
THE PURSUIT OF ANTI-BLACKNESS OUTSIDE OF BLACK MUSLIM SPACES

BY SULTANA PARVIN



Much of the conversation around fighting racial injustice within Muslim communities is mirrored by events outside of it in wider society. There has been much that has recently been written regarding anti-Blackness within non-Black spaces. Specifically that which pertains to other racially minoritised communities. The events that have followed the creation of Black Lives Matter has allowed the South Asian, Asian and Arab diaspora communities, living in the UK, to open up about the impact that anti-Blackness continues to have within those communities.

There is the slow but steady admission that anti-Blackness within such communities exists and is largely unchallenged. This mirrors the Muslim communities. They too are having to come to the painful conclusion that faith, morality, God centredness has not managed to diminish the searing impact that anti Blackness holds in Muslim communities and homes.

With this in mind, it becomes ever more clear that the work to overcome this is not the job or burden of Black people nor Black Muslims. It is in fact the responsibility of non-Black Muslims to open up this conversation in the most brutally honest way. It is with this in mind that many of my friends and I sought to open up spaces to discuss this very topic. Organising conversations around this was met with discomfort and a need to control the conversation and not upset any group of people that might feel they were being targeted. This became one of the obstacles that challenged the organising of such conversations within mosques. There was no appetite where the main congregation were South Asian. It seemed to mirror the fragility that is sometimes faced when white people are confronted with racism; denial and sometimes anger.

What must be clear is that it is exactly this challenge, which proved the need to ask non- Black Muslims why they felt so uneasy in discussing this very topic. What is it that has caused us as people who have also suffered racism or anti-Muslim hatred, to be blind to a pervasive mentality which has its roots in colonialism? While the backlash to such conversations may be

real, the outcome is also tangible. We may finally have a space within UK Muslim institutions and organisations where they can no longer ignore anti-Blackness.

My own efforts began with small steps, but the continual focus on anti-Blackness has allowed conversations to open up about how all racism and anti-Muslim hatred is a branch of anti-Blackness. How the very real poison of colourism which impacts much of diaspora communities both Black and brown, is also a branch of anti-Blackness.

One thing is emerging from the conversations around this; the growing appetite to discuss this especially from amongst many Black and brown women. This may be because historically, they have suffered much of the scourge of colourism more acutely than men have. Colonial beauty standards may be one contributory factor to this amongst others. The other emergence is the fight back and glory that is young Black and brown Muslims who are no longer accepting the status quo set by generations before and are willing to change the way these discussions are being had.

We only fail ourselves and our children and their children, if we choose not to continue a discussion and actively practise resisting and practically fighting anti-Blackness when and wherever we witness it. We fail because the momentum for this has already begun and we will be left in the shadows. But more profoundly we fail our faith and our own resistance if we cannot call out anti-Blackness from amongst our own. White supremacy should not be given a free ride within Muslim spaces. This is why I will continue to tackle anti-Blackness in South Asian spaces. I will continue to ask the questions around why Black Muslims are ‘othered’ by such communities who claim to share the same God and faith, and how can we practically be as loud and vocal in being South Asians for Black lives. Our lives also do not matter unless Black lives also matter.



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CRIMINAL JUSTICE