

LANA SIRRI

# SHIA BAB Z!

*A Graphic  
Journey through  
Islamic Feminism*

PCA

ILLUSTRATED BY  
IREM KURT

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# Shababz!

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Illustrated by Irem Kurt

Amsterdam University Press

## **Shababz!**

A Graphic Journey through Islamic Feminism

Written and Created by Lana Sirri

Illustrations and Layout: Irem Kurt

Cover design: Studio Veen

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**Dear young reader,**

*Be curious!* You're an amazing human being. I know, hearing it again from an "older" person might feel repetitive, but I mean it! Sometimes things seem really tough, unfair, and just plain harsh. There might be moments when anger and frustration seem like the only feelings around. And sometimes it feels like the world isn't quite ready to understand you. But guess what? You hold incredible power within you. The power to turn these experiences into valuable knowledge. The power to image a world that celebrates every part of who you are. The power to make a difference. My hope is that this book helps you to accept, understand and celebrate yourself, your communities and your faith. But remember, I only offer insights here. Ultimately, it's your journey to take. So, go ahead and ask those big questions. Search for answers, and don't be afraid to question those answers too. Be critical, especially when faced with authority figures or ideas that might seem fixed. And always remember, you're not alone. You just need to find those who are taking the same journey, and those who will cheer and support you along the way.

**Dear fellow PoC reader,**

*Be inspirational!* You've faced countless challenges in life, confronting diverse forms of discrimination and exclusion, and perhaps still do. Navigating your own path, you've bridged the gap between the wider society and your predecessors who sought better opportunities elsewhere for our generation. Out of this hardship, your creativity arose, enabling you to build communities. You're the steadfast shoulders upon which the younger generation stands. You've laid down the foundation, allowing them to move

ahead and grow. Your legacy, rooted in the timeless wisdom passed down by your ancestors, embodies strength and endurance. However, just as you once dismissed the struggles and contributions of those before you, thinking '*we know best*,' undoubtedly, you'll encounter similar sentiments from the younger ones. Remember, your pursuit of knowledge and growth is ongoing. You learn from both your elders and your youngsters. Even if their perspectives sometimes puzzle you, they possess invaluable insights. Be compassionate. Deep down, they value your guidance. I offer this book merely as a supplement to your own experiences and knowledge, a tool to aid you in guiding them through life's twists, offering support and understanding as they navigate their journey.

**Dear *white*\* wreader,**

*Be active!* You play a big role here. The journey that these youth are about to take is often paved by you. It's within your power and reach to illuminate their way with streetlights or, under the guise of going green, plant trees that might inadvertently overshadow or replace these guiding lights. With this book, I hope you will explore Islamic feminisms and critical theory, but more importantly gain insights into the life-experiences of young Muslims in Western societies. However, your journey doesn't end with awareness; it begins there. If you are a teacher, educator, social worker, or trainer, use your position to uplift marginalized communities and create inclusive spaces. Use your privileges not to speak on their behalf, but to amplify their voices. Listen to their experiences so you can reflect on your own biases and behaviors and then actively work to change discriminatory attitudes. This is a journey we cannot and should not undertake without you, as each of us is an indispensable thread woven into the fabric of our society.

**Dear younger me,**

*Be resilient!* Now you know what you wish you knew back then. What a ride it's been, teaching you so much about life and why people around you acted the way they did. You learned that sometimes things aren't as they seem



\* The categorization of PoC and white is not intended to exclude others through identity politics, but rather to highlight the process by which groups of people come to be socially constructed, and thus experience certain privileges or disadvantages.

to be. People often say, "It's complicated," but honestly, it's not. Someone once said "framing things as complex is just a way to deter from the ugly, very simple truths"— you realized these simple truths. You learned how to channel your emotions, the comfortable, easy ones and the more difficult, challenging ones. Through this understanding, you grew, flourished, and were able to give back to your community. Along the way, you met awesome people and found supportive allies. You immersed yourself in exciting conversations about important topics that shaped your world, such as Islam, race, gender, and sexuality. Yet, most significantly, you uncovered Islamic feminism, igniting a fire within you and leaving you constantly thirsty for more. You realized it's okay to talk about things others might avoid, break "taboos," and by doing so, enrich yourself and those around you. It's been a journey to get where you are now, and it's been totally worth it.

