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April 13, 2020

Bad Muslims: An exploration of the stereotypes, challenges, and conflicts that young Muslim-Americans face in the form of a comedic short film intended to be a capstone for a comedic television show.

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Abstract

Bad Muslims: An exploration of the stereotypes, challenges, and conflicts that young Muslim-Americans face in the form of a comedic short film intended to be a capstone for a comedic television show.

By Samah Meghjee

Bad Muslims is a comedic short film about the experiences of young Muslims in America post-9/11. The film, meant to be a capstone for the pilot of a comedic television series, explores the representation of Muslims in Western media post-9/11 and the relationship between oppression, representation, and comedy.

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Inspiration and Pitch

Bad Muslims is a short film adapted from a comedy pilot written by my twin sister Salwa Meghjee and me. *Bad Muslims* is about three Muslim young professionals who decide to room together. Erum is broken up with by her boyfriend, Zayn, unexpectedly when they are about to move in together. After meeting Zaamenah in the parking lot of the mosque after a botched drug deal, they decide to find a third roommate through a Muslim roommate matching service (a play off of the popular Muslim arranged marriage service, Shaadi.com). Zaamenah and Erum are surprised to find that they have been accidentally paired with a male roommate, Anas, although they are both female - a huge taboo among children of immigrants and Muslims. The three roommates decide to try and work it out, but are all consciously trying to avoid revealing their identities as “bad Muslims” to each other. The show explores facets of Muslim-American life that have been previously avoided by popular media - the diversity of the types of Muslims within the larger religion of Islam, the balance of young second-generation Muslim-American immigrants between their cultural identities and their adaptation to Western culture, and the normalization of young Muslims as young people who are allowed to be confused, make mistakes, and grow over time.

The title *Bad Muslims* plays off of the idea that Muslims are often considered “bad.” It is my wish to show that Muslims are allowed to be bad - growing up, I often felt pressure to be perfect in order to disprove the stereotypes that surrounded me. I felt that in order to convince other people that Muslims weren’t evil terrorists, I needed to be the perfect person and the perfect Muslim. As I grew older, moved to college, and made significant changes to my beliefs and actions, such as choosing to stop wearing the hijab, I feared that other people would use me as an example to justify their Islamophobia. But at the same time, I was meeting many other Muslims

from varied backgrounds for the first time in my life, and I began to learn that “Muslim” has no cookie-cutter definition. Just as every other religion and culture, members of the Muslim community are nuanced and varied, but it does not diminish any of our identities as Muslims and intrinsically good people. There are very few positive pieces in popular media that depict Muslims as normal people. I truly believe that if any existed when I was growing up, I would have felt much less pressure to be perfect, and much less guilt when I inevitably failed. But I also believe that more positive representation of Muslims that shows us as flawed will allow for the normalization of Muslims as a part of American culture. *Black-ish*, *Fresh off the Boat*, and *Insecure* have begun to pave the way for other marginalized minority groups, and there is room for the entrance of Muslims into the popular culture dialogue.

My original proposed thesis project was to develop a 10-12 minute short adapted from the original *Bad Muslims* pilot my sister and I wrote earlier this semester. For the thesis project, I pitched that I would serve as producer/director to film an adaptation where Zaamenah, Erum, and Anas meet and revolve around each other, trying not to reveal their natures as bad Muslims to each other before their lease is finalized. I wanted to shoot in the Fall in order to reserve the Spring for post-production, editing, re-shooting if necessary, and writing the included paper.

This pitch changed slightly during the course of the last year. The most valuable change made was the addition of an additional producer, Daniel Eshbaugh, who suggested a change the timeline in order to utilize time to fundraise. Before enlisting Daniel, I had no goal for a budget. I did not think that making a thesis that I felt would be good enough for my goals would cost any money. Daniel made me really think big picture - the story I was building could, and deserved to, be bigger than that. It deserved a longer timeline, more funding, and a set of lofty goals. It was the beginning of a great partnership.

Muslim comedy post-9/11

As comedy always does, post-9/11 television sought to explicitly address the Othering of Muslims in America after the attack. In Chiara Bucaria and Luca Barra's book *Taboo Comedy: Television and Controversial Humor*, they speak explicitly about the effect of 9/11 on television in the chapter "Dummies and Demographics: Islamophobia as Market Differentiation in Post-9/11 Television Comedy."

This is the first content specific book that I have read that directly relates to the purpose of my thesis and this accompanying paper . It has also proven to be helpful for the rewriting process - so much of *Bad Muslims* relies on successfully executing humor based around content that is rarely satirized in an appropriate way. There are few television series that show Muslims are funny, and are not wildly problematic. It's possible to execute taboo humor in a way that is helpful to the appreciation of Muslims in popular culture post-9/11 that does not play into stereotypes, overly generalize the population, or rely on the trope of terrorism. But very few have done that yet. While *Ramy*, *Master of None*, and *Little Mosque on the Praire* have begun to pave the way, none highlight the plights and comedic moments of life as a Muslim woman, which is where the niche of *Bad Muslims* comes in.

What I appreciated about *Taboo Comedy* is that it gave a holistic understanding of how taboo humor has been used in the past in television. Each chapter tackles a different kind of taboo humor, including racial humor, dark comedy, and dirty comedy. Particularly, it includes an entire chapter on "Taboo Humanity: Paradoxes of Humanizing Muslims in North American Sitcoms" and another called "Dummies and Demographics: Islamophobia as Market Differentiation in Post-9/11 Television Comedy," which both directly approach my topic. "Taboo Humanity" references a television show that I watched in my childhood called *Little Mosque on the Praire* - the book likens it to a "Muslim Cosby Show," with the intentions of

changing the way Muslims are viewed by the non-Muslim population in the Western world (*Little Mosque* is Canadian). The book makes the same conclusion I did about the show - while it broke barriers, "It presupposed that 'regular' viewers were non-Muslim, and as a result, 'humanizing Muslims' meant erasing visible markers of difference." It catered to a white audience, and thus its main six characters and all of the plot lines revolved around a stereotypical and overgeneralized understanding of Muslim people. The reality is, Muslim culture varies wildly from person to person based on ethnicity, sect, upbringing, country in which it is practiced, race, and dozens of other factors. *Little Mosque* was amazing, but it homogenized Muslims. For many, it reinforced the idea that Muslims are one way - brown, hijab-wearing, and practiced praying five times a day. What I appreciate about the book is the viewing of these issues through a lens of humor. How did the show execute its purpose, and with humor in a digestible way? How did it fail? How can it be viewed as the first wave of Muslim representation in modern Western television? And how will the genre change?

Don't Panic, I'm Islamic is a collection of essays, cartoons, artwork, poetry, and general writings by Muslim comedians. The entire collection only features comedic pieces, but it is clearly and obviously meant to be read by both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences, and is meant to make some sort of social impact, as almost all of the pieces are written to inform or influence thought.

When assessing the literature, I focused on a few select essays that were almost entirely comedic in nature. I originally picked up *Don't Panic, I'm Islamic* because of its blasphemous and provoking title. It reminds me of my own film's title, *Bad Muslims* - it is meant for the consumer to do a double take, it is meant to be funny, and it is meant to cause non-Muslims to pick up the piece and consume it. It is a gimmick that many Muslim comedians use, from the comedy troupes Allah Made me Funny and Axis of Evil to the essay "How Islam Taught Me to

be a Drag Queen.”

Don't Panic, I'm Islamic was extremely helpful in the pre-production process of writing *Bad Muslims* because it helped me establish a goal for the tone and content of the script. It made me realize what kind of funny I wanted the film to be, which was important from transitioning the piece from a comedy to a dramedy. “How Islam Taught Me to be a Drag Queen,” here referred to as “Drag Queen,” is an essay by Amrou Al-Kadhi, a British-Iraqi artist and drag queen. He started a musical comedy drag troupe at his alma mater Cambridge, and is now writing comedic television starring Muslim characters and pitching to the BBC. In the piece, Al-Kadhi details how he believes that his mother’s gaudiness coupled with Islam’s vivid depictions of hellfire (juxtaposed by a seemingly bland heaven) are what influenced him to become a drag queen (60-61). His “Islamic upbringing formed the genesis of [his] career as a queen warrior unicorn” (61). Thus, “unwittingly, [he] always had a home in Islam, even if at times it has felt inhospitable” (61). Al-Kadhi puts into words a quintessential experience of the second-generation Muslim child - while we might not agree with all the teachings of Islam, it undoubtedly has a hand in forming who we are and what we become, and thus will always be inescapable. Even though being Muslim is supposed to be chosen, it becomes a formative marker of one’s identity, something that you cannot help and something that you cannot get rid of.

