

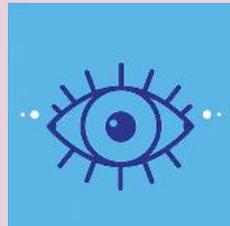
The Auburn University logo, featuring the word "Auburn" in a white serif font inside a dark red, brush-stroke-like shape.

Auburn

Disrupting Myths & Celebrating Muslim-American Women

MARCH 1, 2022 | 6-7:30 PM ET

Disrupting Myths and Celebrating Muslim American Women



**Noor Mir
Kifah Shah**

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- 1. Pinpoint + disrupt myths about Muslim women**
- 2. Uplift and celebrate Muslim-led and Muslim women-led social justice organizations, movements, and interventions**
- 3. Offer ways to plug in and support Muslim organizers/activists**

CHECK-IN QUESTION

What are aspects of Muslim communities or of Islam that relate to your own communities or faith?

Drop in the chat!



OUR STORIES



MYTHBUSTING

What are some myths you can name about/around Muslim women?

Drop responses in the chat!



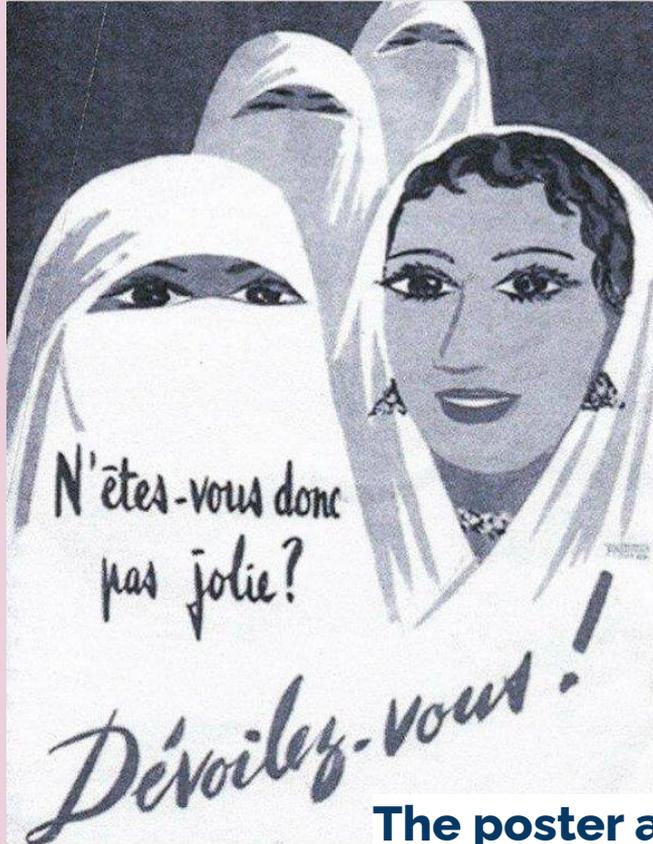
MYTHBUSTING

What are some myths you can name about/around Muslim women?

Drop responses in the chat!



“MUSLIM WOMEN NEED SAVING!”



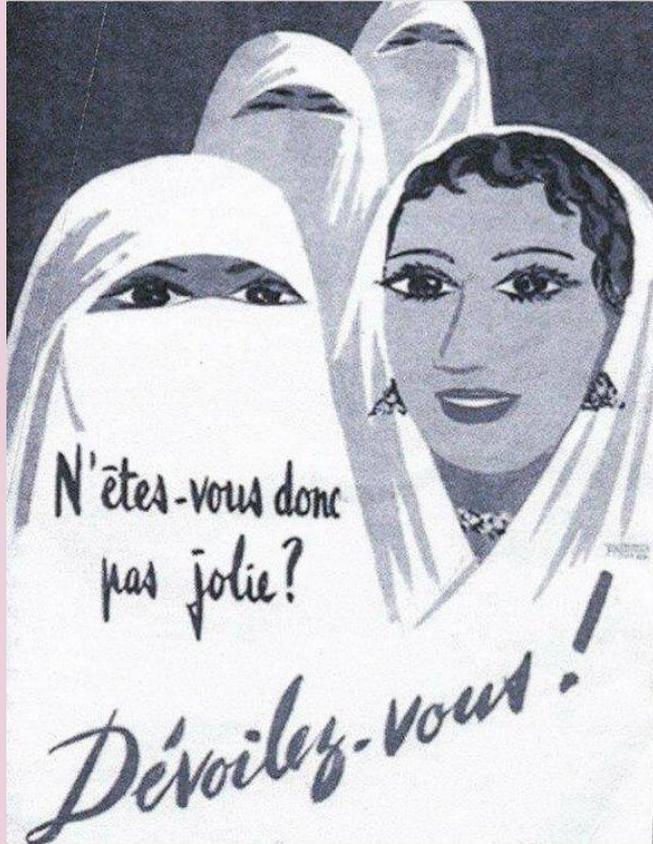
How has war and invasion used Muslim women as their “reasoning”?

