



The Aftermath of 9/11: The Struggles of Arab-American Muslims in Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*

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Abstract

This research discusses the impact of the 9/11 tragedy on Muslims in America, especially Arab-American Muslims. The two major characters as an Arab-American Muslim get bad behavior from the surrounding community who have already given bad prejudice against them. This is clear because the perpetrators of the 9/11 tragedy were Arab terrorists who acted in the name of Islam for their actions. This qualitative study uses it as a methodological framework to explore whether there is resistance from Muslims who receive bad treatment from society. The data and evidence that has been collected comes from the novel *Once in a Promised Land*, as well as from studies that intersect with the topic of this research. Edward Said's Orientalism Theory is used to reveal orientalist prejudice against Arab-Americans by engaging with Postcolonial Studies. The novel challenges orientalist prejudice by showing Islamic values through its major character. This resulted in findings which revealed that the bad prejudice about Islam caused by the 9/11 tragedy was countered by good character traits. Hence, the findings show that although the two major characters get a lot of prejudice and bad behavior from the surrounding community, this novel depicts them as opponents of oriental prejudice by showing the nature of Muslims which reflects the Islamic Values.

Kata kunci:
9/11,
Arab-Amerika,
Muslim,
Orientalisme,
Prasangka.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas tentang dampak dari tragedi 9/11 terhadap Muslim di Amerika, khususnya Muslim Arab-Amerika. Kedua tokoh utama sebagai seorang Muslim Arab-Amerika mendapatkan perilaku buruk dari masyarakat sekitar yang sudah terlanjur memberikan prasangka buruk terhadap mereka. Hal ini jelas karena pelaku tragedi 9/11 merupakan teroris Arab yang mengatasnamakan Islam untuk melakukan aksinya. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakannya sebagai kerangka metodologis untuk mengeksplorasi apakah ada perlawanan dari umat Islam yang menerima perlakuan buruk dari masyarakat. Data dan bukti yang telah dikumpulkan berasal dari novel *Once in a Promised Land*, serta penelitian-penelitian yang bersinggungan dengan topik penelitian ini. Teori Orientalisme Edward Said digunakan untuk mengungkap prasangka orientalis terhadap orang Arab-Amerika dengan menggunakan Studi Poskolonial. Novel ini menantang prasangka orientalis dengan menunjukkan nilai-nilai Islam melalui karakter utamanya. Hal ini menghasilkan temuan yang mengungkapkan bahwa prasangka buruk tentang Islam yang disebabkan oleh tragedi 9/11 dilawan dengan karakter yang baik. Oleh karena itu, temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun kedua karakter utama mendapatkan banyak prasangka dan perilaku buruk dari masyarakat sekitar, novel ini menggambarkan mereka sebagai penentang prasangka orientalis dengan menunjukkan sifat-sifat Muslim yang mencerminkan nilai-nilai Islam.

ملخص

يناقش هذا البحث تأثير مأساة الحادي عشر من سبتمبر على المسلمين في أمريكا، وخاصة المسلمين العرب الأمريكيين. حيث أن الشخصيتين الرئيسيتين في هذا البحث هما الشخصية العربية الأمريكية المسلمة التي تتعرض لسلوك سيء من المجتمع المحيط بها الذي سبق أن أصدر أحكاماً مسبقة سيئة ضدها. وهذا واضح لأن مرتكبي مأساة الحادي عشر من سبتمبر كانوا إرهابيين عرباً تصرفوا باسم الإسلام في أفعالهم. وتستخدم هذه الدراسة النوعية كإطار منهجي لاستكشاف ما إذا كانت هناك مقاومة من المسلمين الذين يتلقون معاملة سيئة من المجتمع. وتأتي البيانات والأدلة التي تم جمعها من رواية "مرة واحدة في أرض الميعاد"، وكذلك من الدراسات التي تتقاطع مع موضوع هذا البحث. وتستخدم نظرية الاستشراق لإدوارد سعيد للكشف عن تحامل المستشرقين على العرب الأمريكيين من خلال التفاعل مع دراسات ما بعد الاستعمار. تتحدى الرواية التحيز الاستشراقي من خلال إظهار القيم الإسلامية من خلال شخصيتها الرئيسية. وقد نتج عن ذلك نتائج كشفت أن التحيز السيئ عن الإسلام الناجم عن مأساة الحادي عشر من سبتمبر يقابله سمات الشخصية الجيدة. ومن ثم، أظهرت النتائج أنه على الرغم من أن الشخصيتين الرئيسيتين تتعرضان للكثير من التحيز والسلوك السيئ من المجتمع المحيط بهما، إلا أن الرواية تصورهما كمناهضين للتحيز الاستشراقي من خلال إظهار طبيعة المسلمين التي تعكس القيم الإسلامية.

