁸ Shortly after the arrest of John Muhammad, Innis met with Department of Justice officials to express concern over "domestic Black Muslims as a national security issue" and launched a campaign to counter Islamic recruitment efforts in the nation's prisons and colleges.⁴⁹ Muslim rappers asked themselves: should we be expected to "represent" Islam positively, and avoid the misogynist and materialistic excesses of mainstream hip-hop artists? Or should the aim be to "get paid" and gain wide success even if it means "playing with the *haram* (illicit)"? Of the U.S.-based Muslim hip-hop crews, Native Deen and Sons of

Hagar have been praised for their positive political and religious messages. Native Deen, made up of three African-American rappers who won't perform in venues that allow mixed dancing or serve alcohol, have been profiled in *The New Yorker* and even received praise from the State Department, but have yet to garner airtime on mainstream radio stations. The Des Moines-based Sons of Hagar, made up of Allahz Sword (Ahmad) and Ramadan Conchus (Abdul), both Arab-Americans, and Keen Intellect (Kareem) and Musa, Irish-American and Korean-American converts to Islam, respectively, have also been praised for socially conscious lyrics. Their poignant single "Insurrection" ("It's the Arab hunting season, and I ain't leavin'/I'm pushin' the conscience button on you people/Where is the reason?"), and their track "Sisterssss" in support of polygamy,⁵⁰ are popular in the underground Muslim-Arab hip-hop scene. But Sons of Hagar have also not achieved mainstream exposure.

The Muslim rap crew that is gaining worldwide notoriety for its lyrical dexterity, stylistic appeal, and explicitly positive portrayal of Islam is the Denmark-based trio Outlandish. Made up of a Moroccan, a Pakistani, and a Honduran, Outlandish has topped the charts with hits including "Guantanamo" (the chorus: "And I got all my Moros here, Guantanamo") and "Aicha," a remake of Cheb Khaled's 1995 hit. The latter track, which saw heavy rotation on MTV Europe and climbed to fourth on the charts in Germany, has been hailed as the most positive depiction of Muslim women in a music video, with shots of pre-prayer ablution and veiled and unveiled Arab, South Asian, and African women. Rather than playing with the *haram*, Outlandish is about "keepin' it *halal* (licit)."

American hip-hop commentators note that political, cerebral rap may be popular in Europe, but if it cannot be "bling-blinged," or sexed up, it will not sell in the U.S. A recent dispute between Simmons and a segment of the African-American Sunni community is illustrative. Though not a Muslim, Simmons has frequently declared his respect for Islam, and the Nation of Islam (NOI) in particular. "I grew up on Farrakhan," he said in one interview. "Where I grew up, there were dope fiends and black Muslims. If Muslims came by, you stood up straight."⁵¹ He also tried to broker talks between the NOI and American Jewish organizations, denounced the invasion of Iraq, helped organize Musicians United to Win Without War and is currently planning a Middle East youth peace summit. But when a recent issue of his *OneWorld* magazine ran a cover with female rapper Li'l Kim wearing a "burka-like garment over her face" and "lingerie from the neck down"—and in the same issue saying, "Fuck Afghanistan"—Najee Ali, director of the civil rights group Project Islamic Hope, demanded an apology to America's Muslims. As someone active in brokering truces in the hip-hop world, Ali cited his Islamic duty "to the people of hip-hop and humanity," and called on Simmons to apologize for the magazine cover and for the "pornographic female rapper" Foxy Brown, who in her song "Hot Spot," produced by the Simmons-founded Def Jam, says "MCs wanna eat me but it's Ramadan."

The Li'l Kim incident instigated a discussion over other not-so-*halal* trends in Islamic hip-hop. The cover of *XXL* magazine showing rapper Nas holding a glass of cognac and wearing prayer beads around his neck outraged many Muslims. "Why he imitatin' the *kufar* (unbelievers, in Arabic) with the Hail Mary beads?!" fumed one blogger. Many Sunni Muslims have also criticized the style of some female Muslim hip-hoppers of wearing a headscarf (*hijab*) with midriff tops and the low-riding jeans popularized by Jennifer Lopez. These sartorially adventurous young Muslim women, known variously as "noochies" (Nubian hoochies), "*halal* honies" and "bodacious *bints*" (girls, in Arabic)—have provoked heated cyber-debates about freedom of expression, female modesty, and the future of Islam in America. "Our *deen* (religion, in Arabic) is not meant to be rocked!" says hip-hop journalist Adisa Banjoko, author of the forthcoming book *The Light From the East*, on Islamic influence in hip-hop. "I see these so-called Muslim sistas wearing a

hijab and then a bustier, or a *hijab* with their belly button sticking out. You don't put on a *hijab* and try to rock it! Or these brothers wearing Allah tattoos, or big medallions with Allah's name—Allah is not to be bling-blinged!"⁵²