“My Own People Don’t Like Me Very Much,” here referred to as “My Own People,” makes a more specific case for the second-generation Muslim by giving it a label the “Third Thing” (25). The author, Negin Farsan, an Iranian-American comedian and television writer, says “Islam doesn’t explain me, Iranian poetry doesn’t explain me, and apple pie doesn’t explain me. And yet I understand all of those things,” making her a Third Thing, an entirely new identity with no clear meaning most primarily identified by a feeling of confusion (25). When talking

about Islam, she says that she feels “squeezed into a category that may technically be true but still doesn’t fit right” (25).

“My Own People” serves to more clearly identify the feeling of Otherness, and even define and name it, that flavors much of Muslim-centric comedy. That Otherness is what new-wave Muslim comedic television like *Ramy*, *Master of None*, and *Homecoming King* tackle head-on. No one quite fits in here, and no one quite fits in there either.

The Market of Muslim comedy

The chapter “Muslim Ethnic Comedy: Inversions of Islamophobia” by Mucahit Bilici in *Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Friend and Enemy* asserts that the distinctive comedy about Muslims prevalent in the latter half of the previous decade through the 2010s could not come about until after 9/11. Both *Allah Made Me Funny* and *Axis of Evil*, two of the most significant and prominent comedy forces in Muslim comedy, were created immediately following the tragedy. According to Zarqa Nawaz, the creator of *Little Mosque on the Prairie* (originally broadcast in 2007, six years after 9/11), “the marketplace has never been this curious about Muslims” (Bilici 196).

According to Bilici, the comedians that made up *Allah Made Me Funny* and *Axis of Evil* “were comedians, but were not ‘American Muslim Comedians’” (197). Dean Obeidallah, a big name in Muslim comedy, has said that “before 9/11, he was a white guy doing generic comedy. After 9/11... he lost his white status and became Arab” (197).

Both similar and dissimilar to the arguments made in *Taboo Comedy*, “Muslim Ethnic Comedy” argues that discrimination of marginalized groups and ethnic comedy together are a deviation from the social consensus, which the book denotes a “common sense” (200). Because minorities have access to both the majority vision and their own particular view, the division of

the two worldviews gives minorities “more to laugh at” (200). Ethnic comedians “[destabilize] the existing ‘common sense’” (200). Bilici alludes to the same careful balance between catering too much to white/non-ethnic audiences versus catering too much to ethnicity-specific audiences.

Most comedy leans one way or the other, with most 2000s and 2010s comedy leaning too much towards catering to white audiences.

Another interesting assertion that “Muslim Ethnic Comedy” makes is that Muslims, who are “[oddities] in American life,” become funny when they appear “ordinary” (205). This contributes to the Othering of Muslim people in Western society - we do not completely fit in here as Americans, but we certainly do not fit in with cultures and places that we did not directly grow up in. This creates a distinct gray area of life that new-wave Muslim comedy like *Master of None*, *Ramy*, and *Homecoming King* seek to address, although they distinctly leave out the perspective of the Muslim Woman, a life that is highly different from that of a Muslim Man, with heightened pressure, lessened freedom, and sometimes an entirely different way of life.

Like “Muslim Ethnic Comedy,” *Taboo Comedy* also seeks to discuss the market of comedy post-9/11, but in addition to opening up space for Muslims to exist in comedy, it opened up space for Islamophobia to reign free without judgement. In the chapter “Dummies and Demographics: Islamophobia as Market Differentiation in Post-9/11 Television Comedy.” *Taboo Comedy* asserts that “By feeding into the anti-Islamic and anti-terrorist sentiments of post-9/11 American culture, comics positioned themselves as brave truth-tellers against the tide of political correctness with relative safety.” While comedy could not just turn into generalized attacks of Muslims, *Taboo Comedy* asserts that non-Muslim comedians had a pocket of allowance to be discriminatory and capitalize on the fears of Americans. Through the early 2000s, “television comedy reinforced us/them binarisms” and contributed to the Othering of

Muslim people.

Comedy from the early 2000s caused “a scrutiny that often threatened and/or denied [Muslims’] status as fully or authentically American,” contributing further to the Othering. Othering is both alienating and beneficial. It obviously causes a turmoil in the West that asserts the need for correction through new wave comedic media by Muslim people to humanize Muslims. By asserting that need, it legitimizes Muslim people as a group of people who deserve a space in comedy and creates space for television shows like *Ramy* and *Master of None*, which according to “Muslim Ethnic Comedy,” could not exist otherwise.

“American Muslims and Contemporary Hahahahalal Comedy” by Morgane Thannort offers an interesting take on Muslim comedy, asserting that “cultural Muslims and religious Muslims conceptualize and materialize their Islamic identity in different ways,” playing into what *Taboo Comedy* says about *Little Mosque* and its inability to represent all Muslims, portraying a much more religious rather than cultural side of the Muslim identity. “Muslim Ethnic Comedy” asserts that 9/11 forced Muslims to begin identifying with Islam, making it a true ethnicity in the United States. “Hahahahalal Comedy” affirms Muslim comedians, both pious and cultural, “use comedy as a means of reintegrating into the American fabric, bridging the gap between estranged communities and downplaying Muslims' otherness” (Thannort). While both methods of comedy are distinctly different from each other, they do, at the end of it, function to decrease the Otherness that Muslims feel across the West. In *Laughter the Best Medicine: Muslim Comedians and Social Criticism in Post-9/11 America*, Amarnath Amarasingam states the “use of comedy to highlight injustices experienced by the Muslim community is common among all of the recent Arab and Muslim American comics” (467).

Muslim comedy tends to be focused on decreasing the feeling of the Other and

influencing non-Muslim people to learn and understand more about Muslims.

Muslims in Comedy in the late 2010s

There is very little literature on the newest boom of Muslim comedy from the last few years. While *Master of None*, *Ramy*, and *Homecoming King* remain the best-case studies for the form of comedy and writing that I am most interested in, almost nothing has been written about them. It is easier to use references to *Allah Made Me Funny*, *Axis of Evil*, and *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, but their humor is quickly becoming outdated, and Muslim comedy has since spiraled far away from the airplane jokes of the early 21st century. Comedy has also turned clearly towards the streaming television industry and away from YouTube comedy groups and network sitcoms. While the cited articles and essays are useful in defining Muslim comedy immediately post-9/11, seeing how it has morphed and changed in the lens of academia throughout the 2010s is difficult.

The Pre-Production Process

The pre-production process started when I teamed up with Daniel Eshbaugh in the Summer of 2019, as he agreed to produce the film. Daniel immediately contacted Alisa Yan, a fellow Senior at Emory, to be the Assistant Director. From there, we laid out what needed to happen over the course of the first semester: revised script, title sequence, fundraising plan, locking primary crew, and casting calls for actors posted.

The revised script took up the bulk of the semester. It went through several edits, but the main goal of revising the script was to change it from sitcom-style to more of a dramedy. After watching *Ramy* over the summer, I realized that the direction I wanted to take *Bad Muslims* was less straight humor and more of a nuanced approach, in order to tackle both difficult and

lighthearted topics that have to do with navigating Islam and the Western World as a young person. While *Ramy* served as a huge inspiration for *Bad Muslims*, I tried to model the writing after HBO's *Insecure*, which has a more direct comedic approach to tackling racial and cultural issues. *Ramy* includes some fantastical elements and a much less structured serial storyline. For example, in Season 01 Episode 04, titled *Strawberries*, young Ramy talks to a personified Osama bin Laden immediately after 9/11 in Ramy's New Jersey kitchen. Episodes 06, *Refugees*, and 07, *Ne Me Quitte Pas*, barely feature the titular character Ramy at all, but instead choose to focus on his sister and mother respectively, skewing the timeline of the story. They are all significantly relevant to the show's main purpose of increasing Muslim representation in comedic television, but the show takes a similar approach to Aziz Ansari's *Master of None* by utilizing 10 short-film-esque episodes to craft an overall message, rather than a sequential story. Conversely, *Insecure* follows a significantly more traditional comedy/dramedy format. There are 8 episodes in a season that follow a sequential arc and are significantly more dialogue heavy than *Ramy* or *Master of None*.

When rewriting *Bad Muslims*, I focused on finding a medium between dialogue heavy and action heavy, in order to move away from sitcom writing and more into dramedy. I started by including an almost entirely action heavy cold open and introducing a new character, Zayn, in order to give Erum a distinct motivation and drive. While the core characteristics of Erum, Zaamenah, and Anas remained the same, their actions changed significantly. Zaamenah's character became significantly less family-friendly with the introduction of her smoking marijuana, and Anas's secrets were changed to be revealed at the very end of the episode in order to build more suspense.

This revision was significant and difficult because it came with having shooting in mind. Before, when coming at scripts from solely a writer's perspective, it was easy to disregard

aspects of shooting that I would not have to worry about. Children, animals, difficult locations, and impossible video effects were fine to include because they would be someone else's problem. When rewriting *Bad Muslims*, I had to remove anything impossible to shoot within our constraints, without sacrificing the creativity or ingenuity of the script. Excessive characters and locations were removed, including extra drag queens and a shot in a dressing room.