الكلمات الرئيسية:
١١/٩،
العربية-الأمريكية،
مسلم،
استشراق،
براسانجكا

INTRODUCTION

Since a long time ago, Muslims in America, especially Arab-American Muslims, have often received a bad view from American society. This bad perception was further exacerbated by the 9/11 tragedy which involved Arabs as the perpetrators of the incident. Following the 9/11 event, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported a 1,700 percent increase of hate crimes against Muslim Americans between 2000 to 2001 s. The American society is increasingly giving a gap with Arab-American Muslims. They have a fear of interacting with Arab-American Muslims and have great suspicion of them being part of terrorists. This makes Arab-Americans increasingly cornered in social life and makes them isolated from everyday life as an American resident.

The traumatic feeling from 9/11 had a strong impact on American society's perception towards Islam and Muslims. (Abdullah, n.d.) Indeed, the power of media to American society has also contributed because they were responsible for shaping the aggressive attitude of the westerners towards Muslims (ل-ل-اميةة ادلاية, n.d.). Arab-American Muslim descent has been depicted in stereotypical and vilifying manners. American society views Muslims as extreme, evil and inferior. Moreover, Arab-American Muslims are often considered as anti-democratic, irrational, hot-tempered, barbaric, lustful, and so on (Abdullah, n.d.). Especially after the 9/11 tragedy, they are often generalized as part of the Arab terrorists. Indeed, this kind of prejudice is part of orientalist prejudice of Muslims which Edward Said stated that it portrays the West as rational, developed, humane, and superior to the East, which they perceive as undeveloped and devalued (Febrina, n.d.).

As a result of the distorted prejudice against Arab-American Muslims in American society, many Arab-American experience struggles in living their lives. Various forms of struggle ranging from grief to discrimination are felt by them. Indeed, after the 9/11 tragedy, Muslims as a minority in America received discriminatory treatment (Yusanto & Gunawan, 2018). They are cornered from American society, which makes them experiencing difficulties in social life. They must restrain themselves and cannot freely use their identity as Arab-American Muslims because it will have an impact on suspicion and hatred.

Since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, there are an enormous number of literary texts dealing with the attacks and their aftermath (H. Djohar, 2021) one of which is *Once in a Promised Land* written by a Jordanian-Palestinian-American woman writer, Laila Halaby. It is the story of an Arab couple, Jassim and Salwa, who left the deserts of their native Jordan and flew to Arizona in the turbulent days following 9/11 to achieve their dreams, the ideal life (Altwaiji, 2016). This novel is set after 9/11 and shows how Jassim and Salwa as Arab-American Muslims face the struggle over orientalism prejudice towards Arab-American Muslims as part of terrorists and various forms of discrimination.

Once in a Promised Land is a fairly well-known novel, so there have been many studies discuss this novel with various topics. (Qaoud & Abu Amrieh, 2022) examine this novel by discussing the car as a representation of social views. They use literary chronotope, counter discourse, and identity formation to connect the novel with the issues discussed. (Arami, n.d.) also studied this novel by discussing identity of the characters in the novel. She focuses on how Halaby as a writer takes issue with gender and nationality stereotypes, and makes it a challenge to women's bodies which are gendered and racist. In addition, (Hilal, 2020) examines mirroring hybridity in this novel. He uses the traditions of the Arab people as a significant mode for Arab, Muslim American, and American culture. The tradition is also used to change the position of the community by marking various cultural markers.

Even though there has been a lot of research on the novel *Once in a Promised Land*, this research is different from the previous research mentioned above. The researchers focused on the impact of the 9/11 tragedy on Arab-American Muslims. This research explores the two main impacts of the 9/11 tragedy on Arab-American Muslims, the distorted prejudice towards Arab-American Muslims by American society and the struggles they face as the impact of that prejudice and discrimination. Indeed, this study aims to investigate Arab-American Muslim character responses and attitudes which reflect Islamic values in order to challenge Orientalist prejudice towards Muslims and challenge American society.

