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

Sunaina Marr Maira
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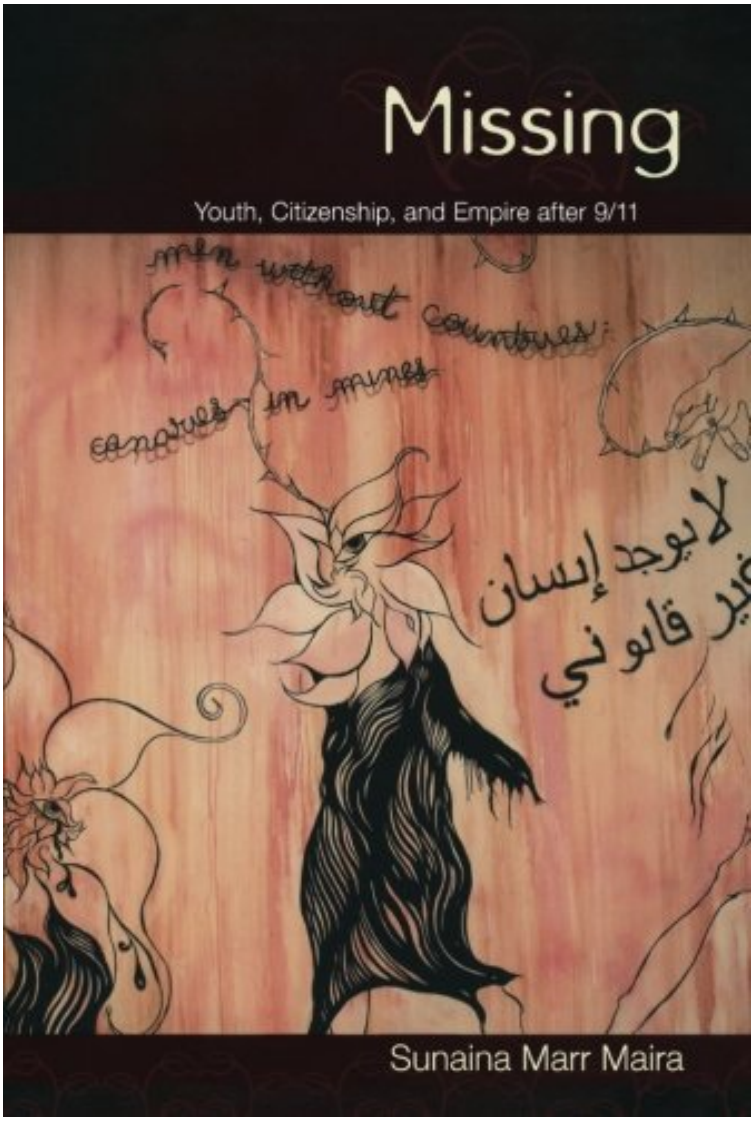

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Sunaina Marr Maira : Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11:

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. MissingBy Michelle K. MalsburyJune 2009 Review for BookpleasuresReviewer-Michelle Kaye Malsbury, BSBM, MMReviewMs. Maira, author of Missing, is an associate professor of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Davis. (2009, final unnumbered page of Missing) In addition to this work, she has authored Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City and co-penned Youthscapes: The Popular, the National, the Global and Contours of the Heart: South Asians Map North