Lana Sirri  
March 2024





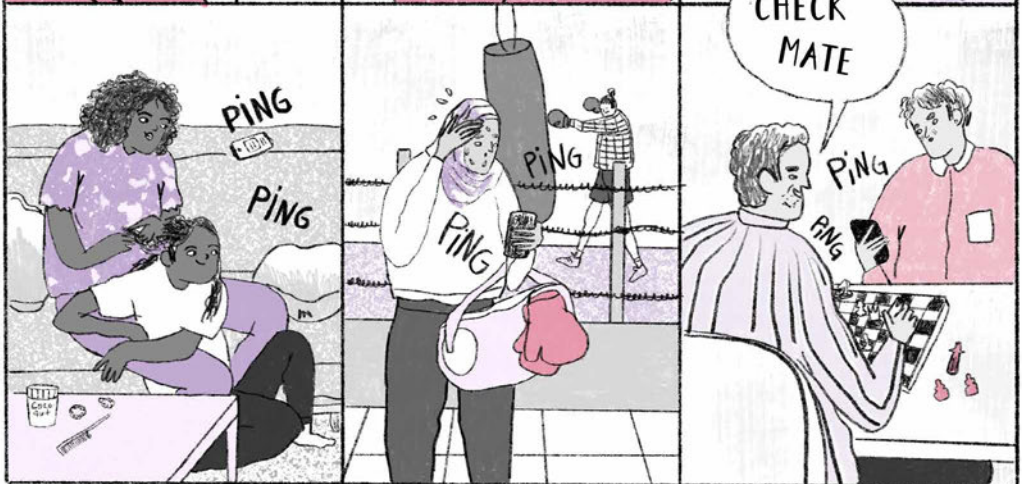


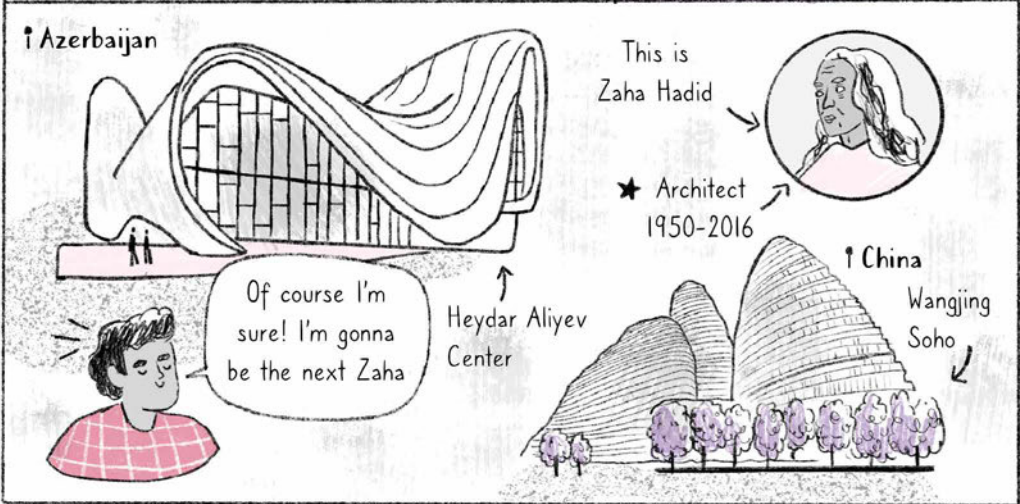
Chapter One  
The Gang

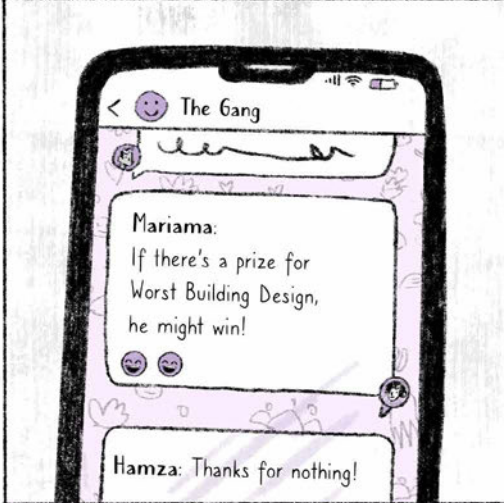