A significant thematic change was the inclusion of subtext about masculinity in Islam. Discussions about masculinity in the film were important to include because of the complexity of the character of Anas – there is a disconnect between the disdain that him and the girls have for hypermasculine Muslim men (“You know how Muslim men can be – aggressive.”) versus the masculinity that Anas seeks to exude when hiding his true identity as a gay man that dresses like a woman in order to perform in drag. Masculinity comes into play even before this, when Zaamenah and Erum smoke weed in the mosque parking lot. Their defiance does not really come from smoking at the mosque – this is a pretty common occurrence among young Muslim men. What is defiant is that they are *women*, uncovered, smoking in the mosque parking lot. They are making themselves equal to men in their sins, but it is only sinful because they are women. This complex subversion of masculine ideals in Islam is what makes *Bad Muslims* stand out from other male-dominant Muslim comedy in television.

Talking about masculinity and what Muslims/brown people are “supposed to be” versus what we are “not supposed to be” aligns with much of what I love about *Insecure*. There is constant conversation about Issa and black women are “supposed to do,” and a constant demonstration of Issa and her comrades subtly or extravagantly defying those expectations. In the paper “Awkward Black girls and postfeminist possibilities: representing millennial Black women on television in *Chewing Gum* and *Insecure*” by Francesca Sobande, she cites a 2017 episode of *Insecure* where Issa says to her boyfriend “We are not about to be the Black couple

fighting in Rite Aid.” Black people navigate the modern world with an understanding of the expectations pressed upon them, and in this case, a verbal acknowledgement. For this verbal acknowledgement to be in a mainstream television show is huge – it allows for a non-Black audience to realize, *Oh, I am discriminating when I think poorly of Black people arguing in public*. It allows for Black people to laugh at that ignorance, and poke fun at their everyday struggles. Muslim people, and largely brown people who are publicly lumped together as presumably Muslim, face similar discrimination. On set, when planes would fly overhead and ruin the sound in the parking lot scene, I made more than one comment stating “I could make a terrorist joke right now, but because this is a Muslim film, I won’t.” The irony that both Black and brown people use to make light of and bring attention to our often similar forms of discrimination is what ties me so deeply to *Insecure* as an inspiration piece, despite a difference in background.

The script went through a second major revision in order to cut down the runtime to 13-15 minutes. We did this to stick to a three day shooting schedule with as few locations as possible. On the first day, we planned to shoot at the apartment entirely. The second day was to be the U-haul, parking lot, and mosque scenes. And finally, the last day was dedicated entirely to shooting at the club. Because the club was only two pages, it was scheduled for only half a day, so we would have half a day of buffer for reshooting any other necessary scenes.

In late November, we listed *Bad Muslims* on the casting websites, Actor’s Access and Backstage, in order to draw talent from the local Atlanta and broader Southern film scene. We had several promising audition reels, and planned to audition actors in person in January. Then, throughout February, we wanted to have several rehearsals with the actors in order to ensure that shooting goes as smoothly as possible. We also locked a primary crew and grip

equipment, all for free due to connections with Emory alumni. In exchange for use of the camera and grip equipment, we allowed the owner of the gear to have Executive Producer credit.

Finally, our fundraising began. We contacted several Emory alumni who have all in some way expressed interest in the project. We wanted to follow up with them in the new year. In the Spring we applied to two grants, the David Goldwasser Fund and the Center for the Creative Arts Grant, as well as asking for funding from the Film Department. We were denied funding through the department, but were able to receive \$3,000 in grants from Emory. We crowdfunded around \$800, and self-funded the rest of the costs, of around \$1,200.

We did a significant amount of creative planning in December and January. Raghu Sunkara, our Director of Photography, Daniel, and I met twice as a team to walk through the concept and talk about gear. Ghu and I met separately to nail down a shot list. Beforehand, I watched a few videos about cinematography and types of shots, including interviews with the DP of *Insecure*. He spoke about the importance of lighting black skin so that it looks the way it looks in real life – dark, and also beautiful. In the video, cited below, he also says that telling the story is not just the director’s job, it is everyone’s job. It was important to me to work with a brown DP in order to light the subjects well, but to also have a hand in telling a story that I could not tell on my own.

Ghu’s insight was very helpful to telling the story. We decided to have most shots be shot handheld, but especially almost all of the shots in the club and all shots of Anas, to symbolize chaos and uncertainty. Almost all shots of Anas were singles, with no other subjects in the foreground or background, to show that he is totally alone in the world and in his own head. Ghu and I used *Insecure* as a model for this as well:

“Using a technique called short siding, Cady limited the frame so that even as Issa looks in

Daniel's direction while talking, the audience only sees her and thus feels her discomfort. But when Daniel is talking, he is framed normally to also include Issa, which reflects his ease and how he has less stake in the game." (Variety)

Wherever we could take one-takes of the conversations between Erum and Zaamenah after their first encounter, we did, because their chemistry is what allows for the believability of their characters moving in together. Rather than static locked-down shots of conversations, we used the dolly for almost every dialogue shot, in order to create a more dynamic and natural feeling and flow. The use of a dolly in particular is part of Ghu's signature style when it comes to narrative storytelling, and although time consuming, it worked well for the nature of our film.

Production

In the Spring of 2020, we crossed from true pre-production into the beginnings of production itself. With our primary crew, most of our equipment, and our sources of funding locked, we only needed to cast. We were able to get two main actors, Zaamenah (Tiare Solis) and Anas (Chozy Ayoub) off of Backstage. We auditioned one of my childhood friends, Shivani Persaud, for the main role of Erum. She moved to Atlanta last year to pursue acting, is half Muslim, and fit the part *perfectly*. It felt like magic. Finally, one of my coworkers Travis Misarti offered to play the role of Zayn, as he has acted in small roles for commercials and narrative television before. We were able to pay them all through the Goldwasser grant, which was important to me as they will all receive tax forms from the University, which I felt legitimized our production.

We also secured our locations and our post-production during the early parts of the Spring semester. I met my boyfriend at my job as a freelance video editor at the advertising agency Ideas United. He is a film colorist and lives in a house with a bunch of other

1- somethings in Decatur, where we were able to shoot the first scene of the film. We rented the top floor of Olde Smith's Bar in Midtown using the rest of the Goldwasser Grant for the club scene for half a day and received a very generous student discount. My friend Caroline offered up her apartment, as her and her roommate were on Spring Break. We planned to shoot pickups at the Al-Farooq Mosque in Midtown the night before our official start date for shooting, after our final rehearsal.

We were able to have two days of rehearsal prior to shooting, which eventually served to be the best choice we made during all of production. It allowed us to move much quicker during shooting days and I never had more than four takes of a shot. This was especially important for the first day of shooting, which was entirely outdoors in the biting cold. While we had indoor locations for all our cast and crew to take breaks in, it was still extremely helpful. After reorganizing our shooting days with our Assistant Director (AD), we were able to ensure every cast and crew member got eight hours of sleep every day, with an included buffer for travel time. Because of our extensive preparation, we wrapped early two of the three shooting days, and on time on the third.

During this time, we began working with our composer, a songwriter, and a choreographer for Anas's drag scene. We decided to write our own song, which at the time felt incredibly ambitious. Daniel's younger brother attends school for Music at UT Austin, and within a 24-hour turnaround had a rough draft of lyrics for us to approve. Our composer made a beat, our choreographer made a dance, and we taught it to Chozy. I purchased three separate pairs of heels for the rehearsals, implemented my favorite sari into the costume and the dance, and we made magic.

We decided to have production begin on the Friday before Spring Break in order to give us plenty of time for fundraising. It also allowed for us to have many student artists and

filmmakers help that week on set. We had an AD, several production assistants, a first and second assistant camera (AC) crew members, a choreographer on set, a script supervisor, a sound mixer, a boom operator, and a makeup artist, all current Emory students. The inclusion of two ACs was of integral importance, as one was always available to pull focus. We never felt short of hands.

The week before production began, we held a table read of the film with all cast members. Tiare is from South Carolina, so she attended virtually. I answered all their questions and explained all their characters in depth to each of them. Chozy felt very connected to his character as a man who grew up half Muslim, and who has been cast in exclusively terrorist roles since arriving in Atlanta to begin his acting career. Shivani felt similarly, having grown up half Muslim as well. Tiare has no connection to Islamic or Asian culture, but went to law school and changed career paths in order to become an actress. Zaamenah is perpetually studying for the Bar Exam in order to please her parents, and Tiare was shocked at how closely their story lines and expectations lined up. Tiare and I also figured out that we are from the same town in Florida, and we all felt an instant chemistry. After the reading and lunch, Shivani, Travis and I all took the photos that are printed out in the moving shots in the first scene.

