



As members of the Interrupting Islamophobia ItAG we gathered together because we wanted to fill in the gaps of misunderstanding surrounding the rich and multifaceted experiences of Islam. In order to facilitate authentic conversation and healing that works to balance out the larger culture narrative regarding Islam, we as educators, need to do the deeper work and fact-finding ourselves. Much like our students, we saw created the Islam 101 facts and information sheet to educate our community; the Response Sheet was created with the intention to redirect commonly heard Islamophobic comments into teachable moments regarding Islam.

**Signed:** Terna Tilley-Gyado; Wazina Zondon; Debbie Almontaser; Laura Marie Thompson; Maryum Khwaja; Nora Aboali; Mark Pacheco; Sheila Azimi; Nina Mauceri; Carol Kinney

**Interrupting Islamophobia**  
Islam 101: Common Terms & Definitions

Islam: means surrender to Allah; estimated 1.5 billion Muslims in the world and approximately 6 million in US; and estimates of approximately 1 million in NYC.

The 5 Pillars of Islam: Shahadah (the Declaration), Salat (prayer), Zakat (charity), Saum (Fasting) and Hajj (pilgrimage)

**Pillar 1, Shahadah:** the declaration; it is the phrase which a person says when they decide they want to surrender themselves to Allah and become Muslim. The Shahadah consists of 2 parts:

“Ashahadu an la illaha illa Allah waashaddu anna Muhammadar Rasul Allah”  
I declare there is no god but Allah. And I declare that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah

**Pillar 2, Salat:** prayer is the most special act of ‘Ibadah (service to Allah). Salat is mainly verses of the Quran and many sayings of the Prophet which call Muslims to this important act

Salat is performed 5 times a day:

**Fajr – Pre-dawn**  
**Zhur – Afternoon**  
**Asr – Late Afternoon**  
**Maghrib – Dusk**  
**Isha – Night**

There are 7 requirements to met for Salat:

- |                           |                      |                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Cleanliness of Body    | 4. Covering the Body | 7. The Intention |
| 2. Cleanliness of Clothes | 5. Correct Timing    |                  |
| 3. Cleanliness of Place   | 6. Facing Qiblah     |                  |

The Adhan or Azaan – the practice of Muslim community to announce that the time for Salat has come.

The Mua'adhan will face the direct of Mecca, put his hands over his ears to shut out distractions and chant loudly and clearing the coming of prayer.

Location for prayer must be facing the Qiblah – the spiritual center which is not based on a person's birthplace or grave or temple for force. Ka'ba is a stone building.

Clothing: must be modest and clean; **Men** must be covered from navel to the knees; a turban or hat is recommended

**Women**: ankles to neck and down to both wrists are to be covered; a hijab or head covered also should be worn. The Prophet (PBUH) once warned that Allah will not accept prayer of a woman with her head uncovered. It is an important symbolic gesture on the part of the woman to show that she recognizes that although people may judge her by her looks and beauty, Allah only consider her heart and actions.

Taharah is the state of ritual cleaning; a Muslim must be aware of what constitutes pollution. If any of the following has occurred then steps must be taken to become ritually clean again:

#### **Minor Impurity**

Passing urine; defecation of any kind; emission of pus or blood; vomiting; pass gas; sleeping; and losing consciousness

#### **Major Impurity**

Menstrual flow (no Salat until it's ended); Emission of fluids from genitals; intercourse; after birth bleeding