An example from history: French “unveiling” ceremonies in Algeria (1958)

- Assumption of “emancipation” provided to Algerian women by French colonizers
- Algerian women from rural areas were forced to unveil themselves publicly for photographs (read: ‘Algeria Unveiled’, Frantz Fanon, watch: the Battle of Algiers)

The poster above reads, “Are you not pretty? Unveil yourself!”

“MUSLIM WOMEN NEED SAVING!”



Recent and current: The invasion and occupation of Afghanistan

- **Muslim women as the justification for war**
- **Laura Bush in her November 2001 radio address stated clearly, “The terrorists who helped rule that country now plot and plan in many countries, and they must be stopped. The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women.”**
- **In 2001, American feminist groups and non-profit organizations played a critical role in generating public support for intervention**
- **For sources and further reading, links in chat**

“MUSLIM WOMEN NEED SAVING!”

Why is it a problem?

ERASES COSTS OF WAR AND IMPERIALISM

- Family separation
- Continued drone strikes
- Detention, abduction and deportation

EROSION OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND AUTONOMY

- Afghan women have been protesting since U.S. withdrawal
- Demanding access to education and work under Taliban administration, excluded from peace process

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN FORCES LEAVE?

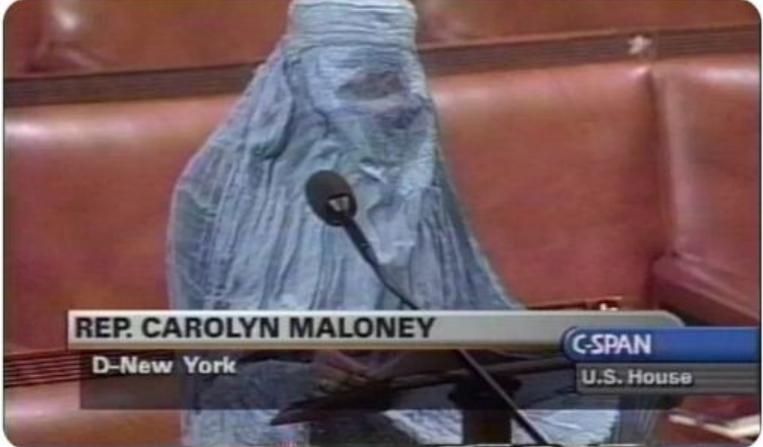
- Fast forward to 2021: U.S theft of Afghan funds, schools and banks remain shuttered. How does this help women pursue a full and healthy life, despite all odd

 Rana Abdelhamid @RanaForCongress · 21h

I was 9 years old when I watched my Congresswoman wear a burqa in Congress to justify the invasion of Afghanistan.

For the rest of my life, I knew that as a Muslim woman my identity would be weaponized to justify American wars.

20 years of war later, what did we accomplish?



Carolyn B. Maloney

257 7.9K 50.1K

“With one hand you’re writing a large, generous check, and with the other you’re shaking hands with war criminals whose crimes include violence against women.”

