

country and to deconstruct the false narratives passing for common knowledge in our media. But you need not wait for an invitation. Go knock on the door of the mosque near you. Call up the chapter of CAIR in your state. Build relationships. Identify yourself as interested in helping and ask what there is for you to do.



3. Develop your anti-oppression skill sets.

Those of us with privilege—skin color, gender, religion, sexual identity, can best stand as allies to vulnerable communities with a consciousness of that privilege that is manifested in our actions.

Acting against oppression requires a skill set around communication and behavior to act in support of affected communities. Working in the context of community with active organizations and community leaders informs these skills over time, but here's a start.

- Listen to understand, and listen more than speak. You will learn more when listening, and not just waiting for your chance to speak, share your opinions, or question or analyze any statements. If/when someone shares their truth with you accept it as the gift it is. Over time you may build relationship and trust, questions you have or information needed to gain deeper understanding can wait until trust is built.

- Be aware of how much space you take, do not expect folks to be comfortable, fully present, or to feel safe in spaces they do not know or where they are not present or in majority.

- Speak from your own experience, do not assume you know what's best for people from other communities. People from vulnerable communities are the experts in their own liberation, they know what they need. You can ask what can be done /how you might help, but refrain from telling people what they need.

- Identify your own privilege and how it reveals itself. This is an exploration of your relationship to power. Then you can see ways to resist abuses of power that do not fit your vision of justice.

- Work to build grassroots movements led by affected communities and support the leadership from those communities.

- Continue to learn. Islamophobia is a growing reality, built on generations of oppression and racism and the forms it takes and threats it represents will continue to manifest. Stay alert to the latest concerns and work to stay in front of community challenges.

4. Challenge and oppose oppression in all forms.

White nationalists gunning down the faithful as they kneel in prayer, or torching a mosque with arsonist intent are just one end of a spectrum of violence and bigotry. At the other end are micro-aggressions and hostilities, each calling out for intervention. It can take a lifetime

of experience to learn to interrupt hateful narratives and interactions with grace. And the only way to gain that experience is to start practicing. Don't think you have to get it right all the time. Sometimes even when the perfect words are not available, something must be said. If something does not feel right, that is a sign. Be prepared to operate in your discomfort zone.

5. Build alliances across faiths and stand as an ally to vulnerable constituencies.

As with the Fugitive Slave Laws of the past, our state and federal governments are enacting laws and rules to criminalize compassion for our immigrant, refugee and Muslim neighbors. None of us alone can muster the resources to defend human rights in a political atmosphere which openly encourages the nation's worst fascist tendencies.

Jewish Voice for Peace created an anti-Islamophobia network and has offered useful tools to engage congregations of diverse faiths. If you have relationships with faith leaders or social organizations in your community you can approach them with an invitation to use these resources and take a stand.

Educating neighbors, finding allies are key to mounting an effective defense against the racist and islamophobic violence we witness on the rise in our communities. We can effectively resist the unconstitutional excesses of the administration. We can build the political power necessary to create what Dr. King called the beloved community, what Muslims call the global *ummah*.

6. Build capacity and relationships, engage with humans, not just keyboards.

Look to local and national groups doing this work and when possible support or partner with their work. Use your anti oppression skills and attend one of their meetings or actions as a support person. Find ways to be of use and step up!

Muslims are in every state of this country, and even where muslim-specific organizations are not available, local organizations exist everywhere dedicated to challenging racism. Find them. Partner with them.

Consider inviting leaders from the local mosque or masjid to make a presentation at one of your meetings and ask if you can come to them to share information and answer questions about the Green Party. Push back from the keyboard and get busy!

Organizing Materials

jewishvoiceforpeace.org/network-against-islamophobia

everydayfeminism.com offers two courses of interest:

Healing from Toxic Whiteness

Everyday Self-Love Course

This tri-fold brochure is excerpted from a 13-page briefing paper by the same name which explores these issues in greater depth and includes nearly 100 citations to source materials documenting the facts. You can get a copy here:

www.gp.org/GreenPapers/Islamophobia.pdf

Islamophobia: Another Social Construction of Racism

Imperialism Justified, Fear Manufactured, Fascism Enabled

Excerpts from a Green Party Briefing Paper

Islamophobia is a contrived fear or prejudice fomented by the existing Eurocentric and Orientalist global power structure.

It is directed at a perceived or real Muslim threat through the maintenance and extension of existing disparities in economic, political, social and cultural relations, while rationalizing the necessity to deploy violence as a tool to achieve "civilizational rehab" of the target communities (Muslim or otherwise). Islamophobia reintroduces and reaffirms a global racial structure through which resource distribution disparities are maintained and extended.

"A social body dependent on imperialist violence to sustain its way of life must discover an ideology that can disavow that dependency if it is to maintain legitimacy.

Various kinds of racism have performed that role in the modern era; Islamophobia is currently the preferred form."

—Arun Kundnani, *The Muslims are Coming: Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror*

The Islamophobic Industry

The exploitation of fear fuels Islamophobia and drives reactionary activists to promote propaganda and messaging to keep the narrative alive.

A network of bloggers, think tanks and propaganda mills have raised and spent hundreds of millions of dollars since 2001 to propagate misinformation about Muslims and Islam.

How Islamophobia manifests itself in this country

Surveillance, infiltration, and entrapment

US Federal agencies have conducted illegal surveillance in Muslim communities and entrapped individuals into criminal activity. As far back as 2009 the FBI was approaching vulnerable members of the Muslim community to enlist them to target young people.

