



***Accurate, appropriate coverage of Islam and Muslims using lessons from analysis of The Seattle Times' coverage of Islam and Muslims in 2012***

[www.cairseattle.org/SeattleTimes](http://www.cairseattle.org/SeattleTimes)



## 40% of nationwide media coverage of Islam/Muslims is negative

According to Gallup report, Media Tenor, found:

- Islam is not only the religion that is the most frequently mentioned in TV news in US, but also a significant share of coverage is negative.
- 36% of statements about religion referred to Islam.
- Tone of media coverage of Islam was negative 40% of time, while statements about Christianity were negative 20% of time.
- “2/3 of television coverage about Islam associates Muslims with extremism.”



## Media has direct affect on hate, prejudice

- ◆ Research by University of Hawaii, University of Exeter, & National Hispanic Media Coalition indicate that media content can have a direct effect on hate and prejudice against Muslims and members of other minority groups.



# Americans' view of Islam

Oct. 2001: 40% positive

July 2005: 40% positive

Dec. 2010: 30% positive

April 2014: 19% positive



# WHERE WE ARE

**WHO WE ARE**

- WHAT WE DO**
- What We Do
  - Children at Risk
  - Hate and Extremism
  - Immigrant Justice
  - LGBT Rights
  - Teaching Tolerance

- GET INFORMED**
- Get Informed
  - News
  - Case Docket
  - Teaching Tolerance Blog
  - Hatewatch Blog
  - Hate Map
  - Intelligence Files
  - » Intelligence Report
  - Hate Incidents
  - Publications

- GET INVOLVED**
- Get Involved
  - Donate Now
  - Friends of the Center
  - Stand Strong Map
  - Donor Resources
  - Other Ways to Give
  - Store

Intelligence Report, Spring 2013, Issue Number: 149

## FBI: Bias Crimes Against Muslims Remain at High Levels

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Hate crimes against perceived Muslims, which jumped 50% in 2010 largely as a result of anti-Muslim propagandizing, remained at relatively high levels for a second year in 2011, according to the FBI's new national hate crime statistics.

The bureau reported that there were 157 anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2011, down very slightly from the 160 recorded in 2010. The 2011 crimes occurred during a period when Islam-bashing propaganda, which initially took off in 2010, continued and even intensified.

The actual number of reported anti-Muslim hate crimes is small for a country the size of the United States, but the FBI statistics are known to be notoriously understated, in part because more than half of hate crimes are never reported to police. Two major Department of Justice (DOJ) studies have indicated that the real level of hate crimes in America is some 20 to 30 times higher than the numbers reported over the years by the FBI, which are simply compilations of state statistics.

If the FBI numbers are taken as only an indicator of larger trends, as seems reasonable given the DOJ studies, the real number of anti-Muslim hate crimes during 2011 may have been somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000.





# Who are American Muslims?

**2009 Gallup poll, “Muslim Americans Exemplify Diversity, Potential,” found:**

- ◆ American Muslim women:
  - ◆ 2<sup>nd</sup> most educated religious group in U.S.
  - ◆ As likely as American Muslim men to have bachelor’s degree
- ◆ Most income equality between genders than any religious group in U.S.
- ◆ American Muslims by far most racially diverse religious group in U.S.
- ◆ 80% say religion is important in daily life



# Who are American Muslims?

## 2011 Harvard Study:

- ◆ The more involved a Muslim person is in mosque-related activities and the more religious the person is, the more likely she/he is to believe that Islam is compatible with political participation in the US.





