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The Black Queer Experience Within Abrahamic Religion

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses a sociological perspective to examine recent religious activism for reformist narratives about racism, sexism, dualism of gender, and prejudice against transgender in the United States as signs of identity politics. Analytically, it explores how identities like race, age, class, religion, gender, and sexuality work within religious discourses, specifically regarding racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny. This question leads to a consideration of America's Original Sin, which presents the interdependency of power structures and dominance with the suppression of vindictive minorities, especially the black queer. This work aims to explore various forms of oppression intertwined in religious structures so that this study will help expose the complexity of systemic prejudice and its effects on minority populations. They emphasize the need for more discussion and representation of these topics in religious spheres and activism, calling for their recognition, acceptance, and equity. In this regard, this study seeks the following objectives: The study aims to contribute to the thematic understanding of identity, power, and oppression within contemporary religious contexts in America.

INTRODUCTION

The monotheistic religions of the world, which include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all stem from the prophet Abraham and have fundamental theological concepts in common. The term Abrahamic religions is derived from the Quran, where the 'religion of Abraham' refers to the relation between these religions. Abraham is, therefore, considered the founder of the three major world religions whose genealogy is considered significant in both testaments. However, Black queer people remain in a very sensitive and postcolonial position in society where they face several discriminations based on color, orientation, and gender. Their history can often be erased or told from a skewed perspective, further underscoring the importance of allowing them to speak for themselves and be heard. Before the development of the Black queer movement, these people struggled for change in the African-American population and gay communities separately, and thus, the importance of their voices and their belonging to any of these groups, African-Americans or queers, in the social and cultural discourses (LGBTQ+, 2024; Study.com, 2024).

The study "Queering the Abrahamic Scriptures: "Queer Jews, Queer Muslims: Race, Religion, and Representation" exposed the diverse and nuanced identity of queer people in the Jewish and Muslim contexts. When considering the role of race, religion, and queerness together, the research finds that both queer Jews and queer Muslims use their respective scriptures in innovative ways to find acceptance, even if it means reinterpreting scriptures within their community. These people exist in a multifaceted world where they must balance two worlds and identities: their faith and their queerness. The work focuses on understanding and providing voice to marginalized members of faith communities and promoting the validity and inclusion of queer stories in the conversation about Abrahamic traditions(Shah, 2024).

Social Identities Divide and Demarcate Humanity

Black Queers are the most disrespected LGBTQIA+ people in America* (Baquet & Corbett, 2020; Neal, 2001; Waters, 2021).

Neither the complex oppression that LGBT people of color face, nor its effects are hypothetical or academic. There are very real substantial efforts must be made to challenge the [racial] oppression of LGBT people of color (Meide, 2001).

Discrete social identities such as religion, race, age, socioeconomic status (SES), gender expression, sexual orientation, etc., have been socio-historically employed to divide, demarcate and secernate ethnic communities within America and, regrettably, have also become politically volatile subject matters within the modern-day context because of its socio-cultural engagement with divisive culture war issues (e.g., sexual identity, gender affirmation, sexual orientation, gender fluidity, etc.); a present-day socio-political conflict that exposes the relations of power regnant within the United States(Balan, 2010; Hanson *et al.*, 2021; Huddy, 2015; Jardim, 2013; Mills, 2003; Shabani, 2014).

The post-racial rise of white nationalism, white Christian supremacy, etc. coupled with increasing bouts of ethnic violence directed towards Jews, Blacks, Asians, etc. now occurring within an America demonstrated by ample acts of homophobic, transphobic and racialized acts of violence and hatred within public, semi-public and private spaces (e.g., Charlottesville VA, Buffalo NY, Colorado Springs CO, New York NY, etc.)—is not coincidental but, rather, a stark religio-historical consequence of the many crisscrossing ways by which some Christian conservative

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pundits are deliberately promulgating whiteness as an American national religio-racial inheritance; a problematic Christian legacy by which to conserve a homogenous religio-racial national American identity, orthodox gender roles, Judeo-Christian moral norms and traditional binary notions concerning the "construction of American life and, ironically, its [associated] democratic institutions and value (Yacovone, 2022; Collins, 2020; Baragona, 2022; Maril, 2022; Durkin, 2022; Pederson, 20019; Cox, 2022; Burke, 2022; Arkin, 2020; Metz & Groves, 2022; NMAAHC, 2022).

Ironically, such Queer spaces have now become within the present-day environs a racialized higher educational communal space—an LGBTQIA+ enclosure where a majority of its membership are white and Christian—many of whom are curiously unable to recognize their own myopic and racist disposition towards their fellow Queer Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) university colleagues (BME, 2020; Jeffries, 2023; Institute, 2022; Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender, Consortium of Higher Education, 2022).

Discerning the imbricate societal carrefours that exist between racism, prejudice, heteronormativity, LGBTQIA+ membership, transphobia, oppression, homophobia, sexism, etc. in the present-day becomes especially portentous when one religio-historically examines in what furtive ways gender expression, race, age, SES, religious identity, sexual orientation, etc. as discrete social identities have now become politically weaponized by present-day American society; a civic knife to publicly cut, marginalize, humiliate and exclude members of the Queer community through legal efforts to legislate Judeo-Christian notions of morality (i.e., Common Good Constitutionalism) while concurrently promulgating gender binarism within the public sphere (Ward, 2022; Smith, 2022; Vermeule, 2020; Vermeula, 2022; OHCHR, 2022; OHCHR, 2023). Ironically, it can also be very difficult for quite a few white American members of the Queer community—oblivious to their white privilege—to envision the considerable ridicule, disparagement, and societal denigration associated with being a poverty-stricken young Queer Black Muslim female within the United States (Vaid, 2022).

The point is that [Queer and non-Queer] Black women can experience discrimination in any number of ways and that the contradiction arises from our assumptions that their claims of exclusion must be unidirectional. Consider an analogy to [automobile] traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. An accident in an intersection can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination [gender expression] or race discrimination. (Crenshaw, 1989).

This paper seeks to critically interrogate the abstruse nature and intersectionality of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, gender expression, SES, etc., as discrete social identities from a religious studies-oriented weltanschauung by cogently illuminating the rampant heteronormativity, cultural intolerance, virulent gendered animosity, omnipresent binarism, contentious identity politics, unrestrained sexual hostility and despicable racism directed towards all Queer forms of Blackness within Abrahamic religious traditions—Christianity, Judaism and especially, Islām (Mohamed, Cox, Diamant & Gecewicz, 2021; Weltanschauung, 2022; Abrams, 2014; Bernstein, 2005; Shapiro, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Black Queer Experience

Black as an antipode to Queer

What happens to the Black Queer experience when Black is increasingly used as an antipode to Queer when Black bodies are erased from Queer scholarly discourse, activism, and neighborhoods while [white] Queer bodies are welcomed as a sign of progress and safety? For whom does this whiteness signify safety? (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender, Consortium of Higher Education. 2022). Islām is currently the second most popular monotheistic religion of choice for over 660,000 African Americans located within the discrete geographical contours of the United States—Christianity is currently the predominant Abrahamic faith tradition for the African American community, and to a much lesser degree, so is Judaism—and, interestingly, collectively represents a vibrant and growing spiritual practice religio-historically associated with people of African (Black) descent/diaspora within America (Abulafia, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2018; WGCU, 2022). However, unbeknownst to quite a few non-Black Americans, the socio-historical survey of Islām within the United States illumines a startling modern-day race-relations-oriented reality and profound religio-historical truth: Islām, like Christianity, took root within the physical contours of our nation as a Black religion because of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (Diouf, 1998; Amon, 2019; Austin, 2012).

