

Forum

Latina Muslim Producers of Online and Literary Countermedia: A Case Study in Union City, New Jersey

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Since 9/11, US English and Spanish language media have reported on the rise in Latino/a conversion to Islam. Western(ized) media images I examined for this essay about Latinas converting to Islam raise suspicions over possible forced conversions, brainwashing, or abuse. What is evident and salient in these media portrayals, whether deliberately or unintentionally created, are the binaries (Western vs. non-Western, Christian vs. Muslim, and Arab vs. Latino) that limit understandings of how these women are self-empowered and make choices for themselves in their everyday lives as Latina Muslim converts. In effect, Western imperial ideologies and discourses in these media portrayals reinforce and normalize rigid state identitarian notions of Christian/Catholic Latinas living in Union City, New Jersey, a traditionally Catholic/Christian-majority and urban Cuban-majority/Latino immigrant enclave since the 1940s-1950s.¹ Now more alarming is this post-9/11 moment when “the Latino American Dawah Organization (LADO) estimated that Latina women outnumbered their male counterparts and reached 60 per cent,”² as part of a changing religious and ethnic demographic³ that includes Muslim Arab and South Asian

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populations amidst Latino/a populations. In my research, it soon became evident that a variety of media sources perceived Union City as a prime site of Latino/a Muslim conversion post-9/11. This essay offers a specific look at the way newsmedia has portrayed Latina Muslims in Union City and how the cultural productions of these women challenge simplistic and Islamophobic views of Latinas who have converted to Islam post-9/11.

Drawing on works of scholarship that offer Latina Muslim gender analysis, conversion and reversion narratives,⁴ and voices of Latina Muslims outside media portrayals, this paper centers local Latina Muslim cultural and feminist expressions in a case study of Union City. My academic interest in this topic is informed by my own ArabLatino identity and Muslim heritage and my desire to understand how Arab, Latino/a, and Muslim cultures converge in a Latino/a American or inter-ethnic context. Between 2010-2012, I visited the North Hudson Islamic Educational Center (NHIEC)⁵ in Union City several times. There, I spoke with Sheikh Mohammad Alhayek and several Latino/a Muslim and Arab members, including Nahela Morales and other individuals portrayed in media reports on the Union City Islamic community. I undertook participant observation at Friday prayer, prayer study, and Hispanic Muslim Day. I also attended two conferences, Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) Hartford (2011) and ICNA Baltimore (2017), at which I engaged with Nahela Morales, as well as Hernan Guadalupe and Wendy Diaz from *Hablamos Islam/Hablamos Islam Niños*.⁶ Morales and Diaz are both featured below.

In this paper, I perform a critical cultural analysis through ethnographic fieldwork that compares media portrayals of Latina Muslims in Union City to the cultural and feminist productions of Nahela Morales and Wendy Diaz. When Morales and I met, she was an active member at the NHIEC and the National Hispanic Outreach Coordinator⁷ for *WhyIslam*, a dawah project of ICNA. Since then, she has moved to Texas and become an indispensable community Latina Muslim leader and staff member for a Spanish-speaking Islamic Center, located in Houston, serving as the Director of Operations for *IslamInSpanish*, which inaugurated the center. Through her online blogging and writing, which I examine in this essay, Morales, who has at least twenty-two thousand followers⁸ on her Facebook public figure account, unapologetically articulates concerns about everyday life as a Latina Muslim, centering perspectives about cultural hybridity, religion, gender, and sexuality. Wendy Diaz is, according to her husband Hernan Guadalupe, the “mastermind” behind *Hablamos Islam/Hablamos Islam Niños*. Diaz has written and self-published several children’s books

(in some cases through community funding initiatives) for Latina/o Muslim children. These books center and dignify the children's hybrid culture and identity in a US immigrant Muslim context that privileges Arab and South Asian languages and cultures.

Together, these two women critique Westernized, Judeo-Christian, white supremacist understandings of Latinas converting to Islam and Latin and Muslim cultures they perceive as patriarchal. I incorporate ethnographic notes that illuminate how these women self-define their liminality and free-will as Latina Muslim subjects to empower and give voice to other Latina Muslim women and their children. I show how Morales and Diaz claim that they are not just objects of Muslim men, as often suggested in media portrayals, but empowered and liberated cultural makers of their lived knowledge in their own right. Ultimately, I argue that these women are ordinary yet powerful countermedia agents who celebrate their hybridity and support other sisters, as well as children, in confidently living out their own hybrid cultural identities despite rigid and Islamophobic ideologies of race, gender, and sexuality in US/Western media. I refer to them as "countermedia agents" because their cultural and feminist works offer alternative understandings of being a present-day Latina Muslim convert while challenging dominant discourses and simplified representations of Latina Muslim culture and identity. At the same time, these women also challenge Arab and South Asian Muslim leadership in their community by articulating their sense of cultural difference as Latina women. Ultimately, these women are building a better tomorrow of inclusion for all US Muslims and providing more awareness and a more nuanced understanding of Latino/a Muslim women and children, specifically in their cultural knowledge and hybrid identity.

This paper is organized into two larger sections. In the first section, I provide a literature review with several components. First, I examine how scholars have written about Western notions of women in Islam and explore how the media, including the US Spanish-language media, is complicit with standing imperial binaries and dominant-white Western feminisms that discourage Latina Muslim conversion. Second, I examine how scholars use border and cultural studies and queer of-color feminism to address the fluidity and liminal positioning of Latina Muslims within the Latino/a and Muslim communities they (un)belong to, as well as their need to voice and live their cultural knowledge outside static notions of Latina identity, gender, and sexuality. In the second section of this paper, I pair

media portrayals of two Union City Latina Muslim women that simplify Union City Latina Muslim converts' lived perspectives with ethnographic accounts that illustrate Nahela Morales' and Wendy Diaz's cultural productions of self-lived knowledge and Latina Islamic feminism, which challenges static Westernized and heteropatriarchal notions of Latina gender and sexuality. In effect, the second section mirrors the first section's two literature subsections by offering contrasting images of Union City Latina Muslims, portrayed either as flattened subjects (in the media) or as everyday women being actively vocal as liminal and hybrid subjects (as evidenced in their self-cultural knowledge production). The culmination of this essay compares these women's cultural productions as countermedia that articulate an alternative, translocal narrative of US Latina Muslim feminist agency to empower themselves and their communities and educate their audiences.