Wudu: ablution

1. **Make niyyah** or the intention to perform wudu.
2. **Recite** the following: "Bismillah-Hir-Rahmanir-Raheem" In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, most Merciful".
3. **Wash your hands**. Use your left hand to wash your right hand (3 times). After that, using your right hand, wash your left hand (3 times).
4. **Rinse your mouth**. Involves whole mouth & upper part of throat as well. Do this thoroughly to get all the remaining food in your mouth out (3 times).
5. **Inhale water into your nose**. After which you will blow the water out (3 times).
6. **Wash your face completely**. While washing the Face the eyes should be kept open so that water reaches in all parts of faces. The whole face encompasses your right ear to the left, and from the edge of the hair to the chin (3 times).
7. **Wash your lower arms**, from wrists to elbows; eave no part dry'. Wash your right arm with your left hand (3 times) and then wash your left arm with your right hand (3 times)
8. **Wipe your head**, using your wet hands, just gently wipe your head from front to back and back to front (once).
9. **Wipe your ears** inside and out (once).
10. **Wash each of your feet** - up to the ankles and between the toes (3 times).
11. **Recite** "Ash-hadu allaa ilaaha illallaahu wahdahuu laa shariikalah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan 'abduhuu wa rasuuluh" I bear witness that there is no God but Allah alone, without any partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is his servant and messenger." This should be recited while pointing right index finger towards sky.

Ghusl: a shower; used to remedy a major pollution.

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|---------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Follow Step #1 & 3           | 3. Step #2 from Wudu | 5. Pour water on head 3X   |
| 2. Wash genitals with left hand | 4. Steps #4 – 8      | 6. Step #10 & 11 from Wudu |

Each Salat consists of a required number of Rakats. A rakat can be thought of as a "round" of prayer. The word denotes "bowing". The bowed down position in prayer is called ruku. You are said to have offered 2 RAKATS of prayer when your prayers have two rukus or bowing down in them (see attachment).

Masjid: or mosque is the Muslim place of worship.

**Pillar 3, Zakat**: charity; as part of the true meaning of Islam, zakat is about surrendering to Allah, therefore when we are made to let go of some of our worldly possessions, we are forcing ourselves to let go of some of the material things we love.

**Pillar 4, Saum**: fasting during the month of Ramadan (9<sup>th</sup> month of the Islamic Lunar calendar). Fasting runs from dusk to dawn. The month of Ramadan offers numerous lessons including:

- what it means to be hungry and learning compassion for the poor;
- we understand how temporary our lives are in this world and how much we depend on food;
- learn to control our animal urges and passion;
- we clear our minds and thoughts for serious remembrance of Allah;
- we train our habits towards prayer forgiveness, self-sacrifice and good behavior.

Expectations:

Prior to first light of sun, a small meal is had and the intention to fast is set

During the day individuals abstain from food, drink, inhaled substances, sexual activity, nutritionally related meds or oral meds

Sin are frowned upon; no fighting, arguing, lying

Mistakes may happen and the fast is not broken

Iftar- the breaking of the fast occurs when the sun has set completely past the horizon; the fast is often broken with a date, milk or water.

For each of the 30 nights of Ramadan, a different portion of the Quran is read until all 30 divisions have been recited.

The odd number nights on the last 10 days of the Ramadan are high holy nights – as it said that the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), received the Quranic revelation.

The end of Ramadan is when the crescent moon has been sighted on average 29 – 30 days later. Following the sighting, Muslims celebrate **Eid ul Fitr** – Festive of Fast Breaking.

**Pillar 5, Hajj**: the pilgrimate occurs during the Dhul Hijjah moth of the Islamic Lunar calendar. It the journey every sane adult Muslim must undertake at least once in their lives if they can afford it and are physically able to.

At the end of the Hajj, Muslims all over the world celebrate the holiday **Eid ul Adha** – the Festival of the Sacrifice. Muslims commemorate together the ultimate act of obedience – when the Prophet Ibrahim was commanded to sacrifice his only son Ismail. Ibrahim proved he would give up his only one – the only thing he loved for Allah's sake and so Allah gave him a ram to sacrifice instead.

In addition to the 5 Pillars, there are **3 duties** a Muslim can do:

1. Da'wah: Calling others to Islam
2. Jihad: striving in Allah's case (by pen, sword);
3. Encouraging virtue while forbidding evil

### Other Terms

Hadith: saying of the prophet Muhammed (PBUH). The Hadith are the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important written record of Islam after the Quran; they are saying heard directly from the Prophet

Imam: prayer leader

Shariah: literally means endless supply of water; Shariah is also a term used to describe the rules of the lifestyle ordered for Muslims by Allah; when you follow the Islamic way of living life, you are following the Shariah whose knowledge is endless.