Ironically, Jewry within some African American families and communities also similarly "goes back to the days of slavery, when Black slaves sometimes adopted the religion of their white owners, a very small percentage of whom were Jewish" (Benor, 2016). Black Muslims within modern-day America currently comprise roughly half (51%) of all Muslim Americans whose families have been in the United States of America for at least three consecutive generations and, from a social science statistical perspective, also collectively represent the second largest religion—in terms of global faith community group size—upon this planet (Hackett *et al.*, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2018). Curiously, within the religio-historical context of present-day America, the three Abrahamic faith traditions—Christianity, Islām and Judaism— continue to routinely identify, castigate and portray the Black Queer community within their

respective congregational bodies as hu representatives emblematic of a gross religious perversion, debauchery and grave moral sin (Vidino *et al.*, 2022; Winer, 2019; Burke, 2022; Krogt, 2016).

I don't think I ever was really honest with myself about how painful it is to see someone who looks like me not be treated well. I believe that I really tried to separate myself as much as I could from the violence and the terror of being Black in America as a coping mechanism to protect myself. But when George Floyd was murdered, there was no opportunity for me not to see anymore. I had to open my eyes and see it all, and take it all in, and really grieve—not only for Black men but grieve for everybody. Today, I can finally embrace all the various parts of myself I contain: my Jewish identity, my gay identity, and my Black Identity Author emphasis. (Abay & Wilbekin, 2022).

The Discrimination of Black Queer People by Abrahamic Religions

Like Islām, within Christianity itself, "the Roman Catholic Church, as well as many Protestant churches [unequivocally] condemn homosexuality unambiguously" (Gross, 2008). Unsurprisingly, Orthodox Judaism also regards "sexual relations between men as forbidden by the Torah. (Lev. 18:22). Such acts are condemned in the strongest possible terms, as abhorrent [author emphasis]. The only other sexual sin that is described in such strong terms is the sin of remarrying a woman you had divorced after she had been married to another man (Deut. 24:4). The sin is punishable by death (Lev. 20:13), as are the sins of adultery and incest" (Rich, 2023). It is therefore noteworthy from an Abrahamic perspective that "as with Christianity and Judaism, Islam's sacred texts have been used to oppress LGBTQ people across the centuries" and, sadly, this dreadful persecution by Christian, Jewish and Muslim zealots continue unabated and unchecked throughout the modern-day world (Foundation, 2022; Younes *et al.*, 2022; Branson-Potts, 2022; Winer, 2019).

In February 2021, I was on my way home from work when five or six men in a huge, tinted Hummer stopped me next to a garbage dump. They kicked and punched and slapped me all over my head and body. They told me to get up and threw me in a garbage bin. I lay down on the garbage, and they pulled out a razor blade and a screwdriver and poked and cut me all over, especially my ass, crotch, and thighs. They sliced me up and poured around five liters of gasoline all over my body and face and set me alight neighbors rescued me." Khadīja, a Muslim transgender woman (Younes & Hasan, 2022).

The organic confluence of race, religion, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, SES, etc., as discrete social identity categories within contemporaneous society remarkably illuminate the asymmetrical power relations, hetero-normative notions of gender identity, binary gender expression, LGBTQIA+ marginalization and transphobic oppression expressed by the various Abrahamic religions towards the Queer Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities—a problematic "religio-cultural response" cruelly played out within the present-day masjid, synagogue and church throughout America and the rest of the world (Program, 2015; Faith, 2015).

Islām [Judaism and Christianity] generally considers same-gender sex a grave sin, and many Muslim majority countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, have implemented anti-LGBTQ laws with punishments such as prison or death … the official position of Islām is that they do not approve of homosexuality … the voices heard most predominantly in the Muslim community have been male and straight. (Yellin, 2022).

Intersectional Discrimination within Abrahamic Faiths

It is a rather bizarre modern-day intersectional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) social identity reality and existence where within some Abrahamic religious traditions, for example, Islām, three out of four masjids in the United States—safe spaces where people of the same faith tradition are supposed to worship together in peace, love, and harmony—are startlingly bifurcated alongside racial, gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation boundaries in a manner not unlike Christianity (Bagby *et al.*, 2001; Cotto, 2022; Lipka, 2014). The present-day religious milieu within the American masjid highlighted by this discomfiting Islāmic reality illumines the profound intersectional social identity contradictions that glaringly coexist alongside disingenuous religious piousness, hetero-normative familial values and a binary-oriented Abrahamic theo-cultural oriented disposition; it is a discordant identity-politics driven religio-cultural model resulting from the prejudicial convergence of race, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, SES, etc. within the modern-day United States Muslim community (Mohamed & Diamant, 2019; Program, 2015; Yellin, 2022). A discerning social justice-oriented interrogation concerning the inequities of power relations prevalent within all three Abrahamic religions induced by such social identity differences (e.g. race, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, SES, etc.) emphasizes how surreptitiously Foucauldian "relations of power influence the types of [social] identities constituted and these identities generally operate to maintain existing [lopsided] power relations" within Islām, Judaism and Christianity (Briscoe, 2005; Foucault, 1980; Foucault, 1980).

Human Oppression

"Oppression is the systematic devaluing, undermining, marginalizing, and disadvantaging of certain social identity groups in contrast to a privileged norm. Oppression exists when some people are denied something of value (such as access to resources, opportunities, and networks; legal protections and rights; inclusion and acceptance, etc.) based on their social [identity] group memberships. Key to an understanding of oppression is recognizing that it is based on membership in socially constructed subordinate [social] identity categories" (Ferber & Samuels, 2022).

A frank and objective religious studies-oriented discourse concerning the genesis, propagation, and consequences of the discursive ways social identities benefit and burden present-day sexual expression, religio-racial inequity, binarism, gender violence, sexual identity, human trafficking, gender oppression, etc., necessitates that scholarly attentiveness be focused upon the pernicious Foucauldian power relations that initially set the lop-sided religio-historical stage for racism and slavery to coexist within Abrahamic religions in the first place. For example, within Islam, it is a religious-historical fact that the slave trade of Africans endured for approximately 1,330 years. (AD 650-1980) versus the Christian slave trade of Africans which persisted for 374 years (AD 1501-1875)—"slavery in the Arab world antedated by more than a millennium the establishment of this appalling institution by Europeans in the New World"—however, there still exists within some quarters of the Academy an odd reticence to address the religio-racial nature of this social injustice (Gordon, 1989; Lovejoy, 2012; Willis, 1985; Segal, 2001; Crookston, 2017; Segal, 1998; Eltis & Tullos, 20013; Loiaconi, 2017).

"While the lecture was supposed to be about slavery in Islām, [Dr.] Brown spent the majority of the lecture talking about [racial] slavery in the United States, the United Kingdom, and China. When discussing slavery in these societies, Brown painted slavery as brutal and violent (which it certainly was). When the conversation would briefly flip to historic slavery in the Arab and Turkish World, slavery was described by [Dr.] Brown in glowing terms. Indeed, according to Brown, enslaved people in the Muslim World lived a pretty good life [Author emphasis]. According to the author, the Muslim community was done with this dishonest North Korean style of propaganda" (Crookston, 2017).