PONDER

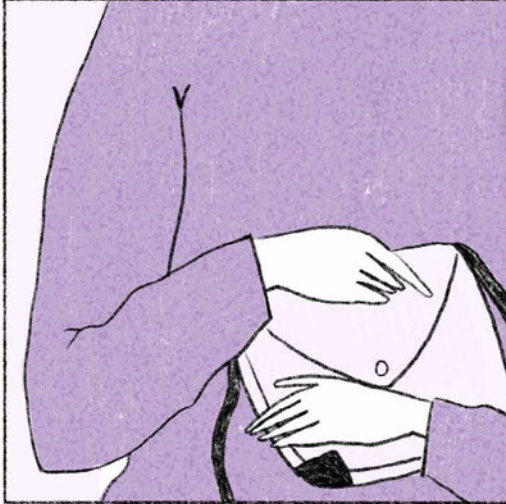








Hamza









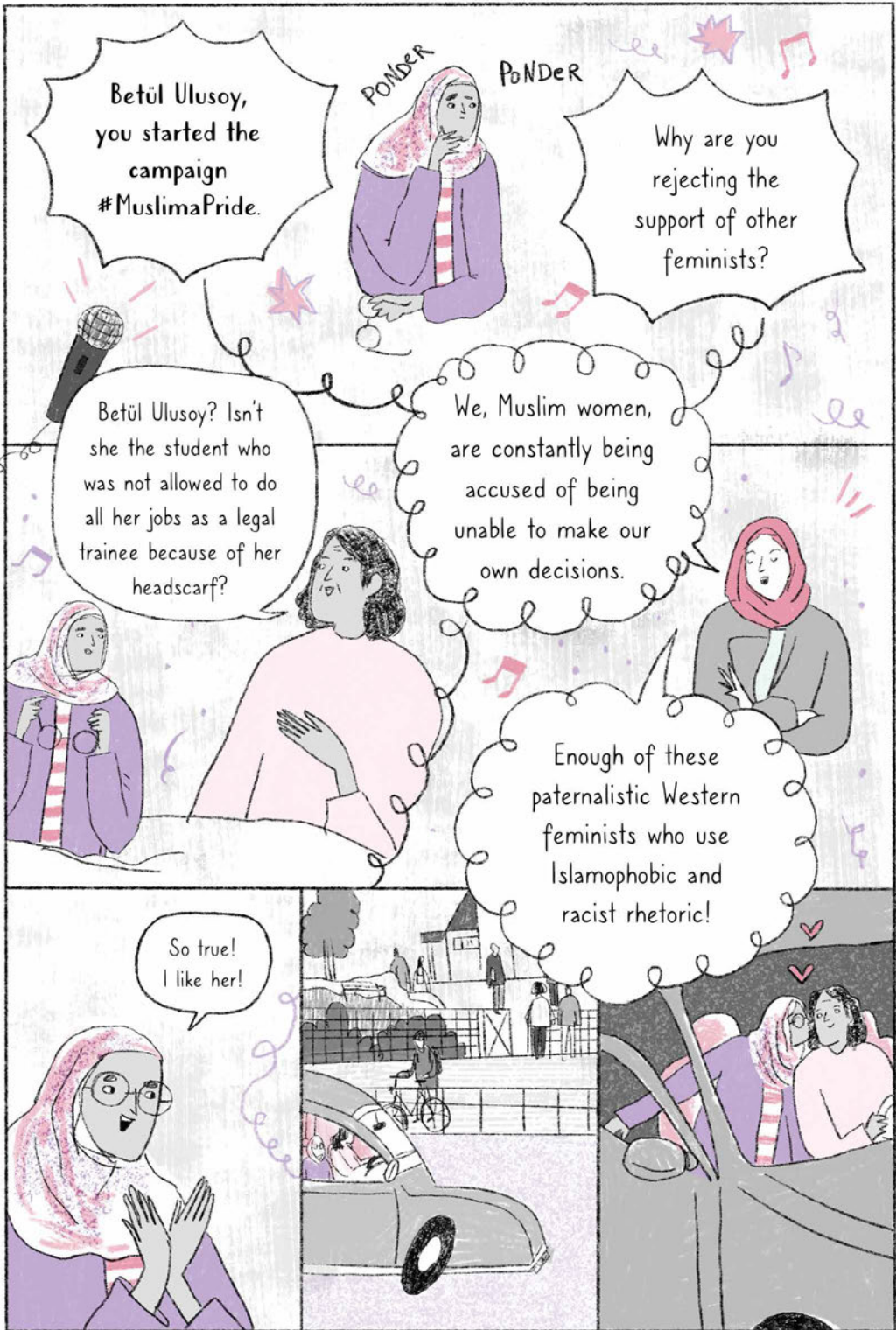
Zahra

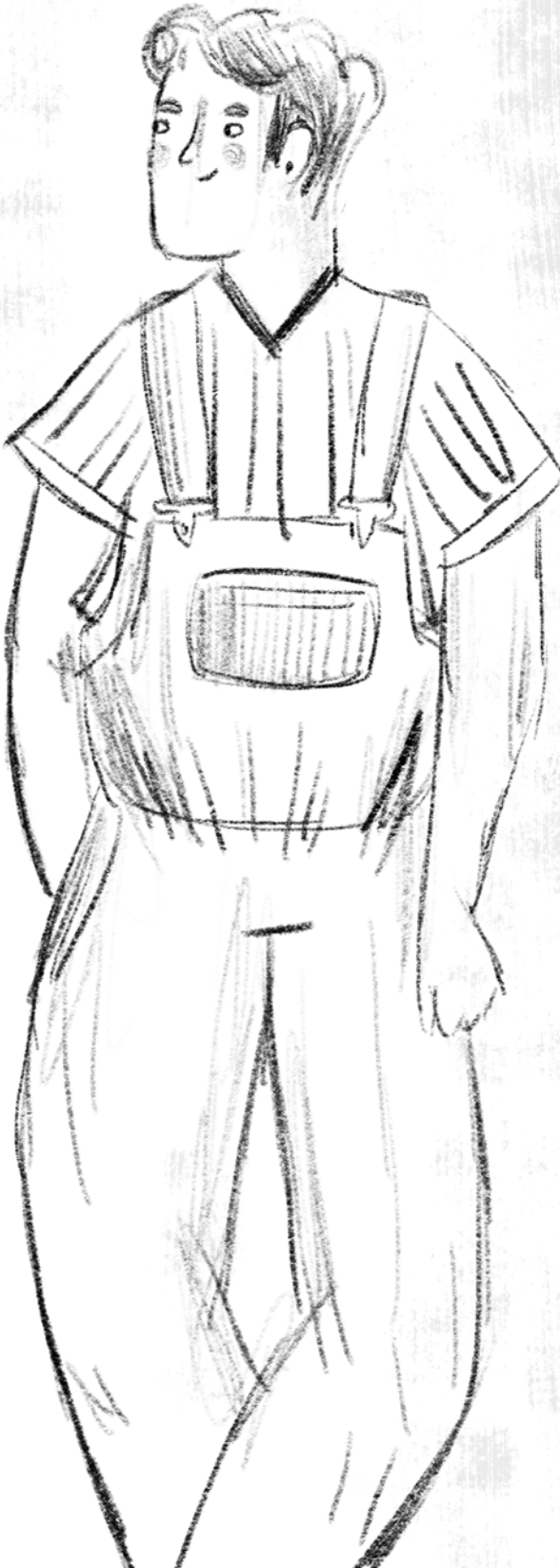




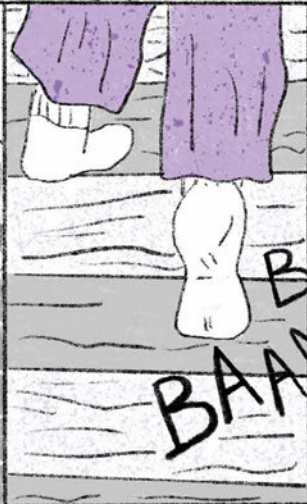
\* FEMEN is a Ukrainian feminist group known for its topless protests.

\*\* Khalas: can be translated to mean "enough", or "done".

