

Looking ahead and anticipating debates and questions unique to Black Muslim women in Britain, Khadija Kuku, an entrepreneur, presents her attempt to create that space online through podcasting and social media. “I basically just wanted to create a space where I felt like we would be able to voice our opinions and talk about situations and experiences that aren’t often spoken about.” Her effort is the creation of discursive space and an opportunity for the development of community for women. Khadija explains that it is an effort of Black Muslim women to “mark our territory and let them know that we are here to stay.”

Two community organisers, Railu Ladidi Tihamiyu and Mujida Mebude representing Federation of Muslim Women in UK, respond to questions and challenges of the development of community institutions. Railu spoke about serious challenges for families, women, and youth in Britain and the challenge of involving the active participation and collaboration of women and men.

In her presentation, Mujida Mebude, the Secretary General of the Federation of Muslim Women in UK (FOMWA UK) noted the importance of the mosque in helping the family to develop within the Black Muslim community. She shared her experience working with women across the Nigerian Muslim community as well as her experience raising her children as a young mother and the impact the Old Kent Road Mosque played as a support system within the community. “The mosque supported me in nurturing my children through the madrassa and the different engagement activities.”

Conference speakers introduced critical themes that each author in this report responds to from the perspective of their unique experience. The essays presented in this report present a nuanced picture of the contributions Black British Muslims are making to society, the barriers they face, and the ways they are overcoming them. Each essay serves as an important account and analysis into a specific area by professionals and community leaders who speak to these issues with depth of expertise and knowledge.

Established categories shape how we understand aspects of our society but they also limit our understanding. This collection of essays serves to create new linkages and categories, providing new ideas and valuable insight. The perspectives of those who have conducted research and provided accounts shed new light on entrenched issues and barriers we face in Britain.



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SECTION 3

PERSPECTIVES - THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK MUSLIMS IN THE UK

This report on the African and Black Caribbean Muslim experience in the UK has been long overdue given their historical presence in the UK. Many will agree that research and insight about the lived experience of African and Black Caribbean people, particularly Muslims, in the UK is not easy to come by. The importance of this collaborative effort, 'Race, Faith, and Community: Essays on African and Black Caribbean Muslims in Britain,' cannot be overemphasised, considering the recent spotlight on the community and on longstanding racial inequalities. The events of 2020 made them more urgent.

First, Covid 19's impact put a spotlight on inequality experienced by Black and ethnic minority groups. African and Black Caribbean communities were disproportionately affected, with no small part played by socio-economic and political factors. Second, the #BlackLivesMatter movement was an impetus to work for justice and equality. The agitation of the Black Lives Matter campaigns across the world, articulated with a silent agitation that has always been there within our everyday lives but ignored and marginalised.

The experiences of African and Black Caribbean Muslims require appropriate contextualisation. Some would argue that to put this together in a report might be a difficult task given the vast nature of what would be necessary to cover. Therefore, the decision about the structure, content, approach to engaging contributors, was by no means an easy one to make given the scale, importance and potential consequences of the endeavour. Readers will find within this section of the report contributions from different stakeholders, community leaders and workers within the Black African and African Caribbean Muslim communities in the UK. The contributors have personal and professional experiences which cut across different sectors; the brief to contributors highlighted the need for fact based, retrospective and introspective analysis of this segment of our diverse and multicultural society in the UK.

Whilst every attempt has been made to make sure that a wide spectrum of issues are covered within the report, it is important to note that the issues and sectors covered in this report are by no means exhaustive. The possibilities of areas that could be covered to provide an understanding of the Black African and Black Caribbean Muslim communities is extensive, however, we believe this is a step in the right direction. The contributions give an overview of what it feels like to be a minority within a minority. Some of the contributions take an analytical approach, some are reflections on the experience of the contributors as stakeholders within the community, either as a community leader, workers and/or campaigner. Many of the contributions present data and information available to contributors based on their engagement with their communities as authors were encouraged to provide empirical data and researched information to support their contributions. However, some of the authors chose to present personal experiences that are equally powerful.

It is our hope that putting this together will provide a better insight into the lived experience of the African and Black Caribbean Muslims, thereby helping the process of achieving better community engagement, service provision and development which seeks to eradicate problems of discrimination, disproportional poverty, social and racial injustices.



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Rashidat Adeyinka Hassan is an Assistant Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain since 2018. She led the formation of the Proudly Muslim And Black Initiative of the MCB.

Rashidat is a community and youth worker involved in a number of community engagement projects as an independent service provider and/or volunteer in local organisations, mosques and charity organisations. She is the Managing Director of Deen4Reel Communications CIC, a community organisation with the vision of supporting Black and Ethnic Minority Groups to achieve their aspirations and develop proportionately within the wider UK society.

Rashidat holds a B.Sc and M.Sc in Mass Communication and has interest in media representation and inclusion. She is a broadcast professional with over 2 decades of experience in both Nigeria and the UK. She is passionate about using the media for social goods and interested in working with women and young people. Rashidat works with people to harness opportunities around them using both their latent and manifest talents. She has created, helped to develop and facilitate several programmes and projects aimed at engaging the youths, women and the generality of people towards self-actualisation and community development.