A plausible religio-cultural argument may be posited that the traditional Abrahamic religious precepts associated with Islāmic law and jurisprudence— colloquially known as sharī'a—are woefully inadequate to keep abreast of any number of a broad modern-day spectrum of non-normative racial, sexual and social identities, gender categories and gender expressions present within contemporaneous American culture; curiously, Muslim jurisprudence additionally reveals how iconic "Islāmic judicial texts, such as al-Muwatta' and ar-Risala, and the compilation of reports of the Prophet (kutub al-hadith), such as Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, have been legally employed to condone and normalize the practice of using [African] slaves" (Freamon, 1998; Schacht, 1982; Na'im, 2019; Hamel, 2012).

As astutely observed by Black legal scholar Bernard Freamon, the current-day Muslim human rights abuses, violations, and concerns regarding Islām are very real and, more importantly, illuminate a powerful socio-religious tautness existing between traditional binary and progressive notions of Muslim sexual identity, gender identity, and gender expression pushing itself up and against a wide-ranging rainbow of modern-day non-normative sexual and social identities, gender identities, gender/sexual expressions and politics (Freamon, 1998; Callimachi, 2015; Mohamed, 2021; Pettigrew, 2020; Joya, 2022; Lydon, 2005; Omaar *et al.*, 1990; Guardian, 2018).

Racialization of social identity

The social identity is the aspect of one's self that is classified according to their belonging to a particular group or category ("we"), which may be ascribed to an individual by their birth or by the culture in which they are embedded. Racialization or ethnicization then refers to the political act of collapsing racial or ethnic categorizations onto relations, practices, or groups that had not previously subscribed to their race or the injection of race into a society's framing of conduct(Contributors, 2024; Oswego, 2024).

No one was "white" before coming to America.

"No one was white before he/she came to America. It took [untold] generations and a vast amount of coercion before this became a white country". (Baldwin, 1998).

To be a Muslim in America has been over time reinterpreted, reimagined, and religio-historically recast—like Christianity—into a United States faith tradition perdurably entangled and inseparably associated with phenotypic (i.e., epidermal) appearance; American Muslims, like their Jewish and Christian American counterparts, have a modern-day race problem upon their hands (Khoshneviss, 2019; Khan, 2015; Livingston, 2021; Chehata, 2021; Batchelor-Hunt, 2021; Rosenbaum, 2023; Green, 2023).

"There is a long history of Black-Jewish partnership in the American Civil Rights Movement, and just as long a history of tension and misunderstandings" (Rosenbaum, 2023).

Dr. Khoshneviss and other sociologists exploring the role of race in America convincingly lay bare the disingenuous identity politics protestations about Islām in America being colorblind (Racism, 2021; Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Sewell, 2016). Khoshneviss persuasively argues how such artful objections concerning Islām in America being colorblind is a misleading attempt to obnubilate the Islāmic reality that many Muslims (e.g., Muslims of Middle-Eastern/Arabic descent) have intentionally embraced an inferior white (i.e., "white but not the right kind of white" and "honorary white") mentalité (Figure A) to mellifluently ingratiate themselves into a Christian society favoring white epidermal appearance (Khoshneviss, 2001).

"Drop the A-word. Abed. Abeed. The Arab [Muslim] community knows this [disparaging] word all too well; 'Abeed' is a derogatory Arabic slang term that is used to refer to Black people. This word is almost synonymous with the N-word. The main difference between these two racist terms is that the N-word is considered to be more pejorative than the word 'abed' because 'abed' literally translates to slave in proper Arabic" (Abdul-Samad, 2017).

Ironically, the colorblind ideology trope—ignoring racial and ethnic dissimilarities promotes racial amity—

adopted by many white Christians within America is a subtle form of racism that has clandestinely permeated contemporary Western society. Such illusory thoughts hetero-normatively impede, or in some cases, deny and invalidate Black Non-Christian Queer students lived cultural experiences, agency, and their self-identified gender expression heritage; a deceitful act of present-day identity politics and gender binarism that prejudicially renders the LGBTQIA+ community invisible and America being deceitfully portrayed as white, male/female, Christian and heterosexual nation (Williams, 2011; Meyers, 2021; Shams, 2021).

"Often, nonwhite Queer and trans people do not feel included — or necessarily even safe — within the larger LGBTQ+ [American] community … Historically, white people have been the ones to decide where or how people of color fit into their [Queer] world". (Meyers, 2021).

The authentic lived cultural experiences of current-day African American Muslims, Jews, and Christians possessing multitudinous social identity characteristics—race, age, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, SES, etc.—dissimilar from the established Eurocentric norm elucidates how social identity categories often publicly intersect, converge and overlap in disconcerting ways to render a disquieting sociocultural portrait that reveals the prejudicial Foucauldian power relations, racialized bias, identity politics, binarism, systematic oppression, hetero-normativity and structural inequality endemic to America for someone who is not born straight, white and Christian (Williams, 2020; Khan, 2018).

To add insult to moral injury, Queers within America are frequently constrained by their Abrahamic religious traditions to worship, speak and praise the Divine—often characterized or depicted as a white male body—through heterosexist and gender-normative language that privileges whiteness and the masculine gender (Blum & Harvey, 2012; Rivers & Gregory, 2021; Massingale & Gregory, 2021; McFarlan, 2020). Curiously, the socio-religious characteristic associated with the human trafficking of Black bodies that occurred within Islām, Christianity, and Judaism is an enigmatic interlocking system of ethno-racial religious oppression religio-historically deployed to render Black bodies as intrinsically inferior and subordinate.

"For those of us who work to raise the racial consciousness of whites, simply getting whites to acknowledge that our race gives us [societal] advantages is a major effort. The defensiveness, denial, and resistance are deep." (DiAngelo, 2019).

It is a somber ethnological-oriented reality that draws much-needed social science insight upon the persistent peculiar nature, quality, and character concerning the systemic and structural racism affecting Queer people of BME descent within contemporaneous American society; a bitter societal truth that legendary African American comedian Paul Gladney (aka Paul Mooney) scornfully observes in his scathing comedic critique regarding the fetishization of Blackness occurring within America with its simultaneous obsession with racism: "Everybody want to be a nigga, but nobody want to be a nigga" (Abrams, 2014; Camara, 2002; Bonilla-Silva, 2011; Ian, 2000; Yosso *et al.*, 2004; Jeffries, 2015; Weatherford, 2017).

"We create a hierarchy of identity in our various [social] circles. In some cases, if you're a Queer person, you have to leave your sexual orientation or gender identity at the door if you want to focus on your [Black] race or vice versa; we need to create an [inclusive] environment where you don't have to choose … We need, as a society, to recognize [Queer] identity and not assign a value on certain [social] identities and devalue others". (Houtman *et al.*, 2014; Morgan, 2021; Fitzsimons, 2020).

For many people of African descent, being born Black in the Americas (i.e., North, Central, and South America) has meant often being unrecognized, repudiated, ignored, or elided within the history and societal fabric of their respective national communities (Gregorius, 2016; ACLU, 2023; Gayle, 2022; Burch, 2022). Sadly, this type of ethnic discrimination is fairly common within the American LGBTQIA+ community as well; for example, quite a few Queer members within the present-day LGBTQIA+ community remain sadly uneducated and unaware concerning how "[Queer] Blacks and Hispanics played outsized roles during many of the earliest milestones of the Gay Rights Movement they are always on the front line they are the ones who are being who they are, no matter what. They are catching all the homophobia, all the transphobias that are being directed at Queer folks" (James, 2019).

