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| http://www.islamicity.com/global/images/photo/IC-Articles/stopislamophobia_100X60__100x60.JPG  | Muslims in America are a highly diverse community, consisting of almost every race, ethnicity and culture, including a large indigenous section. Among them are doctors, engineers, scientists, entrepreneurs and workers, enriching the economy with their contributions. |
| **The Sharia Controvery in America** **6/24/2011 - Opinion Political Social - Article Ref: Th1106-4736Number of comments: 2 By: [Waheeduddin Ahmed, Ph.D.](http://www.iviews.com/Articles/action.lasso.asp?-Search=search&-database=Services&-Table=Magazine&-noresultserror=error.asp&-Response=search.asp&-MaxRecords=10&-SortField=Pdate&-SortOrder=Descending&-op=eq&PFlag=X&-op=cn&S=V&-op=cn&search=Waheeduddin%20Ahmed,%20Ph.D.) Muslim Observer\* -**

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Islamophobia, as it exists today in America, cannot be assigned to a single cause. It has a variety of causes. Differences in belief systems have little to do with it, since such a chasm would require awareness, which is all but lacking in the general populace. Clash of civilizations is hardly causative in a civic society, where only one civilization prevails. In fact, it is the cultural side of Islam, which arouses prejudice and disapproval on the part of some and suspicion on the part of others.The second cause is the global political conflicts in which Muslims are seen as occupying the center stage. Incessant news and events depicting individuals committing terrorist acts, with their religion specifically highlighted in the media if they are Muslims, constantly plays on the minds and emotions of the American people. The worst act of terrorism in its history occurred in New York on September 11, 2001. It was carried out by a few foreign miscreants from the Middle East with Muslim names and had roots in the Arab-Israeli conflict. While it shook the world, it sent chills down the spines of the Muslim inhabitants of America. They were hit the hardest just by name association. They walked the streets under suspicious and disdainful eyes and are still struggling to reclaim their rightful place in the American society.We are living in an era sequential to global communism. The phobia which dominated that era was the fear of the great Bolshevik conspiracy, which would undermine our freedoms and individual liberties. The product of that phobia was the Cold War, generating thousands of nuclear weapons, sufficient to obliterate human race many times over and which gave birth to scores of dictators all over the world, who subjected their countrymen to tyranny and humiliation. The succeeding era would not pass without a phobia to decorate it with. Islamophobia readily served the purpose. The bogey of the worldwide Islamic khilafa replaced that of the Communist conspiracy and is beginning to inflict the psyche of the American public. If there are any people, who are unaware of this khilafa ÒconspiracyÓ, it is the Muslim people themselves.**The Phobia and its Profile: The Mosque Controversies:**Proposals to build mosques to serve the religious needs of Muslims countrywide have brought out deep-rooted prejudices even from the members of the clergy, from California to Wisconsin to New York. Acts of vandalism against the Muslim places of worship such as in Tennessee proliferated. In Sheboygan, Wisconsin a Muslim doctor who owned a store type building proposed to convert the property into a place of worship for hundred or so of Muslims. The place was close to the hospital he worked in. A public hearing brought out some of the patients he had treated and had faith in, who spilled out venom against Islam, a faith they had no knowledge of. It shook the wits out of him and many of the citizens. In Manhattan, Muslims had been praying at Burlington Factory House at Park51 a makeshift mosque for a year before the Cordoba House proposal. On Fridays the congregation at Farah Mosque nearby would spill over on the street for want of sufficient accommodation. It was not a matter of ÒdesecratingÓ Ground Zero but a matter of dire necessity and equal rights under the constitution. The proposal became such a big controversy that everybody from the president to the governor to the archbishop to the Jewish Defense League weighed in. It was made to look as though the proposed Cordoba House was a monument of Muslim ÒtriumphalismÓ at Ground Zero.**Ban the ShariÕah Legislations:**The campaign against the Cordoba House project was started in a blog ÒStop Islamization of AmericaÓ, a xenophobic campaign, playing on the aforementioned fears of people, of the perceived impending transformation of the countryÕs religious face and its cultural profile. This is an outrageous presumption and a wildly imaginary scenario. Exact statistics are lacking but according to a study conducted by the American Jewish Committee there are 2.8million Muslims in America, while many Muslim organizations have been claiming that the total number stood at about six million. This makes the range of percent population to be from 0.9 to 1.9%. The true number may be closer to the lower figure than the higher one. Of the total population, the practicing Muslims may be less than half that number, scattered over a continent and among the population of 308.7 million. What a force for the Islamization of the United States of America!