Just as controversial are the Arabic calligraphy tattoos that women, even outside the hip-hop community, have taken to wearing. The words *halal*, *haram*, and *sharmuta* (whore in Arabic, but a term of endearment in certain circles these days) are tattooed on shoulders, thighs, or lower backs, and worn with bathing suit tops or hip-hugging jeans. Some of these *haram* trends in Islamic hip-hop are deliberate responses to orthodox or fundamentalist Islamic dress, like the "high-water pants" or "total *hijabs*" seen in some inner city areas. Among young Muslim males, equally provocative are black t-shirts worn by some Shiite youth, which read in crimson, "Every Day Is Ashura, Every Day Is Karbala"—references to Shiite rituals commemorating the death of Imam Hussein in the seventh century and the Iraqi plain where he died in battle. Also troubling to some is the growing popularity of martial arts among urban Muslim youth, who say self-defense skills are necessary against gangsters and violent police. If many Black Muslims in the 1960s were practicing syncretic forms of martial arts like "Kushite boxing," many of today's young male hip-hoppers are learning "Islamic wrestling." "The Prophet was a grappler," one enthusiast told *Middle East Report*. "The *hadith* (saying of the Prophet) teaches us to never hit the face of our opponent and that [Islamic] grappling allows you to win over an opponent without punching them and risking brain damage."

Russell Simmons has said that "the coolest stuff about American culture, be it language, dress, or attitude, comes from the underclass—always has and always will."⁵³ If so, then as Islam seeps into the American underclass and as Muslims populate the underclass in Europe, Islamic cultural elements will percolate upward into mainstream culture and society. For many American youth, Islamic hip-hop is their first encounter with Islam, and often leads them to struggle with issues of race, identity, and Western imperialism. As Bakari Kitwana has noted, "If asked about a specific political issue . . . many hip-hop generationers can easily recall the first time their awareness on that issue was raised by rap music."⁵⁴ In Europe, many North African youth are rediscovering Islam and becoming race-conscious through Five Percenter and NOI rap lyrics. For many white hip-hoppers in the U.S., the sought-after "ghetto pass"—acceptance in the hip-hop community—comes only with conversion to Islam, which is seen as a rejection of being white. The white rapper Everlast, formerly Eric Schrody of House of Pain, claims that conversion to Islam and mosque attendance allow him to visit ghetto neighborhoods he could never enter as a non-Muslim white.⁵⁵ Curiously, Everlast's espousal of Islam caused static with the white rapper Eminem who accused him of becoming Muslim to deny that he is a "homosexual white rappin' Irish." One young white Latino youth explained the link between Islam and his street credibility as follows: "In the Bronx, looking like me, you don't get much respect. When I took the *shihada* (professed Islam), the brothers gave me respect, the white folk got nervous, even the police paid attention."⁵⁶

Efforts are being made to direct the energy of Islamic hip-hop. In late July 2003, the First Annual Islamic Family Reunion and Muslims in Hip-Hop Conference and Concert was held in Orlando, Florida, with prominent imams from across the country leading three days of workshops on Muslim youth and stressing the importance of *deen*, family, schooling, and organizing. Activities included Islamic spelling bees, Islamic knowledge competitions, and performances by "positive lyricists" like Native Deen. The conference also established Hallal Entertainment, Inc. and helped launch the Islamic Crisis Emergency Response System, a Philadelphia-based organization which provides services to needy Muslim and non-Muslim families.⁵⁷ Fusing Islamic themes with the preeminent global youth culture, Islamic hip-hop has emerged as a powerful internationalist subculture for disaffected youth around the world.