Unbeknownst to many American heterosexuals the current-day LGBTQIA+ environment is such that approximately 40% of all Queer folk within the physical boundaries of the United States are people-of-color and, with this now having been truthfully said, there are approximately 1.2 million LGBTQIA+ adults within our democratic nation that identify as being both Black and Queer; many scholars within the liberal Academy establishment are woefully ignorant of this salient statistic l*et al*one how "widespread discrimination [against Queer folk] continues to shape LGBT people's lives in both subtle and significant says" (Affairs, 2021; Singh & Durso, 2017; Mahowald *et al.*, 2020).

"The [Rainbow] flag is a crumb … It doesn't change my material conditions. It doesn't make me less targeted in the workplace. It doesn't make me feel safer in the Gayborhood. It's a symbol. For other people, it was like the end of action. We did it. We have arrived. No more racism exists, which we know is a lie. The truth is the Rainbow has never been enough for Black and Brown people. The Rainbow [flag] was never really our symbol. The Black and Brown stripes were a way to say 'NO.' From my vantage point, it was a [Black and Queer] critique on the Rainbow flag. This is a visual critique on the problem of white supremacy and racism in LGBTQ spaces Author emphasis". Abdul-Aliy Muhammad (Williams, 2020).

Abrahamic Slave Trade of Africans

Islāmic slave trade

(Manning, 1990; Goldenberg, 2017; Russell, 2017; Lewis, 1990; Alexander, 2001; Segal, 2001)

"For every gallon of ink that has been spilled on the trans-Atlantic [Judeo-Christian] slave trade and its consequences, only one very small drop has been spent on the [religio-historical] study of the forced migration of Black Africans into the Mediterranean world of Islām. From the ninth to the early twentieth century, probably as many Black Africans were forcibly taken across the Sahara, up the Nile valley, and across the Red Sea as were transported across the Atlantic in a much shorter period". (The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islām, 2002).

A social science query less often scrutinized by some Religious Studies scholars conversant with DEI and the LGBTQIA+ community is why and how religion, age, gender, SES, sexual orientation, gender expression, race, etc. as distinct social science identity categories have oddly intersected with a peculiar form of depravity, impurity, immorality, uncleanliness and pollution that is religio-historically associated with many forms of racial and gender discrimination (e.g., homophobia, racialism, sexism, etc.) present within all three Abrahamic religious traditions (Berthold, 2010; Hagiwara *et al.*, 2012; Cain, 2008). Perhaps it may have something to do with the inconvenient religio-historical truth that human trafficking within some religious traditions for example, Islām (i.e., Islāmic slave trade), Christianity (i.e., Transatlantic slave trade) and Judaism (i.e., Transatlantic slave trade) was peculiarly directed towards people of a darker toned epidermal complexion (Hezser, 2011; Davis, 1994; Tamkin, 2022).

"The participants in the slave [trade] system included Arabs, Berbers, scores of African ethnic groups, Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch, Jews, Germans, Swedes, French, English, Danes, white American. Responsibility, in short, radiated outward to peoples of every sort who had access to the immense [pecuniary] profits generated from the world's first system of multinational production for a mass market— production of sugar, tobacco, coffee, chocolate, rum, dyestuffs, rice, spices, hemp, and cotton. The small number of Jews who lived in the Atlantic community took Black slavery as much for granted as did the Catholics, Muslims, Lutherans, Huguenots, Calvinists, and Anglicans". (Davis, 1994)

Human trafficking within some Abrahamic religious traditions, for example, Islām, is a current-day problematic religio-cultural practice that is still alive and thriving in some parts of Muslim Africa and, more importantly, has not been religio-historically abolished since the death of the Khātam An-Nabīyīn (i.e., Prophet Abū al-Qāsim. Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hāshim) in AD 632 despite Prophet Muammad's oft-cited Farewell Address exhortation that "there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, or of a non-Arab over an Arab, and no superiority of a white person over a Black person or of a Black person over a white person, except based on personal piety and righteousness" (Kahn, 2016; Baderin, 2013; Afsaruddin, 2020; Omaar *et al.*, 2018; Watt *et al.*, 2023).

The modern-day Muslim reality for many Black Muslims can be quite bleak; being born Black within Islām evolved over the passage of time to become religio-socially conflated with an unusual form of racialized religious iniquity (i.e., Christianity: sin, Hebrew: חטאה chata'ah, Arabic: خَطِيئَةٌ katī a) that even the esteemed Muslim followers of the Prophet Muhammad did not choose to religio-culturally reproach, challenge or historically expunge from their racist Muslim imagination "the Blacks do not earn their pay with good deeds and are not of good repute. The [African] children of a stinking Nubian Black; God put no light in their [epidermal] complexions" (al-Asfahānī, 1932; Hanbal, 2010; O'Neil, 1912; Brown *et al.*, 2022; Definify, 2022; Schwally, 1898).

"The Negro nations are, as a rule, submissive to slavery because [Blacks] have little [that is essentially] human and have attributes that are quite similar to those of dumb animals, as we have stated". — Ibn Khaldūn (Lewis, 1990).

"For those of us who are LGBTQ and Muslim, we wait to see which of our [intersecting social] identities we will be more fearful of disclosing in a world that questions our existence and intentions daily." (Chen, 2016)

Speaking Truth to Power as a BME religious studies scholar sensitive to social justice concerns, discerning the recondite role of privilege, power, homophobia, sexism, binarism and hetero-normativity vis-à-vis the carrefour of gender expression, sexual orientation, race, religion, age, SES, etc. as discrete intertwined social identity categories entails for example, the interrogation of the puzzling modern-day religio-historical phenomena concerning the historical persistence of the Black bodies slave trade (Dictionary, 2018; Ghazal, 2022).

The awkward Abrahamic historical truth is that the Prophet Muhammad's problematic actions regarding the buying, selling, capturing, and trading of Africans during his lifetime arguably instantiated the reprehensible religio-historical practice of human trafficking within Islām (Omaar *et al.*, 1990; Guardian, 2018; Sutter, 2012; Ali, 2004; Clarence-Smith, 2006; Guillaume, 2007; BBC, 2009). The religio-cultural fabrication of an overlapping, intersecting, and interdependent system of racialized inequity, gender discrimination, gender oppression, gender inequality, and religious intolerance towards Queers did not appear overnight within the Muslim social imaginary but, rather, is the deliberate religio-historical result of over 1400 years of prejudicial power-relational practices favoring one dominant group and ethnic community over another through calculated racial exclusion, gendered oppression, LGBTQIA+ marginalization, and the hierarchal creation of powerful binary gender-linked images (Fletcher, 1999; Adamu, 1999; Hassan, 1995; Shaheed, 1986; ACLU, 2008; The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam, 2018; The Oxford History of Islam, 2000; Armstrong, 2007).

"LGBTQ people routinely are rejected by their [Muslim] families, denounced by Islāmic authorities, hounded by security forces, and limited to clandestine social lives. Earlier this year, Indonesian Vice President Maruf Amin, in a speech to Muslim teachers, said LGBTQ people were engaged in deviant behavior that should be outlawed". (Tariga *et al.*, 2022).

