

# Combating Islamophobia: A Reflection of an Anti-Racism Educator

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*Abstract: Although Islamophobia has been rising in the West, educational institutions continue to struggle with incorporating anti-Islamophobia education into their curricula. Anti-Islamophobia education, which shares similarities with anti-racism education, can help challenge Islamophobia both within and beyond educational settings. Research on Islamophobia in the West, such as studies by Bakali (2016), Halabi (2021), Hossain (2017) and House (2012), predominantly focuses on students' experiences and voices, often overlooking teachers' perspectives on their efforts to combat Islamophobia in schools (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009). In this article, I use autoethnography as a methodology to reflect on my efforts to challenge Islamophobia at a secondary school in Quebec. I discuss a project I conducted with my students in my English as a Second Language (ESL) class. This project comprises two key dimensions: a conceptual aspect aimed at challenging racism and a technical component focused on teaching ESL. In this reflection, I concentrate on the issues regarding my practices as an anti-racist pedagogue rather than on my role as an ESL teacher. Although a few students were not comfortable discussing Islamophobia, most demonstrated a solid and critical understanding of it. They were brave enough to lead class discussions and offer different perspectives to challenge Islamophobia in their everyday life.*

*Keywords: Islamophobia, teaching against Islamophobia, anti-racism education, pedagogy, auto-ethnography, self-reflection*

## Introduction

Islamophobia refers to the hostility toward individuals who adhere to Islam or who are perceived as Muslims due to their identity, often rooted in misconceptions about Muslims and Islam (Green, 2019; Kozaric, 2024; Pratt & Woodlock, 2016). The 9/11 terrorist attack marked a significant turning point in the lives of Muslims in North America. The deeply rooted biases against Muslims or those who are perceived as Muslims intensified after 9/11 (Beydoun, 2018). It has led to increased scrutiny and surveillance of Muslims (Stonebanks, 2019) as they may be viewed as potential threats. Islamophobia remains pervasive in Canadian society (Zine, 2008), from high-profile events such as the Quebec City Mosque shooting in 2017 to everyday encounters of racism that frequently go unnoticed in various settings, including schools (Kincheloe et al., 2010).

Islamophobia negatively impacts the experience of Muslim students in the West, including Canada, where students face marginalization, discrimination, social exclusion and negative treatment (Abu Khalaf et al., 2022; Bakali, 2016; Halabi, 2021; Kozaric, 2024). These experiences impact students both in school and in their daily lives. Consequently, Islamophobia limits the participation of Muslims as active citizens in society (Abu Khalaf et al., 2022; Mir, 2014). This exclusion is further reinforced by legislation such as Quebec's Law 62, which prohibits face covering in public spaces and Law 21, which bans public service workers, including teachers, from wearing religious symbols. These laws significantly impact hijabi Muslim women by preventing them from working in public educational institutions in Quebec (Potvin et al., 2024).

Education plays a crucial role in challenging and addressing racism by fostering inclusivity and promoting social justice. However, misconceptions about Muslims and Islam continue to prevail in curricula, contributing to negative experiences for Muslim students through the unfavourable representation of Muslims and Islam in school textbooks (Sensory, 2009). Although the discourse surrounding Muslims and Islam has improved in Quebec textbooks since the 1980s, it continues to emphasize controversial subjects (Mc Andrew et al., 2011). Additionally, the literature lacks research that centers teachers' voices and their experiences in confronting Islamophobia in schools (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009). In response to this gap, I share my reflections on my experience and practices in teaching against Islamophobia at a secondary school in Montreal. It is important to distinguish between Islam as a religion and Islamophobia as a social phenomenon. Notably, Islam is a faith followed and practiced globally, where 24.9% of the world population is Muslim (Central Intelligence Agency, 2025). Conversely, Islamophobia refers to the negative perceptions and stereotypes of Muslims and Islam held by individuals or institutions that provoke resentment and hostility towards individuals who are Muslims or perceived to be Muslim, as previously discussed.

