

*Combating Prejudice Against Muslims*  
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In today's world, the presence of Islamophobia in Western societies has resulted in discrimination and prejudices against many Muslims. Prejudice refers to having an unjustified, preconceived opinion or bias towards someone based on the group that they belong to. Prejudice is often rooted in stereotypes which are used to label a group of people and as such, any individual belonging to the group. Many Muslims around the globe face discrimination and violence on a daily basis due to the harmful impacts of such prejudices. Particularly, many Muslim women who observe the various forms of the veil in Islam ranging from the hijab, burqa, and niqab are more visible and unfortunately have been victims to much discrimination and violence as a result of prejudice. Amplifying the voices of Muslims around us and in our communities assists in helping Muslims reclaim their narrative. Historically, Muslims have made valuable contributions to medicine, science, art, math, and society and should be considered equal and valuable members of society.

It is important to recognize Muslims as not only what is shown in media and news outlets, but as members of society. Therefore, in order to combat religious prejudice against Muslims, it is important to gain public support through allies and raise awareness. This can be done in any setting from university campuses to professional work environments. For example, taking the time to recognize and acknowledge the contributions of Muslims in the university and in the workplace helps to reestablish social norms and create an inclusive environment.

Additionally, while Muslims globally face religious prejudices on a daily basis, it is important to remember that it is not the responsibility of Muslims to educate their peers against these stereotypes. This responsibility should be placed on institutions such as universities, schools, work environments, etc. to educate their students, employees, and staff by amplifying the voices of Muslims in their communities. As such, making people aware of falsehoods or inconsistencies in their existing beliefs helps to restore the narrative to Muslims and learning about their religion.

From personal experience, many of my peers and educators have not been aware of Islamic holidays such as Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha that are observed by Muslims worldwide. As such, often, this has put me in the position of having to choose between attending class or celebrating Eid with my family as I am not able to obtain accommodation for missing class and making up the classwork for the day. Having schools and universities, as well as workplaces, recognize important holidays and events creates not only an inclusive environment but also aids to combat against prejudice by acknowledging Muslim holidays and religion at the institution. Furthermore, this should be extended to not only Islam but for all religions.

Another way to combat prejudice against Muslims would be to increase contact with Muslims or educate individuals on Islam. For example, many high schools focus on teaching Western literature, authors and American history. As such, many individuals are not educated on the Eastern culture or other religions such as Islam. The only knowledge many students leaving high school have of Muslims or Islam is what they hear and see online in the media, which may consist of misinformation. Furthermore, oftentimes there is misinterpretation between culture and religion. As such, modifying the curriculum in high schools and universities to educate students on other religions will help to turn out open-minded individuals who make a conscious effort to learn about and respect others from different backgrounds.

Through spreading awareness, gaining support and allies, increasing contact with Muslim figures, and improving school curriculums to be more inclusive of other religions as well as cultures, we can all make a conscious effort to combat religious prejudices in society and seek to better ourselves as individuals.