In 2014, Attorney General Eric Holder on behalf of the Obama Administration, initiated its Countering Violent Extremism. The Brennan Center for Justice describes the approach as ‘dubious’, and as ‘focused only on Muslims, stigmatizing them as a suspect community’.

Chilling Impact on Political Discourse

From the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to COINTELPRO, to the revelations from Edward Snowden on NSA surveillance, intimidation of those who speak out against the status quo has proven successful at silencing communities, groups and individuals. Modern methods of surveillance make this a most effective tool against protest and dissent.

Violence against Muslims

In February 2015, the *Washington Post* published a review of FBI statistics tracking hates crimes against Muslims and concluded that such incidents are occurring at a rate “roughly five times higher than the pre-9/11 rate.

Language

When we let others do our thinking for us, or provide the language we use to do our own thinking for them, we give up our power. Such has happened with the words *jihād* and *shari’a*.

For Muslims the world over, ‘holy war’ has nothing to do with the concept of *jihād*. The Arabic word translates as ‘struggle’, and is used a handful of times in the Qur’an to speak of struggle to stay on a righteous path, to fulfill obligations to family, community and Creator, what the Islamic scholars call a higher *jihād*.

Attacking the Muslim Faith through Legislation

Just as the \$200+ million Islamophobic think tank industry has used the media to convey an inaccurate translation for *jihād*, the word *sharia* has been similarly misrepresented. *Shari’a* is associated with every aspect of one’s daily life and informs how one acts from day to day. In Arabic, the word *shari’a* means “the way”. For those whose Arabic vocabulary is limited to a misunderstanding of those two words, a conversation with a Muslim about *sharia* can quickly devolve into speaking past each other.

Shari’a is not a legal system. It describes a way of life rooted in a relationship with one’s Creator. *Sharia* provides guidance for how a Muslim will pray and fast and conduct themselves in their families, work and community.



Students chant while marching at a rally against Islamophobia at San Diego State University in San Diego, California. Credit: Sandy Huffaker/Reuters

The Rights of Women

From its beginning Islam “. . . uplifted the status of the poor and underprivileged in society . . . and claimed equality of the sexes in stature and worship.”

Just as women in the US struggle for equality and gender justice, so too do women in Muslim-majority nations. Without acknowledging that violence and oppression against women is a global issue, the islamophobic narrative points to honor-killings, FGM and hijab as evidence that Muslims are primitive and require Western intervention including military intervention to save women from Muslim men’s abuse.

Gendered violence

Both the practice of ‘Honor Killings’ and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) while often attributed to Islam, actually long predate the founding of the faith. These practices are cultural, and only the most patriarchal interpretations of Islamic teachings would try to justify them. The countries with the highest documented cases of FGM are majority Christian. A focus on honor killings by a ‘Muslim-other’ deflects attention from the 5,000 women who die annually in this country from domestic violence.

Hijab

The Qur’an speaks to the veiling of the wives of the Prophet, and instructs all Muslims, both men and women, to dress modestly. Women who believe are told to ‘guard their private parts and not expose their adornment’ except among family, though certainly not all Muslim women see that as mandating use of hijab.

The practice is not unique to Islam. Christian and Jewish women also often use habits and head scarves as an expression of their faith as well. In addition, Sufi and some other Muslim men, as well as men who practice the Sikh, Christian and Jewish faiths are also known to wear head covering, including *yamika*, *kufee* and turbans.

Who is The 21st Century Terrorist?

Not all Muslims are extremists, just as not every Christian is a Timothy McVeigh, or a Randall Terry. A few thousand fundamentalists do not speak for 1.6 billion Muslims around the planet. They do not even represent the views of the people they rule, for those who (as in Saudi Arabia) exercise state power.

There is no such thing as Islamic terrorism, certainly not any more than there is Christian terrorism. We would not paint the Christian faith, or dismiss the United Church of Christ as terrorists just because former President Obama was a member before he started managing a weekly kill list and drone fleet.

What is in this for me?

You do not have to be black to understand that Black Lives Matter. You do not have to be a woman to recognize the urgent nature of the work to end domestic violence. You do not have to be Muslim to understand that challenging Islamophobia is important to building a plural, democratic and just future.

In fact, black lives have always mattered to black folks. The issue has been that they haven’t mattered enough to white folks as well. While women have walked on egg shells since the dawn of the patriarchy to avoid men’s violence, it seems that we still must rely on men to stop being violent, and to stop condoning it with speech and inaction.

This brochure can only scratch the surface. But if you read the resources recommended below, you can take significant steps to deconstruct the Islamophobic propaganda and misinformation which so dominates the public discourse, for the profit of the arms dealers and the control of our nation by its most reactionary forces. Please continue to educate yourself in support of the vital work we must each do to advance a different narrative; one grounded in the our shared humanity with our Muslim neighbors.

What Can be Done?

1. Greens have an important role to play.

As Green Party candidates and activists, we have a role as an opposition party to educate ourselves and our communities on issues related to Islamophobia, racism, sexism and gender-identity and to prioritize work to support the struggles of the most vulnerable and marginalized in our communities. We must make an active contribution to the work of defending the human rights of our neighbors. We can build enduring alliances by engaging with the political crisis now present in this country.

2. Look to Muslim leadership.

The Muslim community understands it is under attack in this country, and many larger Islamic centers, and masjids throughout the country are hosting open houses, visit your mosque days and participating in inter-faith alliance building to humanize the face of Islam in this