

Dr Siham Elkassem

Care as Resistance: A Response Framework for Practitioners Advancing Muslim Youth Wellbeing

This presentation advances a justice-oriented approach to care for Muslim youth living under conditions of racial, colonial, and spiritual harm in the Canadian context. It argues that care cannot be disentangled from justice, and that therapeutic, educational, and community-based interventions must confront the systemic realities, including anti-Muslim, anti-Palestinian, and anti-Black racism, that produce racial stress and trauma. Healing, in this context, is not a neutral or apolitical process, but a moral and political act of witnessing, resistance, and repair.

Grounded in findings from two studies, a 2021 dissertation and a 2024 national project conducted amid the genocide in Gaza, this presentation explores how Muslim youth navigate overlapping forms of oppression while enacting spiritual and collective resilience. Their responses are shaped by Islamic ethical commitments to *rahma* (mercy), *ʿadl* (justice), *amanah* (trust), and *ihsān* (excellence), forming a living theology of care and resistance.

The presentation introduces the Justice-Oriented Response Framework for Racial Stress and Trauma, challenging practitioners to:

1. Identify how systemic racism, coloniality, and whiteness shape presenting problems in clinical and community contexts.
2. Centre lived experience and faith-based epistemologies, particularly Islamic ethical worldviews, in therapeutic and educational practice.
3. Integrate Critical Race Theory, anti-colonial thought, and Islamic ethics of care and justice across community based and clinical approaches

This framework reinterprets community based and conventional clinical approaches through a lens that is both spiritually grounded and structurally aware, repositioning Muslim youth not as passive recipients of care but as active theorists and practitioners of justice-oriented healing.

Participants, including scholars, therapists, chaplains, educators, and community workers, will be invited to reimagine care as an ethical obligation and collective practice of solidarity. To care, in contexts marked by systemic violence, is to stand alongside youth in the pursuit of justice, embodying *ʿadl* and *ihsān* as foundational to both healing and liberation.



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Dr Siham Elkassem is an Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work, University of Windsor. Her research examines the psychosocial consequences of anti-Muslim racism at the intersections of anti-Black, anti-Brown, anti-Palestinian racism and other systems of oppression. Drawing on critical ethnography, phenomenology, and community-based methods, her work centres the lived experiences of Muslim youth to explore how systemic harm is experienced, internalized and resisted. With over a decade in direct clinical practice and two decades in community advocacy, Siham bridges theory and praxis to inform care that is spiritually grounded, culturally responsive, and justice-oriented. Her scholarship foregrounds Islamic ethical principles—such as *rahma* (mercy), *ʿadl* (justice), and *ihsān* (excellence)—to challenge dominant paradigms of mental health and trauma. Through research, teaching, and mentorship, she is committed to reimagining care as a collective, political, and spiritual response to systemic violence.