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The force behind this anti-ShariÕah tirade is an Arizona lawyer: David Yerushalmi, a White supremacist, an anti-Islam hate monger and the founder of the ÒSociety of Americans for National Existence (SANE)Ó. He argues that whites are genetically superior to Blacks. He wrote: ÒSome races perform better in sports, some better in mathematical problem solving, some better in language, some better in Western societies and some better in tribal ones.Ó He urged that the United States must declare war on Islam and all Muslim faithful. This puts him in the same category in hate mongering, as the likes of Meir Kahane, Baruch Goldstein, Daniel Pipes, David Horowitz and Peter Emerson. He had pushed legislation in 2007 to make adherence to ShariÕah a felony, punishable by up to 20 years in prison. Sadly, it is him and the likes of him, who are driving the conservative legislative agenda in this country. He is either the author of or the consultant for most of the anti-ShariÕah bills, which have been introduced. The American legislators, who have been led onto this path by people like Yerushalmi, in the name of patriotism, should realize that their actions are mutilating the values and the principles on which this country was founded.A majority of the anti-ShariÕah bills is considered to be, in the main, innocuous and inconsequential, emotive rather than practical, save SB1028, the State of Tennessee bill as originally proposed, which would have dangerously violated the basic human rights of Muslims, guaranteed in the constitution, by criminalizing the day to day acts of worship. The other acts of legislation have been rightly branded as: ÒA Solution in Search of ProblemÓ. However, there are some very complex legal implications, which cannot be overlooked.ShariÕah, meaning Òthe wayÓ or Òthe pathÓ encompasses many disciplines such as ritual worship, moral principles, trade, charity, dietary rules, monetary transactions, matrimony, inheritance as well as criminal law. Many of the ShariÕah rules have been absorbed into cultural norms and adherence to them is almost subconscious, such as the dietary rules. Although ritual worship is an essential part of religion, some Muslims pray and some donÕt and those who pray would do so even under the shadow of a guillotine. The criminal law (the ShariÕah penal code) is in abeyance in a majority of the Muslim countries, as secular criminal laws have taken its place. The laws of marriages, divorce and inheritance are in general followed, except that polygamy is now obsolescent among the common people. Most of the laws of ShariÕah, including the penal code, bear striking similarity to the laws of the Old Testament (Halacha) and those followed in early Christian communities. Reformist movements in Judaism and the Church in Christianity have amended those laws but since in Islam there is no Church, Pope or ÒreformÓ authority, the ShariÕah has remained immutable, except where the rules are amenable to ijtehad (dialectical derivation).There is a corpus of exegesis in ShariÕah law but its implementation however, has been effected with a varying degree of laxity.As for the criminal law, it must be noted that Muslims have lived under secular laws for ages without protestations. There are only two countries where ShariÕah law is applied, albeit selectively: Saudi Arabia and Iran. American Muslims have therefore no qualms about living under the law of the land. Civil laws however are a different matter. Let us take the example of India, home to 161 million Muslims (13.4%) among a total population of 1.2 billion. The criminal law is the law of the land and is applicable to every resident. Muslims are not clamoring for the imposition of hudud, qisas or taÕdhir (elements of religious criminal law). In civil matters, Muslims are allowed to follow their own Òpersonal lawÓ or opt for the secular law. Western countries would do well to consider this precedence.The Archbishop of Canterbury had proposed a similar procedure for the British courts, where arbitration, with the consent of the contestants, would amiably settle disputes without burdening the courts with costly trials and litigations. In any case, in the matters of divorce, inheritance, child custody and child support, the parties would have an option between the ShariÕah and the secular laws, whichever they think serves their interests best. This kind of arrangement, if mutually agreed upon by the parties and allowed by the courts, does in no way threaten the integrity and the tranquility of the society; it may on the other hand enhance them. Nevertheless, we must ensure that the womenÕs rights and the childrenÕs welfare are safeguarded by the courts in the best way possible. There will be times when the ShariÕah will serve women better than the statesÕ laws. In California recently a court ruled that meher payment (a contractual sum payable to a woman by her husband on divorce under the ShariÕah) violated the state law prohibiting spouses from ÒprofiteeringÓ from divorce. Loss to the woman in this case is obvious. In general the interests of the citizens as well as of the state would be best served when the courts are independent and have discretion Ñ not obligation Ñ in when to reference religious laws and when not to do so.**ÒForeignÓ Law and the U.S. Courts:**In many states legislation prohibiting the courts from considering ÒforeignÓ law or international law is being pushed with a vengeance. This raises a number of very complex legal issues, involving international treaties and trade. Compliance with international treaties, when ratified, is vouchsafed in the U.S. constitution and may be outside the jurisdiction of any one state. However, there may be areas of trade and labor laws, where complications may arise and hamper businesses of American companies.In the U.S. courts presently marriages contracted abroad and under the ShariÕah are recognized, so are divorces executed abroad. The integration of many immigrant families is based on this provision. In the matters of matrimony, parenthood, inheritance and execution of wills disputes do arise in courts and could not be settled without reference to ÒforeignÓ laws. There is a serious concern that the ramifications of ban on foreign law now or in the future may put strains on the justice system and adversely affect the social structure of the American society.**Islamophobia, the Underlying Reason:**It is hard to believe that the proponents of the ant-ShariÕah bill of Tennessee, as it was originally written, were unaware of its unconstitutionality. Clearly, their intent was provocation and their motive was historic religious prejudice. It is not uncommon in the American history and in the history of many other countries for hate groups to arise in certain political and economic circumstances and by their actions and rhetoric malign the very society whose wellbeing they claim to protect.

