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# Islamophobia: Reasons, Types And Solutions

## Don't Let Islamophobia be the reason to Judge a Muslim

Ever since the attacks of 9/11, Islamophobia has been on the rise. Whether it be in the west or the middle east, Islamophobia has become a stereotype of hatred and fear. Now, if a Muslim asks you in public to watch over his bag what would your answer be? Would you trust the Muslim? Would you feel comfortable around him?. Unfortunately nowadays the answer to these questions is "No". Now, this is because a perpetuated negative stereotype has been instilled on society that tells them to marginalize Muslims from all sorts of social services. However, evidence says otherwise, history says otherwise, the people say otherwise. Any academic analysis devoid of bias of religion or past experience would say that Islam is a religion of peace, however, it is stereotyped as a promoter of terrorism and violence. A saying goes "The actions of one does not define the beliefs of a whole". This an idea that mainstream society is missing, pertaining to Islamophobia.

Let's look at some types of Islamophobia. There are 4 types of Islamophobia present in today's society. The very first type is discrimination against Muslims and their values. On October 18 2017, a bill was passed in the province of Quebec which discriminated against Muslims women as it prohibited one of their key values of covering their head and faces. The most popular supportive argument of the said bill is that "We need to see their faces for security". My counter argument against it is: "what about the Sikh or the Catholic nuns, why are they allowed to cover their heads and why are the Sikh men allowed to carry knives or wear a turban on their head". And if that's your only motive, then why not have some female security officers to perform these checks, as Muslims women are allowed to show their faces to other females? This clearly shows the discrimination against Muslim women and Islamophobia towards them, that since they are Muslims a proper check should be made and their values should be ignored by the society.

The second type of Islamophobia is called Post-Reflective Personal Islamophobia. This is when people believe that the ideals of Islam are inferior to those of the west. One of the most criticized stereotypes of the West is that the values of Islam lack gender equality. Well, as ridiculous as it sounds some people believe this to be true, however if we look at some quotations directly from the Quran which is the holy book of the Muslims it states "The believers, men and women, are allies of one another. They enjoy the 'common good' and forbid the bad, they observe prayers and give charitable alms and obey God and his Prophet" (Qu'ran , 9:71) . This quote exhorts equality between men and women as it calls men and women to remain mutually supportive through spiritual, emotional and companionate alliance based on common belief in God and his Prophet. In the above verse there is a word in arabic stated as "awliya" which means allies of one another - where one perceives this subliminal closeness between men and women where both are part of each other in harmony. However, it is true that there are some exegesis in the Quran about differences between men and women stated in the religion but those are gender differences which exist among all men and women in society, and those differences are how a female prays or is punished for their sins. This does not mean that the way women are treated in the West is inferior to those of in Islam.

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The third type of Islamophobia is Institutional Islamophobia. This is where people purposely ignore the beliefs of Islam and Muslim people. Recently the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Imran Khan and the Prime Minister of Turkey Recep, Mr. Tayyip Erdoğan came together to announce to the world about the brutalities happening in Kashmir to Muslims by Indian oppressors. However, not a single country has come forth to have a say in this and ignored all calls to actions. I say this is because India is an economic booster for most countries and they have been very defensive about their actions and call it an “entirely internal matter”. But this does not change the human rights violations in Kashmir. This proves that there is Institutional Islamophobia and people are choosing to ignore the oppression of Muslim people.

The fourth type of Islamophobia is Political Islamophobia, where politicians use it for popularity. Recently, the President of U.S.A, Mr. Donald Trump, has called out Muslims on social media to gain popularity among his supporters, or people on the fence. He inspires Islamophobia in them and gets personal gain in terms of votes during his electoral campaign. An example of this is when he made presidential order to ban people from countries with Muslim majorities from entering the US. According to a report from the Washington Post, Mr. Trump has purposely and methodically proposed his Muslim ban in suspicion of American Muslims as the centerpiece of his nativist pitch to voters. Additionally, Mr. Trump has allegedly stated that American Muslims and mosques are knowingly protecting terrorists and that the US should consider profiling Muslims. This is a clear indication of hatred and political gain using Islamophobia.