On the Thursday night before Spring break, we held another rehearsal. Chozy learned his choreography while I blocked and rehearsed the duet scenes with Tiare and Shivani. We all came together to watch Chozy dance with our choreographer Willis Hao, and then the three of them and I moved to another room to rehearse and block their group apartment scenes. After that, Tiare, Shivani, Daniel, Ghu (our Director of Photography), and I went to the Al-Farooq mosque in Midtown to shoot wide establishing shots of the girls in front of a mosque for the smoking scenes. We did this in order to have cutaways, because we were not going to be able to shoot in

front of an actual mosque due to confounding sound and location cost issues. We wrapped early before shooting the next morning.

The morning of our Friday shoot, I met early with Shivani and Travis to rehearse their car scene together, and to rehearse their argument for the club scene. It went smoothly and quickly, and we broke for lunch before meeting again at the house to shoot the first scene.

Shooting went smoothly for the most part. There were small hiccups. On the first day of shooting, we ran into an hour-long traffic jam due to President Trump's impromptu visit to the Center for Disease Control (CDC). We were unable to pick up a fog machine to fog up the car during the mosque scenes because of the same CDC fiasco, so we had to make do with the smoke from the prop joints. Chozy sometimes derailed the shoot with his negative and impatient attitude, so we reorganized the shot list on the second day of shooting in order to shoot him out early to keep the spirits of the rest of the cast and crew up, and to ensure his full participation in dancing for the majority of the rest of the next day. I was very allergic to Caroline's cat at the apartment. At the club, a band out paid us at the last minute, and we were kicked out an hour earlier than we anticipated, after losing an hour when Chozy was late and the club manager showed up late to open the building as well. However, the hiccups were smoothed over well by Daniel and the rest of the crew, and I never felt rushed or panicked to a point of concern.

Pre-production for *Bad Muslims* felt like it was years long. When it finally came time to work with actors, I was nervous – these people were outsiders to the project thus far, especially because all main characters and featured extras are working professionals and not students. It felt like the moment to show that we were a legitimate student film production.

When I was in high school and in my first year of college, I directed a few different plays, including a full-length production of *The Crucible*. Directing *Bad Muslims* was made easier by these previous experiences. One of the most interesting parts of directing the actors was their

diverse backgrounds and how they each influenced their portrayals of their individual characters, particularly the three main characters. Both Chozy and Shivani are half Muslim, meaning that one of their parents identifies as Muslim while the other does not. Islamic culture was influential as a part of both of their upbringings, but both do not actively practice the religion, and are familiar with it to varying levels. I found that this brought a dynamic understanding and respect to both of their character portrayals – Chozy was able to pronounce all of the Arabic words with ease, and helped make decisions about his character’s dress, behavior, and demeanor. Particularly, Chozy’s ability to connect with the masculinity stereotypes present in Arab and Muslim culture and then subvert them, not only willingly but excitedly, in his drag dance was indicative of his particularly nuanced understanding and respect of Islam. Without that inherent respect, I think it would have been easy to make a caricature of Anas’s character, or portray him as one-dimensional instead of with depth.

While Tiare is not Muslim, Arab, or Indian, any woman of color can understand, appreciate, and respect the plights of other women of color. Particularly, Zaamenah’s character is less attached to the religion of Islam; rather, her plight is that of someone with certain expectations placed upon her at birth due external cultural and racial influences. When touching upon her mixed background, Tiare made it clear to me that she empathized with the defiance of expectations that Zaamenah is characterized by, particularly Zaamenah’s defiance of attending law school, as Tiare once studied to be a lawyer and is now an actress. There was, again, an inherent respect to the character despite being unfamiliar with Islam as a way of life.

Tiare’s racial ambiguity is an interesting part of her acting career and how she is able to play characters that have no similarity to her own life. She is constantly being cast in roles that are not representative of her own upbringing, but she is happy to in order to advance and drive stories that are important to be told but are not her own. This is tragic, because Tiare is rarely

or never represented accurately in her work. But she also plays a critical role in the acting world, filling a need that no one else can. In the dissertation “‘We can’t even play ourselves’: mixed-race actresses in the early twenty-first century,” Valerie M. Lo states of Thandie Newton:

“When left unstated, the racial identity of Newton’s characters can usually be discerned by the context of the film, the race of the rest of the cast, and whether or not the film deals with racial issues. As a character actress, Newton does not always have a leading role; however, her portrayals are critical to advancing and completing the overarching story.”

Like Newton, Tiare’s race does not necessarily lend her to having a responsibility to the film and its narrative because of a personal connection to the message, but more because she generally has a responsibility to herself and her success. She must be constantly adapting her identity in order to get jobs. In doing so, she constantly has the responsibility to drive a story and assist a narrative, and must be constantly devoting herself to learning about new cultures and heritages in order to accurately portray her characters. It is a big ask of a person, but she does it well.

Post-Production

We wrapped shooting on the first Sunday of Spring Break. Jeff, the colorist, served as the Digital Imaging Technician and Assistant Editor on set, and compiled all of the footage, offlined it to make the project as small as possible, organized the Premiere file, and applied a rough color to all of the shots on the Monday afterward. On Tuesday, I watched all the footage and began to compile selects from the stringouts that Jeff made. I had taken the week off work, but I was scheduled to go in on Friday to show my boss the assembly and we were going to sit together to improve my assembly. He was going to directly help me edit and provide a secondary rough cut. On Wednesday, we received word that residential housing at the University would be closing,

that we were moving to remote learning, and that I needed to move out by the end of the next week.

The next week was very difficult for me. My family is comprised of two sister who are both immunocompromised, and my parents are over sixty. I still had a 24-hours-per-week job in Atlanta, which at the time had yet to go remote. I did not have a place to stay. I was no longer a Resident Advisor and did not know how I was going to generate enough income to afford renting in Atlanta. When my job went remote, they reduced our contracted hours, thus concerning me even more.

Through the generosity of my friends and loved ones in Atlanta, I was able to secure a place to stay through the rest of the semester. I began working from home, as well as attending classes remotely. However, because my supervisor at work is now managing an entire remote team, he was no longer able to help me with the edit. I lost vital post-production equipment by moving off campus, including a second monitor, which slowed me down immensely. I struggled with the abrupt life change and stressors and lost a lot of motivation.

Post-production has been a difficult process, but a rewarding one. Daniel, my producer, was able to give me feedback remotely through uploads to Frame.io, a site to house drafts of films for review. Luckily, I saved up for and purchased a new laptop before the quarantine began and was able to access all the Adobe Suite for free. I was able to go through several revisions of Premiere and After Effects files before giving the final draft to Jeff for color.

What's Next

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to have our composer or additional editors work on the draft. The most important lesson I have learned from making a film this semester is that filmmaking is not an individual process. It requires collaboration from many

talented people, with individualized specialties and expertise, in order to make the absolute best final product possible. The most important skill for me to have as a writer and director, as well as a primary spearhead of the film, is the ability to make connections far and wide in order to have the best people possible work on the film. I am very proud to have found a producer early on, to have had a DP of Asian descent who was able to properly light our actors of color, and to have the resources of working at a Post House at my disposal. As we work towards submitting the film to festivals, I want the final version of the product to have more eyes on it than just my own. For the next stage, when the pandemic ends I will bring the film back to my office for notes, and work with a new editor to use my version as an inspiration draft. We also want to bring Sam back on as composer for that final draft of the film, in order to keep the integrity of a student and Emory film at its heart.

We still have around \$600 left in our budget, which is projected to be split between our colorist, an editor, and a sound mixer. Within the next month, we will conduct a second round of crowdfunding with colored stills from the film through our social channels and our already existing newsletter. We hope to use those funds to submit to as many festivals and student film competitions as possible. In the Fall, I will attend Northwestern University to pursue a Masters of Fine Arts in Writing for the Screen and Stage, where my acceptance was contingent upon my continued work on the *Bad Muslims* concept. In graduate school, I will have the opportunity to create a Bible as well as write several scripts for episodes of the projected series.

Reflection on Success

While difficult to pull off, I think that *Bad Muslims* was objectively successful in completing the goal of creating new and dynamic Muslim representation in Western media, and in creating a capsule film for what would be a pilot episode of a comedic television series. By pulling

together a diverse and talented team, we were able to shoot in five separate locations and remain under budget for production and post-production. I was able to shift my perspective from solely writing to writing, producing, and directing, which will allow me to become a better writer overall.

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BAD MUSLIMS

Written by

Samah Meghjee

COLD OPEN

1

INT. U-HAUL - DAY

1

A U-haul is being packed with boxes, and each box is labeled with "Erum" - "Erum's shoes," "Erum's DVDs," "Erum's photos." The last box tips over, and a slew of photos pour out - Zayn's arm is slung around Erum's waist as they pose in evening clothes in front of a banner reading "Senior Prom - A Night Under the Stars." A photo of them in the back of a car, laughing. Half a dozen selfies of the two of them. Included in the spill are photos of Erum and her family - at mosque, restaurants, graduation, holidays - where Erum is much more covered than in any of her couple photos, looking sullen.