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| Propsed site of the new IslamicCenter near Ground zero |

It was said after 9/11 that Òhistory begins nowÓ or words to that effect. How true! Muslim Americans have been living in the full glare of history ever since, with their faces lit with bewilderment, although some governmental agencies, the top political leadership of both the parties, the law enforcement agencies and the leadership of almost every faith have helped to take the attention away from them. We still remember with gratitude the president of the United StatesÕ visit to a mosque in the aftermath of the tragic event and the kind words uttered. This brought out what was good in the American people and averted a possible catastrophe. We appeal to the same good nature of the American people not to heed to bigotry, prejudice and electoral polemics. America will lose its soul if it succumbs to religious intolerance. It will lose its reason for being.Muslims in America are a highly diverse community, consisting of almost every race, ethnicity and culture, including a large indigenous section. Among them are doctors, engineers, scientists, entrepreneurs and workers, enriching the economy with their contributions. There are Nobel laureates such as Ahmed Zewail news anchors such as Fareed zakaria and many sports celebrities. There are highly regarded congressmen and mayors in many cities.Muslim contribution in highlighting the moral values is an asset to the society, which should not be ignored. The mosques are not a threat to anybody but beacons of light. They are centers of spiritual uplift as well as of education, social activism, moral reformation and charity. Most mosques have prison visit programs, which have resulted in transforming many individuals into productive and law-abiding citizens. Many mosques in the inner cities have food pantries, counseling and crisis management programs. Above all they curtail social ills. Consider a man who comes to the mosque to pray early morning, early afternoon, late-afternoon, at sunset and at night, five times in Twenty-four hours, to renew his commitment to God. What are his chances of committing unsocial acts in between his prayers? If two million people do this in a society, is the society better off or worse?Source: [*The Muslim Observer*](http://muslimmedianetwork.com/mmn/?p=8673)*- Waheeduddin Ahmed, Ph.D.* |
| http://www.islamicity.com/global/images/photo/IC-Articles/shariaNo100__100x70.JPG  | During last year's Senate race in Nevada, GOP candidate Sharon Angle blithely asserted that Dearborn, as well as a small town in Texas, currently operate under Shariah law. And Minnesota congresswoman Michele Bachmann used the occasion of Osama bin Laden's death to tie the terrorist mastermind to the word: 'It is my hope that this is the beginning of the end of Shariah-compliant terrorism.'  |
| **Shariah-phobia in America** **6/21/2011 - Opinion Political - Article Ref: IV1106-4730Number of comments: 4Opinion Summary:**[**Agree**](http://iviews.com/comments/action.lasso.asp?-db=services&-lay=comments&-format=search.asp&-sortfield=Ref&-sortorder=Descending&-error=error.asp&-op=eq&SubjectID=IV1106-4730&-op=eq&PublishFlag=X&-op=eq&rating=F&-token=Agree&-max=10&-find)**:0**[**Disagree**](http://iviews.com/comments/action.lasso.asp?-db=services&-lay=comments&-format=search.asp&-sortfield=Ref&-sortorder=Descending&-error=error.asp&-op=eq&SubjectID=IV1106-4730&-op=eq&PublishFlag=X&-op=eq&rating=A&-token=Disagree&-max=10&-find)**:1**[**Neutral**](http://iviews.com/comments/action.lasso.asp?-db=services&-lay=comments&-format=search.asp&-sortfield=Ref&-sortorder=Descending&-error=error.asp&-op=eq&SubjectID=IV1106-4730&-op=eq&PublishFlag=X&-op=eq&rating=I&-token=Neutral&-max=10&-find)**:3 By:**[**Dr. Habib Siddiqui**](http://www.iviews.com/Articles/action.lasso.asp?-Search=search&-database=Services&-Table=Magazine&-noresultserror=error.asp&-Response=search.asp&-MaxRecords=10&-SortField=Pdate&-SortOrder=Descending&-op=eq&PFlag=X&-op=cn&S=V&-op=cn&search=Dr.%20Habib%20Siddiqui)**Iviews\* -**