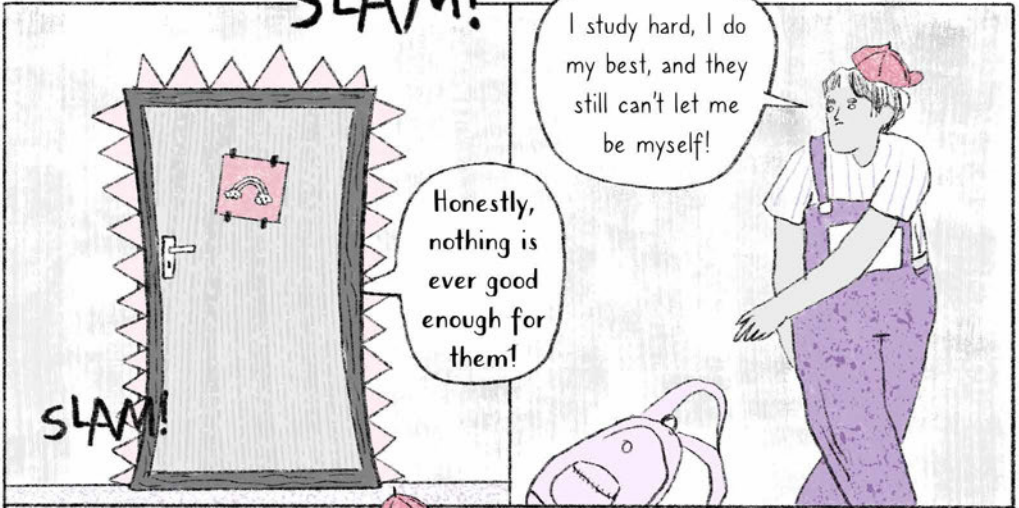




Amari



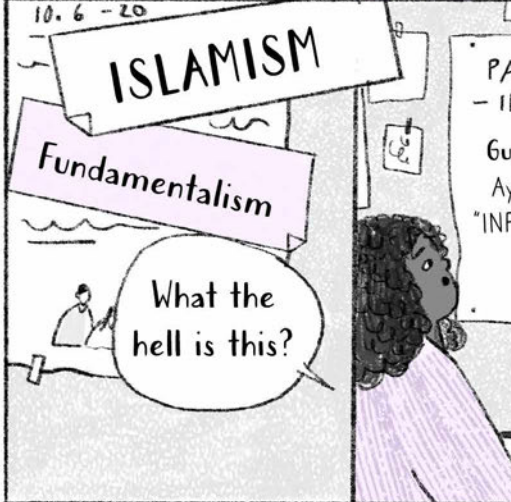
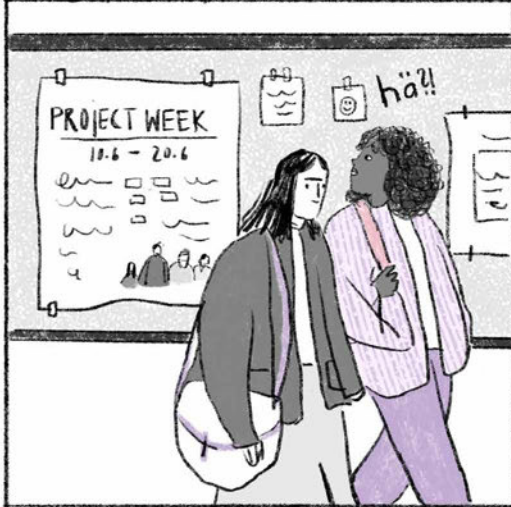
SLAM!







Mariama









I can't help but wonder if everyone else is right and we're the ones who are wrong.

That's BS! They don't even know us.

Just ignore them all, the way I ignored those people on the train.

VFF



There must be something else out there for us.

Can't wait for school graduation.

Finally getting out of here!

And finding out what the world has in store for us!

# Colonialism, Postcolonialism and Decoloniality

I know! Three big words! But don't let them intimidate you. These words hold the key to understanding the epic economic, socio-political whirlwind we're living in, especially if you're one of the awesome underdogs in the Western hustle.

Once upon a time, there was **Colonialism** — a chapter in history when powerful nations went around the world, taking control of other lands and peoples. It was a time of great injustice and exploitation, with many peoples suffering under the weight of racist colonial rule. One of the most impactful consequences of colonialism was the enduring political and economic domination by powerful Western nation-states, which has had profound effects on the lives of colonized communities. The legacy of colonialism includes deep-rooted power imbalances, social divisions, and economic inequalities that persist, even after formal independence. Understanding the political economic effects of colonialism is crucial for addressing these historical injustices and working towards more equitable and inclusive societies.