The U-haul door slams, and ERUM (24, well-meaning but self-destructive) and ZAYN (24, pushover, mama's boy) climb into the front seat.

ERUM

We did it!

ZAYN

It was really all you.

ERUM

And neither of our moms even figured it out. Should we head to your place to get your stuff now? I'll hide in the back so your parents don't see me.

ZAYN

Actually - I uh, actually never told my mom about moving out.

ERUM

What are you talking about?

ZAYN

It's just, approaching that conversation seemed super hard, and you know I'm her baby...

ERUM

So when are you going to tell her? And when are you going to get your stuff?

ZAYN

We don't do this, you know what I mean, Erum? Like, we're not supposed to do stuff like this.

ERUM

Stuff like what?

ZAYN

You know! Like moving in together, or even dating at all. You know my mom freaks out when I even hug girls. She starts shouting "*Na mahram!*" and then makes me put all of my tips from the day into the sadqah box.

ERUM

Did you seriously not tell me that you weren't going to move in with me until now? When my stuff is packed to move into an apartment that I cannot afford? Because you're a 24-year-old man that is *afraid of his mother?*

ZAYN

You didn't tell your mom either!

ERUM

And yet, all of my boxes are here.

ZAYN

That's the thing, Erum... I think we let this go too far. I think... I think we should take a break. Like, what we've been doing, it's not right. I don't want to be a bad Muslim anymore.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

2 INT. APARTMENT - ERUM'S BEDROOM - DAY 2

Erum bangs open the apartment door, struggling to lift an overflowing box on her own. She sets it down, hard, and flops down next to it. She looks inside the top of it, pulls out a photograph, and sighs.

3 INT. ERUM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 3

Erum runs around her half-unpacked room, clearly getting ready for mosque. She is wearing a long black abayah, her hair is in a tight bun, and she is carrying a scarf.

She rummages through boxes until she finds two mismatched socks and slips them on. She picks up her phone - there are nine unread text messages from "Mama."

"Are you on your way?"

"The lecture is going to start in 15 minutes and you still need to pray."

"You need to hurry."

"Astaghfirullah, you can't walk in this late now, everyone will see you."

"Haya it's okay Allah wants you to come to mosque, just hurry."

"Do wudhu. Make sure you bring cash for the charity box."

Erum texts her back.

"On my way!"

Erum grabs a huge wad of cash, her keys, slips on shoes, and sprints out the door.

4 EXT. MOSQUE PARKING LOT - NIGHT 4

ZAAMENAH (25, wild but kind) is wearing an unbuttoned abayah, smoking a joint in a car and blowing the smoke out of the window. In the distance, the call of the Adhaan can be heard, as well as the buzzing of men's voices. She receives some text messages from "Mom."

"Where are you?"

"Come back inside."

"The lecture is nice, you should listen."

"Don't talk to any boys where people can see you."

"All of the girls are in here."

"Enough beta, namaz is starting."

Zaamenah ignores it and takes one last hit, before tossing the remains of the joint out the window. She tilts her seat back, rolls down the windows, and stares at the minaret as it spins lightly among the stars.

There is a RUSTLING SOUND followed by a loud grunt OS. Zaamenah sits up to look out the window. Her view is disrupted abruptly by Erum, who pops into the passenger window.

ERUM

Hey, are you a dealer?

Zaamenah makes no move to get up, unfazed.

ZAAMENAH

Go away.

Erun opens the passenger door and climbs in.

ERUM

I wanna buy some.

ZAAMENAH

You're looking for the teenage boys baraza-ing in the guys' lot.

ERUM

We can't go to the guys' side.
Look, are you selling marijuana or not?

Zaamenah sits up abruptly.

ZAAMENAH

First, nobody calls it marijuana except the Uncles. Second, I know you've never smoked, because you never actually pay attention to the lecture, and the only way someone our age actually pays attention to the lecture is if they're high out of their fucking mind.

(MORE)

ZAAMENAH (CONT'D)

So whatever rebellious kick you're on, leave me out of it, because I don't want to go to hell.

ERUM

You're smoking weed in the mosque parking lot. You're basically smoking weed in the mosque.

ZAAMENAH

Not true. When I did that the fire alarm went off and the sprinklers made the musallahs mold. Go back inside.

Erum holds out the crumpled charity money.

ERUM

I have cash.

ZAAMENAH

Deal.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. MOSQUE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

5

Zaamenah and Erum are smoking in the trunk of the car with the back wide open. Erum's abayah is now also unbuttoned. She takes a drag and coughs, hard.

ZAAMENAH

It's okay, that's how you know it's working.

ERUM

My throat is on fire. This is not fun. Why do people do this?

ZAAMENAH

Give it a second. So where's Zayn?

ERUM

How do you know about that?

ZAAMENAH

Please, everyone knows about that. You forgot to block Sayyeda from your Instagram story and it spread like wildfire.

ERUM

Damn. (Beat) We broke up.

ZAAMENAH

Shit. Didn't you just move in together?

Erum chokes again, this time in shock.

ZAAMENAH (CONT'D)

You need to block Sayyeda. Didn't y'all get a house and everything? Why'd you break up?

ERUM

He said he's tired of being a bad Muslim. He wants to change or something.

ZAAMENAH

What do you think of that?

ERUM

Well, I came to mosque because I thought maybe I should also try to change. Seek enlightenment or something. Bask in the light of the sunnah. Kiss Muhammad's ass.

ZAAMENAH

And to see if Zayn came?

ERUM

Absolutely not. This was just for me. I'm over it, okay? And can you tell Sayyeda that? I'm over it.

ZAAMENAH

And now you're smoking in the parking lot.

Erum raises her eyebrows and takes a drag. She falls backwards against the seats, coughing, tries to get back up, and fails. She lays down hard on Zaamenah's lap, with finality, and stares up at the sky. She laughs at nothing.

ERUM

Okay, it's fun now.

Zaamenah flops down next to Erum, and looks at her apprehensively.

ZAAMENAH

So uh... do you need a roommate?

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

6 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

6

Zaamenah stands over Erum's shoulder. Erum is swiping on her phone.

ERUM

I feel uncomfortable.

ZAAMENAH

This is an important step in you moving on. Left.

ERUM

We didn't even read the bio yet -

ZAAMENAH

No, sometimes you can just tell. Wait, this person looks cool. But that music taste is ass.

ERUM

Why does that matter?

ZAAMENAH

Do you want shitty music keeping us up all night?

ERUM

This is making me uncomfortable. Can't we just do this the traditional way?

ZAAMENAH

Get with the times, Erum. No one does it the traditional way anymore. Everyone finds their roommates online. I already compromised from Craigslist to Muslimmate, don't make me change my mind. Swipe left, no photo.

ERUM

Don't be superficial. Look, lots of Beyonce, says she's tidy, prays five times a day, works in finance so she'll cover our asses if the lights get turned off. Our moms will love her. Perfect.

ZAAMENAH
Fine. Swipe right.

7 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

7

The door to the house swings open. ANAS (24, well-groomed but awkward) stands in the doorway, wearing a topee and holding a Quran.

ANAS
A-salaamu alaykum. I'm Anas.

ZAAMENAH
Wait.

ERUM
You're supposed to be a girl.

ANAS
Yeah, I'm not that, sorry.

ZAAMENAH
It's a Muslim roommate app.
Searching for roommates of a
different gender isn't even an
option.

ANAS
Well you see, I specifically wanted
female roommates.

ZAAMENAH
What kind of perv are you?

ANAS
No! That's not what I meant. I
didn't want to live with men.
They're...loud. And not clean.

ERUM
Yeah, so?

ANAS
And aggressive! You know how Brown
men are.

Both Erum and Zaamenah nod in agreement.

ZAAMENAH
Yeah, they suck.

ERUM

But still. I told my mom I was living with two women.

ZAAMENAH

Yeah, me too.

ERUM

How do we know we can trust you?

ANAS

Wallahi, you can trust me. I'll be very respectful.

ZAAMENAH

You really think we're gonna take a "Wallahi, I swear?" You think we've never met a man before?

ANAS

You'll hardly see me, I promise. I work all day anyway. I swear I won't be a bother at all.

Anas holds up his right hand and holds the Quran in his left. Erum and Zaamenah look at each other.

ANAS (CONT'D)

Please don't make me live with the Muslim guys who wear so much Axe that they basically sweat it. I can't live in that. I have asthma.

ZAAMENAH

I mean, we really need a roommate...

Zaamenah and Erum exchange looks.

ERUM

As long as no one tells my mom.

