



## ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

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### EWIC PUBLIC OUTREACH PROJECT

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#### EWIC Staff Report: **Islamophobia**

Islamophobia is “An exaggerated fear, hatred, and hostility toward Islam and Muslims that is perpetuated by negative stereotypes resulting in bias, discrimination, and the marginalization and exclusion of Muslims from social, political, and civic life.”

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/08/pdf/islamophobia.pdf>

As Jasmin Zine (2004) writes, “The aftermath of 9/11 and the corresponding rise of global militarism and imperialism have had deep consequences for the realities of Muslims around the world. The reemergence of Orientalist representations have provided the ideological justification for military incursions.”

These deep consequences have manifested themselves in the United States in everything from mainstream books by or about Muslim women, to children being subjected to shaming by their teachers based on their religion, to mass shootings, to illegal FBI surveillance of mosques. <http://www.aclu.org/national-security/foia-documents-show-fbi-illegally-collecting-intelligence-under-guise-community>

Suad Joseph and Benjamin Harlingue (2012) in their research looking at the Wall Street Journal found that there was a “convergence of multiple newspapers and of multiple sites within a newspaper” that ultimately revealed an overarching pattern of anti-Muslim, anti-Arab sentiment. What we see then, is a far-reaching and systematic spread of anti-Muslim, anti-Arab sentiment giving rise to hate-crimes and wide-spread disinformation.

The Runnemed Trust has made the case that people who are Islamophobic have “closed views” of Islam. Such views see Islam as a monolithic and static religion, an isolated, disconnected culture inferior to the west. Additionally Islamophobes see Islam as a threat to Western culture, and often correlate Islam with a political and military ideology. As a result of this confused and completely fabricated understanding of Islam, Islamophobic people often engage in brutal and violent actions or libelous advertising campaigns against Muslims or people who they mistake for Muslims. This state of mind is considered to be “normal” by those who suffer from it and is often reinforced by mainstream media outlets and right wing pundits.

<http://www.runnymedtrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/islamophobia.pdf>

The Southern Poverty Law Center in reviewing FBI statistics on hate crimes in the United States in 2011 came to the unsettling discovery that there appeared to be a direct correlation between anti-Muslim propaganda and hate crimes directed against Muslims or individuals mistaken for Muslims. In their Intelligence Report, from Spring 2013 titled, “FBI: Bias Crimes Against Muslims Remain at High Levels” the Southern Poverty Law Center also suggests that in 2010-2011 hate crimes against Muslims (or those mistaken for Muslims) occurred and intensified in correlation with the increasing anti-Muslim, anti-Islamic propaganda put forth by the extreme right-wing groups during this period. <http://www.splcenter.org/home/2012/spring/fbi-bias-crimes-against-muslims-remain-at-high-levels>

Critical responses to Islamophobia in all its myriad and pernicious forms be they print, electronic media or advertising campaigns have been plentiful. Problematizing the monolithic and hegemonic views of Islam as put forth by the mainstream media has been the focus of countless academic papers, grassroots organizations, and ad campaigns to name just a few. Below are a handful of examples of this crucial outreach work.

There have been a number of responses to anti-Muslim or Islamophobic behavior. One such example is the new public education program, “My jihad.” The campaign came in response to a series of hateful ads equating jihad with fear and bloodshed and the “My Jihad” campaign responded by seeking, “to share the proper meaning of Jihad s believed and practiced by the majority of Muslims.” The

actual definition of Jihad means, “struggling in the way of God.” In Islam this term is equated with goodness, justice and compassion. The “My Jihad” education campaign features large ads on city buses with Muslims expressing their own personal jihad, these range from getting more exercise, to peace in Syria, to forming new friendships. <http://myjihad.org/>

Women Against Islamophobia & Racism (WAIR) is a great online source formed by a “a collective of educators, parents, and community activists from different racial, and religious communities” the group was created in response to the “alarming growth of anti-Muslim sentiment and actions across the United States.” <http://wairwomen.wordpress.com/> WAIR focuses on the “communal and psychological impact of hate speech and actions on youth and families.”

Islamophobia Watch created in 2005 as a forum to document anti-Muslim bigotry is a non-profit that documents “material in the public domain which advocates a fear and hatred of the Muslim peoples of the world and Islam as religion.” <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/about-us/>

Islamophobia Watch has defined Islamophobia as, “a racist tool of Western Imperialism” which is “strongly advocated by the political right but also found an echo in the left, particularly sections of the left in France and the countries that make up the United Kingdom.”

On YouTube one can find a short video titled, “Truth Over Fear: Countering Islamophobia” which provides an excellent example of Islamophobia in the United States. The video briefly covers topics ranging from school Muslim children who face hatred and racism in the classroom not only from their classmates but from their teachers, to Keith Ellison the U.S. Representative for Minnesota’s 5<sup>th</sup> congressional district and the racism he had faced from the right-wing news pundits to the blatant Islamophobia utilized in everything from TV shows, such as the “Sleeper Cell” to Hollywood movies. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2xJ6kuhq7w>

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee released a report in 2003 the principle findings of which indicated that Arab Americans were subject to a high number of civil liberty violations ranging from suspension of constitutional rights of U.S. citizens without due process or appeal to seizure of assets without due process, especially from Muslim American charities to arbitrary and abusive stops and detentions by the police and FBI. This type of racism played out into the public sphere as well as taking the form of physical assaults, death threats, death threats, religious intolerance and bigotry in schools and on college campuses. <http://www.adc.org/PDF/hcr02.pdf>

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee report also included a list of recommendations which are included here in part:

The media should not present hate speech as a legitimate contribution to the national conversation, or rely on commentators who routinely resort to racist stereotypes and smearing entire communities.

The entertainment industry should begin to feature positive and neutral Arab and Arab –American characters, and move away from stereotypical Arab villains which have long been used and have a negative impact.

Schools, colleges and universities should make every effort to ensure that their students have access to basic and accurate education on the fundamentals of Islam and Arab culture.

There is no place in the American legal system for secret detentions, evidence, hearings or deportations, or for indefinite detention without due process.

The fundamental human and constitutional rights of immigrants and foreign nationals in the United States should not be sacrificed, including the right to due process of law.

Law enforcement investigations should be restricted to persons or groups suspected of criminal activity, not engaged in lawful political or religious activities, and should never be based on national origin, ethnicity or religious affiliation.

No form of racial profiling is ever acceptable or effective.

<http://www.adc.org/PDF/hcr02.pdf>

Suggested websites for further reading:

<http://www.counterpunch.org/>

<http://www.reelbadarabs.com/>

[www.americanprogress.org](http://www.americanprogress.org)