Islamic expansion through subjugation

Religio-military conquest

A credible scholarly argument may be religio-historically posited that the unusual intersection, tacit support and sanctioning of modern-day human trafficking, gender inequality, unbalanced gender relations, etc., within Islām commenced with Prophet Muhammad's commodification of two Christian concubines—Mary the Copt [aka Maria bint Sham'ûn, Maria al-Qibtiyya, Maria Qubtiyya, or Mariya the Copt] and her sister, Sîrîn bint Sham'ûn [aka Sîrîn]—gifted to Prophet Muhammad by the Christian Melkite Patriarch (Cyrus of Alexandria) as chattel; the Khātam An-Nabīyīn employed what we now know as faith slavery as a problematic instrument of religiomilitary conquest during holy war (jihād) campaigns (Davis, 2009; Al-Dayel *et al.*, 2022; Urban, 2019; Freamon, 2019; Johannesburg, 2014; Ali, 2004; Powers, 2011; Lambton, 1970; Afsaruddin, 2022).

"Islām created a new [caste system] situation by prohibiting the enslavement not only of freeborn Muslims but even of freeborn non-Muslims living under the protection of the Muslim state. The children of slaves (hajin) were born into slavery, but for several reasons, this source of recruitment was not adequate. The growing need for [chattel] slaves had to be met … This gave rise to a vast expansion of slave raiding [within Africa and the Mediterranean] … It is for this reason, no doubt, that the massive development of the slave trade in Black Africa and the large-scale importation of Black Africans for use in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries date from the Arab period". (Lewis, 1985)

Painstaking historical research concerning the inhumane nature and religio-cultural implications of jihād disconcertingly reveal how the obligatory religious conversion of large numbers of non-Muslim Black bodies to Islām through religio-military conquest contextually represented "the [indigenization] processes of Islāmization within Africa" and, having now said this, the Muslim religio-military subjugation of Africa arguably set the religio-racial stage for racism within Islām; Arab Muslim enslavement of Black bodies during jihād draws acute attention to the pernicious Foucauldian power relations, racialized bias, gendered oppression, gender inequality, etc. often politely avoided within American academic discourse because of modern-day political correctness concerns towards Muslims (An-Na'im, 2006; The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islām, 2002; Freund, 2014; Lambton, 1970; Afsaruddin, 2022).

Islāmic Jurisprudence

Racial and gender discrimination

"Being a [Muslim] girl is a heavy crime, and tonight, I want to curse my creator for creating me so that I can be miserable and humiliated." Sakina sama (Joya, 2022; Afsaruddin, 2022; Allāh, 2005).

It is noteworthy how illuminating the intersectional nature of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, gender expression, SES, etc. as discrete social identities within current-day Islāmic jurisprudence greatly elaborates upon how certain forms of discrimination, for example, slavery, should be sacredly regulated—not eliminated—within Muslim society and, more to the point, was systematically sheltered and historically protected under abstruse Islāmic guidelines and recondite Qur'ānic regulations that institutionally enshrined a problematic Muslim theology justifying the heinous act of rape within Afghanistan (International, 2023; Lydon, 2005; Sikainga, 2011; Marmon, Marmon, Ayalon & Hunwick, 1999; Novo, 2011; Puente, 2013; Miers, 2004; Callimachi, 2015). Disquietingly, while it is not religiously permissible to enslave Muslims of any ethnicity/race per se under the Qur'ān, Islāmic jurisprudence makes it abundantly clear that if a non-Muslim male or female converts to Islām after enslavement, he or she remains a slave and, because of this, if I am going to speak Truth to Power: Prophet Muhammad during the course of his problematic lifetime himself owned twelve human beings as chattel with whom he then engaged in sexual relations with; a difficult relationship not unlike that of iconic slave-owing Founding Father, third American President and author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson (Sikainga, 2011; Puente, 2013; Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History, 2017; Freamon, 2019; Freamon, 2013; Pettigrew, 2020; Callimachi, 2015; Gordon-Reed, 1997; Silk, 2016).

The precise religious lesson presented by the problematic moral behavior exhibited by the Prophet Muhammad appears very Janusian by its ethical countenance. On the one hand, the owning, selling, and trading of slaves is indistinctly condoned within Islām and, on the other hand, is ambiguously condemned. In other words, the manumission of slaves by the Prophet Muhammad is considered a virtuous act of Muslim compassion, and, on the other, the possession of chattel by the same person is incomprehensibly overlooked. What moral lesson is the Prophet Muhammad trying to convey to his followers? Human trafficking is wicked, but the manumission of slaves within Islām is considered good? But if that is so, why enslave human beings in the first place? Not to belabor the obvious, but the manumission of slaves becomes wholly unnecessary if every human being is considered to be divinely created in the image of God (Imago Dei) and thus inherently worthy of respect, beauty, freedom, and dignity (Howard, 2013).

A plausible scholarly argument may therefore be submitted that the modern-day religio-historical

disposition towards racism, human trafficking, etc., has deleteriously contributed to the proliferation of Queer oppression and gendered discrimination within modern-day Islāmic society (BBC, 2020; Staff, 2020; Al-Khamri, 2018; Issa, 2016; Abulhawa, 2013; Pettigrew, 2020).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research was carried out using qualitative research method with the aim of exploring and examining the complex interconnectivity between race, religion, gender and sexual orientation within Islam. Hence, using exploratory research methodology, qualitative data through semi-structured interview were obtained from purposively sampled participants who are; Black Muslim, religious scholars and activists, and community leaders. Participant observation was also carried out to capture social interaction as well as religious practices within the relevant communities. In the same process, critical review and content analysis of related documents and historical records also located the historical and cultural aspects of the study area. In light of the ethical considerations that were taken in orienting this study, the participants signed informed consent before participation was allowed, and their anonymity was not compromised in the course of the study, followed the standard ethical consideration guidelines. In analyzing the findings, thematic analysis was adopted to classify the results based on recurrent patterns or themes in the data collected, while reflexivity was brought in to ensure the investigator's personal perspective was taken into consideration when analyzing the results. The validity and reliability of the study were properly addressed by the use of member checking and data source triangulation. The simultaneous focus on thematic areas, with the help of theories borrowed from such disciplines as sociology, anthropology, religious studies, and gender studies, made it easier to comprehend the topic under study. The findings were disseminated through publishing in academic journals and participating in community outreach projects to advance understanding and facilitate change.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Racism is still with us. "Racism is still with us. But it is up to us to prepare our children for what they must meet, and, hopefully, we shall overcome." Rosa Parks (Mitchell, 2023).

A fecund colloquy regarding the genesis, purview, attributes, and consequences of the myriad ways gender expression, race, age, SES, religion, sexual orientation, etc., as discrete social identities culturally benefit or burden sexual expression, racial inequity, hetero-normativity, homophobia, binarism, misogyny, etc. in America necessitates that appropriate scholarly attention be focused upon the Foucauldian power relations that set the religio-historical stage for racism, homophobia, sexism and the trafficking of Black bodies to exist within both Christianity, Judaism and Islām in the first place. A plausible religio-cultural argument may be posited that the traditional Abrahamic religious precepts associated with Islāmic law and jurisprudence—colloquially known as sharī'a—are woefully unable to keep abreast of any number of a broad modern-day spectrum of non-normative racial, sexual and social identities, gender identities, gender/sexual expressions, etc.; the present-day Muslim religio-legal reality is such that traditional and normative "Islāmic judicial texts, such as al-Muwatta' and ar-Risala, and the compilation of reports of the Prophet (kutub al-hadith), such as Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, have been historically employed to condone and normalize the [Muslim] practice of using slaves" (Freamon, 1998; Schacht, 1982; Na'im, 2019; Hamel, 2012).