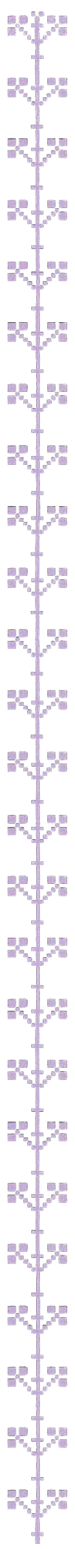
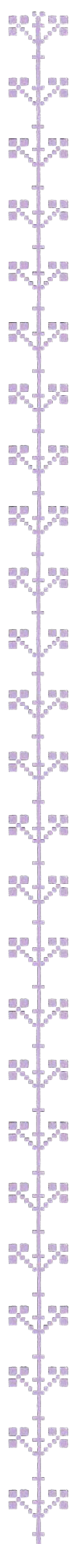
**Postcolonialism** describes the peculiar social, economic, and political condition of formerly colonized societies. Post-colonial studies emerged as an engaged and critical theoretical framework, to analyze and contribute to fighting the enduring effects of colonial control and exploitation. National liberation movements were the collective struggles for independence, where people fought against colonial rule to gain their freedom and self-determination. These movements aimed to reclaim cultural, political, and economic sovereignty, and to establish a nation-state that represents the colonized people's aspirations and values.

After gaining independence, formerly colonized countries embarked on the path of self-governance. However, post-colonial states inherited from colonial regimes some of the structures and institutions of inequality and control. National liberation leaders and parties have often turned into new exploitative dictatorships and ruling groups that have come to enjoy the support of powerful states in the neocolonial world order, in exchange for their violent perpetuation of the status quo in the post-colonial world.

So, things didn't really work out the way anti-colonialist liberation movements had hoped for.

And now, there's **Decoloniality** — a fresh path inviting us to reflect on and correct the mistakes of the past. It's like a new beginning, a chance to make things right. Decoloniality urges us to acknowledge the harms caused by colonialism, not just in the past, but also in the present. It encourages us to challenge unjust systems, to embrace diversity and inclusivity, and to work towards a future where everyone's voices are heard and respected.

**Islamic feminism can indeed be viewed as a decolonial movement** that seeks to challenge the dominant narratives and structures imposed by colonial powers. It values diverse perspectives, emphasizing gender equality and addressing wider injustices like economic, racial, and environmental issues. By reclaiming agency and embracing inclusivity, Islamic feminism contributes to decolonization and creates a more equitable world.



Chapter Two

Speaking and Being



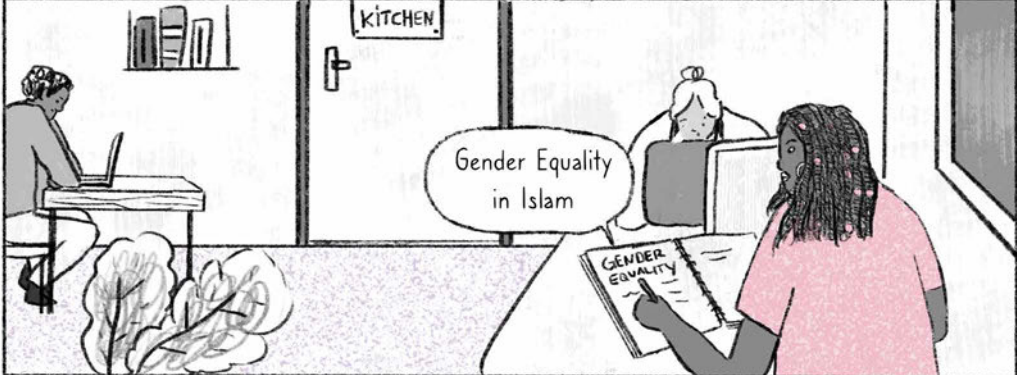
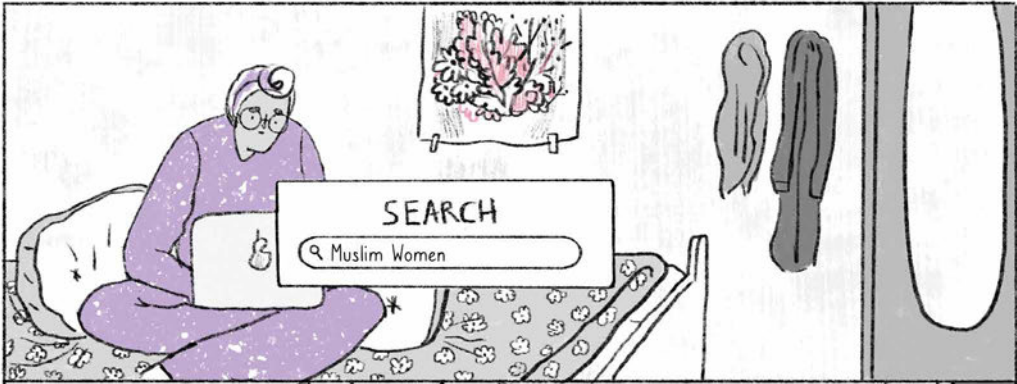


Last School Term









Oppression

Female Genital Mutilation

Q Muslim, Women



BIWOC RISING

Social Injustice towards women

Gender (IN)Equality in Islam

ISLAMISM

Hmm

TABU

It's not our culture

SEARCH

Q Sexual Depr...