As an educator, I believe that confronting entrenched norms requires both courage and innovation, as such challenges involve questioning and potentially transforming longstanding practices and beliefs. Teachers can challenge Islamophobia through various pedagogical practices, both within and beyond the classroom (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009). Kysia (2024) describes her experience teaching against Islamophobia to high school and college students in the United States. In that project, Kysia uses a poem and images that represent Muslims in the media, aiming to co-construct a definition of Islamophobia with her students and to help them understand its different forms. Kysia (2024) emphasized that teaching against Islamophobia should not focus on religious texts or theological content. Rather, it should advocate for a critical examination of Islamophobia's impact on Muslims and their lived experiences. I agree with this approach and maintain that teaching against Islamophobia is not synonymous with teaching about Islam. Rather, it aligns with anti-racism education frameworks, as outlined by scholars, such as Estrada and Matthews (2016), Flensner (2020), Hamako (2014), Housee (2012) and Lynch et al. (2017).

Teaching against Islamophobia involves deconstructing stereotypes and promoting accurate understandings of Muslim communities. It draws on concepts such as Said's (1994) Orientalism, which critiques the negative portrayal of Muslims and Islam in Western literature as uncivilized, inferior, exotic, unknowledgeable and irrational 'Other'. This includes critically examining the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in Western media, which frequently depicts them as threats to national security (Stonebanks, 2019; Zaal, 2012). Ultimately, teaching against Islamophobia seeks to glorify diversity and co-existence within society by challenging misconceptions about Muslims and Islam. It is a form of inclusive, critical pedagogy that amplifies Muslim voices and creates safe spaces for students to express their perspectives and experiences, which clarifies my goal of implementing this project with my students.

In this article, I reflect on my experiences and detail my efforts to combat Islamophobia at a high school in Quebec. I focus on the lessons learned from this project, the challenges I encountered, and the impact observed on students following its implementation. It is noteworthy to mention that this is not a reflection of my students' practices but rather an introspective account of my journey as an anti-racist educator. I also explored the new insights I encountered from my students, which broadened my understanding of issues related to racism and Islamophobia.

Through this reflection, I aim to contribute to the existing literature on how educators can confront challenges associated with Islamophobia in their classrooms by sharing my perspective as an in-service teacher. This project has two key dimensions: a conceptual aspect centered on challenging racism and a technical aspect related to teaching ESL instruction. In this reflection, I focus on the issues related to my practice as an anti-racist educator rather than my role as an ESL teacher. To provide a clearer understanding of the theoretical foundation of this project, I outline the theoretical framework in the next section.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

During the 2022 International Symposium on Autoethnography and Narrative, I attended a session titled *Personal Narrative and Anti-Racist Pedagogy: Performing Embodied Self in Community*, facilitated by Jon Radwan and Kelly Shea from Seton Hall University, along with Angela Kariotis from Brookdale Community College. This session enabled me to connect doctoral-level inquiry on pedagogical approaches with my own efforts to challenge Islamophobia in Quebec high schools. My doctoral research is informed by my personal experience of Islamophobia in my newly adopted home, Canada, beginning with the terrorist attacks against racialized Muslims in Canada and continuing through the Islamophobic discourse I encountered thereon. As a result, I decided to integrate it into my class and do it with my students. Specifically, I draw on Kariotis' concept of "using story and anchoring story for empathy as a diversity, equity, inclusion and justice practice" (Radwan et al., 2022, p. 160). This approach involves sharing personal experiences and reframing them through first-person narratives, which fosters compassion and a deeper understanding among learners.

Radwan et al. (2022) outline the theoretical foundations of the personal narrative approach through three interconnected components: Freire's (1988) Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1973; Marchenkova, 2005) and Ibram Kendi's (2019) concept of neutrality. These frameworks significantly influence my pedagogical approach through this educational project. The frameworks supported my efforts to guide, rather than control, classroom discussions to create a dialogical

learning environment where all students can freely express their opinions, engage in debates and consider multiple perspectives. Together, these theories enabled me to cultivate an inclusive class by encouraging critical dialogue and collective meaning-making. Students were invited to examine key components of Islamophobia and develop their understanding of the issue through reflective, student-led discussions.