THEORY AND METHOD

This research focuses on investigating Arab-American Muslims characters' responses to their struggles and distorted prejudice by American society in order to challenge orientalist perspective toward Islam and Muslims in *Once in a Promise Land*. This study applied qualitative research as the type of research which aims to answer questions related to understanding the meaning and experience of the dimensions of human life and the social world (Fossey et al., n.d.). This research employs Close Textual Analysis (CTA) by examining the novel to determine what techniques the author uses to investigate Arab-American Muslim characters' responses; by evaluating the writings of other scholars to participate in debates about the novel and its themes; by responding to postcolonial studies, which seek to give more voice to marginalized groups, in this case Arab-American Muslims; and with reference to the Arab/Muslim culture. (H. I. Djohar, 2019) along with the Close Textual Analysis method, this research will intersect with postcolonial studies, especially the theory of Orientalism by Edward Said.

This study explores the impact of the 9/11 incident on Arab-American Muslims in American society in order to challenges the prevalent pattern of distortion of non-Western cultures. Additionally, Edward Said's as the core of theory also defines orientalism as a members of a minority group that are linked with undesirable attributes that represent the opposite of the ideal public perception held by the majority. By adopting Said's Orientalism, this novel's not only relates to stereotypical and discriminatory actions, but also to practices that isolate specific groups or individuals from mainstream norms. In this setting, Arab-American Muslims were the minority group that was subjected to distorted prejudice and discrimination by American.

Said Orientalism allows individuals to understand the misrepresentation of culture where the west has built a stereotypical portrayal of the east as a subject through inferior and bad representations. The west has also created a wrong definition of Islamic culture, as well as the negative perceptions that surround it. This analysis uses quotations from the novel as primary data analysis to reveal the Islamic principles applied to the Muslim characters in the novel. It is also supported by secondary sources, such as scientific publications and scholarly debates regarding the central concept of analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

In this discussion, the topic will be elaborated and divided into three subtopics. In the first sub-topic, the discussion focuses on how the text depicted distorted prejudice toward Arab-American Muslims by referring to the event that occurred in the novel. Moreover, in the second sub-topic, the discussion focuses on Arab-American Muslims struggles as the impact

of the 9/11 tragedy and Distorted Prejudice, which reveals that Arab-American Muslims feel sadness and fear in their lives that result in homesickness, limitations in showing their identity as Arab-American Muslims, to their alienation from the society. Finally, in the third sub-topic, the discussion will focus on how the orientalist perspective and distorted prejudice towards Muslims by American society is challenged through the characters' responses and attitudes that demonstrate the Islamic values such as patience (Sabr), courtesy (Ihsan), responsibility, and bravery (Syaja'ah).

Distorted Prejudice Towards Arab-American Muslims

Islam has been a part of the United States' history for a very long time and has been a part of the state's foundation (Patel, n.d.). Patel sheds light on numerous political agendas that shaped perceptions of Islam prior to 9/11, including "the development of Islamic-based civil rights parties in the United States, the establishment and role of Israel, the 1973 oil embargo, and the Iran hostage crisis" Each agenda transmits a series of messages that provide the basis for negative generalizations about Islam and its adherents. This prejudice undermines the morale of the Muslim minority and exemplifies the hazardous image of Muslims held by the majority of US citizens. This is evident in the novel's depiction of prejudices against contemporary Arab-Americans. One instance of bigotry and discrimination towards Arab-American Muslims occurs when this story demonstrates that US society has excessive skepticism in the process of socializing, as evidenced on page 30:

"He just scared me." Salwa saw that her eyes were enormous. "He just stood there and stared for a really long time, like he was high or something. And then I remembered all the stuff that's been going on." (p.30)

Arab-Americans feel uneasy and socially secure in this situation. Arab-Americans as a minority group in the United States are incorrectly categorized as a result of irrational sentimental conduct. However, Once in a Promised Land demonstrates that societal prejudice is also directed at Muslims, particularly following the events of September 11, 2001. Following the 9/11 attacks, Salwa's viewpoint of America shifted. Salwa and Jassim's lives are wrecked and disorderly. They both begin to experience persecution and hatred from Americans due to their Muslim identity (AL-Ibia, 2015)

America is known across the world as the home of dreams, humanity, and equality. These individuals include Salwa and Jassim. On the other hand, there are those who see things differently, such as Salwa's parents. They say that it is a land in which it is tough to be oneself. After September 11th, America was no longer the land of equality and humanity, as Muslims were subjected to extreme discrimination. As a result of the attacks, Americans thought that their prejudice against Muslims was justifiable, hence there was no need for equality because everyone should be treated based on their faith. When Salwa and Jassim were walking through the mall, security followed them at the request of Amber, an employee of one of the stores who suspected their innocence. Even the store's manager informed Salwa that snipers were stationed on the roof in the event of an emergency. Salwa and Jassim feel that their daily existence has altered, and that becoming an Arab in America has become an exhausting challenge.