Honor killing

Women in Saudi Arabia can now drive

But they still need a man's permission to...





What was the name of that Muslim group on the radio?



Oh yes! #Muslima-Pride.



I have to show this to mom!



FREEDOM OF CHOICE

ICH BIN SCHÖN FREI!

ISLAM IS MY CHOICE

GEGEN UNTERDRÜCKUNG !!!

KÄMPFE FÜR MICH!



Look, mom! This is the group we heard about on the radio the other day.

All Hijabis like me, and they fight for feminism as Muslims.

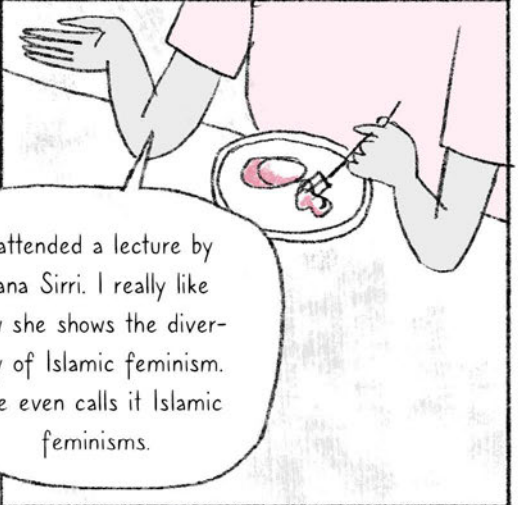
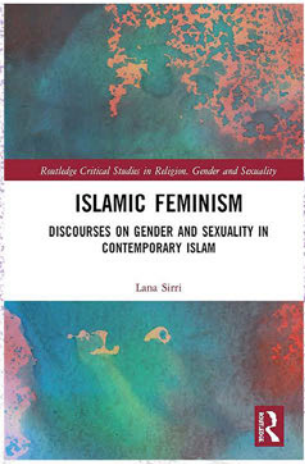








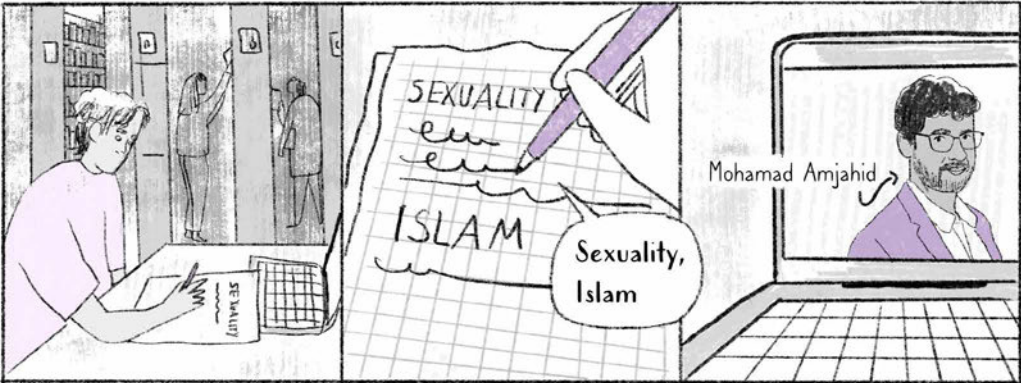
\* BIWOC Rising is the first intersectional coworking place in Europe catering to Black, Indigenous, Women of Color.



**Islamic feminisms are about:**

- ... Rereading and re-interpreting the Qur'an from a feminist, anti-patriarchal perspective.
- ... Recentering Muslim women's experiences.
- ... Highlighting Muslim women's contribution throughout Islam.
- ... Fighting against Muslim women's marginalization and the racial politics within the feminist movements.
- ... Engaging in intersectional feminism.





**Workshop:**  
**Let's Talk About Sex, Habibi!**

REGISTER -4 +

**Book reading with Mohamad Amjahid:**

"Our view of love and desire in North Africa is heavily influenced by clichés, orientalism, and fetishization."