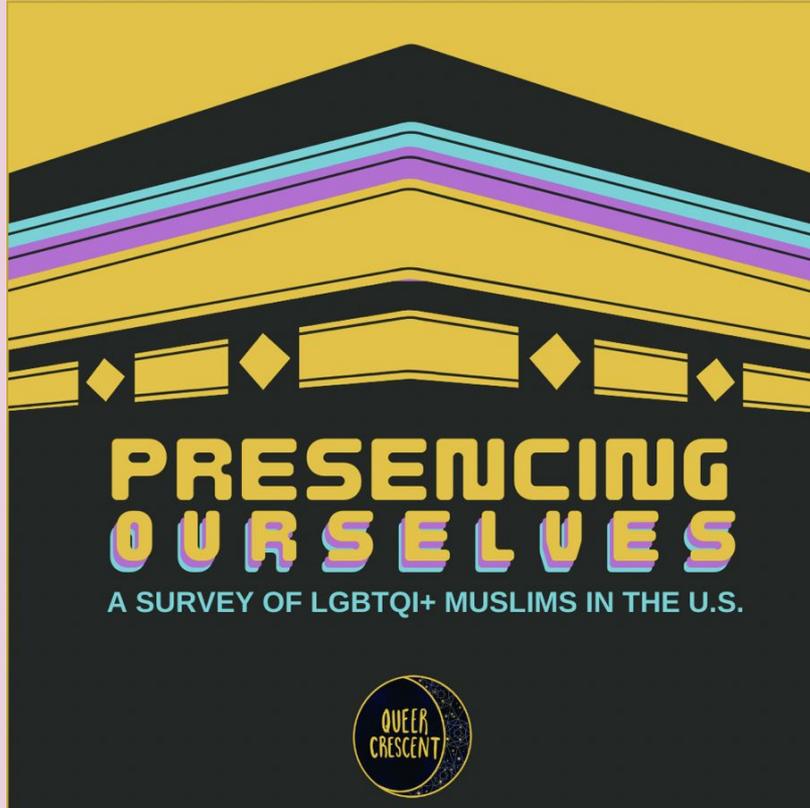
- Heather Barr, Women’s Rights Division at Human Rights Watch

CONFRONTING THE PATRIARCHY NO NEED FOR WHITE FEMINISM

LIKE MOST FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES, OR ANY COMMUNITY, MUSLIMS HAVE FACED GENDER DISCRIMINATION, GENDER BASED VIOLENCE, SEXISM, RACISM, ANTI-BLACKNESS, HOMOPHOBIA, AND MANY OTHER SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION INTERNALLY.

BUT MUSLIM COMMUNITIES ARE MOST OFTEN THE ONLY ONES TO BE SINGLED OUT AS OPPRESSIVE TOWARDS WOMEN BY MAINSTREAM MEDIA AND SOCIETY. WOMEN ARE OFTEN WEAPONIZED AND USED AGAINST MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN ORDER TO ADVANCE ENDLESS WAR, OCCUPATION, SURVEILLANCE, AND CRIMINALIZATION – ESPECIALLY OF MUSLIM MEN.