Black Islāmic legal scholar Bernard Freamon dutifully acknowledges how the Muslim human rights abuses, violations, and modern-day concerns regarding the intersection of slavery, racism, sexism, gender oppression, identity politics, etc., occurring within our present-day world have deleterious societal implications—one evidenced by the persistent United Nations human rights violation reports resulting from religious violence/backlash perpetrated against Queer individuals affirming non-traditional and non-heteronormative notions of gender identity, sexuality and expression (Freamon, 1998; Callimachi, 2015; Mohamed, 2021; Pettigrew, 2020; Joya, 2022; Lydon, 2005; Omaar *et al.*, 1990; Guardian, 2018).

In an American society looking to eliminate all forms of sexual, racial, and gendered oppression, intolerance, and hate from within its membership ranks, we must now courageously confront and resist the present-day conservative-driven religio-political argument to recontextualize and reframe racism, sexism, binarism, trans prejudice, etc. as "a form of identity politics in which the value of your opinion depends on how many victim groups you belong to. At the bottom of the totem pole is the person everybody loves to hate: the straight white male" (Coaston, 2019; Shapiro, 2018).

The religio-cultural challenge facing America today is, therefore, to resolutely value, support, and appreciate diversity, difference, dissimilarity, and divergences that do not fit traditional systems "of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations

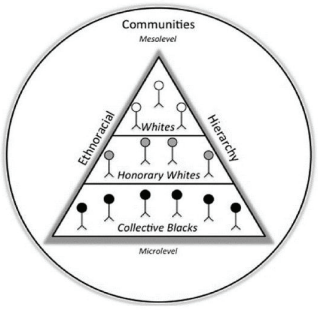

Figure 1: Ethno racial Hierarchy Model (Sewell, 2016)

seem uniquely realistic"—if not, we are morally doomed as a nation because of our bigotry, discrimination and prejudices (Geertz, 1993).

Notes

1. As a Black Catholic scholar within the Academy, I am acutely sensitive to the systemic racism, violence, marginalization, and oppression directed towards African Americans within our nation and, as a consequence, my intentional capitalization of the linguistic term, Black, is used in a manner similar to the New York Times, Associated Press, USA Today, Los Angeles Times and other major news organizations "to describe people and cultures of African origin, both in the United States and elsewhere." (Baquet & Corbett, 2020) for more information and further discussion.

2. My use of the extempore quote, "Black Queers are the most disrespected LGBTQIÃ+ people in America," is creatively appropriated from the iconic May 22nd, 1962, speech given by Malcolm X (aka El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) titled On Protecting the Black Woman. Malcolm X is acknowledged for saying the following, "The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected woman in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman." For more information and further discussion (Waters, 2021).

3. My use of the Foucauldian term, relations of power, is used in a manner similar to that posited by Sergiu Bălan where he cogently asserts that, "power is not something that can be owned, but rather something that acts and manifests itself in a certain way; it is more a strategy than a possession." Furthermore, this nonconformist way of reconceiving the essential characteristics of power entails the acknowledgment of "two key features: a) power is a system, a network of relations encompassing the whole society, rather than a relation between the oppressed and the oppressor; b) individuals are not just the objects of power, but they are the locus where the power and the resistance to it are exerted." For more information and further discussion (Bălan, 2010).

4. My use of the discrete sociological term, post-racial, intentionally refers to an illusionary period in which racial prejudice, hatred, intolerance nor discrimination exists." In some quarters, this is attributable to the time interval following the historic election of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States. Ironically, less than a month after this landmark event, a racially charged white backlash to the Obama presidency began fomenting within the American populace. For more information and further discussion (Yacovone, 2022).

5. I define whiteness in a manner similar to that demarcated by the National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC) – a Smithsonian institution – where it is posited as: "Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups of are compared. Whiteness is also at the core of understanding race in America. Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal. This white-dominant culture also operates as a social mechanism that grants advantages to white people since they can navigate society both by feeling normal and being viewed as normal. Persons who identify as white rarely have to think about their racial identity because they live within a culture where whiteness has been normalized. Thinking about race is very different for nonwhite persons living in America. People of color must always consider their racial identity, whatever the situation, due to the systemic and interpersonal racism that still exists." For more information and further discussion (NMAAHC, 2023).

6. My broad, inclusive use of the modern-day gender identity term, Queer is referring to "a person whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual and whose gender identity is not cisgender." Simply put, it is "not straight." (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2022) for more information and further discussion.

7. I define the UK sociocultural acronym, BME, as a linguistic term that intentionally refers to "Black and Minority Ethnic," and, another key point to remember, refers to those British citizens not of Eurocentric descent. (Macmillan English Dictionary, 2020) for more information and further discussion.

8. I define the discrete legal term, Common Good Constitutionalism, in "layman's terms, that the Constitution empowers the government to pursue conservative political ends, even when those ends conflict with individual rights as most Americans understand them," and, more interestingly for a religio-political perspective, many, though not all, such advocates of this problematic "candid willingness to legislate morality" legal theory are staunchly non-Black Catholics. For more information and further discussion (Ward, 2022).

9. I focus upon Abrahamic faith traditions—Christianity, Islām, and to a lesser degree, Judaism—because the Black community within America is predominately Christian. Having said this, it is important also to note that if one is not a Black Christian, "more Black Americans identify with Islām than with any other non-Christian faith"—only a very small minority of Blacks choose Judaism as their religious tradition (i.e., the numbers of African Americans within other non-Abrahamic religions are statistically negligible). For more information and further discussion, (Mohamed *et al.*, 2021).

10. I define the linguistic term weltanschauung—historically attributable to Immanuel Kant— to contextually represent "a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world especially from a specific standpoint." Simply put, it refers to a "worldview." (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2022) for more information and further discussion.

11. I define the linguistic term, Blackness, in a religio-racial manner similar to Andrea C. West where she posits it as "a fluid concept in that it can refer to cultural

and ethnic identity, sociopolitical status, an aesthetic and embodied way of being, a social and political consciousness, and a diasporic kinship … Blackness is a marker of enslavement, marginalization, criminality, filth, and evil. It also symbolizes pride, beauty, elegance, strength, and depth. It is elusive and difficult to define and yet serves as one of the most potent and unifying domains of identity. It is the foundation of social cohesion and allegiances and, at the same time, is a source of oppression and alienation Cross-culturally, Blackness is the foil to whiteness in terms of marking the boundaries of race, and, in both contentious and collaborative ways, all other racial identities are in conversation with or are negotiated in terms of Blackness." For more information and further discussion, (Abrams, 2014).

12. I define the socio-political term identity politics like that posited by Bernstein as referring to "the belief that identity itself—its elaboration, expression, or affirmation—is and should be a fundamental focus of political work; identity politics politicized areas of life not previously defined as political, including sexuality, interpersonal relations, lifestyle, and culture." This present-day social science term is generally associated with historically marginalized and oppressed ethnoracial, ethnocultural, ethnoreligious, and ethnopolitical groups/communities and, as a result, is regarded as quite polarizing in contemporary society. For more information and further discussion, (Bernstein, 2005).