"I think people are a little freaked out by the idea that someone might try to blow up a mall here in Tucson. We actually have snipers on the roof today, if you can believe that. We were warned today to be on the alert for any odd activity. I guess odd activity is subjective. I'm really sorry." (p.31)

The excerpt shows how the prejudice toward Arab-American Muslims works. Although it seems that "someone" is not specific to one person, it is clear that the "someone" in question is an Arab. Jassim, as an ordinary Arab-American Muslim, is also suspected by people (Americans) of being part of the Arab terrorists who might do the same thing that happened to the WTC building.

Apart from direct action, negative prejudice about Arab-Americans has also been voiced through the mass media, one of which is through the radio. While on the way home, Salwa heard on American radio calling for hatred against Arabs and intensifying the spread of this perspective to the majority of American society. The radio announcer loudly discriminates against Arabs as "terrorists", calling out hateful condemnation of the listening Arab public.

A man's voice blared out: "Is anyone fed up yet? Is anyone sick of nothing being done about all those Arab terrorists? In the name of Jesus Christ! They live with us. Among us! Mahzlims who are just waiting to attack us. They just want..." (p.56)

Concerning this Islamophobic action, the novel depicts that hate-motivated violence rooted in prejudice against Muslims reflects the misrepresentation of Muslims, especially after the 9/11 tragedy, Muslims are generalized as part of terrorists and become a threat to society. Indeed, in the context of the narrative above, one of the triggers for the spread of hatred towards Muslims is the media. Perspectives in seeing the role of the media according to (McQuail, 2000), they basically wants to show that the role of media in social life is not only a means of entertainment or tension release, but the content and information presented has a significant role in social processes. This significant role, like that of radio broadcasters, can influence society through several contents, one of which is propaganda. The content of mass media broadcasts is brain consumption for the community, so what is in the mass media will affect the subjective reality of social interaction actors, because the media is the human eye to see the world. In the novel, the radio broadcast about hatred and distorted prejudice towards Muslims becomes propaganda in marginalizing Arab-American Muslims.

The unpleasant incident returned and kept repeating itself, when Salwa was handling her customer at work, she was asked about her identity because she had an Arab face. His illusions about a beautiful and calm America are slowly fading, strange stares and all kinds of innocent prejudice he gets after the event of 9/11. "What do you mean that you are Palestinian from Jordan?" Does it mean you will steal my money and blow up my world?" (p. 113). Another related prejudice and hatred towards Arab-American Muslims character, When Jassim visits Evan's mother, Mary, the way he speaks reflects his considerable silent fear and hatred of Arabs. He claimed, "We were all scared those people were going to blow us all up." (p. 201). Arguably, the word "blow" in the quote above is part of figurative language which is a metaphor that means bombing. The "blow" here also represents the act of the terrorist and both the citations above refer to Arab-American Muslims. The first citation investigates how Salwa's bank customers suspect Salwa just because she is an Arab-American Muslim. Indeed, the customers of Salwa's bank, as the representation of Americans, generalized all Arabs and Muslims as terrorists and criminals. The second citation also shows the same thing, where they have fear and make Arab-American Muslims a threat to them.

Evan's mother, Marry, continued that her son had been instilled with Islamophobic thoughts since childhood by his father, who is a right-winger. "But he (Evan) did then, ranted and raved about how Arabic people should all be kicked out of this country, rounded up, herded up, and thrown out." (p. 200). Furthermore, a poll conducted by the Arab American

Institute in 2002 found more than two-thirds of Arab-Americans believed they had been profiled since 9/11 and one-fifth experienced discrimination and prejudice.

Furthermore, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) report shows that there has been an increase in reports of discrimination against Muslims in the United States (US) by nine percent after the events of 9/11. Arab sentiment that has been rooted in for a long time is like a boomerang that is continuously bestowed upon Arab-America. Society continues to judge Arabs as a terrible people.