I drew on Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2018) while designing this project, which emphasizes education as a tool for liberation. Freire encourages the empowerment of the voiceless and supports their efforts in sharing their stories as a means to initiate a dialogical and problem-posing approach with the oppressor. This process of dialogue promotes liberation not only for the oppressed but also for the oppressors by fostering awareness of their oppressive behaviours. It creates a dialogical educational model that invites all students to engage in discussion, consider different perspectives and develop both micro and macro levels of critical thinking about a situation (Cui & Teo, 2021; Fischman, 2009; Freire, 2009; Freire et al., 2018). Freire's dialogical approach encourages students to actively listen to their peers' stories, build arguments and deepen their understanding through informed reflection. In doing so, this approach enhances students' social interaction skills while promoting critical engagement with complex social issues through creating a supportive space for students to share their lived experiences. In a similar context, Holquist (2003) explains that Bakhtin's concept of dialogism discusses the importance of dialogue among individuals and advocates for moving from single-voiced to multi-voiced exchanges. Most importantly, both Freire's and Bakhtin's approaches promote inclusive, effective and multi-perspective dialogue, serving as valuable tools to foster empathy and mutual coexistence. These frameworks also incorporate students' voices into the classroom, allowing marginalized students to express their opinions and perspectives. The combination of Freire's and Bakhtin's methodologies helped me construct a pedagogical framework for an educational model based on storytelling, dialogue and active commitment to anti-racism, which supports the methods I employed with my students.

Freire emphasizes that it is not easy for the oppressed to share their stories. To address this challenge, I adapted the approach introduced by Kariotis by inviting my students to read a story about the experiences of a Muslim girl attending high school in New York. Rather than asking students to immediately share personal experiences, which has the potential to make them feel uncomfortable, I encouraged them to express their opinions on the story and engage in critical discussions about its themes. My objective in using this story is to raise awareness about the harmful effects of Islamophobia and to help students learn about the experiences of peers their age who may face challenges similar to the story's protagonist. This approach encourages students to explore the experiences of the 'Others' (Said, 1994) and the strategies individuals use to navigate adversity. Specifically, it aims to promote students' resilience, self-esteem and empathy, in addition to learning different ways to confront discrimination. Furthermore, this method seeks to evoke sympathy by encouraging students to imagine themselves in similar situations and to draw parallels between the story and their own lives. Through this process, students begin to understand how they can challenge various forms of discrimination they may encounter. The classroom discussion revealed insights I had not previously considered as a reader of the text, providing me with an opportunity to learn from my students.

Kendi's (2019) concept of neutrality asserts that true neutrality is impossible when addressing racism and that anti-racist work requires active engagement. This point connects to the positionality of an educator within an educational project. In this project, I aimed to facilitate classroom discussions rather than actively participate in them. However, due to my name and background, it quickly became apparent that I was Muslim. As a result, some students questioned why we were focusing on Islamophobia rather than other forms of racism. Their comments reflected an assumption that the project was motivated solely by my religious identity, raising questions about my subjectivity and objectivity while leading this work. Some students asked why the project did not include other forms of religiously based racism. I addressed this point throughout the project by reflecting on various forms of racism, while maintaining a focus on Islamophobia. I also drew on the socio-constructivist approach (Ormrod, 2016), which emphasizes that learning is socially constructed through interactions among students. Both the Quebec Education Plan and the socio-constructivist approach better contextualize my role as a facilitator during project discussions.

## Methodology

In this paper, I utilize autoethnography to reflect on my practices as an anti-racist educator. Autoethnography is a unique qualitative method that combines elements from various qualitative research approaches, including narrative inquiry, personal memoir and ethnography (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). This methodology enables researchers to share and contextualize personal experiences while linking them to cultural and societal dimensions (Zempi & Awan, 2017). Furthermore, it offers a flexible and creative way to contextualize personal experiences within their cultural framework to address social issues. Like Pinner (2018), who employed autoethnography to gain a deeper understanding of his teaching practices, I adopt an autoethnographic qualitative research method to reflect on my experiences teaching against Islamophobia, a growing concern in Western countries (Abbas, 2019; Bernasconi, 2016; Beydoun, 2018). Through this reflection, I describe my experience implementing this project with my students, identifying what was effective and considering areas for improvement in future iterations of research.

Data in autoethnographic research can be gathered from various sources, such as “self-observation ..., self-reflection ..., personal memory ..., and external data like photographs, letters, diaries, reports, and other documents or artifacts” (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022, p. 199). I began writing this paper immediately after completing the project with the students, which helped me recall every moment of our classroom discussions. In addition to a few notes in my agenda, I primarily relied on my personal memories to reflect on my experiences as an educator (Chang, 2021). I sought to understand the “sociocultural meaning(s) of my personal experience” (p. 54) in the context of teaching against Islamophobia through self-reflection. In analyzing my personal memories, I focused mainly on the project context and critically examined both my successes and failures in its implementation. Since I did not collect data from the students’ work, ethics approval was not necessary. This paper represents my voice solely as a researcher and teacher, highlighting specific points from my journey teaching against Islamophobia. The following section details my reflections on these discussions and the overall project.

