



Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11

By Sunaina Marr Maira



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In *Missing*, Sunaina Marr Maira explores how young South Asian Muslim immigrants living in the United States experienced and understood national belonging (or exclusion) at a particular moment in the history of U.S. imperialism: in the years immediately following September 11, 2001. Drawing on ethnographic research in a New England high school, Maira investigates the cultural dimensions of citizenship for South Asian Muslim students and their relationship to the state in the everyday contexts of education, labor, leisure, dissent, betrayal, and loss. The narratives of the mostly working-class youth she focuses on demonstrate how cultural citizenship is produced in school, at home, at work, and in popular culture. Maira examines how young South Asian Muslims made sense of the political and historical forces shaping their lives and developed their own forms of political critique and modes of dissent, which she links both to their experiences following September 11, 2001, and to a longer history of regimes of surveillance and repression in the United States.

Bringing grounded ethnographic analysis to the critique of U.S. empire, Maira teases out the ways that imperial power affects the everyday lives of young immigrants in the United States. She illuminates the paradoxes of national belonging, exclusion, alienation, and political expression facing a generation of Muslim youth coming of age at this particular moment. She also sheds new light on larger questions about civil rights, globalization, and U.S. foreign policy. Maira demonstrates that a particular subjectivity, the “imperial feeling” of the present historical moment, is linked not just to issues of war and terrorism but also to migration and work, popular culture and global media, family and belonging.



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Editorial Review

Review

“There are no easy answers in *Missing*, but Maira offers a nuanced language for understanding what citizenship and dissent mean to these young people during the War on Terror. . . . *Missing* is impressive for the depth of its analysis of the lives of South Asian Muslim immigrant youth. . . .” - Matt Delmont, *American Quarterly*

“Basing her analysis on ethnographic research, the author captures the sense of disappointment and bewilderment of her informants caught in a double bind while trying to construct an identity that would make them feel secure in the turmoil of this post-9/11 world. Maira interprets individual representations in light of policy and macro analysis of empire. She shows how nation-state policies influence individual lives in a way that contributes much to the confusion about status and rights experienced by South Asian immigrant Muslim youth.” - Ibrahim G. Aoudé, *Teachers College Record*

“[*Missing*] provides rich mining grounds to scholars from fields as wide as postcolonialism, cultural studies, sociology and history. In that sense, despite its socio-anthropologically empirical structure, it is a trans-disciplinary book. . . . This is a brave, honest and necessary study.”
- Tabish Khair, *South Asian Diaspora*

“*Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11* is a timely and important contribution to study of life in the post-9/11 United States for Muslim, South Asian, and Arab communities, in general, and for Muslim immigrant youth in a New England high school, in particular. Engaging deeply and comprehensively with theories of empire, race, and cultural citizenship, the author uses richly textured ethnographic material drawn from school, work, home, and protests to chart the different practices and meaning of cultural citizenship in the everyday lives of young people here and in the countries their parents left behind.” - Susan Terrio, *American Anthropologist*

“Maira’s book *Missing* is a beautifully written analysis, dense with theory and facts. . . . I predict that Maira’s unique study will come to influence many researchers in their ethnic studies.” - Hedvig Ekerwald, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*

“How is national belonging experienced by South Asian teenagers in post-9/11 America? In a deeply thoughtful and compassionate ethnography, Sunaina Marr Maira explores this question, providing one of the most compelling analyses of citizenship in contemporary America. She introduces us to young people who worry about deportation, racism, and the challenges of schooling in another language, but who also possess an acute analysis of imperialism and are capable of forging a transnational community united as much by Bollywood as by their sudden elevation to Public Enemy Number 1. Maira’s stunning achievement is to give vivid content to state power, providing an up close and personal look at how it is lived and resisted by those whom we relentlessly evict from political community.”—**Sherene H. Razack**, author of *Casting Out: The*

Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics

“Sunaina Marr Maira has authored one of the most important books of our time. *Missing* is a carefully researched and beautifully written account of the experiences, ideas, and opinions of South Asian Muslim immigrant children in the United States who find themselves deemed enemies of the state through no fault of their own in the aftermath of 9/11. Through a deft blend of ethnography and cultural critique, Maira demonstrates how the expanding reach and power of the nation-state overseas leads to new forms of disciplinary control at home: in schools, workplaces, media imagery, and immigration law.”—**George Lipsitz**, author of *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music*

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From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Sunaina Marr Maira is Associate Professor of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Davis. She is the author of *Desis in the House: Indian American Culture in New York City* and a co-editor of *Youthscapes: The Popular, the National, the Global*.

Users Review

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