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Are Muslim Americans trying to impose a Taliban-style Shariah law in the USA? Seemingly, the answer is 'yes', if you are a Republican politician. The idea that America is this close to having her constitution replaced by the Muslim Scripture - the Qur'an - used to be a fringe notion in the post-9/11 era of Islamophobia that was packaged, promoted and propagated by malicious "Islamist watchdog" bloggers, neocon pundits with some think tanks and pen-pushing zealots. But nowadays that absurd idea has inched closer to the mainstream, thanks to our Republican politicians. Truly, outside Ron Paul of Texas, I don't know of any serious Republican politician who has not tried to bank on this 'menace.'Newt Gingrich, the former speaker of the House, is the lead dog in this evil campaign. Last year, in his speech at the American Enterprise Institute (a neocon think tank) where he is a senior fellow, Gingrich said, "The fight against Shariah and the maddrassas and mosques which teach hatred and fanaticism is the heart of the enemy movement from which the terrorists spring forth... One of the things I am going to suggest today is a federal law which says no court anywhere in the United States under any circumstance is allowed to consider Shariah as a replacement for American law." Gingrich is a morally decadent person with a history of corruption and adultery, and has obvious reasons for opposing the Shariah or God's Law that could find him guilty for violating some of the Ten Commandments like 'Thou shall not commit adultery' and 'thou shall not covet thy neighbor's wife' and, thus, punished in this world, let alone his wretched state in the afterworld. But what about other Republican politicians? Are they, too, equally depraved, corrupt or morally bankrupt? Sarah Palin, Michele Bachmann and Rick Santorum don't agree on everything, but they all concur that we must stop Shariah law from being imposed upon America. Santorum, the former Pennsylvania senator, refers to Shariah as 'an existential threat' to the United States. During last year's Senate race in Nevada, GOP candidate Sharon Angle blithely asserted that Dearborn, as well as a small town in Texas, currently operate under Shariah law. And Minnesota congresswoman Michele Bachmann used the occasion of Osama bin Laden's death to tie the terrorist mastermind to the word: 'It is my hope that this is the beginning of the end of Shariah-compliant terrorism.' The GOP presidential hopeful Herman Cain, the CEO of Godfather's Pizza, declared in March that he would not appoint a Muslim to a Cabinet position or judgeship because 'there is this attempt to gradually ease Shariah law and the Muslim faith into our government. It does not belong in our government.' Most of these bigots have no clue what Shariah is, why it is a problem and where in the Qur'an to find it. God's Commandments in the Qur'an are not much different from those of the Torah (see below). ***1.****'So know that there is no god but Allah.' (*[*Qur'an 47:19*](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/47/47_19.htm)*) 'Thou shalt have none other gods before me.' (*[*Exodus 20:3*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2020:3&version=NIV)*,*[*Deuteronomy 5:7*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%205:7&version=NIV)*)****2.****'O my Lord! make this city one of peace and security: and preserve me and my sons from worshipping idols.' (*[*Qur'an 14:35*](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/14/14_35.htm)*) 'Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God...' (*[*Exodus 20:4-6*](http://bibleresources.bible.com/passagesearchresults.php?passage1=Exodus+20%3A4-6&version1=8)*,*[*Deuteronomy 5:8-10*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%205:8-10&version=NIV)*)****3.****'And make not Allah's (name) an excuse in your oaths against doing good, or acting rightly, or making peace between persons; for Allah is One Who heareth and knoweth all things.' (*[*Qur'an 2:224*](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/2/2_224.htm)*) 'Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.' (*[*Exodus 20:7*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2020:7&version=NIV)*,*[*Deuteronomy 5:11*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%205:11&version=NIV)*)****4.****'O ye who believe! When the call is heard for the prayer of the day of congregation, haste unto remembrance of Allah and leave your trading. That is better for you if ye did but know.' (*[*Qur'an 62:9*](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/62/62_9.htm)*) 'Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.' (*[*Exodus 20:8*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2020:8&version=NIV)*,*[*Deuteronomy 5:12*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%205:12&version=NIV)*)*