Latina Muslims, Western Notions of Women in Islam, and Latina Hybrid Identity and Knowledge

Western Notions of Women in Islam and Media Representations

My research challenges Western media's imperialist or Latin American Islamophobic ideologies and East-West binaries specifically through taking up US Latina Muslim subjectivity. I add to the growing literature on how Latina/o Muslims fall outside these ideologies and binaries among an often glossed Arab and South Asian Muslim community. Emily Dolezal writes that "Muslim women as represented in the US media tend to be subservient, oppressed, controlled by Muslim men, and forced to cover themselves."⁹ Dolezal suggests here that Muslim women are hardly ever portrayed as subjects with free will and serve to privilege the better positioning of Western Judeo-Christian women, that is, what Juliane Hammer calls "a useful backdrop for the projects of American and European feminists."¹⁰ Amira Akl explains that pioneering Arab-American scholar Edward W. Said documented how "mainstream media have long offered readers and viewers in the United States a demonized version of Islam... associated with ... domestic abusers, veiled and oppressed women, and tyrannized children... which in turn influence[s] the views of Islam held by Americans who are much more familiar with Judeo-Christian culture."¹¹ In light of these established, oversimplified portrayals of Muslim women in US/Western media, Zain Abdullah writes that "Islamic visibility or authenticity often meant showing up on the evening news in prepackaged form for mainstream consumption. It involved a well-crafted selection of certain figures and personalities by

media outlets, funding and governmental agencies.”¹² Abdullah indexes the intimate tie between media and state ‘prepackaging’ of recognizable Islamic figures that are all too often deemed foreign or non-Western by US/Western media viewers. In *Latino and Muslim in America: Race, Religion, and the Making of a New Minority* Harold Morales analyzes 140 articles written about Latino Muslims in the US English media between 2001-2011. His findings reveal that this media, “although not overly villainizing,” sustained a “highly reductive narrative,” with the majority of these articles that center mostly Latino/a conversion “cover[ing] up’ the complex and diverse character of [Latino/a Muslim] individual and groups.”¹³

Latino/a American media and public discourses about Islam ultimately posit that there is a need to save Latina women from converting to Islam post-9/11. Morales writes, “Spanish language media in the United States has...overtly represented Latino Muslims, and especially Latina Muslim women, negatively.”¹⁴ Martinez-Vazquez and Wilson describe how Khadija Rivera and a group of Latina Muslims organized a petition to discredit Spanish-speaking media and its representations of Islam and the mistreatment of women on Telemundo’s “Behind the Veil,” which aired on December 17, 2001.¹⁵ Spanish and Portuguese language media sources broadcast a Brazilian telenovela, “*O Clone*,” which was a tremendous success not only in Brazil but in all of Latino/a America.¹⁶ In a short Telemundo preview¹⁷ for *El Clone*, which orientalizes, sexualizes, and conflates Arab and Muslim culture with East-meets-West imageries of the taboo love between Jade (Muslim female protagonist) and Lucas (Christian male protagonist), Jade is filmed in sharply contrasting ways: she is either dressed in wind-blown silk hijabs that cover her from head-to-toe or scantily clad in gold-trimmed belly dancing garments. At the end, an older patriarchal figure slaps Jade after her lustful (and reciprocated) look at Lucas, shouting (in Spanish), “I told you to cover your face!” (“Te dije que te cubrieras el rostro!”). Evelyn Alsultany and Ella Shohat address the “heated discussions...on Telemundo forum topics...[that] cover a vast array of themes in and around *El Clone*’s portrayal of polygamy, the veil, the Muslim pillars of faith, [and] women’s role in Muslim society.”¹⁸ In these discussions, the treatment of women in Islamic society are deeply questioned and repudiated. Alsultany and Shohat explain, “[*El Clone*’s...narrative nonetheless reproduces a number of paradigmatic Orientalist tropes and binarist oppositions.”¹⁹ Martinez-Vazquez notes that the “media’s stereotyping and misrepresentations advanced the prejudice and marginalization of US Latina/o Muslims within the Latino community.”²⁰

Mestiza Consciousness and Latina Muslim Hybrid Identity

Latinas converting to Islam are at an intersection of different ethnic and religious cultures that each offer a complex narrative of liminal subjectivity and multiplicity outside traditional US/Western notions of Latina identity. My work contributes to the conversation among these literatures in examining how my US Latina Muslim interlocuters demonstrate a complex cultural identity of everyday personal agency through their articulations of hybrid subjectivity outside standard or binarist conventions of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Yesenia King and Michael P. Perez point out that Latina Muslims offer a contemporary example of women at the border, or “at the edge of patriarchal and colonial hegemony,”²¹ and draw from Gloria Anzaldúa’s borderland theory including mestiza consciousness. These authors posit that these women live at the border “at the margins of U.S. dominant society, Latina/o communities, and Arab- and South Asian- dominant Muslim collectivities...that create alternative identities,” evoking mestiza consciousness in them.²² Elena Aviles, whose work is discussed later in this essay, refers to mestiza consciousness as “a path [between borders] of hybridization of thought.”²³ In his study, Martinez-Vazquez also describes the sense of marginality and liminality lived by these Latinas. He writes, “They are considered ‘less’ Latina... by some members of the larger US Latino community and ‘not necessarily’ as good Muslims by members of the larger US Muslim community...they are members of both communities while yet encountering isolation within both.”²⁴ Sandra Cuevas’s empirical study on female Maya Muslims in Chiapas, Mexico speaks to how their “ethnic identities are redefined in relation to Islam...[which] does not undermine their ethnic identities... it is possible to be both Muslim and Maya at the same time.”²⁵ Even while these women are at the margins of these dominant cultures, King and Perez affirm that they hold a mestiza consciousness that “enables adaptability and flexibility...to negotiate [for themselves] their identities to both belong and not belong.”²⁶ Their subaltern power or agency ‘to both belong and not belong’ suggests that through their mestiza consciousness, Latina Muslims use their hybrid and borderland positioning (a concept King and Perez draw from theorists Bonnie Mitchell’s and Joe Feagin’s theory of oppositional culture) “to resist and survive oppression by creating oppositional cultures that provide a coherent [self-formulated and empowered] set of values, beliefs, and practices which mitigates the effects of oppression [and] which is distinct from [the surrounding dominant or] majority culture[s].”²⁷ That is, Latina Muslim perspectives challenge several “patriarchal and colonial” cultures (US-dominant, Latino, Arab and South

Asian immigrant and Muslim) at the same time, allowing women to pursue what they see as a better quality of life and empowerment for all Latina Muslims.