Why is it that when a terrorist incident occurs the first question we ask ourselves is: “was it a Muslim?” and why is it that when a Muslim hears about a terrorist incident, he/she prays that the culprit was not a Muslim? Why is that we are so prone to Islamophobic stereotypes? Let me tell you why. Most people believe that the attacks of 9/11 caused a rise in Islamophobia but in reality Islamophobia existed long before the attack. The term Islamophobia was created in the 1980s. However it is true that the rise of hate crimes and fear in Islamophobia occurred the most after 9/11. Hate crimes against Muslims went from 554% to 1600% in nine weeks after the attack. The main reason for the spread of Islamophobia is undoubtedly the media as it deliberately provokes all types of discrimination to Islam and Muslim people. After 9/11 many remarks and strong statements were made by then US president George W. Bush, in which he awakened the harsh memories of the crusades done in the past against humanity. Bush stated that the US will launch a crusade on terrorism. However, this sparked a sense of hatred towards Islam and contributed to Islamophobia because the nation had thought that Islam was the reason why the attack had happened. Furthermore, the use of word ‘crusade’ in his statement has recalled the barbarous and unjust military operations against the then Muslim empire over capturing the city of Jerusalem. To make matters worse, Mr. Bush uses the word ‘Islamic fundamentalist’ in his statements to describe the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, led by the terrorist Osama Bin Laden. An example of that is the press conference released by Mr. Bush in which he states: “renegade Islamic fundamentalist Osama bin Laden is the most likely suspect in the attacks.” in which he is using the word “Islamic” to tag this terrorist organization to Islam and Muslims. Since then, hatred has enraged many westerners and wars are still being fought to this day in Arab nations such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Libya.

Nowadays, Islam is one way to define “terrorism” in the world. Islamophobia continues to cause disrespect, hatred, loss in value, and led towards the decrease in Muslim faithfuls. Muslims are known to say Allahu Akbar in arabic, meaning God is Great. Now, this word has been attributed as a call for attack. When people talk about “jihad”, it is portrayed as a terrorist attack. When Muslims talk about Sharia Law, it is portrayed as a law of inequality and barbaric actions.

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Islamophobia has changed the world's thinking as it has shown peaceful practices of the Muslims to be lunatic ideologies. The Muslims have to live with disrespect to their religion everyday from so many sources in society. Islamophobia caused 1.6 billion people in the world to lose their confidence, to lose their respect, to lose their homes, to lose their sense of dignity, to lose their freedom and most importantly to lose their right to live in peace. The Muslims lost everything based on the actions of a few lunatics who unfortunately were misguided Muslims. Does this seem right to you? Why are the few terrorists who also happen to be Muslims considered as the representatives of the 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide. In contrast, when terrorists from other faiths or religions commit some violent acts, they are considered to be just lunatics or murderers who do not belong to any religion, country or community. A recent example of this is the Christchurch Mosque shooting in New Zealand on 15 March 2019, in which 51 Muslims were killed and 49 were severely injured. The main suspect of this terrorist act, a heinous man named Brenton Tarrant has not been linked to any particular religion or community by world leaders or mainstream international media, which in fact is a very commendable thing. A terrorist is a terrorist, nothing more or nothing less. If the same terror attack has been committed by a terrorist who is a Muslim, then the same media and the same world leaders would have happily linked it to Islam and provoke more Islamophobia which unfortunately leads to further discrimination against Muslims.

## **So how do we control Islamophobia?**

As frightening as it sounds, Islamophobia can not go away easily. The stereotype and twisted image in our heads about Islam and Islamophobia can not go away with a simple snap of the fingers. But, there is always hope. Muslims believe in peace as they are true followers of their beloved Prophet and consider him as their role model to be the "perfect" Muslim. The prophet used to have many incidents in his life where he was abused and showed hatred but he never oppressed. Instead, he showed kindness and compassion. As is quoted in the Quran: "Messenger of Allah! It is a great Mercy of God that you are gentle and kind towards them; for, had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would all have broken away from you" (Quran 3:159). This shows the kindness of the greatest Muslim to ever walk on the earth. It shows how he changed the opinion of millions of people with kindness, and this is how we fight Islamophobia. This is how we get rid of the oppressors and violence towards Muslims. As George Barnard used to say: "We will always come across not-so-nice people every once in a while, that's life. So how do we deal with such people?... simply by killing them with kindness, the trick is to take away their power of inflicting hurt or pain by being extremely kind towards them."

Most of the time when we judge terror, we are not judging the Muslims but instead showing our sense of hatred and lack of self control, we are only expressing our hatred that has been fed to us. As the famous saying goes: "Those who judge will never understand and those who understand will never judge." Therefore, we need to understand Muslims and the teaching of true Islam and not prejudge them due to Islamophobia. The Muslims in general are trying to make peace. Can you make peace with them too?