

Exercise #1 – Islamophobia

Here are two definitions of Islamophobia:

An exaggerated fear, hatred, and hostility toward Islam and Muslims that is perpetuated by negative stereotypes resulting in bias, discrimination, and the marginalization and exclusion of Muslims from social, political, and civic life. (*Ali, Wajahat, Duss, Matthew, Fang, Lee, Keyes, Scott, and Shakir, Faiz, 2011, Fear, Inc.: The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America, Center for American Progress.*)

Islamophobia refers to unfounded fear of and hostility towards Islam. Such fear and hostility leads to discrimination against Muslims, exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political or social process, stereotyping, the presumption of guilt by association, and finally hate crimes...Islamophobia has resulted in the general and unquestioned acceptance of the following:

- Islam is monolithic and cannot adapt to new realities.
- Islam does not share common values with other major faiths.
- Islam as a religion is inferior to the West. It is archaic, barbaric and irrational.
- Islam is a religion of violence and supports terrorism.
- Islam is a violent political ideology.

(*Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), <http://www.cair.com/issues/islamophobia/islamophobia.aspx>.)*

How are these definitions similar? How are they different? Do you think it's true that there is "general and unquestioned acceptance" of the five statements in the second definition?

Have you observed or experienced any of the manifestations of Islamophobia described in these definitions? Can you give examples of negative stereotyping of Muslims or of fear or hostility to the Muslim faith in television shows, movies or news reports that you have seen?