Similarly, King and Perez help us to understand that Latina Muslims are articulating their own “appropriated Islam,” one that falls outside expected traditional female roles in Islam and challenges marginality within dominant Arab and South Asian US immigrant Muslim communities. King and Perez explain, “These Latinas expressed a common view that Muslim identity is multidimensional, and their appropriations played a key role in navigating their multiple marginalities. They voiced an understanding of Islam as a spiritual site of practical alternatives and solutions to [everyday] real problems.”²⁸ In my view, the Latina Muslims I write about in this essay demonstrate how women are appropriating Islam and ‘voicing’ their complex cultural identity and their lived cultural knowledge as hybrid subjects making part of the ethnic makeup of today’s American Muslim communities.

On Union City Latina Muslims: Pairing Media Portrayals and Ethnographic Observations

In this section, I look at two media clips that portray Latinas who have converted to Islam and juxtapose them with ethnographic observations of Nahela Morales and Wendy Diaz as cultural producers of knowledge that challenge the media’s simplistic and orientalist representations of Latina Muslim women and their everyday lives. Both clips feature the same Union City Muslim community from the North Hudson Islamic Educational Center (NHIEC). My overall intention is not to make generalizations about these media networks, but to consider how Western notions of women in Islam influenced their specific coverage.

The first clip is from Telemundo, a US-based Spanish-language television network owned by NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises, and is narrated by the reporter Ramon Zayas. I show that the Latina Muslims in this clip are portrayed in ‘prepackaged’ ways, according to Akl, as submissive to men and under constant interrogation rather than having the opportunity to lead the conversation and speak affirmatively for themselves. We see the women “interpellated,” in a case “where individuals recognize themselves as subjects through ideology...illustrating how subjects can be complicit in their own domination.”²⁹ I pair this clip with ethnographic fieldwork that examines Latina Muslim Wendy Diaz’s founding and establishing of

Hablamos Islam/Hablamos Islam Niños and how her influential Islamic feminist leadership and authorship of children's books center and dignify Latina/o Muslim culture, gender, and sexuality for women and children within dominant US mainstream and Arab and South Asian Muslim cultures.

In the second clip, which comes from CCTV, a global television network based in China that offers different language channels, including one in English, I argue that the producers do place the Latina Muslim women in brief positions of agency and self-empowerment. Yet, both clips instill ethnic boundaries and religious binaries that maintain Latina Muslims as vulnerable or trapped by Muslim patriarchy. I pair this clip with ethnographic engagements with Nahela Morales, a Latina Muslim local and national community leader who unapologetically and forcefully articulates her Latina Muslim perspective on getting used to wearing her hijab, single parenthood, and her disclosed relationships with men. In effect, Morales' blogs are examples of everyday Latina Muslim Islamic feminist writings that serve to center and empower Latina Muslim and non-Latina Muslim women with similar experiences.

Telemundo Reporting: Crunch Time for Latina Muslim Converts

Most of the reporting of this clip³⁰ is seemingly objective and neutral regarding the emergence of Islam in geographic areas that include Miami, Chicago, New York, and New Jersey. Yet, during the final minute, the clip suggests anxieties over Latina Muslim conversion. In the first three minutes, the clip is overwhelmingly male-focused and includes separate brief interviews of Alexander Robayo, an Ecuadorian convert to Islam, NHIEC's Sheikh Alhayek, and Rev. Carlos Mullins,³¹ an Argentine Catholic priest affiliated with St. Dominic's Church and other parishes in the Bronx. Mullins's emphasis that we are in a historic moment which "finally tolerates" Catholics seeking out new faiths adds to the overall neutral tone of the coverage. Revealingly, none of the men are asked questions before they speak. But in the last minute, the female interviewees are subject to a more overt line of interrogation that changes the tone of the reporting.

The sharp difference between the amount of coverage given to male and female interviewees suggests that the media possesses a great deal of anxiety about Latina Muslim converts. The dissimilarity in time and space offered to each gender reifies Westernized notions of unequal voice and agency for women in Islam. This reporting conveys a precarious feeling for women in this community because there is only a less than one-minute

segment allotted to two female interviewees, in addition to the line of questioning performed by the reporter. Unlike in the male representations in this clip, no personal details are given about the women, except Linda Rodriguez's and Diana Maria's names, which reinforces a sense of not only anonymity but also constriction that resonates with oppressed and bounded women. Like the men, the women are filmed indoors, leaving the feeling that none of them are truly integrated within the larger Christian/Catholic fabric of Union City. Featuring the women only inside the mosque—briefly and less independently than the men—ultimately sensationalizes a 'pre-packaged' image of trapped or subdued women.

Further, the reporter's direct questioning of the women overpowers the definitive responses from these female subjects. At first, the interview starts similarly to the men's, when interviewee Diana Maria confidently states, "Your brother can be black, he can be a millionaire, but they are shoulder to shoulder while worshipping God." Diana Maria's use of "brother," in my view, articulates gender equality and momentarily breaks the Westernized notion of how Muslim women are ultimately denied their voice, rights, and agency by men. The reporter proceeds with an open interpellation that clouds Diana Maria's assertion and reinforces the suspicion that Muslim women are oppressed. He says, "In the mosque, the women pray behind the men but they don't view that as inequality in Islam. They say it's not like Latino machismo." In effect, the reporter's statement implies skepticism about equality for women converts as well as doubt that Latina women have it worse with Latino Christian men. Linda Rodriguez proceeds to answer that praying behind the men is not machista, but instead, "a masculine protection toward us because we are a feminine symbol. We are something delicate." Her assertive stance is followed by a question, "At any given moment, do you feel inferior?" This question reveals that Rodriguez's firm answer was evaded; in asking a similar question around issues of oppression, vulnerability, and abuse, the question both reifies Western notions of unequal treatment of Muslim women and sustains the precarious outlook for Muslim women converting to Islam. To that question, Rodriguez briefly and unwaveringly answers, "No, on the contrary." But even then, one can hear the reporter moving to a follow-up question that is inaudible or possibly edited out. The line of interrogation in this compressed segment leaves behind a production of interpellation and deep skepticism over these women's safety, despite their firm answers.

