

## Solidarity Syllabus – September 2018

### *17 Years Later*

This month, Deepa is in conversation with Aber Kawas and Arjun Singh Sethi about the legacy of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the domestic War on Terror. What has changed over the past 17 years? How does the current political climate affect Muslim, Arab, South Asian and Sikh (MASA) communities, and what can we learn from community building and solidarity over the past 17 years?

Arjun Singh Sethi is a community activist, civil rights lawyer, writer and law professor based in Washington, D.C. He works closely with MASA communities and advocates for racial justice, equity, and social change at both the local and the national levels. He teaches at [Georgetown University Law Center](#) and [Vanderbilt University Law School](#), and he is the editor of the critically-acclaimed book [American Hate: Survivors Speak Out](#) (The New Press).

Aber Kawas is graduated from the City College of New York's International Studies Program with a concentration in Latin American Studies. From Brooklyn, New York, Aber is of Palestinian descent and has been organizing in the Arab and Muslim community in New York since 2010. She has worked with the [CAIR-NY](#), the [Urban Justice Center](#) and the [Arab American Association of New York](#), and she currently serves as the New York City Advocacy Specialist with the Campaign to [Take on Hate](#), an effort of the [National Network of Arab American Communities](#).

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### Interpersonal Violence, Discrimination, and Bullying

Hate violence and discrimination against Muslim, Arab, South Asian and Sikh communities rose sharply after the 9/11 attacks. In the first week after the 9/11 attacks, [645 bias incidents](#) – from verbal threats to arson to fatal shootings – were reported in the media. [According to FBI statistics](#), hate crimes rose from 28 to 481 recorded incidents between 2000 and 2001.

After the start of the Trump electoral campaign, the total rate of anti-Muslim assaults jumped 67%, [surpassing post-9/11 levels](#). Overall, anti-Muslim hate crimes [rose 17% in 2016](#) and an additional 15% in 2017. According to the [Council of American-Islamic Relations](#) (CAIR), the rate of anti-Muslim bias incidents increased 91% in the first six months of 2017 following the election. Other MASA communities have also been targeted, often after being [mistaken as Muslim](#). According to a report from South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) entitled [Communities on Fire](#), “Anti-Arab hate crimes increased by 38%; anti-Sikh hate crimes increased by 17%; and anti-Hindu hate crimes increased by 100% in the last year,” and reporting rates remain low.

According to [The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding \(2018\)](#), 42% of Muslim parents with school-age children reported their children being bullied for their faith, and "teachers and school officials have participated in [one in four bullying incidents](#) involving Muslim students." According to CAIR reports and surveys over the last 6 years, Muslim students are [twice as likely to be bullied](#) than other students. [The Sikh Coalition](#) also reported that turbaned Sikh children experience bullying at more than double the national rate.

## State Violence and Racial Profiling

### NSEERS

In September 2001, the Department of Homeland Security launched the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS), which surveilled and restricted freedom of movement for [approximately 84,000](#) "non-immigrant men and boys from predominantly Arab and Muslim-majority countries." People targeted by NSEERS were obligated to report to an immigration office to be photographed, fingerprinted, and interviewed. Though none were ever convicted of terrorism-related crimes, thousands were arrested or deported from the United States for minor civil violations or failure to comply with NSEERS.

In 2011, DHS ceased NSEERS registrations. Five years later, [in December 2016](#), the Obama Administration rescinded the regulation that gave rise to NSEERS, dismantling the program and [blocking the Trump administration](#) "from using the NSEERS framework without publishing a new regulation."

### CVE

In 2014, the Obama administration established a set of programs under the name [Countering Violent Extremism](#) (CVE). Ostensibly dedicated to counterterrorism, these programs overwhelmingly target and monitor Muslims and minority communities. CVE also seeks to incentivize individuals to report on their own communities. Under the Trump administration, CVE funding has tripled and now more than 85% of CVE programs explicitly target minority groups. According to the [Brennan Center for Justice](#), "14 of the 26 programs funded by the Department of Homeland Security target schools and students, some as young as 5 years old."

In August 2018, the mayor of Los Angeles [turned down \\$425,000](#) of federal CVE funding after pressure from activist groups including [MPower Change](#), [CAIR-LA](#), and [Asian Americans Advancing Justice-LA](#).

## Airport Profiling

According to [a report from the ACLU](#), the TSA demonstrates [systemic racial and religious profiling](#) in airport security screenings. [The Intercept reported in 2014](#) that over 700,000 Americans have been placed on "the Terrorist Screening Database," a government watch list. While many on this list have no connection to terrorist groups, the TSA routinely stops people from this list for 'secondary' screenings and invasive searches.

27-year-old Zainab Merchant, a graduate student at Harvard University, has undergone degrading, excessive searches from the TSA [at least 10 times](#) since September 2016. Most recently, Merchant reported that TSA officers made her [show her menstrual pad](#) during a private screening while traveling from Boston to Washington, D.C.

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### More Resources

[We Too Sing America: South Asian, Arab, Muslim, and Sikh Immigrants Shape Our Multiracial Future](#) by Deepa Iyer (The New Press)

[American Hate: Survivors Speak Out](#) edited by Arjun Singh Sethi (The New Press)

[Aman Zones](#): A project from Take On Hate, promoting safe and inclusive spaces through community engagement

[Countering Violent Extremism \(CVE\): A Resource Page](#) — Brennan Center for Justice

["Column: Why educators still need to talk about 9/11 — and Islamophobia"](#) by Rusul Alruball – PBS, 2017

[American Backlash: Terrorists Bring War Home in More Ways than One](#) - a special report by South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), 2001

["Too Many Americans Think Patriotism Means Racism and Xenophobia"](#) by Suman Raghunathan — The Nation, 2017

[Sanctioned Bias: Racial Profiling Since 9/11](#) — ACLU, 2004

["Traveling While Muslim Complicates Air Travel"](#) by Michael T. Luongo — NYT, 2016

["Exclusive: TSA's Secret Behavior Checklist to Spot Terrorists"](#) by Jana Winter, Cora Currier – The Intercept, 2015