ZAAMENAH AND ANAS TOGETHER

Mine either.

ANAS

Thank you, Jazakallah.

Anas gives an awkward half-bow and steps in the doorway.

ZAAMENAH

Whatever, dude.

ANAS
Which room is mine?

ZAAMENAH
I claimed that one.

Zaamenah points to the room the two girls walked out of.

ERUM
And I got the one by the kitchen.

ANAS
So the living room will be the
prayer room?

ERUM
Uh -

ZAAMENAH
Why don't we, uh, pray in our own
rooms?

ANAS
You're right, it's a more intimate
connection to Allah that way.
Alright, I'll go get my stuff.

Anas nods awkwardly and leaves the apartment.

ERUM
He seems like a nice guy.

ZAAMENAH
He'll probably just pray all the
time and not bother us. Exactly
what I wanted.

8 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

8

Erum is scrolling through Zayn's Instagram on the couch, in
sweats and eating ice cream. Zaamenah's door bangs open and
Erum jumps, stuffing the phone under her butt.

ZAAMENAH

Zaamenah walks to Anas's door. She doesn't knock, but starts
to open it.

ZAAMENAH (CONT'D)

Anas, we need your portion of the security deposit. It's due at the end of the weekend.

Anas catches the door from the inside, pokes his head out of the crack, and screams at the top of his lungs.

ANAS

No.

Anas slams the door shut. Zaamenah tries to open it again, but it bounces back - Anas is holding it shut from the inside.

ZAAMENAH

What are you doing?

ANAS

I'm naked. So, so naked.

ZAAMENAH

What?

ANAS

So unbelievably naked.

ZAAMENAH

Well, get unnaked and open the door.

ANAS

I'll uh, slip the check under the door.

Zaamenah and Erum look at each other, bewildered.

ERUM

(whispers)
Masturbating?

ZAAMENAH

(whispers)
Definitely.

Zaamenah walks to a kitchen drawer, shuffles around inside of it, pulls out a plastic baggie, and begins to roll a joint.

ERUM

Be careful! Anas is here! And can you not do that in the house?

ZAAMENAH

Light some oud.

ERUM
Crack a window.

Zaamenah makes no move to do so.

ZAAMENAH
So are you coming out tonight?

ERUM
Absolutely not.

ZAAMENAH
Why not? I thought you were a bad
kid now.

ERUM
I smoked once! And I'm never going
to again.

ZAAMENAH
Sure. I'm leaving in ten, I'll see
you later. Maybe.

Zaamenah exits. Erum pulls out her phone again and watches Zayn's Instagram story. It is blurry, colorful, and unsteady - he is clearly out at a club. There are shots of Zayn dancing, taking shots, and the last is of a remarkably beautiful girl dancing in front of the camera, smiling ear-to-ear.

ERUM
You motherfucker. Good Muslim my
ass.

END OF ACT TWO.

ACT THREE

9

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

9

There is loud music, colorful lights, and scantily clad people dancing close together. Erum shoves through them, clearly uncomfortable. She is still in sweatpants with her hair in a bun. A man tries to offer her a drink and she pushes it away, disgusted. Someone else grabs her hand to try and dance with her - she pulls away.

Zaamenah is at the bar, schmoozing a white guy. They take shots, and then he pulls her onto the dance floor, where they start dancing together.

THREE DRAG QUEENS file out onto the main dance floor. The crowd roars. Zaamenah is taken from her dance partner, and laughing she dances with one of the drag queens. The queen spins her into the dance floor, and Zaamenah and Anas dance past each other, neither realizing the other is there.

Erum is shocked by the arrival of the queens. She backs away from the incoming crowd and bumps right into Zayn, who is dancing with the pretty girl from his Instagram story. He looks shocked to see Erum.

ERUM

This is your way of fulfilling the
Sunnah?

ZAYN

Erum?

Zayn and Erum start arguing.

Zaamenah is spun back into the arms of the white BOY, who dips his head to kiss her.

BOY

I've never made out with an Indian
girl before.

Zaamenah looks up and rolls her eyes.

ZAAMENAH

Just shut up.

They kiss.

The drag queens start to conglomerate at the head of the dance floor, continually riling the crowd.

A spotlight falls onto the stage, and a drumroll is heard. An ANNOUNCER calls from offscreen.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
And now welcoming, the crowd
favorite, Kiss an Ass!

The crowd parts, and Anas strolls into the middle of the floor. He catches eyes with Zaamenah, in the arms of the white boy, and Erum, in pajamas, arguing with Zayn, tears streaming down her face. All of them stare at each other, shocked.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

BAD MUSLIMS

A COMEDIC SHORT FILM BY SAMAH AND SALWA MEGHJEE

WATCH THE TITLE SEQUENCE



WHAT IS BAD MUSLIMS?

BAD MUSLIMS IS A COMEDIC SHORT FILM BASED ON A PILOT EPISODE CREATED BY MY TWIN SISTER SALWA AND I. IT STARS **ERUM**, A SWEET BUT INSECURE 20-SOMETHING WHO, AFTER A CHANCE ENCOUNTER IN THE MOSQUE PARKING LOT, DECIDES TO ROOM WITH **ZAMENAH**, A WILD ONE. FROM THERE, THEY FIND A THIRD ROOMMATE USING A POPULAR MUSLIM MATCHMAKING APP – BUT, HE TURNS OUT TO BE A MAN, **ANAS**. THE THREE DECIDE TO LIVE TOGETHER DESPITE MUSLIM SOCIETAL NORMS DICTATING THEIR MIXED-GENDERED LIVING SITUATION AS CULTURALLY TABOO AND TRY TO NAVIGATE LIVING TOGETHER HARMONIOUSLY WHILE HIDING THEIR "**BAD MUSLIM**" SHENANIGANS FROM EACH OTHER AND THEIR PARENTS. BUT ALL CANNOT BE HIDDEN FOR LONG. A LITTLE BIT OF **INSECURE**, **THREE'S COMPANY**, **NEW GIRL**, **MASTER OF NONE**, AND HULU'S NEW **RAMY**, **BAD MUSLIMS** NAVIGATES WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO BE **GOOD, BAD, OR MUSLIM IN THE MODERN AGE.**

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

BAD MUSLIMS WAS CREATED TO FILL A GAP THAT WE SEE IN TRADITIONAL MEDIA – MUSLIM PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY MUSLIM WOMEN, ARE ALMOST NEVER FEATURED AS THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF COMEDIC TELEVISION, OR REALLY COMEDIC ANYTHING. WE ARE ALWAYS SIDE CHARACTERS, JOKES, AND CARICATURES THAT DO NOT SERVE TO DIVERSIFY THE WAY THAT THE GENERAL PUBLIC THINKS ABOUT MUSLIMS, BUT INSTEAD CONTINUES TO HINDER OUR PROGRESS IN WESTERN SOCIETY. BUT MUSLIM PEOPLE ARE FUNNY, AND SOME OF THE STUFF WE DO IS WHACK, BUT IN A GOOD WAY. AFTER WATCHING LITTLE MOSQUE ON THE PRAIRIE, A CHEESY CANADIAN SITCOM THAT I WAS OBSESSED WITH AS A KID, I WAS HOOKED ON THE IDEA OF SEEING PEOPLE THAT LOOKED LIKE ME, SOUNDED LIKE ME, AND TOLD JOKES THAT I REALLY UNDERSTOOD. IT WAS SOMETHING I COULD NEVER LET GO OF.

HOW I NEED HELP

WE ARE CURRENTLY FUNDRAISING TO MAKE THE PROJECT THE BEST IT CAN POSSIBLY BE. BELOW IS OUR OVERALL BUDGET. WHILE OUR \$5,000 BUDGET WOULD HELP US MAKE A HIGH QUALITY FILM, THE MORE WE RAISE, THE BETTER IT CAN GET.