CONFRONTING THE PATRIARCHY



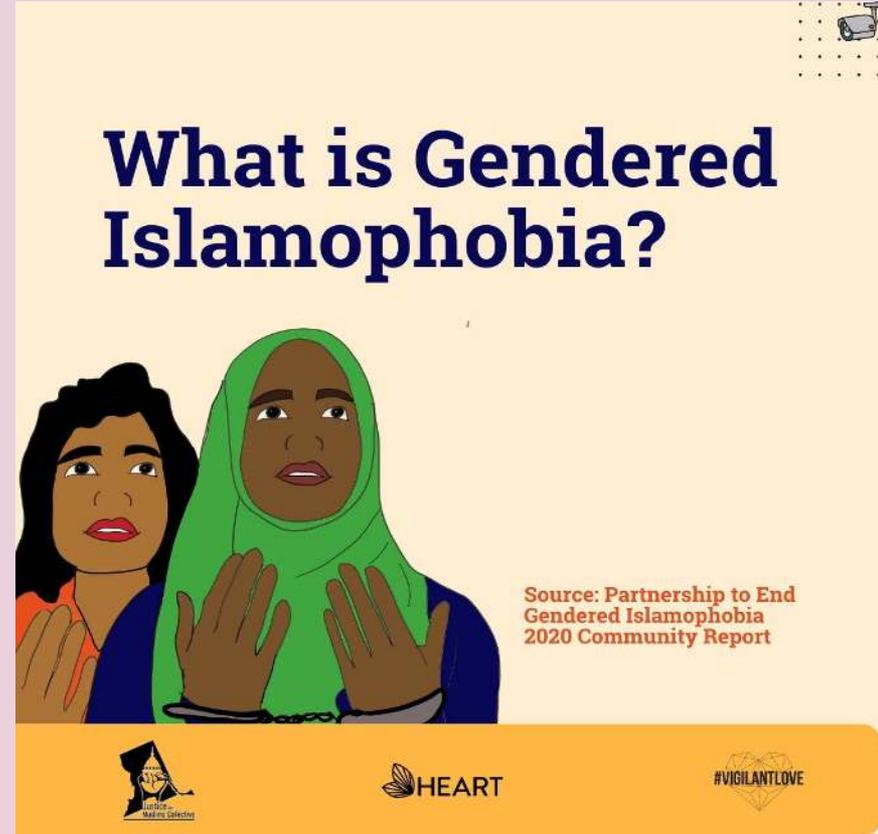
HOMOPHOBIA + HETERONORMATIVITY

- Muslim women are organizing within Muslim communities to confront patriarchy – from toxic masculinity to homophobia and everything in between
- Work like the “Presenting Ourselves” Survey by Queer Crescent has created a baseline dataset across LGBTQI+ Muslims to confront social erasure and visiblize a highly invisibilized community

CONFRONTING THE PATRIARCHY

GENDERED ISLAMOPHOBIA + SEXISM

- The Partnership to End Gendered Islamophobia shows how Muslim-led/Muslim-centered organizations are working to build analyses, tools, and power to dismantle Gendered Islamophobia – together.



GENDERED ISLAMOPHOBIA

GENDERED ISLAMOPHOBIA CONSISTS OF THE WAYS THE STATE UTILIZES GENDRED FORMS OF VIOLENCE TO OPPRESS, MONITOR, PUNISH, MAIM, AND CONTROL MUSLIM BODIES.

- JUSTICE FOR MUSLIMS COLLECTIVE, 2019

CONFRONTING THE PATRIARCHY



POLITICAL EDUCATION

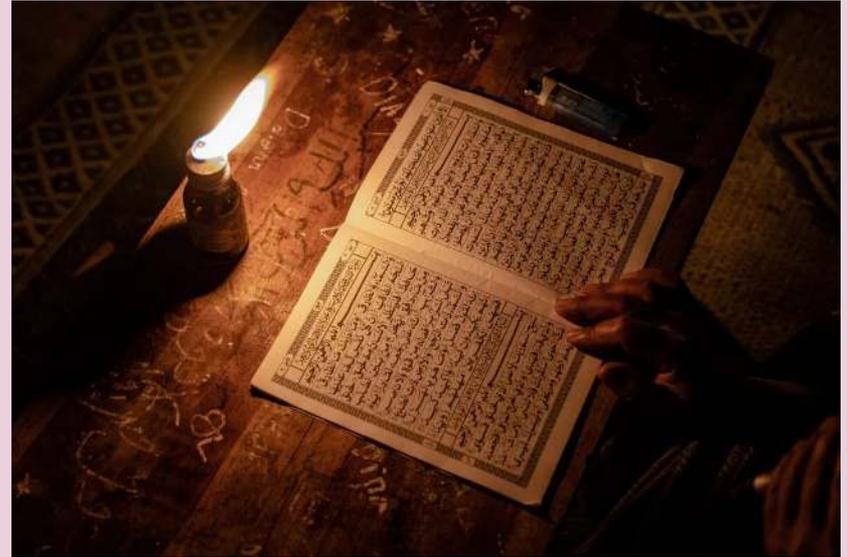
- **Muslim women are deeply organizing within their communities to build a greater sense of justice, Islamically rooted in many ways, including as one of the 99 names of Allah (al Adl). Muslim Women For have been building relationships with 20+ imams across North Carolina to engage in political education around several issues, including sexism and patriarchy.**

“There is a division within feminism . . . between the women who write and speak feminism and the women who live it, the women who have a voice versus the women who have experience.”

