

Montgomery County Anti-Hate Task Force

Muslim Cohort

MEMBERS

ADILEH SHARIEFF
AMBEREEN KHAN
DR. ILHAN CAGRI
FIRDAUS KADIR
IMAM FAIZUL KHAN

Recommendations

The background features a dark blue gradient on the left, transitioning into a complex, glowing blue structure on the right. This structure consists of numerous thin, parallel lines that curve and spiral inward, creating a sense of depth and movement, similar to a tunnel or a data stream visualization. The lines are more densely packed and brighter in the center of the curve, fading towards the edges.

Addendum to Recommendations:

The situation for Muslims in Montgomery County has changed since Oct. 7th.

Our recommendations have been amended to reflect our new reality.

Our Community is Facing a Crisis

The conflict in Israel has affected the mood in the US.

The American Muslim and Arab American community in Montgomery County is seeing a serious uptick in anti-hate incidents.

We are facing an avalanche of harassment in the workplace and in the schools, verbal assaults and intimidation in public places, bullying, doxing, and even violent attacks.

Reporting is Problematic

- Reporting is stymied because many of the incidents do not rise to the level of a violent crime.
- Victims face skepticism or their experiences are devalued -- even when they are violent or when threats of violence are documented (See the video of Nov 5 Rockville rally).
- Community organizations like CAIR and the ADC have seen reports of hate and bias incidents skyrocket, whereas our county police show almost no record of anti-Muslim incidents.

Recommendation #1

We ask for the **creation of an Office of an Ombudsman** staffed and resourced to serve as the central location for reporting so that county officials can be informed about the extent of the problems we are facing.

The Office of the Ombudsman should hold hearings and produce a public report on the state of Hate in Montgomery County which will serve as an auditing mechanism to improve the functions, hold leaders to account, and demonstrate accountability to the residents to restore confidence that the county cares about their safety and security.

Recommendation #2

We ask for a **county wide summit** that will affirm the importance of protecting non-violent political speech and educate private sector employers, school leaders, civic organizations and NGOs on the ways in which protected speech is currently being quashed, in violation of their constitutionally protected first amendment rights.

Recommendation #2 -continued

This summit should address three areas:

- 1) Identify the types and extent of harassment and discrimination Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim are facing, including the experiences of students in schools.

Recommendation #2 -continued

This summit should address three areas:

- 2) Formulating a public statement and policy that is unequivocal in rejecting Islamophobia and anti-Muslim/anti-Arab bigotry.

Recommendation #2 -continued

This summit should address three areas:

- 3) Clarify and affirm the first amendment rights and guarantees of protected political speech for all and expression and Title 6 protections against national origin discrimination

Urgent Action Needed

All branches and departments of Montgomery County must take immediate steps to counter the mood of hatred against sympathizers of Palestine. More importantly, all actions that stem from this hatred must receive unequivocal consequences.

If the county fails to take clear and immediate steps, we fear that the incidences will become more severe and more violent.

Old Recommendations for County Council Community Engagement:

- **Diverse Representation:** Seek to partner with the diversity of Muslim organizations and leaders on issues of shared civic importance (confronting food insecurity, housing crisis, access to health care, supporting newcomers, building economic opportunities for small businesses, celebrating culture and more.). Avoid using the same gatekeepers from the same institutions.
- **Expanding the Structural Bias and Inequity Definitions:** Incorporate Islamophobia and anti-Muslim bigotry and the racialized Muslim as illustrations of how the intersectional experiences of Muslims in Montgomery County when developing programs to confront anti-immigrant sentiment, anti-Black racism and structural inequities. Familiarize your networks with manifestations (and historic roots) of Islamophobia.
- **Training Civic Leaders:** As Montgomery County equips volunteer leaders to facilitate and manage programs, standing and ad hoc task forces, include a mandatory training on cultural competency that includes anti-Muslim bigotry and demographics on the diversity of the Muslim communities in the county.
- **Communication Strategies:** Ensure that materials and volunteer engagement opportunities coming from the County Executive and County Council are translated and disseminated to a robust and representative network of the faith-based and faith-aligned civic and religious organizations that serve the diverse Muslim community.

Old Recommendations for the County Government & Agencies:

- **Reporting:** Create a **central place** where people can report HATE crimes: School, Workplace, Community. Educate the community on using that central place to report hate crimes – suggest a PSA campaign that includes staffing with community resources for intake
- **Training:** Include anti-Islamophobia and anti-Muslim bigotry awareness in training modules for inclusion and diversity training, workplace policies that guide engaging the public, and hiring practices.
- **Training:** Incorporate cultural competency & religious literacy training for civic, business & non-profit leaders in institutions receiving Montgomery County funds and serving on task forces -- standing and ad hoc.
- **Community Engagement:** County Council and County Executive should do consistent and regular listening sessions around the county with Muslims and provide follow-up communications related to actions and issues raised.
- **Celebrate History and Diversity:** Designate and recognize Muslim American Heritage Month that acknowledges the First Muslims in Maryland and subsequent contributions across sectors since the founding of the colony.
- **Equity and Access:** Audit of the community grants to ensure access is reaching the diverse segments of the Montgomery County Muslim community
- **Communication:** Faith Community Advisory Group should be given funds for staff to facilitate multifaith communication/engagement with county departments

Old Recommendations for MCPS:

- **Reporting:** Create a robust reporting mechanism for students and parents to report bullying and a campaign to raise awareness
- **Training:** Include mandatory anti-Islamophobia content in professional development modules and training for staff and team leaders in every school
- **Inclusive Instruction:** Teach about the contributions of diverse communities, especially those of the children in your classroom. Integrate age-appropriate religious literacy education into the English Language Arts and Social Studies curriculum.
- **Anti-Discrimination Resources:** Educate parents on the school system's definition of bullying in the school, offer examples of anti-Muslim bigotry, and ensure these examples are integrated into upstander/bystander trainings that have been adopted.
- **Subject Matter Bias:** Confront biased teaching when reviewing historic and current events that rely on reductive anti-Muslim narratives and tropes of the "good Muslim v bad Muslim" and the national security framing of Muslims as either victims or terror threats. Incorporate guidance on how to recognize and avoid reinforcing stereotypes and misinformation by reviewing classroom activities and exercises. Topical examples: Reviewing 9/11, Israel Palestinian Conflict, Medieval Crusades, Doctrine of Discovery.
- **Ensuring Dignity in Religious Accommodation:** Review US Department of Education's Faith-based Office for Best Practices on creating safe spaces for Muslim students and staff to exercise faithful practice throughout the year.

Same issues... except amplified

- How pervasive is Islamophobia and prejudice against Arabs
- Hate crimes, hate incidents, micro-aggressions have sky-rocketed
- People not reporting incidents because it is not easy or consistent
- County resources are neither clear nor effective
- No indication that County is taking steps to address problem of hatred of Muslims and pro-Palestinians, including Jews
- MCPS is failing in protecting its students, teachers & staff. No policy nor messaging on current rise in bullying and harassment.