ACTORS	\$1,000
LOCATIONS	\$780
SET DRESSING	\$80
CATERING	\$675
PROPS	\$200
CREW	\$950
POST-PRODUCTION	\$1,000
FESTIVAL SUBMISSIONS	\$400

Sheet #: 2 1 5/8 pgs	Scenes: 1	EXT	UHAUL IN DRIVEWAY Erum moves out; Zayn breaks up with Erum.	Day	1, 4
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LUNCH :30

Sheet #: 4 1 5/8 pgs	Scenes: 4	EXT	MOSQUE PARKING LOT Zaamenah smokes weed; Erum tries to buy some.	Night	1, 2
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Sheet #: 5 1 4/8 pgs	Scenes: 5	EXT	MOSQUE PARKING LOT Erum and Zaamenah smoke.	Night	1, 2
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Company move and set up apartment 2:00

Sheet #: 3 6/8 pgs	Scenes: 3	INT	ERUM'S BEDROOM Erum's mom texts her about going to mosque; Erum leaves f		1
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End of Shooting Day 1

Sheet #: 13 1/8 pgs	Scenes: 2	INT	ERUM'S BEDROOM Erum struggles to move a box.	Day	1
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Sheet #: 7 2 4/8 pgs	Scenes: 7	INT	LIVING ROOM Anas arrives; Erum and Zaamenah realize that he's a man.	Day	1, 2, 3
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LUNCH (HALFWAY THROUGH SCENE 7) :30

Sheet #: 6 1 1/8 pgs	Scenes: 6	INT	LIVING ROOM Erum and Zaamenah swipe on Muslimmate.		1, 2
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Sheet #: 9 1 7/8 pgs	Scenes: 9	INT	LIVING ROOM Erum is sad about her breakup; she and Zaamenah try to col	Night	1, 2, 3
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End of Shooting Day 2

Sheet #: 10 1 4/8 pgs	Scenes: 10	INT	CLUB Erum argues with Zayn; Erum and Zaamenah find Anas at th	Night	1, 2, 3, 4
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LUNCH (HALFWAY THROUGH SCENE 10) :30

End of Shooting Day 3

SHOT LIST · Bad Muslims

SCENE #:		4			SCENE: EXT. MOSQUE - NIGHT			PAGES:		1/8		Date:		3/5								
✓ [1]	SETUP #	SHOT #	SUBJECT [2]	SHOT SIZE [3]	CAMERA	ANGLE	MOVEMENT	EQUIPMENT	LENS	SOUND	NOTES	TAKE # (CIRCLE BEST) [4]	SCRIPT TIME (MIN) [5]	SETUP TIME (MIN) [6]	EST. # OF TAKES [7]	SHOOT TIME (MIN) [8]						
✓	1	1	Zaamenah	W		Eyelevel	Pan	Steadicam			Pan from mosque to Zaamenah smoking in car										0.00%	
✓	1	2	Zaamenah	MS		Eyelevel	Steadicam	Steadicam			Zaamenah checks her phone											0.00%
✓	1	3	Erum	W		Eyelevel	Steadicam	Steadicam			Erum approaches passenger window											0.00%
SCENE NOTES:												TOTAL SHOOT TIME FOR SCENE (HOURS): 100.00%										

SHOT LIST · Bad Muslims

SCENE #: 1	SCENE: EXT. HOUSE - DAY				PAGES: 1 5/8			Date: 3/6								
✓	SETUP #	SHOT #	SUBJECT	SHOT SIZE	CAMERA	ANGLE	MOVEMENT	EQUIPMENT	LENS	SOUND	NOTES	TAKE # (CIRCLE BEST)	SCRIPT TIME (MIN)	SETUP TIME (MIN)	EST. # OF TAKES	SHOOT TIME (MIN)
✓	1	1	Photos	CU		Eyelevel	Pan	Handheld			Box of photos gets placed into the car. It spills, pan over photos of Erum. Trunk slams.					0
✓	2	2	Erum, Zayn	MS		Eyelevel	Static	Sticks / Tripod			Erum and Zayn get into the car.					0
✓	3	3	Erum	MS (OTS)		Eyelevel	Static	Handheld			Erum and Zayn break up.					0
✓	4	4	Zayn	MS (OTS)		Eyelevel	Static	Handheld			Erum and Zayn break up.					0
Nice-to-Have	5	5	Erum, Zayn	W		Eyelevel	Dolly	Dolly			Dolly shot that slowly pulls out for all dialogue.					0
Nice-to-Have	6	6	Erum, Zayn	W		Low Angle	Dolly	Dolly			Erum and Zayn pack the car.					0
Nice-to-Have	7	7	Erum, Zayn	W		High Angle	Crane / Boom	Crane			Erum and Zayn pack the car.					0
SCENE NOTES:												TOTAL SHOOT TIME FOR SCENE (HOURS):			3	

SCENE #: 4	SCENE: EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT				PAGES: 1 5/8			Date: 3/6								
✓	SETUP #	SHOT #	SUBJECT	SHOT SIZE	CAMERA	ANGLE	MOVEMENT	EQUIPMENT	LENS	SOUND	NOTES	TAKE # (CIRCLE BEST)	SCRIPT TIME (MIN)	SETUP TIME (MIN)	EST. # OF TAKES	SHOOT TIME (MIN)
✓	1	1	Zaamenah	MS			Static	Sticks / Tripod			Zaamenah takes a hit, checks her phone					0
✓	1	2	Zaamenah	MS			Static	Sticks / Tripod			Zaamenah and Erum talk					0
✓	1	3	Erum	MS			Handheld	Handheld			Erum talks outside the window					0
✓	1	4	Erum	MS			Handheld	Handheld			Erum talks inside the car					0
✓	1	5	Erum	MS			Handheld	Handheld			Erum gets in the car.					0
SCENE NOTES:												TOTAL SHOOT TIME FOR SCENE (HOURS):			0	

SCENE #: 5	SCENE: EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT				PAGES: 1 4/8			Date: 3/6								
✓	SETUP #	SHOT #	SUBJECT	SHOT SIZE	CAMERA	ANGLE	MOVEMENT	EQUIPMENT	LENS	SOUND	NOTES	TAKE # (CIRCLE BEST)	SCRIPT TIME (MIN)	SETUP TIME (MIN)	EST. # OF TAKES	SHOOT TIME (MIN)
✓	1	1	Zaamenah, Erum	W			Static	Sticks / Tripod			Zaamenah and Erum talk in trunk					0
✓	1	4	Zaamenah	MS			Static	Sticks / Tripod			Zaamenah and Erum talk in trunk					0
✓	1	3	Erum	MS			Handheld	Handheld			Zaamenah and Erum talk in trunk					0
Nice-to-Have	1	2	Zaamenah, Erum	W			Dolly	Dolly			Zaamenah and Erum talk in trunk					0
SCENE NOTES:												TOTAL SHOOT TIME FOR SCENE (HOURS):			0	

SCENE #: 3	SCENE: INT. APARTMENT - DAY				PAGES: 6/8			Date: 3/6								
✓	SETUP #	SHOT #	SUBJECT	SHOT SIZE	CAMERA	ANGLE	MOVEMENT	EQUIPMENT	LENS	SOUND	NOTES	TAKE # (CIRCLE BEST)	SCRIPT TIME (MIN)	SETUP TIME (MIN)	EST. # OF TAKES	SHOOT TIME (MIN)
✓	1	1	Erum	W			Pan	Handheld			Erum runs around a half-unpacked room, finds shoes, socks					0
✓	1	2	Boxes	CU			Handheld	Handheld			Erum pulls shoes, socks out of a box					0
✓	1	3	Boxes	CU			Handheld	Handheld			Closeups of boxes					0
✓	1	1	Erum	W			Static	Handheld			Erum checks her phone, grabs wad of cash					0
✓	1	2	Case	CU			Handheld	Handheld			Erum grabs wad of cash					0
Nice-to-Have	1	3	Erum	W			Dolly	Dolly			One take of whole scene					0

SCENE NOTES:

TOTAL SHOOT TIME FOR SCENE (HOURS):

0



SHOT LIST · Bad Muslims

SCENE #: 2		SCENE: INT. APARTMENT - DAY				PAGES: 1/8		Date: 3/7								
✓	SETUP #	SHOT #	SUBJECT	SHOT SIZE	CAMERA	ANGLE	MOVEMENT	EQUIPMENT	LENS	SOUND	NOTES	TAKE # (CIRCLE BEST)	SCRIPT TIME (MIN)	SETUP TIME (MIN)	EST. # OF TAKES	SHOOT TIME (MIN)
✓	1	1	Erum	W			Static	Handheld			Erum struggles to open door w/ box					
✓	1	2	Erum	W			Static	Handheld			Erum sets down the box in the empty room, sits next to it, pulls out photo.					
Nice-to-Have	1	3	Erum	W			Dolly	Dolly			Erum struggles to open door w/ box					
Nice-to-Have	1	4	Erum	W			Dolly	Dolly			Erum sets down the box in the empty room, sits next to it, pulls out photo.					
✓	1	5	Photo	CU			Static	Handheld			Photo					
SCENE NOTES:												TOTAL SHOOT TIME FOR SCENE (HOURS):				