“Roaring from the East”

“The specter of a storm is haunting the Western world,” wrote the Black power poet Askia Muhammad Toure in 1965. “The Great Storm, the coming Black Revolution, is rolling like a tornado; roaring from the East; shaking the moorings of the earth as it passes through countries ruled by oppressive regimes. . . . Yes, all over this sullen planet, the multi-colored ‘hordes’ of undernourished millions are on the move like never before in human history.”⁵⁸ Toure was pondering the appeal of “the East” to African-American youth in the aftermath of the 1955 Bandung conference. There, President Sukarno of Indonesia had told the representatives of twenty-nine African and Asian nations that they were united “by a common detestation of colonialism in whatever form it appears. We are united by a common detestation of racialism.” Those were the days when Malcolm X met with Fidel Castro at the famed Teresa Hotel in Harlem, and when Malcolm, from his perspective of “Islamic internationalism,” came to understand the civil rights movement as an instance of the struggle against imperialism, seeing the Vietnam war and the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya as uprisings of the “darker races” and, like the African-American struggle, part of the “tidal wave” against Western imperialism.

Some commentators, pointing to the current anti-war and anti-globalization movement, have suggested that a new era of Afro-Asian-Latin solidarity may be in the offing. In the U.S., the past two years has seen a political ferment and coalition-building between progressive groups—in particular between Arab- and Muslim-American groups and African-American groups—not seen since the 1960s when the Black Panthers and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee declared solidarity with the PLO, which in turn declared solidarity with Native Americans. September 11 and the subsequent backlash has led many African-American leaders to stand with Muslim and Arab-Americans, not least because African-American Muslims are also targeted in the post-September 11 profiling and detention campaigns. Activists like Al Sharpton are mobilizing against the USA PATRIOT Act “because it is used to profile people of color” and “impacting Muslims everywhere, including Brooklyn and Harlem.”⁵⁹

Given the centrality of Islam and the Arab world to the war on terror, and the presence of *kaffiyyas* and (regrettably) Bin Laden t-shirts at protests from Porto Alegre to Barcelona, it appears that the new Bandung may have a distinct Arab or Islamic cast. In the past two years, a number of Latin American leaders have called for “concrete action” to establish a Palestinian state. Castro has signed agreements of bilateral cooperation with Algeria and the United Arab Emirates, and continues to rail against “global apartheid” in general and “Israeli apartheid” in particular. Castro has also been accused of building ties with Iran and selling biotechnology in exchange for cheap oil. When he visited Iran in 2001, Castro spoke of his rapport with President Mohammad Khatami and reported that he “had the longest sleep of his life in Tehran.” Most recently, he has been accused by the U.S. of jamming the satellite broadcasts of U.S.-based Iranian opposition groups.⁶⁰ Recent articles in right-leaning American newsmagazines claim to have discovered evidence that Venezuela is providing identity papers to suspicious numbers of people from Arab and South Asian “countries of interest” (as well as Colombians and Cubans). One article also features the claim of the former Venezuelan ambassador to Libya, Julio Cesar Pineda, to possess correspondence from Hugo Chavez stating his desire to “solidify” ties between Latin America and the Middle East—including use of the oil weapon.⁶¹ Chavez challenged the reporters in question to produce “one single shred of evidence” for their claims.

These stories of Cuban and Venezuelan ties to Middle Eastern radicals may be little more than partisan puffery, and Chavez’s repeated calls for solidarity with the Arab world may be nothing more than petroleum diplomacy or an embattled leader’s desperate plea

for allies. Yet the Venezuelan leader's appeal to "Arab roots" is indicative of a trend in the West. Among Western subordinate groups and opposition movements that feel victimized or neglected by globalization, the Arabs are seen as bearing the brunt of the worldwide imperial assault in the era of the war on terror. As Western nationalists portray Islam as a threat to freedom and security, and launch wars to bring democracy to the Muslim world, "the multi-colored hordes" of the West are reaching for teachings and precedents (like Moorish Spain) in Islam that they hope will make the West more compassionate and free.

Islam is leaking into the West through conversion, migration, and media-driven cultural flows, and to many, the Islamic world is presenting a repertoire of alternative identities. As marginalized Westerners are finding inspiration in Islam, Muslims in the diaspora are inspired by the African-American experience. The cross-fertilization taking place between Islamic, Black, and Latin cultures is creating fascinating trends and art forms. Many would argue that the fashion for Arabic tattoos, Allah chains, Orientalist soap operas, belly dancing, and hip scarves is just that—fashion. But as the Arab pride movement in Europe and Islamic hip-hop demonstrate, the vibrant cultural intermingling can have significant political implications. Cultural flows can spark forceful challenges to state policies, state-imposed identities, and the claims of Western nationalism.