Under these circumstances, we can see how the women in this segment are unable to lead the conversation affirmatively. Nabil Echchabibi

asserts that “Even if Muslim Americans could speak...their [prepackaged] visibility in the media remain[s] largely framed around a trope of the defensive Muslim who is only invited to react and whose lived experience as an American is perpetually perceived as in question.”³² This is the position in which Diana Maria and Linda Rodriguez find themselves during the segment’s open and critical interpellation. As previously quoted, Akl points out how Western mainstream media offers “a demonized version of Islam...associated with veiled and oppressed women and tyrannized children.”³³ These representations resonate with the interpellation of this coverage that defends modernized (even machista) Christian Latino family life and patriarchy over ‘premodern’ Muslim family life and patriarchy. Yet according to Martinez-Vazquez’s study, “many women mentioned machismo, which their culture and Christianity promote, as something they do not like within their US Latino tradition.”³⁴

Latina at the Forefront of Cultural Resources for Latina/o Muslim Youth

In 2011, I briefly met Wendy Diaz and her husband, Hernan Guadalupe, creators of Hablamos Islam, at ICNA’s Hartford Conference. In the same year, Neda Hashmi, a reporter from The Muslim Link, featured this couple’s mission in the article, “Couple Fills Void in Spanish Books for Muslim Children.”³⁵ Diaz and Guadalupe provide Muslim books³⁶ for bilingual or Spanish-only speaking Latino Children in Latino/a America to counteract the dearth of resources for Spanish-speaking and culturally Latino/a Muslim children. In 2017, at ICNA’s Baltimore conference, Guadalupe explained to me that Hablamos Islam is a family enterprise but “Wendy is the mastermind for the project.” In Hashmi’s article, Diaz explains that after attempting to translate Muslim children’s books and getting no word from publishers, “I decided to take the matter into my own hands and write books myself.”³⁷ This powerful act shows her strong sense of self-determination. Hashmi also centers Wendy Diaz’s intellectual authority, which is independent of her husband’s. Hashmi quotes Diaz: “At first my own children were my only motivation, but the more I thought about other kids in Latin America, Spain, and in the US whose first language is Spanish and whose parents are Muslim, then they all become my motivation.” Diaz’s vision here is a geographically expansive transnational and global project of youth activism, which Hablamos Islam has accomplished with the launching of several books self-published through personal enterprise and community fundraising.³⁸

Hablamos Islam Niños is a successful organization funded by the community that has self-published over ten books specifically for children in Latino/a America. In my ethnographic account from 2011, I wrote about Diaz's discussion at the session:

Wendy talked about an organization that she and her husband started up called *hablamosislam.com*. Similar to the panel I went to about educating Muslim youth at home because schools had a lack of mentoring and adequate Muslim role models, the mission of this married couple is to provide literature for Spanish speaking children/families with children books to buffer the loss of Islamic cultural capital in the schools and even at home [that also represents Latino/a cultural identity, namely through Spanish language and cultural markers in the storylines]. Wendy said that there are hardly any reading materials on Islam at the time she decided to put together children's book for Latin American/Latina/o kids.

Based on this account, Wendy articulates her leadership concerning advocacy for hybrid Latin American/o children who are in need of literature that celebrates their mixed identities, given that little to no resources exist to help them navigate their world. Even while she posits that there is a general need to center Islamic cultural capital in public schools, she further complicates this by authoring books for Latin American/o Muslim children to celebrate their Hispanophone and Muslim identities in dignified ways. This literature buffers them against the constant misrepresentation in media and absence from schools' textbooks. In effect, Wendy's vision for this project is to instill a positive self-mirroring and equal representation of Latina/o cultural and Muslim identity in these children.

Before *Hablamos Islam*, Latino/a Muslim children had virtually "no options" for supportive resources that they could relate to that dignified their race and hybrid cultural identity. In an era of streamlined educational resources, Latino/a children's racial, class, and cultural positioning are left out or marginalized. Jesse S. Gainer details the importance and legacy of Tomas Rivera's children's books to Chican@/Latin@ children.³⁹ Gainer writes that Rivera's motivation worked against Latino/a children not being represented in the world around them. Similarly, Diaz's works are tools that combat the further isolation of Muslim children. Latino/a Muslim children also face a "double-edged" marginality⁴⁰ between dominant (white-middle class) US society and a US Arab and South Asian immigrant Muslim community. At the 2017 ICNA convention in Baltimore, I attended a panel that discussed the need to provide and create more dignified resources for

Latino/a Muslim children and their hybrid cultural identity that empower and put them at the center of Arab and South Asian majority Islamic schools and classrooms.⁴¹

In a 2016 piece she wrote for MomsRising.org, entitled “Fifteen Years of Hate, A Lifetime of Lessons,” Diaz explains how she has grown committed to changing Western notions of Islam in her overall career and describes her goals as a children’s writer. She writes, “I have spent the last 10 years not only raising my children, but also working on outreach projects with our community to educate others about Islam...to speak to others and dispel stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam...in English and Spanish...in newspapers, magazines, and websites.”⁴² Diaz’s work to “dispel stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam” motivates her children’s book authorship. In the same piece, Diaz says she writes to challenge the kind of world “her children’s generation is coming into.” In speaking here about her role as a mother, she conveys an activism on behalf of children that compels her to write “to [provide her children with] the love and security they need so they can build the confidence to confront whatever trials they will face with dignity and courage.” And as quoted earlier in Hashmi’s piece, Diaz’s children are also part of the Latino/a Muslim audience motivating this work.

I focus next on one of Diaz’s works, *Mi Mami Tiene Un Velo*,⁴³ to highlight her celebration of Latina Muslim gender and sexuality and its potential impact on her youth readers. I demonstrate below how this book helps Latino/a Muslim children view their mothers and other female figures in their lives with “confidence, love, and dignity” despite negative images of Muslim women in the Western world. Diaz’s book helps forge a world where a generation of new Latino/a Muslim children can incorporate themselves and see positive depictions of their mothers and other female figures despite the constant negative and ambivalent Western stereotypes and public discourse. Part of this positive outcome involves authors skillfully and powerfully constructing their narratives. Elena Avilés writes about the value of queer writer Gonzalez’s use of the self in children’s literature, stating, “By writing herself into fictional reality, [Gonzalez] articulates a perspective... that allows her to visualize and articulate from that queer positionality. And that queer oppositional stance brings a new awareness of herself where she is able to reframe her gender as something positive and empowering.”⁴⁴ Similar to Gonzalez, Diaz “writes herself into fictional reality” but from a non-Western feminist and mestiza consciousness perspective that “reframes her gender as...positive and empowering.” Diaz, in my view, uses her personal story, oppositional feminist perspective, and “double edged

marginality” to articulate a dignified space and desired future of love, confidence, and tolerance for this generation of Latino/a Muslim children.

