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“Separation, Walls and the Role of the Muslim Intellectual”

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The contemporary world order is increasingly being characterized by the construction of *walls* that separate *us* from *them*. The building of walls, both in Palestine and on the US-Mexico border, is legitimized through neo-Orientalist ideas about the “other” which must be kept at both a distance and under tight control, and prevented from disturbing dominant interests in the modern world capitalist economy. In addition to such literal *walls*, there are a variety of other modern and newly developing forms of socio-political exclusions that effectively serve the same function as *walls*. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the core capitalist countries of the West, because of the enormous material surplus they gained from their relationships with the peripheral zones of the world economy, were able to make various concessions to their citizens regarding their standard of living status as well as grant them political and civil liberties. This concessionary process, to a great extent, has been contingent on the “othering,” and the relegation of the peoples of the South, as well as marginalized communities within the core capitalist countries themselves, in an inferior position in the world system, denying them these social, political, and economic advances. In this discourse of separation, the positioning of Muslims throughout the world is quite significant. The rejuvenated classical Orientalist and racist ideas about Muslims, Latinos, and other peoples of color, and the threat they supposedly pose to modern civilization, are used as a justification for the building, militarization and policing of such *walls*. The role of the Muslim intellectual is to critically scrutinize issues of deep political economy and hegemonic agendas that underlie these plans.