For many of the minority convert communities and the diaspora Muslim communities, Islamic Spain has emerged as an anchor for their identity. Moorish Spain was a place where Islam was in and of the West, and inhabited a Golden Age before the rise of the genocidal, imperial West, a historical moment that disenchanted Westerners can share with Muslims. Neither Muslim nostalgia for nor Western Orientalist romanticism about Andalusia is new, but it is new for different subordinate groups in the West to be yearning for "return" to Moorish Spain's multiracialism. In this worldview, the year 1492 is a historical turning point. On Columbus Day in October, Chavez urged Latin Americans to boycott celebrations of the "discovery," saying that Columbus was "worse than Hitler." That the longing for pre-1492 history is shared by many minorities throughout the West is an indication of their lasting exclusion, and how the stridency of Western nationalism since September 11 has revived memories of centuries-old trauma. As one African-American activist put it recently, "The profiling and brutalizing of African-Americans didn't begin after September 11. It began in 1492."⁶³ In a similar spirit, after Moussaoui was arrested in the U.S. and granted the right to represent himself in court, one of his first demands was "the return of Spain to the Moors."

With African-American and Latino converts speaking of the tragedy of 1492, and with Muslim minorities in the West becoming increasingly race-conscious and inspired by Black America ("*l'autre Amerique*"), the world is witnessing a new fusion between Islam and pan-Africanism. Today, however, this racialized Islamic internationalism contains elements of other cultures and diasporas as well. Islam is at the heart of an emerging global anti-hegemonic culture, which post-colonial critic Robert Young would say incarnates a "tricontinental counter-modernity" that combines diasporic and local cultural elements, and blends Arab, Islamic, Black, and Hispanic factors to generate "a revolutionary black, Asian and Hispanic globalization, with its own dynamic counter-modernity . . . constructed in order to fight global imperialism."⁶⁴

Notes

1. This article originally appeared in the Winter 2003 issue of the *Middle East Final Report*.
2. Jose Marti, "Espana en Melilla," in *Cuba: Letras*, vol. 2 (Havana: Edicion Tropico, 1938), p. 201.
3. Quoted in Rene Depestre, "Carta de Cuba sobre el imperialismo de la mala fe," *Por la revolucion, por la poesia* (Havana: Institute del Libro, 1969), p. 93.