Haram: any action forbidden by Allah in the Quran or by the Prophet; any action which goes against the spirit of Islam.

Halal: any action which is approved by the Quran or by the express or silent approval of the Prophet (PBUH)

Ijtihad: independent reasoning; intellectual endeavor to seek the solutions of day to day matters using Quran and based on the teachings of the Sunnah.

Sunnah: means habit or usual practice refers to the sayings and living habits of the prophet Muhammed (PBUH). Recording Sunnah was an Arabian tradition, and once people converted to Islam, they brought the tradition to the religion. The Sunnah of Muhammad includes his specific words, habits, practices, and silent approvals. It is significant to the spirituality of Islam because it addresses ways of life dealing with friends, family, and government.

Fatwa: an official proclamation; a decision made and approved by responsible scholars. It is not considered binding for all time, however for later scholars may understand an issue better as more facts come to light. In that case, a new fatwa should be issued.

Kaffir: a person who rejects the message of Shahadah; according to Islam, we are not to call non-believers Kafir (or Kuffar, plural) unless they are clearly enemies to Islam.

Taqwa: awareness of Allah; the more taqwa we develop, the stronger and more unyielding we become to practice of Islam

PBUH: Peace Be Upon Him; a phrase that Muslims often say after saying (or hearing) the name of a prophet of Islam.

SAW: *Sall Allāhu `alay-hi wa-sallam*; May Allah honour him and grant him peace

Amin: Let it be so

Allahamdulliah: All praise is due to Allah

Inshallah: God willing

Asalaamalaikum: Peace be unto you; often responded to with wa'alikum asalaam, which means “and peace be with you.”

**Jihad literally means striving or struggling; working for something with determination**

Allah has said in the Quran that He does not love those who create trouble in the earth.

The Arabic word for War is **Harb**, and fighting is **Qital**.

Jihad is any action which is done to further the cause of Allah.

**Physical Jihad may only be initiated for 3 reasons:**

- to defend the Muslim community against aggression
- to eliminate an evil force which oppresses people
- to remove any barrier to the free flow of Islamic da'wah (calling other to the word of Allah/Islam)

The Prophet (PBUH) was said to have said something interesting about Jihad to a companion after battle: *you have left the lesser jihad, now you are coming to the greater jihad. The struggle against yourself.*

- Your own soul and the temptation which affects it

Those who die in jihad are said to automatically go to paradise. A Shahid is a martyr.

**Interrupting Islamophobia**  
Response Sheet

Islamophobic Comments	Response	Response
<p><b>1. Can a Muslim be a good American?</b></p>	<p>Of course a Muslim can be a good American. Just as a Jew, Christian, or Hindu. Muslims hold many of the same fundamental beliefs as these religions. In fact, Muslims have been in America since slavery, and were in New York in the late 1800s!</p>	<p>Of course! America's foundation is based on freedom of religion and so this extends to all people, including Muslims.</p>
<p><b>2. Islam isn't a religion its brainwashing doctrine</b></p>	<p>All religions suggest certain beliefs that a follower can choose to or choose not to follow. Just like in other religions, there are many different types of Muslims with a wide variety of beliefs. Islam is practiced by sunnis, shias, sufis, and other groups in many different ways in many different countries. No one is forced into believing anything against his or her will.</p>	<p>Islam is a religion that informs the everyday choices of some but many different Muslims choose to practice their faith differently.</p>
<p><b>3. Why do Muslims treat their women so poorly? or Islam is an oppressive religion for women</b></p>	<p>Islam is a religion that holds women in high regard. Different people and cultures interpret the Quran differently. Islam encourages equity in all areas of life, marriage/social and economic matters.</p>	<p>Islam calls for equality of the sexes and actually offered liberties to women in society that they didn't have (in pre-Islamic civilizations). The choice to dress modestly or wear a hijab is a woman's choice and its actually meant as a way to liberate women from harassment and being objectified.</p>
<p><b>4. How many wives can a Muslim man have?</b></p>	<p>While Mohamed had more than one wife, the Qu'ran says that a Muslim can have more than one wife if he can care for each equally. Many Muslims interpret this to mean that it is almost impossible to do this,</p>	