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***5.****'Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.'  (*[*Qur'an 17:23*](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/17/17_23.htm)*) 'Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.' (*[*Exodus 20:12*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2020:12&version=NIV)*,*[*Deuteronomy 5:16*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%205:16&version=NIV)*)****6.****'... whosoever killeth a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind, and whoso saveth the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind.' (*[*Qur'an 5:32*](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/5/5_32.htm)*) 'Thou shalt not kill.' (*[*Exodus 20:13*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2020:13&version=NIV)*,*[*Deuteronomy 5:17*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%205:17&version=NIV)*)****7.****'Slay not your children, fearing a fall to poverty, We shall provide for them and for you. Lo! the slaying of them is great sin. Nor come nigh to adultery. Lo! it is an abomination and an evil way. ' (*[*Qur'an 17:31*](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/5/5_31.htm)*-*[*32*](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/5/5_32.htm)*) 'Neither shalt thou commit adultery.' (*[*Exodus 20:14*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2020:14&version=NIV)*,*[*Deuteronomy 5:18*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%205:18&version=NIV)*)****8.****'O Prophet! ... they will not associate in worship any other thing whatever with Allah, that they will not steal, that they will not commit adultery (or fornication), that they will not kill their children, that they will not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood, and that they will not disobey thee in any just matter...' (*[*Qur'an 60:12*](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/60/60_12.htm)*) 'Neither shalt thou steal.' (*[*Exodus 20:15*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2020:15&version=NIV)*,*[*Deuteronomy 5:19*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%205:19&version=NIV)*)****9.****'...Conceal not evidence; for whoever conceals it his heart is tainted with sin. And Allah Knoweth all that ye do.' (*[*Qur'an 2:283*](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/2/2_183.htm)*) 'Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.Õ' (*[*Exodus 20:16*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2020:16&version=NIV)*,*[*Deuteronomy 5:20*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%205:20&version=NIV)*)****10.****'And strain not thine eyes toward that which We cause some wedded pairs among them to enjoy, the flower of the life of the world, that We may try them thereby. The provision of thy Lord is better and more lasting.' (*[*Qur'an 20:131*](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/20/20_131.htm)*) 'Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.' (*[*Exodus 20:17*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2020:17&version=NIV)*,*[*Deuteronomy 5:21*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy%205:21&version=NIV)*)* |

Gingrich's call for a federal law banning Shariah has gone unheeded so far. But at the local level, nearly two dozen states have introduced or passed laws in the past two years to ban the use of Shariah in court cases. The sponsor of an Oklahoma measure banning Shariah approved by voters last fall described it as "a pre-emptive strike." Gerald Allen, the Alabama state senator who sponsored a bill banning Shariah, when asked for a definition, could not say what it was. "I don't have my file in front of me," he told reporters. "I wish I could answer you better." In Tennessee, lawmakers sought to make following Shariah a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison - until they learned that their effort would essentially make it illegal to be Muslim in their state.