- Rafia Zakaria, *Against White Feminism*

THE SCRIPTURE

- **Muslims live their lives according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah**
- **In the early 600s CE, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) expanded women's rights to include inheritance, property, and marriage rights. This was revolutionary!**
- **Ijtihad – the Islamic legal term referring to independent reasoning by an expert in Islamic law; a rigorous and open process**



THE SCRIPTURE



- The principle of equality among all humans is clear in the Qur'an, which states:

“We have honored the childrens of Adam, and provided them with rides on land and in the sea. We provided for them good provisions, and we gave them greater advantages than many of Our creatures.” (Qur’an 17:70)

“O people, We created you from the same male and female, and rendered you distinct peoples and tribes that you may recognize one another. The best among you in the sight of God is the most righteous. God is Omniscient, Cognizant.” (Qur’an 49:13)

Male domination based on religious texts is widely disputed and refuted, especially by Muslim women.

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

SURVEILLANCE STATE

- **Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)**
- **Our safe institutions as sites of entrapment**

DISCRIMINATION, HARRASSMENT, AND ASSAULT

- **Walking while visibly Muslim**
 - **Pew Research Center: Women in 56 countries experienced social hostilities – that is, harassment from individuals or groups – due to clothing that was deemed to violate religious or secular dress norms. Meanwhile, women in 61 countries faced government restrictions on dress – specifically, regulations on their head coverings. This measure covers rules that were in place or incidents that occurred in 2018.**
 - **A 2017 report from NYC's Commission on Human Rights found that 1 in 4 Muslim women in New York say they've been pushed on a subway platform while wearing a hijab.**
- **Harassment privately and publicly**
 - **Libraries, swimming pools, amusement parks, airports, sports**

EXPERIENCES INSPIRE CAREER

- **Nida Allam (NC): the first Muslim woman ever elected to public office in North Carolina – running for Congress in NC-06**
- **Rana Abdelhamid (NY): shaped by her own experiences with harassment and a career in self-defense training for Muslim women – running for Congress in NY-12**
- **Huwaida Arraf: a Palestinian American lawyer, activist, and co-founder of the International Solidarity Movement, running in Michigan's 10th Congressional District**

SPOTLIGHTING: ORGANIZATIONS



SPOTLIGHTING: LEADERS



Lila Abu-Lughod

- *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*
- “Securofeminism”

SPOTLIGHTING: LEADERS

Linda Sarsour

- **Women's March, MPower Change, Until Freedom**
- *We Are Not Here to be Bystanders*



SPOTLIGHTING: LEADERS



Mauree Turner

- **Made history in 2020 by becoming the country's first openly non-binary state legislator at age 27**
- **Agenda focuses on criminal justice reform, healthcare, education, and the hope that their presence will help LGBT+ community feel represented**

SPOTLIGHTING: LEADERS

Dr. Su'ad Abdul Khabeer

- **Umi's Archive**
- ***Sapelo Square***
- ***Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States***



SPOTLIGHTING: LEADERS

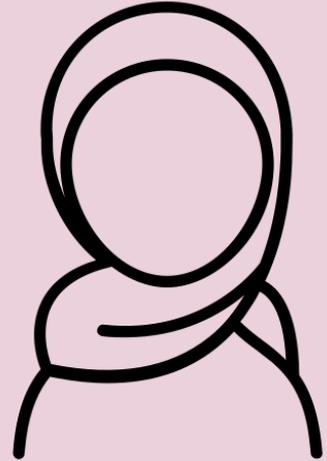


Dr. Debbie Almontaser

- *Leading While Muslim: The Experiences of American Muslim Principles after 9/11*
- Lives of Commitment Honoree

SCENARIO

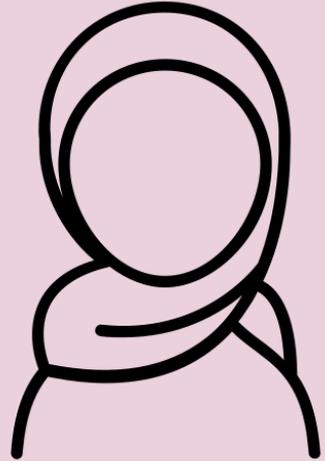
You are on the subway to see a group of teenagers taunting a woman in a hijab. What do you do?