	and therefore, have only one wife. While some Muslims, depending on the country, do have more than one wife, it is not common.	
<b>5. All Muslim men are misogynists</b>	Did you know that when the Qu'ran was revealed to Mohamed, many of the suras contained instructions about how to improve the lives of women? There is nothing about Islam that instructs men to be any more misogynistic than men in any another religion.	Many cultures based in patriarchy treat their women in sexist ways. It's not the religion but the interpretation of the scriptures.
<b>6. (student shares in class about a current events topic) Its a violent religion that encourages suicide bombers and jihadists</b>	Is Christianity a violent religion because of how it was used during the colonization of the Americas? Religion is often used for political purposes. Religion can motivate the masses (boy soldiers in Iran), it can legitimize a regime (Zayl Huk in Pakistan), or it can abet genocide (Columbus). Islam does not condone violence or suicide.	Unfortunately, the depictions of Muslims on TV, movies and media are based on stereotypes and generalizations. Much like we cannot and do not believe the stereotypes on TV about black people, gays and lesbians, teenagers or women, we cannot believe everything we read about one group of people.
	Islam does not allow violence against people and humanity. Jihad for many people means very many different things and the definition unfortunately has been misunderstood. Jihad literally means striving or struggling; working for something with determination.	

<p><b>7. All Muslims hate America - or - If they hate American culture so much why are they here?</b></p>	<p>Why do you say all Muslims hate American culture? A Muslim friend once told me there is no better place to be a Muslim than in America. Remember, what you read in the newspaper or see on the evening news does not represent all Muslims!</p>	<p>There is no one way to express or "be" American - that is the beauty of America! Lots of people, from lots of different backgrounds may be critical of what happens in the US, our policies or laws, but Muslims are not any more critical than any other community. I know lots of people from different backgrounds who are critical of some of the policies in our country but that is because they think discrimination of any kind is bad. Muslims have been part of our American culture for over 100 years and contributed to our laws and country in a variety of ways.</p>
<p><b>8. Why is my son/daughter spending so much time on Islam in their English (or Social Studies?) class</b></p>	<p>A large part of my class is dedicated to giving students the opportunity to learn about cultures, religions, people, and experiences that might be new or foreign to them. Through understanding a religion or a culture different than their own, hopefully our students will become more insightful of their own experience. When they can understand another experience, they will better understand themselves. When they are equipped to better understand themselves and their own experiences, hopefully they will be more empathetic and understanding to the many new types of people they will meet in the future.</p>	<p>We aren't spending any extra time on any one religion or culture in our class. I do think it is important and my job to expose my students to different writers, authors and resources that offer than a wide spectrum of experience and information. There are important and noteworthy Muslim (as well Christian, Jewish, and non-religious) writers, politicians and individuals we need our students to know about in order to be competitive and well-equipped for college and beyond.</p>



<p><b>9. Why does she get to wear a hat (scarf) in school when the rest of us can't?</b></p>	<p>She is choosing to wear her headscarf as an expression of her religion. What would you say if we said you couldn't wear your necklace because it had a cross on it or if we forced you to come to school on Christmas morning? We must respect others' religions just like we want our own respected.</p>	<p>For many people their faith is an integral part of their identity and sense of self. Much like for Jews or Christians, their faith informs their culture and they might wear a kippa (or yarmulke) or a cross, some Muslim women wear a hijab or head scarf. A hijab is not the same as a hat.</p>
<p><b>10. There aren't any Muslim role models for students - I mean, you can't even teach it Humanities!</b></p>	<p>There are important and noteworthy Muslim (as well Christian, Jewish, and non-religious) writers, politicians and individuals we need our students to know about in order to be competitive and well-equipped for college and beyond.</p>	
<p><b>11. (you overhear a student ask another (Muslim) student: Did you know Osama Bin Laden/Saddam Hussein?</b></p>	<p>That is actually a very hurtful and disrespectful question to ask. Islam is a religion of millions of people.</p>	
<p><b>12. Does Islam condone terrorism?</b></p>	<p>Islam is actually a religion of peace. Unfortunately, there are extremists and violent people from many different faiths and backgrounds and what happened on 9/11 and what we see/read about on the news (in Palestine, etc) are a minority who people mistake for the majority.</p>	
<p><b>13. Do you need to have a beard/kurta/hijab/... to be a Muslim?</b></p>	<p>No! To be a Muslim, you must believe in Allah and that Mohamed is his messenger. You must pray five times a day, give charity, fast during ramadan, and make a pilgrimage to Mecca in your lifetime. However, I know many people that consider themselves Muslim and don't always say their prayers and have no immediate plans to go to Mecca. The dress code is more of a personal choice than</p>	