Diaz employs several techniques that offer an oppositional feminist stance while centering her Latina identity and offering a deeply affirmative and positive portrayal of the Latina Muslim moms/women in their lives. Diaz’s use of Spanish conveys to Latin American and Latino/a Muslim children the importance and value of their language in an Arab-language-centric Muslim culture. In a second edition, and in *Hablamos Islam Niños*’s other children’s books, Diaz provides a bilingual text that addresses the cultural identity of many US Latino/a Muslim children who navigate both languages every day with their families and in communities such as Union City. Avilés writes that Gonzalez’s “uses of visual and written language reverses the absence of storylines in children’s literature that celebrate the diversity of subjectivity among ...Latin@ communities as well as additional ethnic and historically oppressed communities.”⁴⁵ Diaz similarly uses language to positively center Spanish-only or English- and Spanish-written storylines that are often lost or silenced within these children’s two dominant communities.

As for the “visual” aspect of *Mi Mami Tiene Un Velo*, Diaz uses an array of vivid, bold and/or clashing colors that shout against a white backdrop. These color choices are deeply symbolic of her oppositional stance (against white middle class society and the Arab and South Asian immigrant Muslim community) that “reverses the absence of storylines” and dignifies them for Latino/a Muslim children. The white backdrop could also be seen as a space for children to fill in for themselves regarding their sense of self (i.e. racial and cultural hybrid positioning) amidst the two dominant societies they live in as liminal subjects. Diaz employs what Elena Avilés describes as “chillante [shouting] aesthetics as a colorful cry for social justice...to a new generation of readers and thinkers.”⁴⁶ Many of the children’s verses are “chillante” in the ways they praise their mothers’ personal choices, for example, in verses like, “Mami se pone el velo, y dice que nunca se [lo] quitará!” (“Mom puts on her hijab and says she’ll never take it off!”)⁴⁷ and “A mi me gusta que Mami se ponga su velo, es tan genial!” (“I like it when my mother puts on her veil, it’s so great!”).⁴⁸ The exclamations in these verses are to be read in an assertive, confident and bold manner that celebrates and dignifies the mother’s choice to wear her hijab. In the end, the book becomes a space to honor mothers and other female figures amidst negative and dehumanized depictions of Muslim women in Western ideologies and texts. Diaz ends her poem, which is to be read aloud by young readers,

“Mi Mami es musulmana y por eso es especial!” (“My mother is Muslim and that’s why she is special!”). In other words, Diaz’s emphasis that being Muslim “is why my mother is special” humanizes and celebrates the mother’s choice to be a Latina Muslim, with the goal of creating a more tolerant world.

Diaz’s feminist oppositional stance conveys to children that she is special not because she fulfills traditional patriarchal roles but because she is an independent thinker. In my view, Diaz’s work amplifies female volition in several ways. First, neither the father/husband nor other male figures are present throughout this story, which further centers the mother’s presence, choices, and independent thinking in her everyday life. Second, Diaz portrays the mother driving to the supermarket, the plaza, the bank, and the school.⁴⁹ The author shows the Mom outside of the home and outside of the mosque, in contrast to ‘prepackaged’ media depictions that portray Muslim women as restricted to their homes and their mosques “behind the men.” Even more, this image portrays Muslim women as providers and social networkers for their families, which implies equality in the everyday lived gender roles.⁵⁰

CCTV on Latina Muslims: A Fairer Spotlight with a Spotty Ending

In the second TV clip, from CCTV, the portrayal of Latina Muslims is arguably fairer than in the first. Overall, Latina women are at the center of this reporting and portrayed as being freer than in the first clip. Nick Carper, the reporter, does not directly interrogate the Latina Muslim interviewees, which ultimately conveys a less suspicious portrayal of Latina women as brainwashed or captive to abusive Muslim men. The fact that CCTV is a Chinese media network may account for a break in ideology regarding the portrayal of women under Western notions of Islam.

Further, the women in the CCTV clip⁵¹ are portrayed as assertive and at ease. Throughout this clip, Nadia makes bold statements that are juxtaposed with reporters’ observations and facts. Avant-Mier examines how the dominant and imperial US rock music project undergoes “[political] dialogical processes [in media] that are not only linear”⁵² with hybrid and local forms of rock music.⁵³ In much the same way, the dialogic communication between the reporter’s statements and Latina Muslim perspectives on this TV clip, offered without open interrogation, places these hybrid women in positions of authority and agency as third space/subaltern subjects who speak and lead the conversation—if only briefly.

In one example, the newscaster explains, “Even while the majority [of Hispanics] are brought up within the Catholic Church, the latest census suggests that many of them are turning to Islam.” With this statement, the newscaster sets up the idea that Latinos are converting to Islam despite ethnic boundaries and binaries between Christianity and Islam. Turning over to CCTV field reporter Nick Harper, he says of Nadia, who converted to Islam six years ago, “She thought her nationality [as a Uruguayan Latina] would stand in the way of exploring Islam.” Then Nadia explains, “I didn’t even know there were Latino Muslims.” In effect, the message here is that Nadia was, at first, limited to Western notions of Hispanic identity that tied her to ethnic boundaries as a Christian Latina. After finding out that Latinos/as had converted before her, it was her own free choice to become Muslim. Yet, the end of the reporting raises a familiar “suspicion” regarding the women’s perspective. Harper states, “New Muslims like Nadia still face suspicion from those closest to them.” The camera focuses on Nadia, who says, “A lot of people stopped talking to me. Umm, my boss told me that I was retarded. That I was brainwashed. That something was wrong with me. I lost my job.” While she is vocal and critical about her friends’ and boss’s suspicions, it raises questions of ‘brainwashing’ and mental health drawn from a dominant Western Judeo-Christian frame of reference. In light of the possible dialogic communication with Latina Muslims, Nadia’s final words gesture to the fears regarding Islamic conversion which cast out converts from state ideologies of Latina identity.