“Bella called the FBI on you a couple of days after it happened, told them you were a rich Arab with access to the city’s water supply and you didn’t seem very upset by what had happened... She was going to call the FBI on you again. Report you.” (p. 271)

“We are investigating all aspects of this case. We believe the man who works for you could be a threat.” (p. 290)

The excerpts above show Jassim suspected as part of Arabs who spread threats. Jassim could not believe that such a situation would happen to him. In all investigations, Jassim has done his best to be honest and comply with applicable laws, but he continues to be remotely monitored by the FBI regarding his problem with bumping into Evan. This clearly demonstrates how America feared every Arab. The 9/11 incident changed the view of many Americans towards Islam. According to a Pew Research Center poll, the majority of Americans believe that Islam is more likely to encourage violence than other religions. In the three examples above, the innocent prejudice against Islam was not only widespread, but spread to Jassim's relatives and close friends. Regardless of Jassim's good background, they, as Native Americans, are also wary and see Jassim as an Arab who needs to be watched out for.

Arab-American Muslim Struggles: Impact of 9/11 tragedy and Distorted Prejudice

9/11 is a tragedy that attacked America, and has been classified as the greatest violent attack in the history of the United States (Mussafi, 2019). This tragedy, of course, caused various kinds of chaos in America, starting from the collapse of the two towers that were attacked, to causing many lives to be lost due to the incident. Even the third plane has been directed to destroy the US Ministry of Defense. The attack was carried out by Al-Qaeda, this is because America and Al-Qaeda are engaged in a fight that doesn't seem to have any chance of being resolved anytime soon (Bergen, 2011). Tragedy itself must have an impact, whether it's good or bad. The case contained in the novel *Once in a Promised Land* is a bad impact for the American people themselves, especially Arab-American Muslims who live in America. Arab-American Muslims not only get physical and material impacts, but also impacts on their identity as Arab-American Muslims. There is a case in this novel that alludes to the impact of the 9/11 tragedy on the identity of the main character.

“Honey, I wanted to give you these.” She held out her hands; each contained an American flag decal. “You should put one on your car, on the back window. You never know what people are thinking, and having this will let them know where you stand.” (p. 55)

The snippet of the conversation above shows that Joan, who is a friend of Salwa, gave Salwa an American flag decal because she was worried. In this case, Joan stated that Salwa had to

put the American flag decal on her car, Salwa basically had no problem with that. Salwa is an Arab-American and she is an American Citizen, however, it cannot be denied that Salwa still has Arab blood passed down by her father and family, and this identity needs to be recognized as they admit that they are Americans. By putting an American flag decal on his car, he can show the public that he is an American and stands for America. Of course this disturbed Salwa's identity, that she could not live freely by showing her identity as an Arab-American and had to hide her identity as an Arab. It is supported by (Kulwicki, n.d.) which states that many Arabs hide their identities in order to fit into American society.

There are other impacts that occur to the two major characters. Due to immigration from Jordan to America, and living separately from their families, of course Jassim and Salwa feel a very deep longing for home. Home here is a metaphor for the warmth of the family that Jassim and Salwa miss, this deep longing is due to the difficulty for them to go abroad and visit their families.

"Each day that Jassim had gone swimming since that fateful Tuesday when the planes hit, his mind had not cleared on entering the water but rather captured memories, mostly of home, and rolled them around for the duration of his swim."
(p. 62)

"After the accident, his diorama was sufficiently shaken, he began to see, slowed down, and looked at those looking back. And for the first time he felt unsettled in his beloved America, vaguely longed for home, where he could nestle in the safe, predictable bosom of other Arabs." (p. 165)

From the snippet of the first conversation above, it shows that after the 9/11 tragedy, Jassim felt something different about him. Especially the blankness of his mind when he was about to carry out his swimming activities. Unclear thoughts about what, instantaneous memories of home and family. This does not only happen once in this novel, seen in the second evidence above, where since the 9/11 tragedy Jassim no longer feels calm in America. Jassim wants to go home to meet and live with his family. He felt that it would be more comfortable and safe if he could hang out with other Arabs. This is homesickness, the impact of Jassim's struggles, who have not returned to Jordan for a long time. Homesickness is a distress or feeling of discomfort that can occur because individuals are separated from their living environment and are characterized by negative emotions, experiencing strong thoughts about home (Istanto & Engry, 2019). Homesickness is not only experienced by Jassim, but also by his wife, Salwa. Salwa himself clearly stated that he was homesick, especially during Ramadan and Eid. "I always feel a bit homesick during Ramadan and Eid. Especially this year, with everything that's going on." (p. 148). The fragment of the conversation indicates that the two main characters in the *Once in a Promised Land* novel share the same feelings. The struggle between the two is equal, namely missing their respective homes and families, especially after the 9/11 incident which made it even more difficult for them to travel abroad. Arguably, sadness became the symbol to represent Arab-American Muslim's life, especially after 9/11. Of course, homesickness is one of the reasons for sadness, but there are other reasons in this novel that cause sadness to become a symbol that represents Arab-American life.