	something that is prescribed in the religion.	
<b>14. (a colleague says this to you) They're not that sort of Muslim - you know, the fundamentalist type</b>	What does a fundamentalist Muslim look like?	There are "fundamentalists" and radicals in all religions and faiths. I think you're stereotyping them.
<b>15. (over hear a staff person say this) Why do they need to stick out and alienate themselves so much from society?</b>	Expressing your religious identity isn't sticking out at all. That is a fundamental part of being an American.	Expressing one's faith, sharing about it or simply having a faith that is different from yours or the majority is not alienating oneself. Muslim Americans are part of the fabric and have been of American society for years - whether they have been 'visible' to us or not.
<b>16. (you over hear students say this) That looks like shit smeared on your hands!</b>	That is disrespectful and uncalled for.	That is so terribly rude and disrespectful to make fun of someone's culture. That is henna (mehndi) on her hands.
<b>17. Muslims don't celebrate Christmas because they don't believe in Jesus</b>	Actually, Muslims have a great respect for Jesus. In fact, he is mentioned quite a few times in the Qu'ran and is seen as a great prophet, just like Noah, Adam, and Abraham. There is even a sura, or chapter, dedicated to his mother, Mary, in the Qu'ran. Christians believe, however, that Jesus is the son of God, and therefore, celebrate his birth on Christmas.	
<b>18. Muslims and Jews hate each other!</b>	Let's not confuse politics and religion! Despite the tensions in the Middle East, there is nothing in either religion that says Jews and Muslims shouldn't get along. In the Qu'ran, it explicitly states that Jews and Christians are "People of the Book", and are to be respected for their religious beliefs.	What you might not know is that Jews and Muslims (as well as Christians) have a lot in common and actually share many of the same beliefs.
<b>19. (student asks you, a Muslim teacher) Do they kill you for stealing in Muslim countries? (or other Aladdin type questions)</b>	Different cultures and countries have or have had laws that we might not agree on or think are unusual. The punishment you're referencing is from a	

	<p>kid's movie that used stereotypes and made generalizations that are untrue or very old-fashioned.</p>	
<p><b>20. (you over hear two colleagues say about another student) I just don't get it - why does he/she talk openly about his/her religion when it has no place in our classrooms?! (referencing a beard/kufi or hijab or other identifier)</b></p>	<p>Religion does belong in our classrooms! Saying the 'Our Father' over the loudspeaker or forcing children to believe in a creed that isn't their own, however, does not belong! Religion is a huge part of our lives and identities. We need to discuss these topics in a safe environment where our students feel comfortable expressing who they are. I think all of us benefit from hearing a perspective a little different than our own. Do we say that we can't talk about food because there is no eating allowed in class?</p>	
<p><b>21. (a student or colleague says to you, a Muslim educator/staff person) Did your parents pick your spouse for you?</b></p>	<p>If my parents did pick my spouse for me, I would say, "Yes, they did. But that is not because of my religion." If my parents did not pick my spouse for me, I would say, "No they didn't. Did your parents pick your spouse?"</p>	<p>Arranged marriages are common for different religions. For Muslims, not all families select their children's partners for them.</p>
	<p>Some Muslims choose to have an arranged marriage, some have love marriages.</p>	