

Network Against Islamophobia

The Network Against Islamophobia (NAI), a project of [Jewish Voice for Peace](#), was created to serve as a resource to, and work with, JVP chapters and other groups interested in organizing against Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism and to be a partner to the broader, Muslim-led movement against Islamophobia.

We created these materials--a two session curriculum and resources; a series of modules; and a facilitator guide--so we can be effective, accountable partners in this work.

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Liberal Islamophobia Module

PURPOSE OF MODULE:

This module looks at the ways that liberal Islamophobia is present in the U.S. today and how it affects people's perceptions of Muslims and connects to cultural and structural racism and government policies. It analyzes critical distinctions and similarities between outspoken anti-Muslim rhetoric and the racism of liberal Islamophobia, and encourages us to think more deeply about the multiple and structural ways Islamophobia manifests itself--and needs to be challenged. We recommend using this module after, or in conjunction with, the [full NAI curriculum](#) or [Intro module](#). Other ideas about how to use the NAI curriculum can be found in the Facilitator Guide.

GOALS:

- TO DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF LIBERAL ISLAMOPHOBIA
- TO ANALYZE AND BE MINDFUL OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF LIBERAL ISLAMOPHOBIA
- TO THINK CRITICALLY ABOUT HOW TO CHALLENGE THE PROBLEMATIC ATTITUDES AND NARRATIVES OF "LIBERAL ISLAMOPHOBIA"

MATERIALS:

Handout #1: Basic Definitions of Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Racism

Handout #4: Liberal Islamophobia

Yasmin Nouh, Fusion, "No Extremists Here" [video](#)

NAI [Readings and Resources on Islamophobia](#)

I. INTRODUCTIONS AND OPENING (10 MINUTES)

FACILITATOR:

5 minutes: Pass out handout #1, and give a brief overview of the agenda and rationale for this module.

5 minutes: Ask participants to think about what the word “Islamophobia” means to them. After a few minutes, ask participants to share their thoughts with the person sitting next to them. Those who feel comfortable can share with the whole group.

II. WHAT IS LIBERAL ISLAMOPHOBIA? (25 MINUTES)

FACILITATOR:

10 minutes: Present the following quote by Deepa Kumar on board or chart paper:

“The way liberal Islamophobia works is that it roundly criticizes Islam-bashing, thereby preempting charges of racism, but then it goes on to champion programs that target and vilify Muslims.”

Then also put on board or chart paper:

- What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “good Muslim/bad Muslim?”
- How might this framing of the “good Muslim/bad Muslim” concept perpetuate Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism?

Ask participants to think deeply about the quote and and two questions and then reflect on:

- What do you think “liberal Islamophobia” means?
- What are some examples of it from things you’ve heard or read or experienced?
- What are the possible consequences and impacts of ignoring this kind of Islamophobia?

15 minutes: Pass out post-its and ask participants to jot down examples of Islamophobia that they have seen and/or experienced. Then display two pieces of chart paper. On one piece of chart paper place a circle in the middle with the words, “Islamophobia: Islam-bashing.” On the other piece of chart paper place a circle in the middle with the words, “Liberal Islamophobia: Some Muslims are ‘problems.’” Ask participants to think about whether the examples they thought of fall under Islamophobia or liberal Islamophobia. Ask them to stick their post-its on the piece of chart paper where they think their example fits best.

Guide a whole group discussion on examples that participants posted, pointing out any similarities or differences, anything that stood out or was surprising, etc.

IV. LIBERALISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA (40 MINUTES)

FACILITATOR:

25 minutes: Share Handout #4: Liberal Islamophobia. Divide participants into three groups for an in-depth discussion. Ask each group to focus their discussion on a specific section of the handout:

- Group 1: Kalia Abiade's explanations of some of the critical distinctions between right-wing/mainstream Islamophobia and liberal Islamophobia.
- Group 2: Arun Kundnani's analysis of liberals and conservatives in relation to Islamophobia.
- Group 3: Deepa Kumar's and Sunaina Maira's comments on liberal Islamophobia and "feminism."

Explore potential responses to these Islamophobic assumptions as they apply to what you are reading:

- Profiling Muslims in the community or at the airport keeps me/"us" "safe."
- Muslim women are oppressed./Wearing hijab is oppressive.
- Muslim women should be asked to remove hijab at airports/checkpoints.
- Muslims in the U.S. need to be "vetted" or given more scrutiny when entering this country.

Facilitator will then explain that these are examples of liberal Islamophobia that we will now discuss more fully.

15 minutes: Each group shares a summary of its group discussion with the whole group.

III. CHALLENGING ISLAMOPHOBIA (10 MINUTES)

FACILITATOR:

2 minutes: Show Yasmin Nouh, Fusion, "No Extremists Here" [video](#)

8 minutes: Guide group conversation with Guiding Questions:

- How can we respond to false, Islamophobic assertions about who commits violence?
- What are the implications of the accusation that Muslims should be responsible for addressing any and all violence committed by anyone calling themselves Muslim, and how can we respond?
- How do we respond to groups within our communities (like the ADL) that oppose acts of Islamophobia, but support the "good Muslim-bad Muslim" notion and support state programs that surveil or target Muslims?
- How do we challenge the notion of which women need "liberating?"

V. CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

FACILITATOR:

10 minutes: Ask participants to discuss any new or lingering thoughts they have about liberal Islamophobia or Islamophobia in general. Ask them to share what they will take away with them, including a next step (perhaps some type of action or community education) they might take or be part of to counter liberal Islamophobia.

FURTHER READING (FROM NAI'S [READINGS AND RESOURCES ON ISLAMOPHOBIA](#)):

Mohamad Elmasry, "The Brussels Attack and Liberal Islamophobia," *Middle East Eye*, March 22, 2016.

Deepa Kumar, "Islamophobia: A Bipartisan Project," *The Nation*, July 2, 2012.

Alex Kane, "Author Deepa Kumar on the Imperial Roots of Anti Muslim Sentiment" (interview), *Mondoweiss*, July 2, 2012.

Brandon Jordan, "Interview: Author Arun Kundnani on Islamophobia & the Myth of the Liberal Anti Racist," *Shadow Proof*, January 8, 2015.