Anti-Muslim, conservative think-tanker Frank Gaffney declared preposterously last year that "Americans across this country are struggling to understand the true nature of the threat we face from Shariah. They are entitled to straight talk about the extent to which it is being insinuated, promoted, and legitimated not only in mosques but by banks, academic institutions, and government agencies." Like his buddies in the hate camp, he singles out Islam as the one religion that cannot be accommodated in any of these institutions. It is based on the scare-mongering notion that once a court allows a financial institute to offer Shariah-compliant financing, it won't take too long for an imam in a mosque to be allowed to flog an adulterer and an adulteress with a hundred stripes. ([Qur'an 24:2](http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/arabicscript/Ayat/20/20_131.htm))

Other Islamophobes, like the conservative Center for Security Policy, assert that all Muslims are bound to work to establish an Islamic state in the U.S. But if this assertion is true - and the very allegation that every Muslim in America is a national security threat - should not Dearborn, the Detroit suburb, which is home to the largest community of Arabs in the U.S., have seen the Islamic theocracy movement creeping in? After all, Muslims first moved to Dearborn nearly a century ago to work in the factories of the Ford motor company! And yet after five or six generations, Dearborn's Muslims have not sought to see the city run in accordance with the Shariah.

So, why this vicious accusation labeled against Muslim Americans? Are these politicians, who cry 'Shariah', engaged in one of the oldest and dirtiest political traditions - xenophobic demagoguery? Are they throwing around a word simply because it scares some voters, much like what the Nazis, in particular, did against the Jews of Germany and what the Christians, in general, did against Jews throughout history?

These demagogues forget that American courts are governed by American law, which has long provided that parties to contracts can provide for alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (such as arbitration). As noted last year by Andrew Silow-Carroll, Editor-in-Chief of the New Jersey Jewish News, among those alternative mechanisms is the beit din, or rabbinic law court. Every day Jews go before batei din to arbitrate real estate deals, nasty divorces, and business disputes. "In fact, according to the Beth Din of America," wrote Silow-Carroll, "Jewish law does not allow a Jew to be a plaintiff in a secular court without first obtaining permission from a Jewish court. Permitting people to settle their disputes in their own religious courts is not a 'replacement' of American law, but a time-honored expression of religious freedom and accommodation." If this be the reality, why a different yardstick for Muslims when they don't have even an equivalent of the Jewish Beth Din in America?

Never mind that most Muslim countries do not enforce the Shariah laws of punishment prescribed in the Qur'an, what is so striking about Gingrich and the other Sharia-phobes is their lack of faith in the Constitution, the American legal system, and the American people themselves.

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As Amy Sullivan recently noted in the USA Today, the anti-communist Red Scare of the 1950s made broad use of guilt by innuendo and warnings about shadowy conspiracies. She suggested, "If GOP candidates insist they are not doing the same thing to ordinary Muslims, they can prove it by explaining what they believe sharia is and whether they're prepared to ban the consideration of all religious codes from civil arbitration. Anything less is simply fear mongering."

The far right is long on fear mongering and short on providing supportive evidence. 'Shariah' has become their code word and symbol to exploit American voters' fears and engage in Islam- and Muslim-bashing without any push-back because nobody, including most of the candidates, knows what it is. They scare ordinary Americans with their monster, and then they want to take credit for saving the people from their own creation.

It's no surprise that two candidates could not resist playing the 'Muslim card' in the recent GOP debate. Herman Cain insisted, "There have been instances in New Jersey and Oklahoma where Muslims did try to influence court decisions with Sharia Law." Cain wants to question Muslims about their commitment to the Constitution 'to make sure we have people committed to the Constitution working for this country.' But he wouldn't do the same with Christians or Jews! Newt Gingrich could not afford to be left behind, and said: "I'm in favor of saying to people, 'If you're not prepared to be loyal to the United States, you will not serve in my administration,' period."

As a Muslim American, I would like to ask these Republican politicians: when did Bush's Global War on Terror become a war on American Muslims? Didn't GW Bush himself say on September 17, 2001: "America counts millions of Muslims amongst our citizens, and Muslims make an incredibly valuable contribution to our country?" "And they need to be treated with respect. In our anger and emotion, our fellow Americans must treat each other with respect," said Bush.

In closing, let me echo what Professor John Esposito wrote in his recent Washington Post article: "To those Republicans who continue to stoke the flames of fear and bigotry to attract media attention and benefit their own political careers, it's time to call a spade a spade, a bigot a bigot and stop those who would resurrect the intolerance of the past and add Muslims to a long list of groups that has included Jews, African Americans, World War II Japanese Americans and others who have been victims of religious discrimination and racism."

If the Republican politicians don't stop this hateful campaign against Muslim Americans, no Muslim would ever vote for them, and not even their cronies that once campaigned for Bush.

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