### **The Anti-Islamophobia Curriculum Project**

The project was implemented in April 2024 following the October 7th war on Gaza, which was accompanied by a surge in Islamophobic rhetoric across the Global North (GN), as reflected in 2024 media coverage from the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Cities in the GN, including Montreal, witnessed weekly demonstrations in support of Gaza. University students organized encampments at their institutions in the GN to protest institutional investments in Israeli companies. Despite this broader sociopolitical context, discussions about the war on Gaza were often avoided in the classroom. Side conversations among students occasionally revealed strong support for one side, rather than focusing on ending the war or working to achieve peace in the region. Additionally, the school administration advised against discussing the war on Gaza, instead recommended peace education as a priority during that time.

I designed the project to meet the four International Baccalaureate (IB) criteria for the ESL class: listening, reading, speaking and writing. The listening task involved a TEDx Talk video that introduced the concept of Islamophobia to the class. The video focused on the aftermath of 9/11 for Muslims in the United States, describing their lived experiences in the days following the attack, as well as the support they received from other communities in showing solidarity against the hostility they faced.

The reading component of this project was a chapter from Mustapha Bayoumi’s book titled *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America*. The book explores the experiences of Arabs and Muslims in North America before and after 9/11. The selected chapter focuses on Yasmin, a hijabi student navigating high school life in New York. It highlights her struggle to balance her religious identity with her responsibilities as the secretary of her school’s student council. After being elected secretary, Yasmin chose not to attend a school-organized dance party due to her religious beliefs. Although she was offered the option to remain in a separate room during the event, she declined, as the core issue remained unaddressed. Furthermore, some students of different religions were excused from mandatory meetings that were rescheduled to accommodate their needs. When she declined to attend the dance, the coordinator of student affairs asked her to resign from her position. Yasmin chose to uphold her religious identity and stepped down from her position on the student council. A long journey followed to assert her right to accommodation as a Muslim. Through her persistence and seeking support from various sources, she ultimately succeeded. She ran for student council again and was elected as the president of the student council.

The speaking task consists of questions designed to encourage students to propose solutions to various scenarios representing different forms of racism. This task aimed to connect Islamophobia to other forms of discrimination, prompting students to explore broader issues such as sexism and ageism.

The writing task was based on the reading section. The students were given two options: to express their opinions about the text and evaluate Yasmin's actions in challenging the status quo, or to retell the story from the first-person perspective. In both options, students were required to suggest alternative actions Yasmin could have taken and provide a different ending they believed would have been more effective or appropriate than the original response.

Throughout the four sections of this project, I employed a socio-constructivist (Ormrod, 2016) approach, which enabled students to complete the assigned tasks and deepen their knowledge through discussion and collaboration. This approach was particularly evident during the speaking task, when the students shared and debated their perspectives with one another. In addition, I drew on critical theory by encouraging students to engage the text thoughtfully and to either support or challenge the protagonist's actions. The ESL class was diverse. Students came from a range of backgrounds, including Quebecois, Arab, Middle Eastern, francophone, anglophone, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian. This diversity enriched the learning experience, as students brought multiple viewpoints to class discussions, contributing to more nuanced and meaningful engagement with the text.

Although this project was implemented in an ESL class, it can be easily adapted for use in any language classroom. It may also be an interdisciplinary project with a creative inquiry approach (Ward, 2025) spanning multiple subjects. Such an approach can encourage students to express their reflections and emotions through creative media. Creative inquiry can effectively raise students' critical consciousness, prompting them to examine different forms of discrimination experienced by others. However, it is crucial for educators to consider their students' diverse cultural backgrounds and intentionally incorporate these into the classroom experience. Doing so can foster more inclusive learning environments where all students feel acknowledged and represented throughout the project.

### **Reflection and Discussion on the Project Experience**

The collection of tasks in this project enhanced students' understanding of racism as a concept. The listening task initiated a discussion about Islamophobia, helping students learn about its historical presence in North America and how it intensified after 9/11 (Jamil, 2022; Nagra, 2017; Zine, 2022). Furthermore, it highlighted the importance of empathy and solidarity in addressing social injustices. Although some students mentioned that they had explored Islamophobia in previous classes, their understanding appeared limited and at times, confused. I recognized that students often view Islamophobia as primarily affecting Muslims, overlooking its impact on those perceived or racialized as Muslim. I aimed to clarify this misconception during the reading task by asking thought-provoking questions, which broadened their understanding of Islamophobia.