SCENE #: 7		SCENE: INT. APARTMENT - DAY				PAGES: 1 5/8		Date: 3/7								
✓	SETUP #	SHOT #	SUBJECT	SHOT SIZE	CAMERA	ANGLE	MOVEMENT	EQUIPMENT	LENS	SOUND	NOTES	TAKE # (CIRCLE BEST)	SCRIPT TIME (MIN)	SETUP TIME (MIN)	EST. # OF TAKES	SHOOT TIME (MIN)
✓	1	1	Anas	W			Static	Handheld			Door swings open to reveal Anas					
✓	1	2	Anas	MS		Eyelevel	Static	Handheld			Anas, Erum, Zaamenah conversation					
✓	1	3	Erum	MS		Eyelevel	Static	Handheld			Anas, Erum, Zaamenah conversation					
✓	1	4	Zaamenah	MS		Eyelevel	Static	Handheld			Anas, Erum, Zaamenah conversation					
Nice-to-Have	1	5	Anas	W			Pan	Handheld			Anas in the doorway - surprise! a man!					
Nice-to-Have	1	6	Zaamenah, Erum	MS		Eyelevel	Static	Sticks / Tripod			Anas, Erum, Zaamenah conversation					0
Nice-to-Have	1	7	Zaamenah, Erum, Anas	W			Dolly	Dolly			Anas, Erum, Zaamenah conversation					0
Nice-to-Have	1	8	Zaamenah, Erum, Anas	W			Static	Sticks / Tripod			Wes-Anderson-y symmetry shot					0
SCENE NOTES:												TOTAL SHOOT TIME FOR SCENE (HOURS): 0				

SCENE #: 6		SCENE: INT. APARTMENT - DAY				PAGES: 1 1/8		Date: 3/7								
✓	SETUP #	SHOT #	SUBJECT	SHOT SIZE	CAMERA	ANGLE	MOVEMENT	EQUIPMENT	LENS	SOUND	NOTES	TAKE # (CIRCLE BEST)	SCRIPT TIME (MIN)	SETUP TIME (MIN)	EST. # OF TAKES	SHOOT TIME (MIN)
✓	1	1	Zaamenah, Erum	W			Dolly	Dolly			Zaamenah and Erum conversation					
✓	1	1	Zaamenah, Erum	W			Static	Handheld			Zaamenah and Erum conversation					
SCENE NOTES:												TOTAL SHOOT TIME FOR SCENE (HOURS): 0				

SCENE #: 8		SCENE: INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT				PAGES: 1 7/8		Date: 3/7								
✓	SETUP #	SHOT #	SUBJECT	SHOT SIZE	CAMERA	ANGLE	MOVEMENT	EQUIPMENT	LENS	SOUND	NOTES	TAKE # (CIRCLE BEST)	SCRIPT TIME (MIN)	SETUP TIME (MIN)	EST. # OF TAKES	SHOOT TIME (MIN)
Nice-to-Have	1	1	Erum	W		Extreme High	Static	Sticks / Tripod			Overhead of Erum eating ice cream and swiping until Z enters					
✓	1	2	Erum	MS			Static	Handheld			Erum eating ice cream and swiping; convo w Zaamenah					
✓	1	3	Erum	CU (OTS)		High Angle	Static	Handheld			Erum swiping through instagram until Z enters - once w green screen, once w story.					
✓	1	4	Zaamenah	MS			Tracking Shot	Dolly			Zaamenah enters and crosses the apartment to Anas's door					
✓	1	5	Zaamenah	MS			Static	Sticks / Tripod			Zaamenah enters					

✓	1	6	Anas	MS			Static	Sticks / Tripod			Zaamenah knocks & talks to Anas					
✓	1	7	Zaamenah	MS		POV	Static	Sticks / Tripod			Zaamenah talks through the door to Anas					
Nice-to-Have	1	8	Zaamenah	MS			Tracking Shot	Dolly			Zaamenah walks to couch, pulls out weed					
✓	1	9	Zaamenah	W			Tracking Shot	Sticks / Tripod			Zaamenah walks to couch, pulls out weed					
✓	1	10	Zaamenah	MS			Static	Sticks / Tripod			Convo w Erum					
SCENE NOTES:											TOTAL SHOOT TIME FOR SCENE (HOURS):					0



SHOT LIST · Bad Muslims

SCENE #: 9

SCENE: INT. SMITH'S OLDE BAR

PAGES: 1 4/8

Date: 3/8

✓	SETUP #	SHOT #	SUBJECT	SHOT SIZE	CAMERA	ANGLE	MOVEMENT	EQUIPMENT	LENS	SOUND	NOTES	TAKE # (CIRCLE BEST)	SCRIPT TIME (MIN)	SETUP TIME (MIN)	EST. # OF TAKES	SHOOT TIME (MIN)	
✓	1	1	extras	MS		Eyelevel	Pan	Handheld			b roll - dancing extras						
✓	2	1	erum	ms		Eyelevel	Tracking Shot	Handheld			track erum into club. erum bumps into somepeople. swing to see zaamenah and bar w white boy - they take a shot. swing back to erum bumping into zayn. they argue. swing back to see zaamenah and whit boy pulled onto dance floor. white boy and z make out. swing to see anas enter.						
	3	1	erum								erum enters bar, bumps into people						
	4	1	zaamenah								z and white boy flirt at bar, take shots						
	4	2	white boy								z and white boy flirt at bar, take shots						
	4	3	z and white boy								z and white boy flirt at bar, take shots						
	5	1	zayn								erum bumps into zayn, gets angry						
	5	2	erum								erum bumps into zayn, gets angry						
	5	3	erum and zayn								erum bumps into zayn, gets angry						
	4	1	zaamenah								z and white boy enter dance floor, dance. white boy line.						
	4	2	white boy								z and white boy enter dance floor, dance. white boy line.						
	4	3	z and white boy								z and white boy enter dance floor, dance. white boy line.						
	5	1	zaamenah								z and white boy hear announcement						
	5	2	erum								erum and zayn hear announcement						
	6	1	anas								enters, dance						
	6	2	anas								anas b roll						
	7	1	anas								anas locks eyes w erum						
	7	2	erum								zaamenah						
	7	3	zaamenah								anas locks eyes w erum						
											zaamenah						
											anas locks eyes w erum						
											zaamenah						

SCENE NOTES:

TOTAL SHOOT TIME FOR SCENE (HOURS):

BAD MUSLIMS

Call sheet #1

Friday, March 6th, 2020

DIRECTOR: Samah Meghjee

PRODUCER: Daniel Eshbaugh

SHOOT DAY 1 OF 3

SUNSET: 6:39 PM

WEATHER: 53 degrees, 1% chance of rain

Nearest hospital: 1364 Clifton Rd, Atlanta, GA 30322

GENERAL CREW CALL:

12:30 PM

1647 Deerfield Cir. Decatur GA 30033

CHECK BELOW FOR INDIVIDUAL CALLS

NOTES

Dinner will be served at the Visual Arts Building (700 Peavine Creek Dr.) from 4:30 to 5:00 PM. **Please let production know if you have any dietary restrictions.**

Production moves from 1647 Deerfield to Lowerfields from 4-4:30p, then from Lowerfields to 201 Rock Springs 9:30-10p.

SC.	SET/SYNOPSIS	D/N	PGS	CAST	LOCATION
1	EXT. UHAUL IN DRIVEWAY Erum moves out; Zayn breaks up with Erum.	D1	1 5/8	1, 4	1647 Deerfield Cir. Decatur GA 30033
4	EXT. MOSQUE PARKING LOT Zaamenah smokes weed; Erum tries to buy some.	N2	1 5/8	1, 2	Lowerfields parking lot
5	EXT. MOSQUE PARKING LOT Erum and Zaamenah smoke.	N2	1 4/8	1, 2	Lowerfields parking lot
3	INT. ERUM'S BEDROOM Erum's mom texts her about going to mosque; Erum leaves her room.	D1	6/8	1	201 Rock Springs Ct NE, Atlanta, GA, 30306

	CAST	ROLE	STATUS	CALL TIME	NOTES
1.	Shivani Persuad	Erum	WS	1p	
2.	Tiare Solis	Zaamenah	WS	4:30p	Arrive @ 700 Peavine Creek Dr.
3.	Chozy Aiyub	Anas	H	NC	
4.	Travis Misarti	Zayn	WS	1p	

CREW TITLE	PERSONNEL	CALL	PHONE NUMBER	NOTES
Director	Samah Meghjee	12:30 p	407-484-1174	
Producer	Daniel Eshbaugh	12:30 p	254-913-3688	
1st AD	Alisa Yan	12:30 p	240-620-1337	
DP	Raghu Sunkara	12:30 p	914-564-3380	
AC/Grip	Isaac Gazmarian Alex Choy	12:30 p 12:30 p	404-947-0429 302-841-8181	Bringing dolly
Script Supervisor	Rachel Singh	12:30 p	386-283-2221	
Sound	Jay Adeagbo	12:30 p	--	
Media	Andy Paul Jeff Spott	12:30 p NC	912-663-8326 317-370-5210	
MUA	June Kwon	12:30 p	626-646-9505	
Choreographer	Willis Hao	NC	770-825-2660	
PA	Ben Hammond Emma Kantor Katie Nabors	12:30 p NC 12:30 p	678-644-5236 510-520-4043 512-696-7176	
BTS Photographer	Andy Leverett	NC	904-735-1428	