13. I define the feminist sociological term intersectionality as "the study of intersections between different disenfranchised groups or groups of minorities; specifically, the study of the interactions of multiple systems of oppression or discrimination. This feminist sociological theory was first highlighted by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. The theory suggests that—and seeks to examine how—various biological, social, and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, speciesism, and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic injustice and social inequality. Intersectionality holds that the classical conceptualizations of oppression within society, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and belief-based bigotry, including nationalism and speciesism, do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination. For more information and further discussion, (Definitions.net, 2022).

14. I define the religious studies term, Abrahamic faith tradition, as an inclusive communal oriented religious designation that describes, labels, and establishes shared intersections of religio-historical overlap between Judaism, Christianity, and Islām. For more information and further discussion, (Abulafia, 2019).

15. Globally, Muslims make up the second largest religious group, with 1.8 billion people, or 24% of the world's population. For more information and further discussion, (Hackett & McClendon, 2017).

16. My use of the human resources term DEI is an acronym for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. It is employed in a social science manner to refer to "a conceptual framework that promotes the fair treatment and full participation of all people, especially in the workplace, including populations who have historically been underrepresented or subject to discrimination because of their background, identity, disability, etc. For more information and further discussion, (Dictionary.com, 2022).

17. Malcolm X is quoted to have said the following: "America needs to understand Islām because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem." For more information and further discussion (Kelsay, 2016).

18. The present-day Muslim American population is estimated to be 3.3 million (approximately 1% of the US population) and, with this having been said, African Americans currently account for about a fifth (i.e., 660,000 Black Muslims) of the entire Muslim American population (approximately 50% of Black Muslims are converts to Islām). For more information and further discussion (Mohamed & Diamant, 2019).

19. The total number of Africans trafficked during the Islāmic slave trade (AD 650-1980) borders 11.8 million, a number quite comparable to the Transatlantic slave trade (10.7 million). For more information and further discussion (Gordon, 1992).

20. My use of the complex Arabic religio-legal term, sharī 'a, is deployed in a manner similar to that circumscribed by Black Islāmic Law legal scholar Bernard K. Freamon. He posits sharī 'a as an "Arabic word meaning 'way,' 'road,' or 'path' to the watering place or oasis. In the legal sense, the term has a comprehensive and technical meaning, describing the behavior that all Muslims must follow to achieve salvation. In this sense, the sharī 'a regulates the life of a Muslim in every aspect [my emphasis]—from prayers and rituals to child-rearing, family life, politics, and ethics—encompassing all aspects of public and private law, hygiene, and even courtesy and good manners." For more information and further discussion (Freamon, 1998).

21. My use of the linguistic term colorblind is employed in a socio-psychological sense to describe an ideology that purportedly claims to eliminate racism, prejudice, bigotry, and intolerance by treating, regarding, attending to, and behaving towards others dissimilar from oneself without any regard to their race, ethnicity nor culture. For social science purposes, colorblind comprises the following three elements: "frames, styles, and racial stories. This ideology's central frames or themes are set paths for interpreting information. There are four principal frames: (1) abstract liberalism, (2) naturalization of race-related matters, (3) cultural racism, and (4) minimization of racism." The use of a colorblind ideology in a post-civil rights America, unlike its predecessor, Jim Crow, deliberates obfuscates, conceals, and avoids conventional racial discourse and, by so doing, seeks to disingenuously

assert that "racism is no longer a major problem in the United States and that existing racial inequality is the product of the culture and behavior of minorities." For more information and further discussion (Racism, 2021).

22. My use of the sociological linguistic term, inferior white, is used in a scholarly manner first proposed by Muslim American sociologist Hadi Khoshneviss. He refers to it as "a racialized ethnicity that in the racial hierarchy of the US fits neither in Hollinger's ethnoracial pentagon of African Americans, Asian Americans, Whites, Native Americans and Latinos, nor in Bonilla-Silva's proposed 'trichotomy' of whites, honorary whites, and the 'collective Black.' People from the ME are white, but not the right kind of white [my emphasis] to be granted complete inclusion; they are perceived as unfit and, hence, extraneous." For more information and further discussion (Khoshneviss, 2019).

23. My use of the architectural term, space, is employed in a social science-oriented manner meant to illuminate the "particular role space has in symbolizing, maintaining, and reinforcing gender relations. More recently, particular attention has been paid to how the relationship between gender and space is defined through power—how power relations are inscribed in built space." Space has consequently become within modern-day architectural circles a contested Foucauldian power relations dimension/arena where gender, race, age, SES, religious identity, and sexual orientation intersect in many disconcerting ways. For more information and further discussion (Rendell, 2003).

24. As a Black Catholic Religious Studies scholar, it saddens me that within the Black community, there still exists a vitriolic prejudice directed against Queer folk. It is an abhorrent religio-historical bias that has existed since before the Civil Rights Movement, as evidenced by the truculent homophobia directed against Bayard Rustin for being Black and Gay—the Black Church needs to do much better concerning this matter. For more information and further discussion (Houtman *et al.*, 2014).

25. My intentional use of the linguistic term, Islāmic slave trade, is deployed in a holistic, inclusive, and encompassing manner similar to that posited by other prominent Religious Studies scholars, for example, William *et al.* (2017) in referring to the massive importation of Africans via the Trans-Saharan slave trade, East African slave trade, Indian-Ocean slave trade and other such odious forms of human trafficking—the buying and selling of Blacks as chattel by non-Black Muslims that have occurred over a thousand year plus period within Islām—into the Middle East and elsewhere for Muslims of non-African descent. Furthermore, Islām, from a historical perspective, has done more to expand and protect the problematic Muslim institution of chattel slavery than abolish this morally fraught practice. For example, "the [Qur'ānic] religious strictures against enslaving those converting to Islām were not readily observed when it came to Black Africans." For more information and further discussion (Manning, 1990).

26. The problematic practice of slavery in antiquity did exist among the Israelites; however, it was not predicated upon racial complexion per se. Curiously, like both Christianity and Islām, the main form of human enslavement was "war captives seized during conquests besides conquest, debt, poverty and banditry, the slave population was also increased through slave-breeding and natural procreation … masters were interested in encouraging their female slaves to have children to increase the number of slaves born within their household." For more information and further discussion (Hezser, 2011).

27. The discrete Islāmic religious term, Khātam An-Nabīyīn, refers to a sacred title—typically translated as the "Seal of the Prophets"—that is employed within the Qur'ān to designate the Prophet Muhammad ibn ʿAbdullāh, regarded by many, but not all Muslims, as being the absolute last of the prophets sent by God. For more information and further discussion (Kahn, 2016).

28. My use of the Islāmic religio-historical term, Farewell Address, refers to Muhammad ibn ʿAbdullāh (Prophet Muhammad) ʿs last known public lecture, in which he exhorts his Muslim followers not to succumb to ethnic racism, racial prejudice, bigotry, discrimination, or mockery. For more information and further discussion Baderin (2013).

29. It should be noted that acclaimed Middle Eastern religious scholar, Ahmad ibn `Abd Allāh ibn Ahmad ibn Ishāq ibn Mūsā ibn Mahrān al-Mihrānī al-Asbahānī al-Ahwal al-Ash`arī al-Shāfi`ī (aka Abu Nu'aym al-Asfahānī), within his seminal book, Hilyat al-awliya wa tabaqat al -asfiyā. , alludes to how the slave, Mahran, was callously renamed Safīna (i.e., cargo ship) by the Prophet Muhammad himself and, more importantly, treated like a pack animal.