Nahela Morales: On Hijab and Single Motherhood

Since meeting Morales in 2010 at the mosque in Union City, I have seen how her role as a Latina Muslim leader has grown within the community both translocally and within the US. For example, Morales has worked on building resources for the Latino/a Muslim community in Union City as well as organizing and getting funds for a homeland trip to Chiapas⁵⁴ to provide resources for Latina Muslims there. She also helped organize and participate in several Latino/a Muslim panels at ICNA conferences, as mentioned earlier. Further, Morales has appeared as a community figure on several news reports concerning the rise of Latino/a Muslims since 9/11. Morales blogs on an array of current topics that range from Islamophobia and interfaith connections to Islamic celebrations and Muslim pride, which demonstrates her ability and will to share her voice and perspective to empower others (especially new converts or single mother Muslim women). In light of this, I examine her April 2017 blog post, “What Does My Hijab

(Veil) Mean to Me? #HIJABTOME,” in which she articulates and celebrates her devotion to her hijab while addressing older, questioning, and newly converted sisters.

At the beginning of her reflection, Morales opens up with self-empowered assertions about why she wears her hijab, which she says challenges Western notions of Muslim women’s place in Islam:

My hijab is so much more than “just” a piece of cloth on my head. (...) My hijab screams loud and clear I am Muslim and my faith is Islam. It’s my suit of armour, it protect[s] me and gives me strength. It’s a constant reminder of my obedience towards my Creator Allah subhna wa taa’la. Many assume that my hijab oppresses me when in reality it empowers me, it liberates me from today’s dictations from society on how am [I] am suppose[d] to look.

In this text, Morales starts off by affirming that her hijab, rather than being a burden, has taken on a great personal spiritual value that has helped her to grow as an individual Latina Muslim. Soon after, she declares its role in her everyday life. Here, she articulates that wearing her hijab is her choice to “obey” her creator rather than the men around her. Her declaration disrupts stereotypes of Muslim women as being oppressed and subservient to Muslim men, lacking voice or agency. Similarly, Maria, a Latina Muslim interviewee in Martinez-Vazquez’s study, explains, “In terms of the hijab, it is not oppressive; in fact, wearing it forces people to deal with you in response to what you say and what you do [not how you look]...Women have to wear hijab because God commands it. No man can force you to wear hijab. If there are men who force you to wear hijab, it does not count... It’s a woman’s choice [to do so].”⁵⁵ Maria’s statement supports Morales’ view that Muslim women choose to wear their hijab as a sign of their spiritual relationship and submission to Allah, not to the men in their lives. Maria also complements Morales’s view of how the hijab is empowering. Both women agree that wearing the hijab has helped them to have a voice equal to men’s, rather than being judged first by their appearance, as women in Western societies often are.

Yet, Morales explains that wearing the hijab at the beginning was not easy. She writes, “As a revert, one of the hardest challenges for me was understanding the true meaning of hijab. Even though I grew up admiring the Virgin of Guadalupe/Virgen Mary with her veil, it was still a bit difficult accepting this dramatic change.” Here Morales is talking to new Latina converts or older Latina Muslims wavering over the extent to which they will

wear their hijab. Morales's reverence and devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe suggests a cultural religious past as a Mexican-origin Latina that has stayed with her in her present and has helped her to assume her everyday use of the hijab. Nikkeshia Wilson notes strong similarities between Latina 'marianismo'⁵⁶ and Muslim women's gender and sexuality, both of which exist in cultures of "brute patriarchy...and an inability to progress under modernity."⁵⁷ While this cultural similarity between Latino/a and Islamic cultures is highlighted by Morales's Latina Muslim hybridity in her writing, she does not situate it against gender oppression by men. Morales writes to her sisters that this "dramatic change" evolved with a greater spiritual relationship that came with "tons of dua" (supplication or invocation). Similarly, in Cuevas's study, Muslim women in Chiapas resisted when Spanish Muslim leaders sought to force them to wear their hijab "all the time."⁵⁸ In the end, these women chose to follow other Muslim leaders who did not impose such narrow-minded and mistaken views of Islam. Thereafter, Morales "decided to wear [it for myself] and completely embrace my hijab with respect, determination and full conviction" due to her connection to Allah, only when she was ready and not to enact submission to Muslim men. She emphasizes that doing so meant embracing her spiritual relationship with God and not promoting patriarchy.

Morales is a single mother, as declared in her March 2017 post, "Breaking Stereotypes: Living as a Muslim Latina Single Mom." Therefore she also speaks to those Latinas who need support and empowerment to live confidently, against the negative stereotypes about them within the Latino and Muslim community. Maria also explains that 'unmarried women' like Morales could also be single divorced Moms: "But you see women walking around wearing hijab and niqab, and many are not married. So, who is forcing them to wear these things? No one is forcing them. It is their relationship with God." In other words, Maria's perspective further acknowledges the relationship to Allah that women have, unrelated to the presence or exit of men in their lives.

Similarly, Morales shares in this second blog post her deep relationship to Allah amidst the struggles and stigmas endured by (Latina) Muslim single mothers that challenge unfair perceptions of them, especially within the Muslim community. In her post she opens up, saying,

For a new Muslim, and a Latina, this stereotype may be even more emphasized. However, single motherhood is no more than another test from Allah, and the person being tested with it is only fulfilling their duty in

this life: to worship and struggle for a promised reward. Single motherhood is a life of hard work and sacrifice, and so it may be that the reward is much greater. Only Allah knows.

Keeping in mind that Morales celebrates and wears her hijab, her reflection conveys a firm and spiritual relationship with God through “worship and struggle [outside the control of patriarchy]...[amidst] single motherhood [being] a life of hard work and sacrifice.” Further, the struggle resonates with how Morales states from the very beginning that her single motherhood as a “new Muslim and a Latina” is “more emphasized,” or in other words, is viewed with more scrutiny by the Muslim community, which may be suspicious of her Latina sexuality of Christian/secular origins. While focused on her evolving spiritual relationship to Allah by embracing her hijab, Morales shares here the struggles she faces as a single Latina mother. She also directed herself to a broader audience by reposting this blog on her Facebook public figure account on July 31 with a preface generalizing the ostracization of single Muslim mothers. Ultimately, Morales powerfully uses her lived experience and voice to persistently challenge the unfair treatment of single mothers within the Muslim community. Morales’s Latina Muslim feminist and activist writing offers empathy, hope, and empowerment to Latina and non-Latina women in similar circumstances.

