# Disgraced by Akhtar: A Reflection of Social Issue in America Today

Disgraced, a 2012 play by Ayad Akhtar, draws its central themes from socio-political themes such as Islamophobia. It also focuses on the self-identity of Muslim-American citizens. The play introduces the audience to a dinner with four different people from distinguishable backgrounds. The four engages in a discussion that turns to politics and religion that leads results in a heated mood. In the play, the description as a “combustible powder keg of identity politics” is a depiction of the racial and ethnic prejudices that “secretly persist in even the most progressive cultural circles” (Akhtar 38). It further portrays the challenges that the Muslims that an upwardly mobile faced in the post 9/11 America. This paper examines and evaluates how the issues presented in Akhtar’s Disgraced manifest themselves in the current political, social and cultural systems of America.

In the play, the theme of tackling Islamophobia is distinguishable. The questions of Mkuslim-American identity are also evident. The play introduces two couples who exchange observations on the trends of faith and politics in the modern world. The two couples assert that they continue to find themselves tangled in intellectual thickets. The scriptwriter points out that “the thorny questions of identity and religion in the contemporary world relates to how the radical Islam and terrorism affect the public discourse” (Akhtar 41). In the play, Kapoor rejects his Muslim upbringing, including his surname, so that he can be able to assimilate perfectly in his law firm. However, he still feels the tag of Islam in various occasions. The issue of religion and race has been facing America over the years. Therefore, the snapshot of the play portrays the manner in which Americans try to come in terms with their multiple identities such as American versus Asian, Muslim versus secularist, and Indian versus Hispanic. These social aspects of identity continue to face America significantly. Racial discrimination has been one of the significant issues in America (Yeghiazarian n.p.). This relates to the play that shows the issue of racial discrimination to an extent that some Muslims do not feel complete identification with their race and this forces them to even drop their surnames to fit in the society of the majority.

Crime against people from Arabic countries is another significant theme that comes out in this play. America has been having a series of national de bates around Islam. In early part of 2017, President Donald Trump fronted the idea of deporting all immigrants from Arab countries and this created remarkable debates on relating the Arabic people to crimes. Records show that crimes against people from Arabic countries increased significantly by 500% in America from 2001 to 2009. At workplace, there is a 150 percent increase in discrimination against Muslim. The worst aspect of relating people of Arabic origin to crime is the recent Paris attack. America has done a series of hateful attacks against Muslim people with the intention of eliminating them and thus reducing the incidences of crime all over the nation.

The play also depicts a caricature of a politics that is odd. As Akhtar presents this issue, he demonstrates anxiety over the transition between social history. That is, lived experiences and the anecdotal narratives in the minds of the people. Akhtar transcends the particularities in American politics as well as the modern epic version of the rise and fall of various political systems in America. It is interesting that in America an individual can most probably win a presidential election if he or she belongs to the two major ruling parties, the Republican and the Democrats. Other political dynasties have been isolated based on issues that the scriptwriter refers to as an asymmetrical representational reservoir of Muslims in American imagination. Most Americans perceive Muslims as violent and terrorists. Therefore, in their political systems Americans do not display characteristics of association with the Arab Muslims, a behavior that supports this sort of popular discourse.

Disgraced is also about upward mobility, which is the myth of success in America. The play depicts an assumption that race and religion do not deter an individual’s ability to get a promotion. The assumption further holds that a person that works hard and pays his or her dues has an equal probability of getting a promotion and eventually gaining respect from colleagues and friends. Ironically, this is not the case in America as there are significant traces of bias and bigotry as Amir learns. The association of Amir with the local Imam’s case worries his Jewish partners at the law firm. The fact that Amir reports that he was born in India and not Pakistan in his employment forms creates more disturbance among his counterparts. The question of their clients thinking that he was a Hindu, but now coming out to be a Muslim disturbs their mind (Yeghiazarian n.p.). According to Jory, the partners felt Amir was duplicitous. The partners decide to reject Amir and this depicts an aspect of bias and bigotry in the line of duty despite Amir’s exceptional skills and experience in law. The partners are not ready to associate with an organization that may be funding Hamas. The partners subscribe to a prejudice most Muslim entities in America must defray. In this scenario, Amir appears as a professional liability.

## Works Cited

Akhtar, Ayad. "Disgraced." *Final Production Draft* (2012): 1-91. Print.

Yeghiazarian, Torange. "On Ayad Akhtar’s Disgraced." *Segal Theatre Center Publication*2.2 (2016): n. pag. Web. 10 Dec. 2017.