حَدثَّنَا سُلَيْمَانُ بْنُ أَحْمَدَ، ثنَا عُمَرُ بْنُ حَفْ صٍ السَّدُوسِيُّ، ثنَا عَاصِمُ، بْنُ عَلِ ي ، ثنَا حَشْرَ جُ بْنُ نُبَاتَةَ، ثنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ جُمْهَانَ قَالَ :سَأَلْتُ سَفِينَةَ عَنُ اسْمِهِ، فقَالَ :إ نِي مُخْبِرُكُ بِاسْمِي، سَمَّانِي رَسُولُ اللِ صَلَّىَ اللُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَفِينَةَ، قُلْتُ :لِمُ سَمَّاكُ سَفِينَةَ؟ قَالَ :خَرَ جُ وَمَعَهُ أَصْحَابُهُ فَثَقُلَ عَلَيْهِمُ مَتَاعُهُمُ فقَالَ« :ابْسُطُ كِسَاءَكُ»، فَبَسَطْتُهُ فجَعَلَ فِيهِ مَتَاعَهُمُ ثمَّ حَمَلَهُ مَا أَنْتُ إِلَّ سَفِينَةُ »، قَالَ :فَلَوْ (Arabic translation:)عَلَيَّ فقَالَ« :احْمِلُ حَمَلْتُ يَوْمَئِ ذٍ وِقْرُ بعَِي رٍ أَوْ بعَِيرَيْنِ أَوْ خَمْسَ ةٌ أَوْ سِت ةٌ مَا ثقَُلَ عَلَيَّ

Narrated by Sulaiman ibn Ahmad through ʿUmar ibn Hafs as-Sudūsi through ʿĀsim ibn ʿAli through Hashrj ibn Nubāta though Sa'īd ibn Juhmān, he said: I asked Safīna about his name, and he said: "I will inform you about my name. The Messenger of Allah [Prophet Muhammad ibn ʿAbdullāh] gave me the name Safīna." I asked him: "Why did he call you Safīna?" He said: "He went with his companions on a trip; they found their belongings too heavy. He [the Prophet Muhammad ibn ʿAbdullāh] said: 'Spread your garment', and so I did. He put their belongings in it, then he carried it and put it on me. He [the Prophet Muhammad ibn ʿAbdullāh] said: 'Carry for you are a ship [Safīna].' That day, if I were given a load of a camel or two camels or five or six, I would have been able to." It is reasonable to assume that no human being in their correct frame of mind would want to be loaded with heavy luggage similar to that carried by a pack animal

and, with this now being said, nor would they desire to be named after a cargo ship. For more information and further discussion (al-Asfahānī, 1932).

30. My use of the Christian theological term, sin, is deployed in a religious studies context to refer to "an act not in accord with reason informed by the Divine law" that is committed against God (Hebrew translation: חטאה -- chata'ah, Arabic translation: خَطِيئَةٌ -- katī 'a). For more information and further discussion (O'Neil, 1912).

31. Ibn Khaldūn, after describing the known peoples of Black West Africa, observes that "beyond them, to the south, there is no civilization in the proper sense. There are only humans who are closer to dumb animals than to rational beings. They live in thickets and caves and eat herbs and unprepared grain. They frequently eat each other. They cannot be considered human beings." Ibn Khaldūn gives a lengthy account of the West African peoples and kingdoms. In another passage, Ibn Khaldūn makes a more general observation about the inhabitants of the zones that are "far from temperate." He says of the Blacks: "Their foodstuffs are durra and herbs, their clothing is the leaves of trees, which they sew together to cover themselves, or animal skins. Most of them go naked. The fruits and seasonings of their countries are strange and inclined to be intemperate. In their business dealings, they do not use the two noble metals, but copper, iron, or skins, upon which they set a value for the purpose of business dealings. Their character qualities, moreover, are similar to those of dumb animals. It has even been reported that most of the Negroes of the first zone dwell in caves and thickets, eat herbs, live in savage isolation, and do not congregate and eat each other." For more information and further discussion (Lewis, 1992).

32. Using the African American Civil Rights Movement linguistic term, Speak Truth to Power emphasizes its implicit sociocultural origin and inference to "stand up for what's right and tell people in charge what's what. That is the idea behind the phrase, which is an expression for courageously confronting an authority, calling out injustices on their watch, and demanding change." This BME term is credited to the Black Civil Rights icon and social justice pioneer Bayard Rustin in 1942. For more information and further discussion (Dictionary.com, 2018).

33. Human trafficking was and continues to be within some contemporaneous Muslim nations (e.g., Islāmic Republic of Mauritania, Federal Republic of Somalia, State of Libya, Republic of Senegal) a highly lucrative economic enterprise that materially benefits the Muslim ruling elite. For more information and further discussion, a highly lucrative economic enterprise that materially benefits the Muslim ruling elite (Rakiya *et al.*, 1990).

34. Islām originated within the modern-day nation-state of Saudi Arabia around A.D. 610 with a series of Divine revelations given to Muhammad ibn ʿAbdullāh. For more information and further discussion (The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam, 2018).

35. My re-imagined usage of the religio-historical term, faith slavery, first coined by religious studies historian Robert C. Davis to describe "how, for hundreds of years, men throughout the Mediterranean enslaved each other, not because of the color of their skins but because of their religions [author emphasis] … it was at its fiercest where Christianity and Islām came in direct contact." In Islāmic warfare, men are, for the most part, slaughtered, and the women are frequently enslaved as concubines.

36. The Arabic term jihād is a highly complex word whose precise etymological intention, meaning, and signification depend highly on context because it possesses numerous meanings. I am employing it in a religious studies context that emphasizes its peculiar religio-psychological hermeneutical idiosyncrasy as it appertains to Islāmic military campaigns waged against unbelievers. For more information and further discussion (Lambton, 1970).

37. It is worth noting from a BME social science perspective that "the [derogatory] term commonly used by the ancient Arabs for the offspring of mixed unions was hajin, a word which, like the English 'mongrel' and 'half-breed,' was cruelly used to disparagingly refer to both animals and human beings, especially those of African descent. For example, hajin would indicate a horse whose sire was a thoroughbred Arab and whose dam was not. It had much the same meaning when applied to human beings, denoting a person whose father was Arab and free and whose mother was an enslaved Black person." For more information and further discussion (Lewis, 1985).

38. The Arabic theological term, Allāh, is typically translated into English in Religious Studies as "God." For more information and further discussion (Afsaruddin, 2022).

39. The Catholic theological term Imago Dei is Latin for the "Image of God"; it highlights a theological doctrine common to Jews, Christians, and Muslims that denotes mankind's relation to God on the one hand and all other living creatures on the other. As it appertains to Islām, "in the Qurān, man is created as the khalīfa (caliph, or representative) of God on earth." For more information and further discussion (Imago Dei, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Here, multiple analyses of race, religion, gender, and Sexuality mean tracing the issues of race, religion, gender, and queer concerning Islamic and other religious formulations within identity, power, and the structuring of social relations. These complexities reassert themselves in the current conjuncture. Thus, using comprehensive analysis and diverse critical thinking, the text reveals the nature of black identity, the hegemony of whiteness, and multiple discriminations concerning multicultural communities. As advocacy for broader, composite, and more innovative concepts of diversity and equity, it demands fighting prejudice within religious domains and promoting tolerance, sustainability, and justice. Finally, the exchange posits conversation, understanding, and the concept of scaffolding as tenets towards emerging an accepting and inclusive society for every citizen.

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