The goal of the reading was not only to discuss and examine the lived experiences of a hijabi high school student in the United States, but also to provide students with a model of resilience they could draw upon when facing challenges in their own lives. The discussion included analyzing writing style and text structure, highlighting novel vocabulary and developing an understanding of the text. I dedicated three 75-minute classes to reading and analyzing the text, dividing it into two sections to facilitate small group discussions. The final class was devoted to a whole-class discussion of the whole story. This structure allowed me to implement a multi-voiced dialogical approach consistent with Bakhtin's concept of dialogue, as described earlier in this paper. Through this method, students were able to share their perspectives, debate them, and respond to one another's input in the discussion. The group discussions were thorough and reflected the classroom's diversity. I observed a deeper understanding of the story among the students, along with a variety of interpretations. Their discussions led to a broader understanding of racism and Islamophobia, revealing novel and diverse perspectives on the text. Some students supported Yasmin's viewpoint, some extended it further and some entirely opposed her attitude.

I approached the speaking task through Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed lens to create space and empower voiceless students to express their opinions and discuss others' points of view. Students' understanding evolved significantly during the speaking assignment. They constructed knowledge socially through peer-interaction, which helped them cultivate awareness, critically examine scenarios and propose solutions rooted in social justice and equity, which are central themes throughout the project. In responding to the scenarios, students demonstrated personal awareness of social issues and a strengthened sense of citizenship. It became evident that this activity increased their sense of agency (Vaughn, 2020) and encouraged those who had previously remained silent to express their viewpoints. Many students enjoyed the activity and confidently shared their lived experiences of injustice. They proposed solutions inspired by Yasmin's story. This speaking task broadened their understanding of Islamophobia and its adverse effects on Muslims in North America. Furthermore, it helped them examine the similar outcomes of different forms of racism, which may impact anyone in our society. It also prompted them to reflect on their positionality and sense of neutrality while examining different forms of racism, particularly those that may be relevant to their own identities and experiences.

The writing task served as the final assessment for this project. I observed that the students were divided between retelling the text from a first-person perspective and evaluating Yasmin's attitude as she pursued her rights during her journey. Overall, the students demonstrated a strong understanding of the topic and provided a critical analysis of the story in their writings. However, many students struggled with first-person retelling. Class discussions revealed that students were hesitant to position themselves as the protagonist in the narrative. Despite demonstrating a clear grasp of the storyline, some expressed discomfort or reluctance in imagining themselves in the role of the hero. This hesitancy may reflect a broader pattern among youth, who, despite their insight, can sometimes disengage when faced with emotionally or cognitively demanding tasks. In addition, some students reported feeling bored or frustrated with Yasmin's repeated attempts to assert her rights. While most expressed sympathy for her, reactions varied, some students fully supported her persistence, while others questioned whether the issue warranted such prolonged effort.

As an educator, I learned a great deal from the students' understanding of the story and enjoyed the richness of classroom discussions. They offered unexpected perspectives that prompted diverse interpretations of the narrative. I was surprised to hear my students suggest that combating Islamophobia involves not only changing policies but also empowering those who experience it to share their stories and assert their rights. Furthermore, the students asserted that half-measures should not be accepted; change must encompass social justice for everyone. Additionally, I did not anticipate the students arguing that they are internally motivated to challenge the status quo and combat Islamophobia, which I found surprising.

Teaching against Islamophobia presents significant challenges. Some students initially misunderstood the project, believing it focused on Islam rather than Islamophobia. Although we spent time during this project searching for new vocabulary, analyzing writing styles and reviewing grammar, only a few students openly shared their thoughts on discussing Islamophobia in class. Some viewed it as a topic more appropriate for religious education and questioned the connection between second language instruction and the concept of Islamophobia. This concern was addressed by framing the topic as a way to enhance language learning through the analysis of stories that engage with real-world issues. As students examined new vocabulary and writing styles, they also developed critical thinking skills, deepening their language skills and social awareness. Furthermore, discussions about Islam as a religion were not included in the class dialogue. Instead, the issue was revisited during the speaking task, where we connected Islamophobia to other forms of racism. During this activity, students were asked to propose solutions to various scenarios involving members of marginalized groups who may face similar challenges due to their out-group identities. This connection helped the students understand that discrimination against any one group is ultimately discrimination against all. It also introduced the concept of solidarity, encouraging students to consider how they might support less privileged students in their communities.