The American public's opinion of Islam has worsened significantly since 2005 and FBI hate crimes statistics show that hate crimes against Muslims are at high levels. In 2010, a Pew Research Survey found that 70% of the general American public held either an unfavorable or very unfavorable view of Islam. More alarming, this survey shows that around 10% of Americans were unable to articulate a view on Islam in 2005 to not being able to articulate a view on Islam in 2010. One of the facets of CAIR's work is to document, manage, and resolve civil rights cases involving Muslims. CAIR's Civil Liberties Unit provides legal assistance to Muslims in the United States and around the world. CAIR's 12 media centers, particularly print newspapers, have a unique position of influence on their readers' perception of people and issues. Proper terminology, contextualization, and angle of reporting can help readers understand issues thoroughly and if not properly done, can actually become an obstacle to readers' understanding of issues. Inaccurate reporting can mislead and confuse readers

## AN ANALYSIS OF

# *The Seattle Times'*

## COVERAGE OF

# Islam & Muslims

## IN 2012

...er contextualization, ...ormative qualities that help readers accurately understand the issues being described. The Seattle Times aims to "serve the community through quality journalism," and we believe this should include a focus on ensuring that its content helps maintain a vibrant democracy through an informed populace. Proper terminology, contextualization, and angle of reporting can help readers understand issues thoroughly and if not properly done, can actually become an obstacle to readers' understanding of issues. Inaccurate reporting can mislead and confuse readers

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## **Society of Professional Journalists:**

**“To ensure that the concept of self-government outlined by the U.S. Constitution remains a reality into future centuries, the American people must be well informed in order to make decisions regarding their lives, and their local and national communities.**

**It is the role of journalists to provide this information in an accurate, comprehensive, timely and understandable manner.”**



# Contents of Report

- ◆ **Executive Summary**
- ◆ **General Recommendations**
- ◆ **Methodology**
- ◆ **Discussion of findings:**
  - ◆ **Representative reporting**
  - ◆ **Informative articles**
  - ◆ **Labeling or contextualization disparities**
  - ◆ **Inaccurate, imprecise, misleading terminology**
  - ◆ **Inflammatory or false information**



# Analysis Methodology

- ◆ **Researched, written during 2012 and 2013**
- ◆ **Read daily hard copy of The Seattle Times**
- ◆ **Logged 2,500 articles from 8 categories in Excel**
- ◆ **Flagged articles based on 5 categories:**
  - ◆ **Representative reporting**
  - ◆ **Informative articles**
  - ◆ **Labeling or contextualization disparities**
  - ◆ **Inaccurate, imprecise, misleading terminology**
  - ◆ **Inflammatory or false information**
- ◆ **Flagged articles were clipped and placed in files**
- ◆ **Flagged articles comprise most source material for report**



# Syndicated Articles

- ✦ Majority of national and international coverage from syndicated articles
- ✦ AP, NYT, Wash Po, LA Times, McClatchy, etc.
- ✦ Headlines and content is often edited
- ✦ *The Seattle Times*, as customer, can contact them to improve accuracy of content



# Representative, realistic coverage

Flagged for realistic, fact-based, representative accurate portrayals of Muslims' lives

- ◆ “Covered” feature in Sept. 2, 2012 *Pacific NW Magazine*
- ◆ Aziz Junejo in *Faith and Values*
- ◆ Photos

# Labeling, Contextualization Disparity

- ◆ **‘Terrorism,’ ‘Terrorist,’ ‘Terror’**
- ◆ **Case Study: Gabrielle Giffords attack**
- ◆ **Case study: Mass shootings**
  - ◆ **F.E.A.R. & militia violence, South Seattle shooting**
- ◆ **Case study: Michael Page & Mohamed Merah**
- ◆ **Case study: Religious groups: Lord’s Resistance Army & Boko Haram**
- ◆ **Case study: Breivik’s inspirations**
- ◆ **Usage of ‘Radical’: Awlaki, Nuns, Terry Jones**



# Who is a 'terrorist'?

- ◆ Norway bomber?
- ◆ FEAR?
- ◆ LRA?
- ◆ Boko Haram?
- ◆ Boston Marathon bombers/shooters?
- ◆ Fort Hood shooters?
- ◆ Arizona attacks on gov't officials?
- ◆ Navy Ship Yard shooter?