RESPONSE

You can learn from bystander training models like the 5 D's:

- **Distract**
- **Delegate**
- **Document**
- **Delay**
- **Direct**



SCENARIO

**In your faith community,
someone talks about how
oppressive Islam is towards
women.**



RESPONSE: DON'T

- 1) **Get into a personal attack/name-calling**
- 2) **“Fact-check”**
- 3) **Ignore that it happened**



RESPONSE: DO

1) Ask questions:

- For example: “Can you explain why you think that? Where did you learn that”

2) Reframe:

- For example: You know, I think there are a lot of governments, leaders and people around the world, not just in Muslim majority countries, that can interpret any of our scriptures for their own benefit. It’s important to remember that context matters and there are people that read the Quran and find that it supports women.

3) Use a values based approach:

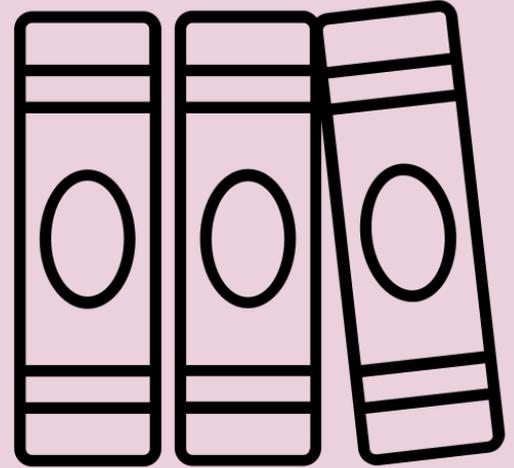
- I am a part of this community because it allows me to connect with people that believe in kindness and justice I’ve been able to connect with many Muslim men and women in our neighborhood that also believe in these values. I don’t think we should make generalizations.

4) Check out AFSC’s trainings

- Linked in the chat

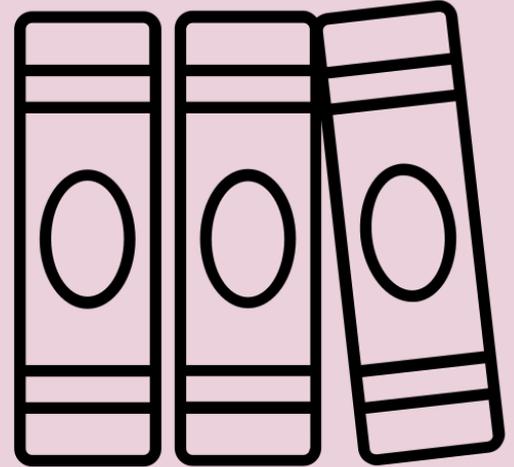
SCENARIO

You are at the library and a security guard asks a Muslim woman to remove her headscarf because headgear is not allowed on the premises.



RESPONSE

- 1) **Know Your Rights:**
 - **If you are directly intervening, you can say, “It is illegal for public accommodations such as a library to turn a person away because of their religious head covering.”**



RESPONSE

More details from the ACLU:

- 1) Under the law, “public accommodations” cannot turn you away because of your hijab or headscarf, or demand that you remove them in order to obtain goods or services. Public accommodations covered under the law include most restaurants, other food service establishments, inns, hotels, motels, other places of lodging, movie theaters, concert halls, sports arenas, stadiums, and other entertainment venues. Some state and local laws provide additional protections.
- 2) In addition, any public facility that is “*owned, operated, or managed by or on behalf of any State or subdivision thereof,*” except for public schools or public colleges (which are governed by other laws), cannot discriminate against you for wearing your hijab or headscarf. For example, if a public library, public community center, or public hospital allows other types of head coverings, you must be permitted to wear your hijab.
- 3) Read more via the ACLU resource link in the chat

NEXT STEPS

- **This presentation will be shared with you after today's session:**
 - **Check out the organizations, projects, and individuals we've highlighted and support them**
 - **Read the books, articles, and resource guides; watch the movies/lectures uplifted**
- **Today's takeaways:**
 - **Reconsider the dominant discourse of white feminism and delve into transnational feminism**
 - **The myths about Muslim women are not only untrue but harmful; remember you can disrupt them, too.**

THANK YOU!

Discussion + Q&A