America.Missing offers a poignant insider perspective of how South Asian Muslim and non-Muslim youth after 9/11 were impacted by overlapping and interconnected issues and topics ranging from citizenship, to detention, to politics, U.S. empire, the War on Terror, work, play, polyculturalism, fear and control, various economic struggles, education [in general terms and also the importance of education attached to the ability to navigate out of one class and into another---in socio-economic terms], home, family, abrogation or erosion of basic rights and freedoms, ethnic/racial identification, military aggression, caste, pop-culture, liberalism and conservatism, and solidarity. Insight provided via narrative interviews and participant-observation with/of over sixty-seven youth from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Tibet, Nepal, and Africa (2009, appendix)is enlightening, refreshing, and contributes greatly to the growing body of scholastic knowledge on South Asian studies.Conclusions drawn from this extensive body of research are compiled by piecing together information gathered from legislative actions, Presidential directives, direct-interviews with impacted persons and/or families of those impacted, educators, civic groups, references/theories/analogies made from other scholastic and peer-reviewed periodicals, first-hand experiences, and more, as justification and supporting documentation for the arguments provided therein. Common strands that bind these shared stories together throughout this process, and noted most in responses, were centered upon perceptions [whether actual or perceived] of hostility, fear, suspicion, anxiety, disillusionment, betrayal, loss, and harassment post 9/11 for these marginalized persons. Their stories depict the emotional and social impacts of racial profiling, detention, surveillance, and deportation on their community [both here in America and abroad]. Those theories and suppositions are built upon by tying together common threads that suggest how the concept of empire and imperialism has shaped these people's actions and interactions with regard to nationalism and global dominance by the neoconservative and liberal leadership in America that has used fear as a political and economic strategy exacerbating and perpetuating inequities between societies and world communities.Ms. Maira's research also delves into specific rhetoric [i.e. good/evil] used by the Bush Administration post 911, with regard to the war on terror. She posits that a "new version of racism" was born from that rhetoric because it defined terrorist as a Muslim, Arab, or South Asian. (2009, 241) There was a lot of anger and resentment about Bush's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, especially from these marginalized people who felt these were attacks against innocent people and innocent nations would do little to nothing to combat terror around the world. [and I agree] Maira postulates that the war on terror is less about religion, human rights, and/or democratic freedom than how U.S. power and dominance of the world order can be effectuated. People who stood apart from President Bush on this premise were perceived as being `with the enemy' [i.e. the use of being with or against by President Bush post 911] or abetting terrorists.Scholars and researchers were blacklisted and called "anti-American" by Lynne Cheney and Senator Joe Lieberman who formed the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA). The purpose of ACTA was to document "unpatriotic" acts by academics. (2009, 31) [surely I am on their blacklist because I've also been outspoken against these wars] Is it possible that President Bush could use a reality check Maira asks?----her reply is that "not all enemies are Muslim, and not all Muslim are enemies."I strongly suggest adding this book of research to any scholastic program involved with the teaching of anthropology, sociology, psychology, ethnography, conflict resolution, South Asian-American studies, political science, and youth studies.2 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Un-ethnographyBy ChristopherHere's a very brief synopsis: Each chapter starts with an edited narrative from a couple of high school students (very typical high school students, mind you) that purportedly preface the points Maira is going to make in the following pages. Maira then spends about a page and a half usually taking these already heavily edited narratives out of any intuitive context and stretching them to address her pet project. She then abandones the high school students' experiences entirely (keep in mind these "everyday experiences" are supposedly what she is interested in) and rambles on for 20-50 pages about other people's work and US foreign and domestic policy. She is incredibly thorough in her exploration of texts, but utterly without redeeming qualities in her use of her participants' experiences. The ethnography never gets off the ground. To the last chapter she is just doing literature review.There are a number of problems with the way Maira appropriates rather commonplace experiences to fit with her script on the war on terror, the way she usually deviates from her own field work to make her points, her underutilization of her own concept of "imperial feelings" (her feeble attempt at doing theory), and her tone deaf conclusion. The point I would like to make, however, is that none of that really matters. I don't mean this in a good way. It's not that the book has redeeming qualities - it doesn't. The reason it doesn't matter how bad Maira's attempt at ethnography is is that she doesn't really use her field work at all. If you must read this book (and for some it will actually be useful - she does distill a great deal of literature and history, after all, even if she does avoid being at all original in her formulation) read it as a rather polemical history. Read this book with an utter disregard for the experiences of South Asian high school students. She seems to have written it that way.

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.

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