

WHAT IS ISLAMOPHOBIA?



According to Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid, a chairman of the Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony UK, **islamophobia** is “the fear and/or hatred of Islam, Muslims or Islamic culture and history. Islamophobia can be characterized by the belief that all or most Muslims are religious fanatics, have violent tendencies towards non-Muslims, and reject as directly opposed to Islam such concepts as equality, tolerance, and democracy” (RISC 2011).

In the wake of national tragedies, such as 9/11 or the mass shooting at Pulse Nightclub, levels of islamophobia rise sharply; however anti-Muslim bias is, generally speaking, prominent in American culture. A 2015 YouGov poll found that 55% of surveyed Americans had an “unfavorable” opinion of Islam. 40% of participants were in favor of a national registry of Muslims, a policy rooted in anti-Muslim fear and bias (Chalabi 2015).

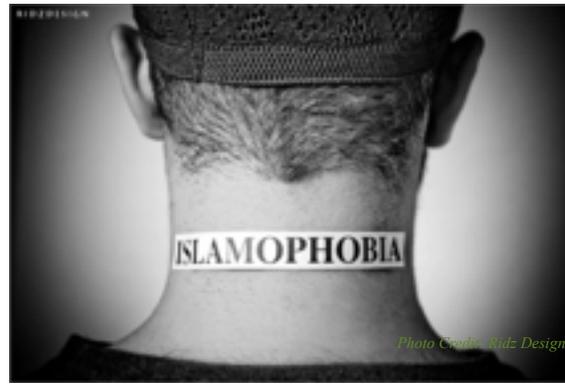


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Check out these resources

“Top Myths About Islam” - About Religion
goo.gl/3ait5h

“Why the Idea That Islam Promotes Intolerance of the LGBTQIA+ Community is a Lie” - Andrew Hernann
goo.gl/sVgsCT

“How anti-Muslim are Americans? Data points to extent of Islamophobia” - Mona Chalabi
goo.gl/LdDOFS

“Anti-Muslim Discrimination” - American Civil Liberties Union
goo.gl/lzPWCV

“Islamophobia Pocket Guide” - Council on American-Islamic Relationships
goo.gl/8oxQfY

“Long Story Short: Islam” - Huffington Post
goo.gl/bZloFR



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This information resource was created to aid students, faculty, staff, and individuals of the broader community to better understand Islamophobia and to take steps towards active allyship. The aim of this resource is to foster intergroup dialogue on campus, in the workplace, and in the Tucson community. Produced by the Office for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence (ODIEX)

4 MYTHS ABOUT ISLAM



Myth #1: Islam promotes hatred.

The Qur'an is centered around faith, hope, and peace. When lines from the Qur'an are used to claim that Islam is violent, these quotes have been taken out of context (Huffington Post).

Myth #2: Jihad is synonymous with terrorism.

While extremist groups have understood terrorism as a form of jihad, jihad itself is an Arabic word that means "exerted effort or struggle to better oneself." In other words, jihad is a lifestyle commitment and can be practiced similarly to New Year's resolutions (Huffington Post).

Myth #3: The hijab, or headscarf, is oppressive.

Almost all Muslim women who wear a hijab have chosen to dress in this way. There are only a couple of passages in the Qur'an that even address modesty, and the word hijab itself is never used. Like many other religious symbols — such as a cross or yarmulke — the hijab is a sign of faith. Reima Yosif, the founding president of the Al-Rawiya Foundation, says her decision to wear a hijab can be described as "an outward expression of an inward experience" (Huffington Post).

Myth #4: Islam is oppressive to women and to the LGBTQIA+ community.

While some Muslims use the Qur'an and Hadiths to justify patriarchy and queerphobia, many other Muslims assert that Islam demands practicing compassion, acceptance, and love (Hernann 2015). As with other religions, there are many different ways that Islam is practiced, and it is a generalization to say that Islam is anti-woman or anti-queer.

STEPS TOWARDS ALLYSHIP



Features of Islamophobia

One of the first steps towards allyship is to become aware of what islamophobia looks like so that you can more effectively challenge it. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) identifies the following beliefs that underlie islamophobia:

- Muslim cultures and Islam are monolithic and unchanging
- Muslim cultures are viewed as wholly different from other cultures
- Islam is perceived as inherently threatening
- Muslims are seen as using their faith mainly for political or military advantage
- Muslim criticisms of Western societies are rejected out of hand
- Fear of Islam is mixed with racist hostility towards immigration
- Islamophobia is assumed to be natural and unproblematic

(CAIR 2016)

Allyship

1. Educate yourself about Islam, the many Islamic cultures world-wide, and the discrimination and violence experienced by Muslim communities.
2. Increase your awareness about the ways in which White, Western, and Christian privileges perpetuate islamophobia
3. Challenge myths or stereotypes about Islam when you hear or see them
4. When you encounter islamophobic rhetoric in the media, document it and contact an official from that media outlet (CAIR)
5. Challenge political policies that are anti-Muslim, such as discriminatory national security profiling, immigration discrimination, and discriminatory watchlists (ACLU)
6. Be conscientious of the ways in which your attempts at advocacy may unintentionally silence or patronize Muslim community members. Instead, focus on ways to promote their agency and leadership (Hernann 2015)