Cultural Knowledge Production as Countermedia

Scholars have written about the ways in which Muslim women like Nahela Morales and Wendy Diaz are defining their positionality through cultural production that complicates the flattening of American Muslim women through media (mis)representations. Emily Dolezal asserts that “Muslim women in the United States increasingly are struggling to be understood in their own terms,”⁵⁹ while the *Azizah* editor-in-chief describes the magazine’s mandate as “allow[ing] American-Muslim women to lead conversation rather than be the topic of conversation.”⁶⁰ Similarly, Nabil Echchaibi posits other ways Muslim women ‘lead the conversation’: “Muslim[ah]s [have become]...agents of media production in a variety of platforms like web blogging, social media, and film...[and are] increasingly cognizant of the critical importance of media production as an effective mechanism to fight against their marginalization and otherization in public discourse.”⁶¹ He cites Muslimah Media Watch as an example: “a blogging site where a group of feminist Muslims critique the representations of Muslim women

in popular culture and advocate for a greater visibility of their voices.”⁶² Furthermore, Amira Akl suggests that “for disenfranchised groups such as American Muslim[ah]s, the Internet can serve as a space for engaging in activism by publishing positive images of Arab and Muslim[ah] culture... however humble this type of individual activism may be, the Internet allows mainstream Americans a peek into the American-Muslim[ah] experience.”⁶³ In effect, Akl suggests that American Muslim(ah) cultural producers face a disadvantage when matched against powerful US/Western static media productions. Despite this power structure, she and other scholars are hopeful that these subaltern cultural productions—while ‘humble’—are effective in working “to foster intercultural and interreligious relations”⁶⁴ and challenge Islamophobic binaries and ‘prepackaged’ misrepresentations of Muslim(ah)s. Thus, they are a countermedia of proactive, self-empowered individuals attempting to bridge their lived experiences and cultural knowledge. Countermedia provide a genuine and complex understanding of people and their multiplicities amidst simplified and Westernized state notions of race, ethnicity, and gender.

Conclusion

I have examined the crossroads that US Latina Muslims find themselves in, between rigid Western notions of Islam and their self-representations at the border of different communities and power structures. I offered two examples of media portrayals of Union City’s post-9/11 wave of Latina Muslim conversion that, whether deliberately or unintentionally, bind these women to Western Islamophobic, misogynist, and nativist ideologies in a demographically changing local context. Further, I also examined how Spanish-language media are influenced by and complicit in the promotion of these ideologies. Second, I paired these media portrayals with ethnographic fieldwork that offers a more complex everyday understanding of how some Latina Muslim women are vocal and active about their hybrid cultural identities. Specifically, I turned to two pioneering Union City Latina Muslim leaders, Nahela Morales and Wendy Diaz, whose cultural productions offer an urgent countermedia of oppositional space and feminist agency with translocal and global dimensions. This countermedia allows Morales and Diaz to speak freely from their hybrid positioning to critically impact different audiences. Importantly, it also demonstrates the ways in which Latina Muslims are not simply assimilating into Arab and South Asian Muslim communities but interpreting and appropriating Islam from their hybrid ethnic and gender positioning. Morales’s and Diaz’s

courageous works are a testament to what's arrived: a generation of fearless Latina Muslims from within what Morales describes as the "third wave," whose countermedia embrace the fluid intersections of identity they face while "carv[ing] out' and add[ing] their own identity into America's diverse landscape."⁶⁵

Endnotes

1. Yolanda Prieto, *The Cubans of Union City: Immigrants and Exiles in a New Jersey Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 21-25.
2. Zain Abdullah, "American Muslims in the Contemporary World," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Islam*, eds. Juliane Hammer and Omid Safi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 77.
3. Here are some examples. First, in Hernan Guadalupe's taping of his oral history, found on YouTube.com, he notes (at 8:55) that Holy Cross, a former Catholic School, is now an Islamic elementary and high school in Union City. He says in Spanish, "This shows how much Islam is growing in this community..." Guadalupe, an Ecuadorian-American/Latino convert, is co-founder of Hablamos Islam/Hablamos Islam Niños with Wendy Diaz (his wife), both discussed in this essay. Here is the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yecpsa5vnq0&t=2114s>. Second, in this BBC clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXs-Kpvun3Q>), the reporter states (at 1:31) that the North Hudson Islamic Educational Center mosque is the same building where Union City's Cuban American Center once was.
4. According to Harold Morales's *Latino & Muslim in America: Race, Religion, and the Making of a New Minority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), journalists have generally portrayed Latinos/as "converting" (rather than "reverting") to Islam in the post-9/11 context—implying something

- “new and foreign rather than something from the past and familiar” (12). According to Morales, the mainstream media frames Latino/a Muslims as a new minority that will be incorporated into the American multicultural community of standing imperial racial and cultural histories. In contrast, “reversion” denotes Latino/a Muslims affirming ties to a racial and cultural past outside Western racial and cultural histories that converge with Latino culture and identity via Muslim Spain and therefore challenges US national projects of Latino race, culture, and ethnicity.
5. Website for the center: <http://www.nhiec.com/>.
 6. <http://www.hablamosislamninios.com/>. Translation from Spanish: *Hablamos Islam*, “We speak Islam”; *Hablamos Islam Niños*, “We, children, speak Islam.” *Hablamos Islam* is also on Facebook with 5.3k followers.
 7. See Nahela Morales’s website, www.nahelamorales.com; check the “About” link. According to the about section on the same website, “Nahela is the co-founder of Embrace a project of ICNA, an initiative created for Reverts by Reverts. Their mission is for Reverts/Converts to be embrace[d] and treated with Dignity, Equality and Respect and to become leaders within the Muslim Community. She currently serves as the Marketing Director and Brand Ambassador.”
 8. The breakdown as of November 28, 2018 is: 11,136 like this and 11,233 follow this.
 9. Emily Dolezal, “Covered: Representations of Muslim Women in *Azizah Magazine*,” in *Muslims and American Popular Culture: Vol. 2 Print Culture and Identity*, ed. Anne R. Richards and Iraj Omidvar (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2014), 163.
 10. Juliane Hammer, “Studying American Muslim Women: Gender, Feminism, and Islam,” in *The Cambridge Companion to American Islam*, eds. Juliane Hammer and Omid Safi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 340.
 11. Amira Akl, “American Muslims in Cyberspace,” in *Muslims and American Popular Culture*, 175-176.
 12. Abdullah, “American Muslims,” 76.
 13. Morales, *Latino & Muslim in America*, 108.
 14. *Ibid.*, 107.
 15. Hjamil A. Martinez-Vazquez, *Latina/o Y Musulmán: The Construction of Latina/o Identity among Latina/o Muslims in the United States* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010); Nikkeshia Wilson, “Latinos and Islamic Conversion in the United States,” in *Muslims and American Popular Culture*, 229-244.
 16. Hisham D. Aidi, *Rebel Music: Race, Empire and the New Muslim Youth Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014), 17.
 17. Preview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNjSknMBFHE&t=10s>