"How did your Eid celebration go?"

"It was nice, thanks." Tidy answer to cover up the sadness and tears after she had

talked with her family, when they had spent the evening with Bassam.” (p. 161)

“What was your reaction to the events of September 11?”

“I was shocked, saddened, and unsettled. Probably much the same as most people in this country. It was so unexpected.” (p. 230)

“What was your wife’s reaction to September 11?”

“She was sad and outraged by it.” (p. 233)

The three fragments of the conversation above show that there is sadness in this novel. After 9/11, grief certainly became widespread throughout America, including Jassim and Salwa who live in the country. In the first evidence above, Salwa is still struggling with sadness caused by a feeling of longing for home when the holidays arrive. This sadness continues in the evidence of the second and third conversations above, where Jassim and Salwa feel sad over the occurrence of 9/11. Sadness in this case becomes a symbol of the representation of Arab-American life which is filled with distress after the 9/11 incident that befell America. This is supported by (Marmolejo-Ramos et al., n.d.) which states that researchers designed tasks for emotional alignment, using sentences that create context to represent emotions such as joy and sadness. In addition, this can be included in irony, because America has long been an interesting thing in Salwa's eyes since he was young, "America pulled and yanked on her from a very young age, forever trying to reel her in." However it is now the opposite of what he imagined before. Where Salwa should have lived in pleasure but irony befell him and now he has to feel sad in a country he used to even think of as the promised land.

After 9/11, as Arab-American Muslims living in America, Jassim and Salwa faced a struggle where they could not freely show that they were Arab-Americans. This is because there is a distorted prejudice against Arab-American Muslims. In the novel, Salwa says, "Joan gave us both American flag decals for our cars, so that we can announce to every stranger we drive by that we do not intend to blow anything up." (p. 57). Blow, which is a metaphor for the bombing, is used by Salwa in his speech. Salwa was affected by the 9/11 tragedy where the perpetrators were Arabs who acted in the name of Islam, Salwa received a distorted prejudice for his presence as an Arab-American Muslim. Hence, Salwa followed Joan's suggestion to put an American flag decal on his car to avoid this distorted prejudice. In addition, the 9/11 tragedy also caused the lives of Muslim Arab-Americans to be filled with fear and worry.

“Salwa had talked to her friend Randa several times as well, babbling about how horrible it was and how she feared for the repercussions toward Arabs in this country.

“Randa is worried about her kids, and thinks someone might try to hurt them.” she told him later.” (p.21)

“Being hated outwardly would have been so much easier than this dancing around people’s words and complaints and trying to figure out what they really meant.” (p. 234)

The two evidences of the conversation above show the struggle from the existence of fear and worry that surrounds Arab-Americans in America. In the first evidence above, the fear and worry of a mother who is an Arab-American Muslim for her children. This novel clearly states that they received a bad impact from the incident, especially to their image identity which was damaged by the terrorists who were Arabs. This causes Randa's character to feel afraid and worried about her child. Apart from that, Jassim also feels the same way, as an Arab living in America, he gets distorted prejudice from the surrounding community. Jassim even thought it would be better if he was just hated from the start rather than having to live in worry surrounded by bad words and other people's complaints against him for behavior he never did. The last struggle that will be discussed in this subtitle is about the life of Arabs and Pakistanis, and other Muslims who are not recognized and respected in America.

"She has a radio program. She talks about what is really happening in this country, about the scores of Arabs and Pakistanis and other Muslims who have been arrested on baseless allegations, who are being held who knows where and are not allowed contact with their families, and how they may be deported because of visa violations." (p. 226)

Evidence of the conversation above is a statement issued by Marcus, who is a colleague and also a friend of Jassim. He said that many Arabs and Pakistanis, especially Muslims, were arrested without any clear charge. This is certainly not easy for them to live, there is no peace in their lives, filled with fear and worry. They were even prevented from contacting their families, and had to be deported for violating visas. This struggle shows the lack of comfort and security for Muslims in America, especially after the 9/11 tragedy.

