

AMERICA INDIVISIBLE

HOW TO SPOT AND STOP RACIALIZED ANTI-MUSLIM BIGOTRY



NOVEMBER 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Chances are, you know someone who's asked this question "How can Islamophobia be racism if Islam's not a race?" Like some forms of racism, anti-Muslim rhetoric in this country is grounded in how people look. Whether it's "funny" hats, "menacing" beards, or "oppressive" head scarves, it is often about visible features.

Race is a created idea used to categorize people according to physical characteristics (skin color, facial features, hair texture, etc). This is [different from ethnicity](#) (a person's culture, heritage, and ethnic roots) or nationality (a person's citizenship). For example, somebody could be an American who has Irish roots but be classified racially as white and another may be an Italian who immigrated to the United States and also be classified as white. Race in America has had a rough history of grouping people together solely on how they look. Racism towards Muslims is really no different.

In addition, many of the anti-Muslim attacks in the United States have been directed toward people who aren't even Muslim. South Asian Hindus have been targeted because of their accents and Sikhs because of their turbans. At the same time, the diverse religion of Islam has been categorized as a solely Middle Eastern faith causing many Muslims to be mistaken as Arab. Did you know that the largest population of Muslims in the world is actually found [in Indonesia](#)? That's approximately 5,000 miles from the Middle East!

This digital, clickable guide is designed as a resource for you to better understand the racial undertones of anti-Muslim bigotry. Below you can see the different kinds of people that are affected by racialized Islamophobia, where it happens, and ways that you can take a stand against it.



WHO DOES RACIALIZED ANTI-MUSLIM BIGOTRY IMPACT?

SIKHS

[Sikhism](#) is the world's fifth largest religion and is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak. Sikhs have [been in the United States](#) for generations and are often [confused as Muslims](#) because of the religious head coverings they wear.

- A Sikh man was one of the first recorded post 9/11 ["revenge" killings](#)
- Listen to this [personal story](#) of a Sikh man who was targeted as a Muslim

MUSLIMS

Muslims are often put into a monolithic group. But Muslims form one of the [most diverse religious communities](#) in the country.

- For example, read about this white, [Scottish man](#) who considers himself a Muslim
- There is also a large [LGBTQ Muslim community](#), and mosques are learning what it means to [be inclusive of them](#).

SOUTH ASIANS

The term South Asian refers to people who track their ancestry to [many different countries](#) including India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Although Islam does have a very large presence in these communities, the majority of South Asians are actually [Hindu](#) while the Buddhist, Christian, and Sikh religions are also prominent.

- A South Asian man was [assaulted at a Red Robin](#) in Pennsylvania and another man was [killed at a bar in Kansas](#). In both instances, the attackers thought the men were Arab or Muslim, though neither were.

SOUTH EAST ASIANS

East and Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, and Myanmar are also home to many Muslim communities who have immigrated to the United States. Here is an [example](#) from the United Kingdom.

BLACK AMERICANS

Islam plays a large part in the history and culture of Black America. Malcolm X was a key player in the civil rights movement and black Muslims were some of the first Africans to be brought over as slaves as this [film about a Gambian Muslim prince](#) portrays. As you watch the film, here's a [viewing guide](#) to help you follow along.

- Check out this [coming of age film](#) about a young black woman navigating her Muslim identity in America.
 - Anti-Muslim bigotry can be directed to black people who aren't Muslim as well. A famous example of this is the misattribution of [Barack Obama's religious identity](#).
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ARABS

Arabs are made up of people from all over the Middle East and North Africa and are often portrayed in the media as violent extremists. Because of this, Arab Muslims can often be targeted for hate crimes or everyday things like [getting profiled at the airport](#).

- Arabs who aren't Muslims can be targeted as well, like a Lebanese-American Christian boy who was [shot on his porch](#) in Oklahoma or a Mexican-Palestinian Christian who was falsely [accused of having ties](#) to the Muslim Brotherhood by his opponent in the [2018 congressional elections](#).

IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Immigrants, or folks who have permanently moved to the U.S. from abroad, and refugees, those forced to flee their home countries, come from diverse religious backgrounds. However, many of them are assumed to be Muslim based on the language they speak or their country of origin, which can make them [susceptible to anti-Muslim bigotry](#).

- Read about this [Bosnian Muslim immigrant community](#) that isn't assumed to be Muslim or immigrants because they don't fit the usual stereotypes.

WOMEN

Women often carry the brunt of anti-Muslim bigotry because of their head coverings. But did you know that there are many different religious traditions that involve head covering?

- Some Orthodox Jewish women wear [head coverings](#) and have even been [targeted in attacks](#) for them.
- There are also many Christians that cover, like the [Mennonites](#) or the [Amish](#).
- Remember, sometimes women wear scarves to [stay warm](#).



WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

Across the country:

New America has compiled racist Islamophobic incidents into a series of [interactive graphs and maps](#).

[South Asian Americans Leading Together](#) (SAALT) has published their [Acts of Hate Database](#). Check it out to see up to date information on incidents and where they are happening. They also have an easy to view [map](#) of incidents around the country.

Legislation can often stem from racialized Islamophobic ideas. The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding publishes a [restrictive legislation map](#).

The Southern Poverty Law Center publishes a [hate map](#) which tracks any organizations that “attack or malign an entire class of people.”

In media and entertainment:

There are [many examples](#) of films today that cast those who appear to be Muslim in a bad light.

[This documentary](#) specifically tracks the negative perceptions of Arabs in film.

Read about how these [graffiti artists](#) highlighted the racism of the show Homeland.

In textbooks and schools:

Anti-Muslim bigotry can result in bullying. Read this [kid's story](#) of being bullied because of his faith. For a more comprehensive understanding, read this report on the [bullying of America's Muslim children](#).

See how a Muslim Student Association is sharing their experience as a hijabi by encouraging their fellow students to [wear a hijab for a day](#).

This [report](#) on the bullying of the Sikh community sheds light on how anti-Muslim bullying doesn't just affect Muslims.

The bullying of Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim is not surprising when you take into account the anti-Muslim bigotry in children's [textbooks around the country](#), like this situation [in California](#).

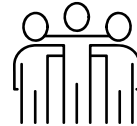
Check out how one organization is pushing back against this narrative by countering Islamophobia [through children's stories](#).

HOW TO STOP IT

FOR THE NON-IMPACTED

DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT FOREIGNNESS AND FAITH.

- Don't assume a name is "[foreign](#)" just because it doesn't sound like one you've heard before. And don't assume a person is foreign because of their name.
- Don't assume someone isn't American just [because of how they look](#).

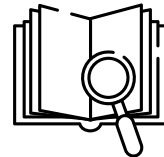


PRACTICE ENLIGHTENED CURIOSITY AND LISTENING.

- Check out [these women](#) engaging the diversity of identities around those who are perceived to be Muslim and the advice they have for how to stay curious and engage well.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

- [Here's a great resource](#) to better understand the diversity of American Muslims and their faith!
- Check out this [quick fact sheet](#) as well.



LEAD A DISCUSSION!

Here's a great resource to better understand the diversity of American Muslims and their faith!

- Have a [Living Room Conversation](#) around race and ethnicity with your friends
- Check out the film, Prince Among Slaves, a historical documentary about a West African prince enslaved in the United States. Here are a couple of ways you could use it to start dialogues in your community:
 - *Prince Among Slaves* [Outreach Resource Kit](#)
 - *Prince Among Slaves* [Advertising Campaign Planner](#)

HOW TO STOP IT

FOR THE IMPACTED AND THEIR ALLIES

PRACTICE SELF-CARE

It's [not your job](#) to educate the world or to fight bigotry wherever you find it. Address it if you want, or walk away. Whatever you decide, know that there are networks of allies and organizations who are working hard to help.



RESPOND WITH RELATIONSHIPS AND STORIES

- Looking for examples of how to do this? Check out this [diverse set of Muslims](#) who are stepping up and choosing to tell their story the way they think it should be told. For more, check out NPR's [snapshots](#) on their lives.

BRING IN THE PROS

If you have witnessed or been the victim of a hate crime, look for resources in your local area [here](#). You can also report your incident to some of these great organizations that deal with this kind of stuff for a living:

- [Council on American Islamic Relations](#): report an [incident](#).
- [The Sikh Coalition](#): report an [incident](#).
- [American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee](#): report an [incident](#).



CLICKABLE RESOURCES

ARTICLES/REPORTS



[TheWant To Stop Islamophobia? Talk To Your Fellow Christians](#)



[Charter For Compassion International's Islamophobia Guidebook](#)



[Equal Treatment? Measuring the Legal and Media Responses to Ideologically Motivated Violence in the United States](#)



[Muslims in America: A New Generation](#)

BOOKS



[The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West](#)



[Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States](#)



[Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11](#)



[American Muslim Women: Negotiating Race, Class, and Gender within the Ummah](#)



[Growing Up Muslim: Muslim College Students in America Tell Their Life Stories](#)



[The Black Muslims in America](#)

RESEARCH CENTERS/ ORGANIZATIONS FIGHTING BIGOTRY



[Sikh Coalition](#)



[Justice for Muslims Collective](#)



[Shoulder to Shoulder](#)



[National Sikh Campaign](#)



[MuslimARC](#)



[Muslim Public Affairs Council](#)



[Islamic Networks Group](#)



[Institute for Social Policy and Understanding](#)
