

EVELYN ALSULTANY, *Broken: The Failed Promise of Muslim Inclusion* (New York: New York University Press, 2022). Pp. 309. \$30.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper. ISBN: 9781479823963.

REVIEWED BY INAASH ISLAM, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Saint Michael's College, email: iislam@smcvt.edu



At a time when questions of diversity, equity, and inclusion burgeon in industries, the media, and the academy, Evelyn Alsultany's book *Broken: The Failed Promise of Muslim Inclusion* offers much needed insight into the complexities of "doing diversity." Centering Muslims and MENA populations in her analysis, Alsultany shows how media, law enforcement, corporations, institutions of higher education, and the US government work to include Arab and Muslim identities in their diversity initiatives but fall short in their goals for holistic social justice and inclusion. Through content and discourse analysis, each of Alsultany's chapters analyze one or more data set(s) from an archive of materials that include media representations, corporate and university statements, hate crime cases, hate speech cases, news reports, and social media posts. Consequently, each chapter offers a multilayered, nuanced, and focused analysis of each institutional practice of diversity. One of the significant contributions of this text—in addition to being one of the first to center Muslims within conversations of diversity—is its sociopolitical contextualization. Rather than using 9/11 as a starting point for her analysis, Alsultany traces the cultural politics of Muslims in the US from 2008 to 2020 to show how "crisis diversity" emerged and transformed during the Obama and Trump administrations as a way to address anti-Muslim racism. Beginning with the premise that the inclusion of the Muslim identity as a marginalized category in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts shapes the cultural logics of diversity practices, Alsultany's text questions whether these efforts are effective in solving the structural issue of anti-Muslim racism. This book is a well-articulated and reader-friendly text that offers insight into the normalized but often invisible logics of "doing diversity" and shows the limits and possibilities of these practices in the current historical moment.

The introductory chapter defines diversity, traces its politicization in US history, and describes how and when Muslims first came to be included in diversity initiatives. Organized into four sections: the What, the Who, the When, and the Where, the introductory chapter situates an analysis of crisis diversity from the framework of anti-Muslim racism as a structural problem and provides clarification and detail on Alsultany's usage of terms such as MENA, Arabs, Muslim, etc. The introduction describes her methodology, outlines the book's five chapters, and lays out the book's main objective, which is to trace "operations of diversity's intersection with anti-Muslim racism across . . . institutional landscapes . . . to identify how institutions and their specific logics shape – and delimit – how we address racism" (17).

Chapter 1 and 2 focus on media representation of Muslims, and are respectively entitled "Stereotype-Confined Expansions" and "Diversity Compromise." While both chapters share similar analytical approaches, chapter 1 examines reality television representations of Muslims (specifically, *All-American Muslim*, *Shahs of Sunset*, and *Real Time with Bill Maher*) from 2010 to 2015, and chapter 2 contextualizes Hollywood representations of Muslims from 2015 to 2020 as a reaction to the politics of the Trump administration. Both chapters reflect Alsultany's expertise as a media studies scholar, and offer multiple insights on the trends of media representation and characterizations of Muslims. Chapter 1 reflects on the tendency of media representations to lean on variations of the normative Muslim, posed as either the "nominal Muslim" or "moderate Muslim" (25). While the normative Muslim is indicative of current media strategies of liberal multiculturalism, Alsultany critiques this representation for reifying post-9/11 terroristic narratives that expect Muslims to prove their loyalty to US values. Consequently, these expanded representations of diversity fail in their efforts to be adequately racially just. Chapter 2 reflects on the post-Muslim ban moment, when Hollywood writers and producers made a concerted effort to challenge stereotypes; however, Alsultany problematizes their efforts, arguing that they failed to change these narratives in any significant manner. A major contribution of this chapter is the Obeidi-Alsultany test, which is a spin-off of the Bechdel test that centers the Muslim identity in determining criteria of adequate inclusion and representation in television and film.

Chapter 3, titled "Racial Gaslighting," is a somber analysis of the Chapel Hill murders of 2015 and the killing of Nabra Hassanen in 2017. In this chapter, Alsultany interrogates diversity through the

framework of hate crime charge designations, examining how the denial of hate crime classification in cases involving anti-Muslim violence contributes to “the diminishment and denial of anti-Muslim racism and, as such, should be understood as a form of racial gaslighting – that is, a systematic denial of the persistence and severity of racism” (115). Alsultany situates her discussion within abolitionist frameworks, arguing that by upholding narrow definitions of racism and what constitutes a hate crime, law enforcement prioritizes punishment over social justice while also absolving the state of accountability for its own anti-Muslim violence. This chapter emphasizes the empirical importance of framing anti-Muslim hostility as *racism* in the pursuit of justice in the criminal justice system.

Chapter 4, “Racial Purging,” examines how corporations shape racial politics through the firing of public figures for offending speech. Alsultany analyzes the firing of Juan Williams by NPR and Curt Schilling by ESPN for bigoted speech to show that “canceling” individuals has concerning (un)intended consequences. For example, firing individuals for speech violations frames racism as an individual problem with individual-level solutions, and creates polarized racial politics by facilitating the platforming of the offending individuals in spaces that critique political correctness and “co-opt the language of inequality to argue for their own marginalization” (187). Consequently, the diversity practice of “canceling” is unpacked as inordinately complex and consequential in shaping US’s contemporary racial politics and culture wars.

In chapter 5, entitled “Flexible Diversity,” Alsultany reflects on diversity practices in higher education, paying special attention to the institutional practices of the University of Michigan. She analyzes how universities fail to protect and include Muslim and MENA students in their diversity initiatives when they are targeted by Zionist organizations for their Palestinian rights activism. In a balanced analysis, Alsultany shows what has been done by the University of Michigan to institutionalize DEI and offers concrete steps that would ensure Muslim and MENA students’ rights and safety on college campuses. Building on her discussion of antisemitism, Zionism, and Palestinian rights activism, Alsultany’s epilogue rounds out the book’s central arguments by weaving issues of representation, hate crime designations, and anti-Muslim racism in the diversity politics surrounding US congresswomen Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib. Not only is this reflection timely but it offers critical insight into how Muslim women are racialized, politicized, and co-opted in practices of diversity in US politics.

In addition to being a critical contribution to the field of ethnic studies, the brilliance of Alsultany's book lies in its broad appeal. Readers interested in Muslim or MENA studies will have much to learn from this text; however, it also has significant appeal to generalist readers interested in understanding the complexity of contemporary diversity initiatives. The contentiousness of DEI and looming threats of eradicating critical race studies and ethnic studies educational programs emphasize the importance of understanding the limits and possibilities of institutionalized diversity practices. Alsultany's book provides insight into these dynamics while leaving readers to ponder how our institutions can better deliver on their promises of diversity, equity, and inclusion. I recommend this text for undergraduates, and specialist and generalist readers interested in ethnic studies and broader issues of DEI.