Another struggle that Arab-American Muslims face is that they are sidelined and alienated from society. It shows through the narration below,

"Jassim had done nothing wrong and this was America and there should have to be proof of negligence on his part for his job to be affected. People, companies, the city, shouldn't be able to pull accounts on the basis of his being an Arab. Yes, finally he saw what had been sitting at the back of his consciousness for some time in a not-so-whispered voice: with or against. But was he not with? I understand American society, he wanted to scream. I speak your language. I pay taxes to your government. I play your game. I have a right to be here. How could this be happening?" (p.234)

The narration shows Jassim's confession about what he feels. Although an Arab and a Muslim, he is also an American. He pays taxes obediently, he speaks the same language as everyone else, and he has been well behaved. However, he experienced discrimination, namely being ostracized by society just because he was Arab. It deploys the effect of the 9/11 tragedy and the American society prejudice towards Muslims. The alienation of Muslims in society is an implication of "Otherness" in Edward Said's Orientalism. The spread of Islam as a "Violent ideology" has formed a limited perception of the American society who views the Muslim community as the Other (Febrina, n.d.).

Challenging the Distorted Prejudice: Implementing Islamic Values

Since then, Arabs and Muslims in America have received a lot of bad stereotypes, mainly because of the orientalist perception between West and East and also towards Muslims and

Arabs. They are often considered as anti-democratic, irrational, hot-tempered, barbaric, lustful, and so on. Worse, the 9/11 tragedy that occurred in America added to the distorted prejudice towards Muslims in general and especially Arab-American Muslims. American society generalized Arab-American Muslims as part of the terrorists and felt that they were a threat. However, this is a bad perception and contrary to the true teachings of Islam. Literally, Islam means peace or safety. As a religion and a way of life, Islam offers peace and safety for all people in this world (Yati, 2018). Islam as "Rahmatan Lil' Alamin", means that Islam teaches its adherents to live in love with one another, uphold peace and mutual tolerance among human beings (Hidayat, 2017).

The novel challenges distorted prejudice towards Muslims by depicting Arab-American Muslim characters' responses that reflect Islamic values. Jassim and Salwa faced many struggles in their lives after the 9/11 tragedy happened. One moment when Salwa told about her bad day where she heard a hatred speech against Muslims from the radio, Salwa felt scared and felt angry. But Jassim said so,

"This is new for Americans. They don't know what to do, and they are unexposed to the rest of the world. The real world, as you would say. Just be patient, *habibti*. This will pass." (p.58)

The excerpt deploys how Jassim responds to the hatred given by American society to them as Arab-American Muslims. Jassim's response represents how a good Muslim should be in reacting to a hatred-speech, which is with patience (*Sabr*). When facing tests or trials in life, a good Muslim will implement the nature of patience (*Sabr*). As stated in the Qur'an (Muslim holy book), Surah Al-Baqarah verse 153, "O you who believe, make patience and prayer as your helpers. Verily Allah is with those who are patient" Patient illustrates the power of the soul culprit (controlling) the passion of lust, so that for every Muslim has the character of patient in any circumstances. Patient also has a close aspect with faith, piety, and good deeds (Salewe, 2018). By implementing Patience (*Sabr*), Jassim's response was able to challenge the orientalist prejudice which is considered Muslim as hot-tempered.

Another response similar to Jassim was when Salwa was serving her bank customers. The bank's customers refused to be served by Salwa because she is an Arab-American Muslim. The narration states, "Salwa's heart thudded in anger, and she willed her blood to stay calm, to keep away from her face. Her perfect English puddled on the floor, her manners and kindness all scattered and soggy" (p. 114). The excerpt deploys how Salwa challenges the perception of Muslims as hot-tempered by showing her patience (*Sabr*). Moreover, Salwa also implements one of the Islamic values which is Courtesy (*Ihsan*). Islam is composed of measures of elegance, courtesy, cleanliness or good manners (Topbas, n.d.). Indeed, good Muslims are those who implement religious teachings including behavior. Even though Salwa is facing hatred from her bank customers, she remains patience (*Sabr*) and also implements the courtesy (*Ihsan*). Again, the Arab-American Muslim character in this novel challenges the orientalist perspective towards Muslims that views Muslims as barbaric.