Incorporating Islamophobia into an ESL class was manageable. However, it required perseverance and effective planning. Educators should consider students' cultural backgrounds and examine how these intersect with various forms of racism their students may experience. This approach will help students draw parallels to other forms of racism and examine parallel ways to challenge different forms of racism. Furthermore, it will be helpful for educators to explicitly explain the link between the subject they teach, the

topic they want to incorporate into their curricula and the form of racism they want to challenge, as this was one of the main concerns of my students. Although I stated the goals I am working on in relation to ESL skills, a few students resisted discussing Islamophobia, as mentioned before. However, the IB foreign language assessment helped me differentiate the classroom environment and introduced a variety of activities to the classroom. Also, linking Islamophobia to other forms of racism was the best solution to address the students' concerns.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I reflect on my practices as an anti-racism pedagogue while teaching against Islamophobia. I detail the theoretical foundations of my approach, which are based on the philosophical ideas of Freire, Bakhtin and Kendi. The project followed the International Baccalaureate foreign language curriculum, incorporating listening, reading, speaking and writing. The reading component was central to the project, as it facilitated meaningful classroom discussions. It focused on the experiences of a hijabi student in a U.S. high school, providing a lens through which students could critically engage with the topic. I explored both the development I observed in my students' understanding of this topic and the insights I gained from their reflections. Students have made noticeable progress while discussing this topic. They managed to examine the problem from various perspectives and propose alternative solutions.

In this project, students have demonstrated increased awareness of discussing racism and Islamophobia through their active engagement, rich contributions to class discussions, insightful questions, and thoughtful responses during the four parts of the project. I observed an improvement in students' critical thinking across the various project components. They were brave enough to lead discussions, express their point of view and suggest new ways to challenge racism in and out of schools. Additionally, I gained a deeper understanding of the topic by listening to their discussions and various perspectives. During the reading discussion, students moved beyond simplistic interpretations of the protagonist. Instead, they proposed more holistic perspectives aimed at fostering inclusivity in society. Notably, this process reinforced the importance of creating a safe space for students to feel empowered to voice their perspectives within classroom discussions. Indeed, this project successfully achieved this goal. Within this process, teachers can maintain a sense of neutrality by guiding rather than dominating the discussion, thereby supporting students in taking the lead. Additionally, the speaking component of the project has helped students understand the intersectionality between Islamophobia and other forms of racism. The writing has fostered empathy with those who experienced Islamophobia, especially the students who chose to retell the story using an autobiographical lens. However, this project faced its share of challenges.

Educators engaging with anti-racist curricula should be prepared for a range of student responses, including moments of resistance or misunderstanding. Some challenges arose, such as misinterpreting the reading about Muslims' lived experiences to be teaching about Islam. However, there was no discussion of Islam as a religious doctrine at any point, as I believe that teaching against Islamophobia does not require teaching about Islam itself. This confusion was addressed by connecting Islamophobia to broader forms of discrimination. To avoid this confusion, I would begin by exploring a range of experiences with racism, informed by the diverse positionalities of students in the classroom, before approaching the topic of Islamophobia. Some students questioned my subjectivity in this project, as it was evident to them that I am Muslim. For example, I would choose another story from the same book next time which tells the story of a non-Muslim Arab student in the United States who was racialized as a Muslim and faced challenges in his post-secondary education after 9/11.

Based on my experience in this project, I believe that teaching against Islamophobia does not require theological knowledge of Islam. However, introducing this topic thoughtfully in the classroom requires determination and courage, allowing students to guide discussions and ensure everyone's voice is heard. Moreover, engaging in these conversations requires bravery, as it involves listening to the students' rich discussions, learning from them and engaging in discussions of their arguments. Furthermore, educators should be prepared for unexpected challenges from the students or guardians as well. Therefore, support and encouragement from the administrators are essential to include such topics in our classes. Administrators can support educators by offering professional development opportunities to learn effective techniques to

introduce these topics into classrooms. Additionally, they can encourage such a project by supporting anti-racism initiatives with the required materials they need.

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