18. Evelyn Alsultany and Ella Shohat, "The Cultural Politics of 'the Middle East' in the Americas: An Introduction," in *Between the Middle East and the Americas: The Cultural Politics of Diaspora*, eds. Evelyn Alsultany and Ella Shohat (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 22.
19. *Ibid.*, 24.
20. Martinez-Vazquez, *Latina/o Y Musulmán*, 61-62.
21. Yesenia King and Michael P. Perez, "Double-Edged Marginality and Agency: Latina Conversion to Islam," in *Crescent Over Another Horizon: Islam in Latin America, The Caribbean, and Latino USA*, eds. Maria del Mar Logroña, Paulo G. Pinto, and John Tofik Karam (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 308.
22. *Ibid.*, 308-309.
23. Elena Avilés, "Reading Latinx and LGBTQ+ Perspectives: Maya Christina Gonzalez and Equity Minded Models at Play," *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 33 no. 4 (2017): 41.
24. Martinez-Vazquez, *Latina/o Y Musulmán*, 3.
25. Sandra Cañas Cuevas, "The Politics of Conversion to Islam in Southern Mexico," in *Islam in the Americas*, ed. Aisha Khan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 166.
26. King and Perez, "Double-Edged Marginality," 309.
27. *Ibid.*, 307-308.
28. *Ibid.*, 310.
29. Cindy Nuygen, "interpellation," The Chicago School of Media Theory, Accessed August 9, 2017, <https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/interpellation/>.
30. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgS_iri7LJA. Titled on YouTube.com, "Latinos leaving Church and Turning to Islam."
31. A *New York Times* article that features Father Carlos Mullins: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/nyregion/7-lives-intersecting-with-pope-francis.html>.
32. Nabil Echchaibi, "American Muslims and the Media," in *The Cambridge Companion to American Islam*, eds. Juliane Hammer and Omid Safi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 123.
33. Akl, "American Muslims in Cyberspace," 175.
34. Martinez-Vazquez, *Latina/o Y Musulmán*, 58.
35. Neda Hashmi, "Hablamos Islam Niños," *The Muslim Link*, March 31, 2011, <http://www.muslimlinkpaper.com/index.php/community-news/community-news/2547-hablamos-islam-ninos.html>.
36. Here is a page that lists other books by Hablamos Islam Niños: <http://hablamosislamninios.com/index.php/tiendita>.
37. Hashmi, "Hablamos Islam Niños."
38. https://www.launchgood.com/project/hablamos_islam_book_project#!/

39. Jesse G. Gainer, "Promoting the Legacy of Dr. Tomas Rivera with a Chicana/o Children's Book Award," *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 33, no. 5 (2017): 107-116.
40. King and Perez, "Double-Edged Marginality," 304.
41. "Self-Image and Pride Matters: A Second Reflection from ICNA Baltimore 2017." *Nahela Morales*, May 23. Accessed August 9, 2017.
42. Wendy Diaz, "Fifteen Years of Hate, a Lifetime of Lessons," *MomsRising.org*, March 21, 2016, <https://www.momsrising.org/blog/fifteen-years-of-hate-a-lifetime-of-lessons>.
43. Download the free book: <http://hablamosislamninios.com/index.php/libros-gratuitos>.
44. Avilés, "Reading Latinx and LGBTQ+ Perspectives," 37.
45. Ibid.
46. Avilés, "Reading Latinx and LGBTQ+ Perspectives," 40-41.
47. Wendy Diaz, *Mi Mami Tiene Un Velo: Un Poema Para Niños Musulmanes* (Hablamos Islam, 2010), 5.
48. Diaz, *Mi Mami Tiene Un Velo*, 9.
49. Ibid., 2.
50. Cf. Cuevas, "The Politics of Conversion," 178-179.
51. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjsyOlWmTis&t=32s>. Titled on YouTube.com, "CCTV: Hispanic Muslims Converts in U.S."
52. Roberto Avant-Mier, *Rock the Nation: Latin/o Identities and the Latin Rock Diaspora* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 21.
53. See Maria Elena Cepeda's *Musical ImagiNation: U.S.-Colombian Identity and the Latin Music Boom* (2010). In the chapter "Florecita Rockera: Gender and Representation in Latin(o) American Rock and Mainstream Media," Cepeda offers a detailed example of dialogical communication between Tonight Show host Jay Leno and Colombian feminist rock star Andrea Echeverri from Aterciopelados.
54. Nahela Morales is featured in this article about her trip to Chiapas: <http://worldofumm.blogspot.com/2013/10/muslim-mothers-in-chiapas.html>
55. Martinez-Vazquez, *Latina/o Y Musulmán*, 28-29.
56. Wilson cites Bianca I. Laureano: "Historically, 'marianismo' was a term coined for the expectation of femininity for Latinas that is connected to Catholicism (enter colonization via religion). The term refers directly to the Virgin Mary (hence the term Maria-nismo), who was considered self-less, enduring sacrifices for the family, being 'pure' and thus spiritually stronger than Latino men." The article can be found at <https://rewire.news/article/2010/04/02/deconstructing-marianismo/>.
57. Wilson, "Latinos and Islamic Conversion," 234.
58. Cuevas, "The Politics of Conversion," 171-172.
59. Dolezal, "Covered: Representations of Muslim Women," 164-165.

60. Ibid., 164-165.
61. Echchaibi, "American Muslims and the Media," 124.
62. Ibid., 129.
63. Akl, "American Muslims in Cyberspace," 177.
64. Ibid.
65. Morales, *Latino & Muslim in America*, 170.