Another Islamic value implemented by Jassim is responsibility. Indeed, Jassim faces a tragedy in that he accidentally knocks a boy to death. However, he does not run away from problems and tries to solve the problems he faces,

"I will turn this around, help the boy's family. I cannot undo what I have done, but I can offer to help with the damage." (p. 144)

"I will never forget that day, and again, I am so very sorry. Please know that. I also want to offer help, any help I can give you, financial or otherwise." (p. 200)

The excerpts depict how Jassim is responsible for what he does. Islam teaches its people to be responsible for what they do. By surrendering himself to the police; apologize to the victim's family, and trying to provide assistance, this form of responsibility shows that Jassim demonstrates what a Muslim should do when facing a problem. As Q.S. Al-Mudassir verse 38, "Everyone is responsible for what he has done." (Irawan, n.d.). Indeed, here Jassim challenges the orientalist perspective towards Muslims by demonstrating responsibility.

Another response of Jassim and Salwa in facing their struggles and facing the distorted prejudice toward them is by showing the courage to defend themselves. As Arab-American Muslims, they want to against the discrimination and suspicion of being part of terrorists or radicals. On page 28, Salwa and Jassim are shopping at a mall. Then at one point, there was a store employee (American) who was suspicious of Jassim and then reported it to security. However, Salwa shows her bravery to approach the employee who turns out to be Amber. Amber said, "And then I remembered all the stuff that's been going on." (p. 30). Salwa also defended himself with the core that not all Muslims are part of the terrorists and she (Amber) should not generalize bad perceptions of all Arab-American Muslims. Apart from that, Jassim also dared to speak up when he was being interrogated by an FBI agent,

"I am a scientist. I work to make water safe and available. I am a normal citizen who happens to be an Arab. Yes, I have access to the city's water supply, but I have no desire to abuse it. The mere fact that I am an Arab should not add suspicion to the matter." (p. 232)

"I have spent my entire life trying to find ways to make water safe and accessible for everyone. Just because I am an Arab, because I was raised a Muslim, you want to believe that I am capable of doing evil. It is sometimes best to look within before casting such a broad net." (p. 232)

The excerpts above show Jassim's braveness to speak the truth. He said that he had no desire to abuse the water's supply. He also dared to say that he should not be overly suspicious because he is an Arab. Indeed, Jassim directly criticized FBI agents for having a distorted prejudice towards Arab-American Muslims and always suspected them for anything. This bravery is also part of the Islamic values that must be implemented by a Muslim. Bravery (Syaja'ah) demanded by Islam is the courage to defend the truth. The courageous nature (Syaja'ah) encourages Muslims to remain true, wise, and able to control their emotions. Thus, Jassim and Salwa's again demonstrates good Muslims. Their implementation of bravery (Syaja'ah) challenges the orientalist perspective towards Muslims.

Since a long time ago, Islam and Muslims have been stereotyped in a negative direction by an orientalist perspective and American society. They have the misunderstanding of Islam which is perceived as the religion that promotes the use of violence to spread the faith (Yazdani, 2020). Especially after 9/11, that misunderstanding is spreading and making Muslims seen as bad and violent people. However, the discussion above challenges that kind of perception and misunderstanding. In facing the struggles as Arab-American Muslims who live in America caused by 9/11, Jassim and Salwa implement Islamic values and show the true color of Muslims and Islam.

CONCLUSION

Long ago, Muslims and Arabs faced numerous prejudices. It was growing worse when the 9/11 event occurred. The tragedy had major implications for Americans, particularly Arab-Americans who were indirectly implicated in it. This taints all Arab and Muslim Americans, resulting in misguided prejudice and even discrimination from the surrounding population. As a result, Arab-American Muslims no longer live a calm, safe, and tranquil life. They are also absorbed by feelings of grief, anxiety, and worry, giving rise to fights in order to endure the demotion carried out by the American people. However, Arab-Americans resist this orientalist prejudice by acting in accordance with Islamic teachings and principles such as patience (Sabr), courtesy (Ihsan), responsibility, and bravery (Syaja'ah). They also contend with the self-image of an Arab-American who is harmless.

This study demonstrates the problems faced by Muslims after the 9/11 attacks by referring to the main characters, Jassim and Salwa. Americans blame Arabs and Muslims for the inconveniences in the United States. The American system and practice views all Muslims as terrorists, dangerous and stupid. In this novel, Americans condemn Muslims and urge them to be true to themselves and stay away from social life. For Jassim and Salwa, America is a complete and beautiful ideal that they want to achieve, but it turns out to be a nightmare that he should never dream about. In this study, the researcher wants to show the call for justice, humanity, and acceptance of all people, regardless of religion or background. Aside from that, it is hoped that the other researchers would talk about how Muslims deal with the blasphemy directed against them.

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