

WHAT IS ISLAMOPHOBIA?

Safety and Resistance for LGBTQ+ Muslims



WHAT IS ISLAMOPHOBIA?

AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT MUSLIMS?

Islamophobia is defined as hostility and hatred towards Muslims. While the term “phobia” implies fear of Islam, Islamophobia can be expressed through prejudice, systemic discrimination, and violence.

The influence and impact of Islamophobia is far reaching. It leads to bias in the classroom and workplace, hate speech in communities and in the media, and informs policies such as Quebec’s Bill 21 banning hijabs.

The National Council of Canadian Muslims confirms that hate crimes against Muslims continues to rise.

DOES ISLAMOPHOBIA AFFECT “NON-PRACTICING” MUSLIMS?

Islamophobia targets both Muslims and those who are perceived to be Muslims. People of colour and women who wear head scarves are disproportionately impacted by anti-Muslim bigotry.



EVERYDAY ISLAMOPHOBIA

Islamophobia erases the rich diversity of Muslims.

Muslims are assumed to think and worship the same way, despite the fact that Muslims are ethnically diverse, speak hundreds of different languages, and are part of various denominations.

Islamophobia creates an environment of fear, anxiety and suspicion.

Muslims are forced to navigate harmful and hateful stereotypes that negatively impact their health. Simple, everyday activities such as walking in your neighbourhood, taking public transportation or shopping for groceries can be hard and scary.

In Canada, bills have been passed to prohibit Muslim women from wearing hijabs in positions associated with public service (e.g. teachers, police officers, judges). At colleges and universities, Muslim students have been approached by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to discuss their activities as a form of surveillance.



ANTI-BLACK ISLAMOPHOBIA

Black Muslims in Canada experience bias and bigotry from Muslims because of their Blackness and from non-Muslims for being Black and Muslim. The compounding impacts of anti-Black racism and Islamophobia are harmful and dangerous.

As a result, Black Muslims are disproportionately impacted and are the targets of surveillance policies by local and national agencies.

It's important to recognize the way these systems of oppression intersect and interact so you can better address anti-Black Islamophobia.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN LGBTQ COMMUNITIES

There is widespread perception in LGBTQ communities that Muslims are “backwards” and inherently homophobic and unaccepting of gender and sexual minorities. This misperception creates an unwelcoming and alienating environment for LGBTQ Muslims. Some people experience ridicule and harassment.

The reality is that while some Muslims may be homophobic, many are not. In fact, multiple organizations, faith groups, mosques and Imams embrace the rich diversity of LGBTQ Muslims.

Sometimes LGBTQ Muslims experience queer communities as othering when they are hyper-sexualized because of their race. This can be harmful and makes it unsafe for Muslims to enter intimate relationships or social spaces.



INTERNALIZED ISLAMOPHOBIA FOR LGBTQ MUSLIMS

There is an expectation of LGBTQ Muslims to denounce their faith in order to reconcile their identity or to “come out”. For some, there can be pressure to hide parts of their identity in an effort to fit in.

This can be disorienting and lead some to believe negative messages about Islam. A couple of ways you can combat internalizing harmful messages about Islam from others include:

- Surrounding yourself with other LGBTQ Muslims who share your values. This can be a healing and affirming experience for many LGBTQ Muslims.
- Separating what we find affirming about Islam from what has been used against us as LGBTQ Muslims.



FURTHER READING

Black Muslims in Canada
by Fatima Jackson-Best

**Blurred Intersections: The Anti-Black, Islamophobic
Dimensions of CVE Surveillance**
by Zeinab A. Dahir

Islamophobia in Canada
by Azeezah Kanji

On Rocks and Hard Places
by Delice Mugabo

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