# 'Terror(ism,ist)' as a label

There is no agreement over the use of the term 'terrorism,' and the academic debate over 'terrorism' is equally as convoluted. Each U.S. government agency dealing with security uses a different definition of 'terrorism' yet is such a consequential label!

Based on our analysis, the term terrorism is almost exclusively used to denote violence by Muslims

The Seattle Times should end use of the label 'terror' and its variants, and instead use accurate, fact-based language to describe groups, persons, and events



# Labeling, Context Disparity

Differences in labeling and context provided can fuel prejudice and hate against a people group by giving a false impression that members of that community are somehow a threat to society

Improper labels and context can be defamatory, can mislead readers and fuel prejudice and hatred of Islam and Muslims



# Terminology

- ◆ **Inaccurate, imprecise, misleading. An obstacle to readers' understanding of issues**
- ◆ **'Islamist', 'Islamism'**
  - ◆ **Used 388 times in Seattle Times in 2012, 60.5% with negative connotations**
  - ◆ **242 times in late 2012 during national spike in hate crimes**
- ◆ **'Jihadist,' 'Jihadi,' 'Jihadism' used 120+ times**



# Terminology

The term 'Islamist' only serves to deprive readers of critical information, creates confusion and cements false stereotypes that fuel prejudice and hate.

It is considered very defamatory by Muslims and is frequently used by anti-Muslim extremists as a religious and ethnic slur to attack Muslim individuals and organizations

Journalists should use accurate, informative descriptions of the subject and cease using the slurs such as 'Islamist' and its variants in reporting



# ‘Religious Extremists?’

- ◆ Lord’s Resistance Army (‘L.R.A.’)?
- ◆ Boko Haram?
- ◆ Various killers who invoked ‘Jesus’?
- ◆ South Seattle military recruiting center plotters?



# Terminology

In nearly every instance (1 out of over 100) it was mentioned in The Seattle Times, the term 'jihad' and its variants were used to denote violence by Muslims...the term was used not only in a grossly incorrect manner, but it also caused confusion.

Using the slur 'jihadist' and its variants to label Muslims who commit violence, misleads readers, gives them false information about Islam and gives crimes by criminals the religious credibility they desperately seek



# Inflammatory

- ◆ **Name-calling, defamation**
- ◆ **Crude stereotyping**
- ◆ **8/9/12 “Running for their lives”**
- ◆ **9/8/12 “Consulate attackers were well armed”**





# Inflammatory

The columnist appears to describe Islam as a whole as a “primitive misogynist religion” that is “armed and dangerous towards women”... A similarly defamatory attack on a minority religion, such as Judaism, or a culture such as African American culture, would not be considered fit to print

We recommend that editors exercise care in distinguishing between opposing view points and hostile, defamatory rhetoric, which can grossly misinform the public, and fuel prejudice and hate



# What YOU can do starting today

- ✦ Use this report to have your local media realize best practices & areas of improvement
- ✦ Use research and lessons from this report to advocate realistic, accurate, representative media portrayals of Islam and Muslims.
- ✦ Find verifiable facts about Islam/Muslims at [www.islamfactcheck.org](http://www.islamfactcheck.org)



# What YOU should do starting today

Use these lessons to e-mail & tweet at editors EVERY time you see something inaccurate, defamatory, inflammatory, or commendable!

**Associated Press** General: [info@ap.org](mailto:info@ap.org) .@AP

**CNN** Jeff Zucker, President: [jeff.zucker@cnn.com](mailto:jeff.zucker@cnn.com) .@CNN

**New York Times** General letters: [Letters@nytimes.com](mailto:Letters@nytimes.com) .@NYTimes

**Seattle Times** General: [letters@seattletimes.com](mailto:letters@seattletimes.com) .@seattletimes

**USA Today** General letters: [letters@usatoday.com](mailto:letters@usatoday.com) .@USAToday

**Wall Street Journal** General letters: [wsj.letters@wsj.com](mailto:wsj.letters@wsj.com) .@WSJ