Part 3: Understanding History and Myths

Lesson 3.2

Essential Question

How does history influence the controlling narratives that fuel anti-Muslim racism today?

Enduring Understanding

Enduring histories of colonization, anti-Blackness, and Orientalism have shaped contemporary "us versus them" narratives about Muslims, which characterize them as barbaric, irrational, and dangerous.

Learning Outcomes

Students will know:
- Orientalism has influenced anti-Muslim sentiments long before the September 11, 2001 attacks.
- Orientalist narratives shape our understandings of Muslims, which have real repercussions in people's everyday lives.

Students will be able to:
- Explain the historical contexts that led to anti-Blackness, Orientalism, and anti-Muslim racism.
- Analyze how historical events fuel contemporary controlling narratives that justify and advance anti-Muslim racism in both its individual and institutional forms.

Standards:

- **SS.H.1.9-12:** Evaluate how historical developments were shaped by time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- **CCSS.RH.9-10.1**: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

Vocabulary:

- Orientalism
- Anti-Blackness
- Anti-Black racism
- (Controlling) Narrative
- Dichotomy/binaries

Time:

50-60 Minutes

Materials:

- Several printed copies of the three articles (accessible/electronic copies available based on need)
- Poster paper or small/medium whiteboards for group concept maps
- Markers

Procedure:

1. **Opener** (re-cap from previous lesson)
   a. Have students write/respond: What histories inform these narratives? (Continuation from Lesson 3.1)

2. **Jigsaw**
   a. Divide class into groups of 3-5 students. For the first round of the jigsaw, students will read and annotate their group's article together. During the second round of the jigsaw, new groups will be formed so that each article is represented in the group. Students will then discuss the main points in their article and work together to create a concept map. Remember to explain that they will read the article and annotate as needed to prepare for a small-group jigsaw discussion, whole class discussion, and a creative group project afterwards. To help facilitate fruitful discussions of the articles, encourage students to create a graphic organizer to help organize their thinking.
      1. Distribute the *Vox* article, Islamophobia as Racism, to groups.
      2. Distribute the *Boston Globe* article, Ferguson Must Force Us to Face Anti-Blackness, to groups.
      3. Distribute *Teen Vogue* article, Colonialism, Explained, to groups.

3. **Collaborative Creative Concept Maps**
   a. In the second jigsaw groups, students will work together to create concepts maps collaboratively that answer/speak to the essential question for the lesson: *How do the histories of Orientalism, anti-Blackness, and colonialism fuel the controlling narratives that support anti-Muslim racism today?*

4. **Share out:** Encourage groups to share their work and present their understanding of these interconnected histories to the class. This activity aims to help students draw connections between the histories of Orientalism, anti-Blackness, and colonization as well as give students opportunities to share their own thinking with their peers.

5. **Group Discussion** (time permitting): Teacher leads group discussion on histories that have led to these myths/forms of institutional racism.

6. **Reflection 1-2-3**
   a. Explain one way that the histories of Orientalism, anti-Blackness, and colonialism continue to reinforce anti-Muslim racism in your own community (community being as broad or as specific as you choose to define it).
   b. Name two things that people in your community are doing to fight against anti-Blackness, Orientalism/anti-Muslim racism, and/or colonialism.

    c. Think of a person in your life who is difficult to confront. Think of at least three strategies you could use to educate them on Orientalism, anti-Blackness, and colonialism.

Talking Points

- Anti-Muslim racism is informed by the logics of anti-Blackness, Orientalism, and colonialism. For example, the transatlantic slave trade included African Muslims and the police targeted the Nation of Islam during the Black freedom movement of the 1960s and 70s. *Servants of Allah* by Sylviane Diouf provides important insight into the experiences of enslaved African Muslims.
- Understanding Islamophobia as anti-Muslim racism is a shift from previous understandings of Islamophobia. It is important to understand this.
- Orientalism includes the use of racist tropes of non-Western and non-white people (particularly those from Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa) as dangerous, irrational, weak, deviant, and Other.
- The term Orientalism refers, in part, to the West's projection of an image of the East in opposition to the West. Through this lens, the West appears civilized, refined, and educated--the direct opposite of the barbaric and uncivilized East. This "us versus them" narrative justified colonialism. This means that Orientalism enables and limits what we and say about the East and the West. Edward Said, who coined the term, writes, "In short, Orientalism [is] a Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."
  - Anti-Blackness is the "absolute denial of Black and African humanity and autonomy. Defining humanity of white/western/European and non-Black people in opposition to Blackness."
- Anti-Blackness and Orientalism establish and in turn rely upon binaries, such as white vs. Black, East vs West, civilized vs barbaric/violent.
- Dichotomy, or binary, is the division of ideas/concepts/things/peoples into two contrasting or contradictory parts. Oftentimes, this involves giving differential value to one side of the binary over the other. We often define concepts, like whiteness, by its opposition (non-white).
- Thus, Orientalism, anti-Blackness, and colonialism work in tandem to dominate "the Other" and legitimize white supremacy.
- Through these enduring narratives, the United States government has argued that Islam is "irrational" and "savage," ultimately a threat to western, liberal values. To manage this threat, the United States has waged war to civilize, humanize, and secularize Muslim communities. This map provides an overview of the places the United States bombed in 2017, in the name of protecting national security.