4. *El Pais*, April 17, 2002.
5. *Latin American Weekly Report*, October 4, 2003.
6. CUT National Plenary, Conjuntura Internacional e Nacional, Resolution 10, "Cresce a poliaizacao politica a social em todo o mundo." Accessible online at <http://cutnac-web.cut.org.br/10plencut/conjtex5.htm>.
7. Deutsche Presse-Agentur, April 3, 2003.
8. *New York Times*, October 22, 2001; *The Economist*, October 26, 2001. Imams and converts also made this claim in interviews carried out by Columbia University's Muslim Communities in New York Project on June 4 and June 16, 2003.
9. *Times* (London), January 7, 2002.
10. *Evening Standard*, March 15, 2002.
11. *Christian Science Monitor*, October 2, 2002. See also Yusuf Fernandez, "Spain Returning to Islam," *Islamic Horizons* (July–August 2002).
12. Olivier Roy, "Euro-Islam: The Jihad Within?" *The National Interest* (Spring 2003).
13. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 15.
14. Cox News Service, August 11, 2002; see also Knight-Ridder News Service, June 20, 2003.
15. *El Diario-La Prensa*, October 6, 2001. See also *Islamic Horizons* (July–August 2002).
16. Interview with Rahim Ocasio, April 16, 1999.
17. Rahim Ocasio, "Latinos, The Invisible: Islam's Forgotten Multitude," *The Message*, August 1997.
18. Kimi Eisele, "The Multicultural Power of Soap Operas," *Pacific News Service*, November 25, 2002.
19. Interview with Rosa Margarita of *El Diario-La Prensa*, August 8, 2003. El Clon—inspired fashion can be viewed online at <http://www.laoriginal.com/especiales.htm>.
20. *Independent*, July 19, 2002.
21. Agence France-Presse, May 28, 2003.
22. Eisele.
23. Interview with Fernando Casado Caneque, September 8, 2003. Casado was referring to the conservative Aznar's effort to insert a reference to Europe's Christian roots in the E.U.'s constitution, a measure that has provoked the Spanish left and the regions of Andalusia and Catalonia who resent how the Aznar government has made Catholicism so central to the state's identity. See *El Pais*, July 28, 2003.
24. James Baldwin, *No Name in the Street* (New York: Dial Press, 1972), p. 41.
25. See, for instance, the interview with Ferida Belghoul in Alec Hargreaves, *Voices from the North American Community in France: Immigration and Identity in Beur Fiction* (Providence, R.I.: Berg Publishers, 1991), p. 126.
26. *Le Monde*, February 12, 2003.
27. *Jerusalem Report*, May 6, 2002.
28. See Loic Wacquant, "Red Belt, Black Belt: Racial Division, Class Inequality and the State in the French Urban Periphery and the American Ghetto," in Enzo Mingione, ed., *Urban Poverty and the Underclass* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).
29. *New York Times*, October 16, 2001.
30. *Weekly Standard*, July 15, 2002.
31. *Times* (London), September 29, 2001.
32. Abd al-Samad Moussaoui, *Zacarias, My Brother: The Making of a Terrorist* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), p. 129.
33. *Independent*, April 3, 2003.
34. See Paul Silverstein, "Why Are We Waiting to Start the Fire? French Gangsta Rap and the Critique of State Capitalism," in Alain-Philippe Durand, ed., *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in the Francophone World* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2002).
35. *Le Figaro*, June 17, 2003; *Le Monde*, March 11, 2003.
36. *Le Monde*, September 27, 2001.
37. *L'Expansion*, June 11, 2003.
38. Independant Race and Refugee News Network, April 1, 2001.
39. The group's manifesto is online at http://infosuds.free.fr/082001/enquete_bc.htm. I am grateful to Paul Silverstein for this point.
40. Interview with 3eme Oeil and DJ Rebel, Bronx, New York, July 24, 2003.
41. *Jerusalem Report*, May 6, 2002.
42. *L'Express*, March 27, 2003.
43. David Lepoutre, *Coeur de banlieue: Codes, rites et languages* (Paris: O. Jacob, 1997).
44. *Le Figaro*, June 3, 2000.
45. The Spanish slur Moro has long been a term of endearment in Morocco and in the Moroccan diaspora—the Arabic adaptation is *moro khal al-ras* (black-headed Moor).
46. I am grateful to Zaheer Ali for this point.

47. Interview with Napoleon, March 22, 2004, New York. Tupac Shakur's former companion Napoleon, a Muslim convert who will be releasing a CD titled "Have Mercy" featuring a collaboration with the Pakistani-American crew The Aman Brothers, speaks about this allegation in an interview with the Tupac fan site HitEmUp.com, published on April 16, 2003. Accessible online at <http://www.hitemup.com/interviews/napoleon-part1.html#Bush>.
48. "Islamic rappers' message of terror" *The Observer*, February 8, 2004.
49. *Washington Times*, November 13, 2002.
50. When told that polygamy is illegal in the U.S., Allahz Sword responded, "A lot of rappers out there talk about pimpin'—is that good? . . . I'm just talking about part of my religion." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, February 17, 2003.
51. Hisham Aidi, "'Building A New America': A Conversation with Russell Simmons," *Africana.com*, February 5, 2002.
52. Personal communication with author, August 4, 2003.
53. Quoted in John McWhorter, "How Hip-Hop Holds Blacks Back," *City Journal*, Summer 2003.
54. Interview with Adisa Banjoko, "Everlast: Taking Islam One Day at a Time," July 12, 1999. The interview is accessible online at <http://thetrue religion.org/everlast.htm>.
56. Interview with Columbia's Muslim Communities of New York Project, June 16, 2003 (Converts Focus Group).
57. Sister Kalima A-Quddus, "Verily This Is a Single Ummah," *MuslimsInHipHop Newsletter*, August 7, 2003.
58. Quoted in Robin Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), p. 60.
59. *Village Voice*, December 24, 2002.
60. *Financial Times*, July 21, 2003.
61. See Martin Arostegui, "From Venezuela, a Counterplot," *Insight on the News*, March 4, 2003 and "Terror Close to Home," *US News and World Report*, October 6, 2003.
62. Agence France-Presse, October 2, 2003.
63. Interview with Columbia's Muslim Communities of New York Project, July 21, 2003 (Focus group for Muslims in NYPD and Fire Department).
64. Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p. 2.