

Platitudes over protection

We need to understand that hate crimes
don't just hurt the hated

Editor's notebook

By Andy Trussler

WHEN YOU GOOGLE “Muslim” and “Edmonton,” you get Islamophobic assaults.

In the fall, a Muslim woman was [threatened](#) on the LRT, and her complaint “laughed at” by the Edmonton Police Service. [Another woman](#), 27, was thrown to the ground by someone who threatened to strip off her burka.

Mayor Don Iveson [denounced](#) the attacks, but political platitudes do not change the reality for hundreds of Edmonton Muslims – that they are desperately unsafe.

Prejudice is hardly new in Edmonton. Janis Irwin, an openly gay NDP MLA, had “[ANTIFA LIAR](#)” spray-painted on her political office Feb. 27. In December 2020, two Somali Muslims were [attacked in their car](#) by a 41-year-old man. In January 2019, an Asian woman left the grocery store to [find a note on her car](#), that read, “Go back to your country, f*****g Asian.”

If you are a member of a visible minority in Edmonton, you live with the fear that you may be next.

*‘When racist violence is part of local culture,
do Muslim women only have each other and themselves?’*

In the rest of Canada, people “joke” that Alberta is the “[Texas of Canada](#).” Texas, and its neighbouring states, are stereotyped for their overwhelming racism, homophobia, and otherwise baffling bigotry. As a lesbian and resident Albertan, I find it hard to laugh.

(Considering that six Muslim worshippers were killed, and five wounded in the [2017 Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City shooting](#), it is a safe bet that members of Canada’s Muslim population don’t find it funny, either.)

Politicians, public figures and Edmonton Police do nothing to prevent this violence. Rather, they wait until the violence occurs, then share meaningless sentiments of equality and peace.

Prejudice is alive and thriving in Edmonton.

The Somali woman's complaints were brushed off, and she was discouraged from reporting the attack and was eventually dismissed. Not only does she feel threatened by members of the public, but she has good reason to feel unsafe with law enforcement.

This trauma becomes twofold.

How does a visible minority live one's life in such a place? With new hate crimes seeming to be in the Alberta news every few weeks, Edmonton Muslims must take their protection upon themselves. Noor Al-Henedy, public relations director of Al Rashid Mosque, is offering [25-person self-defence courses](#) for Muslim women. Without protection from law enforcement, and rarely drawing bystanders' aid, these women are completely vulnerable. And this is unacceptable.

Canadians benefit from – and are weakened by – unearned superiority. We say that, at least we're “not as bad as Americans,” and consider it good enough. So, we don't even have to try very hard to do better.

This complacency puts human lives in jeopardy and brutalizes people. People of colour exist in a constant state of fear. Unseen by many in the majority, Canada has become a battlefield for thousands.

What does one do when your only safety is your wit and ability to retaliate? When racist violence is part of local culture, do Muslim women only have each other and themselves?

The last thing we want to believe is that racist violence is just part of being Albertan.

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