But what freedoms exist in supposedly closed societies? Mohamed Amjahid shows...

**NEXT**

...what the everyday sexuality of North Africans really looks like and dispels racist stereotypes."

TIP TAP

I thought talking about sexuality in Islam was a taboo!

🌟 The Gang

**Amari:**  
I'm signing us all up for this event!

BFF



PROJECT WEEK!?!

Uh... Can men be feminists?

Do you think you're better than your sister? You think you deserve more rights?

NO!

Then you're a feminist, brother!

Islam teaches us that we're all equal in God's eyes.

Can Men be Feminists?

Male, Muslim and feminist, UN's Mohammad Naciri talks women's rights in the Middle East.

Are Male Muslim Feminists a Minority?

I'm definitely not the minority, there are many of us around.





A Week Later

Project Week Presentations

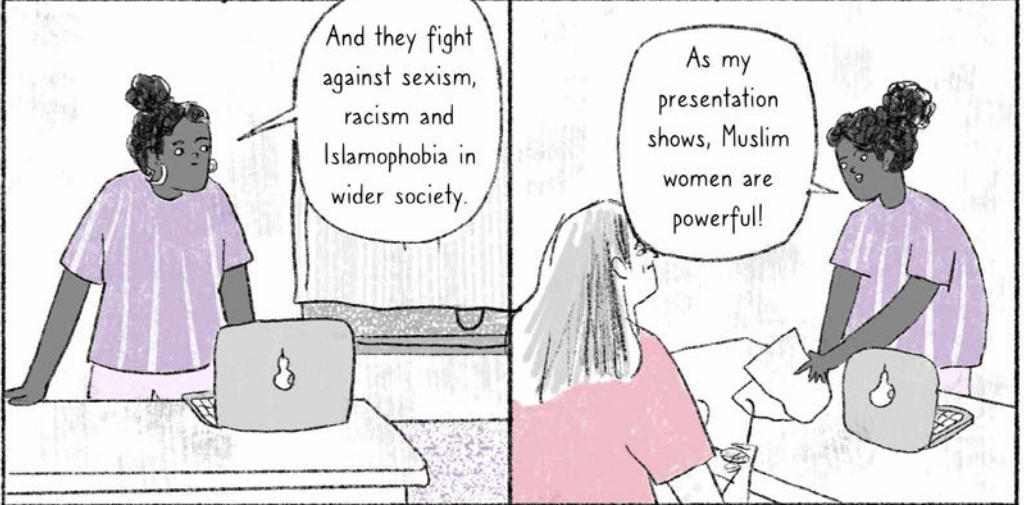
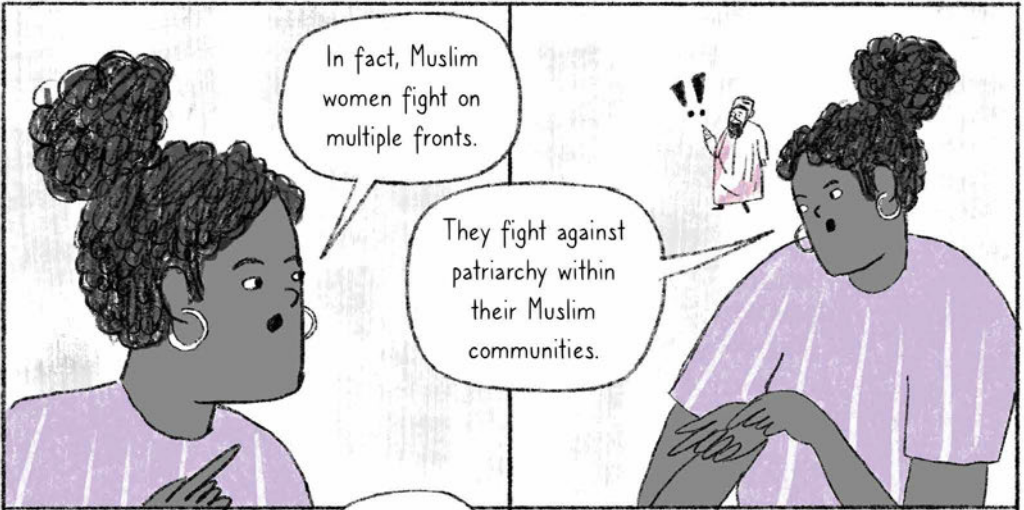
Mariama, you're next.

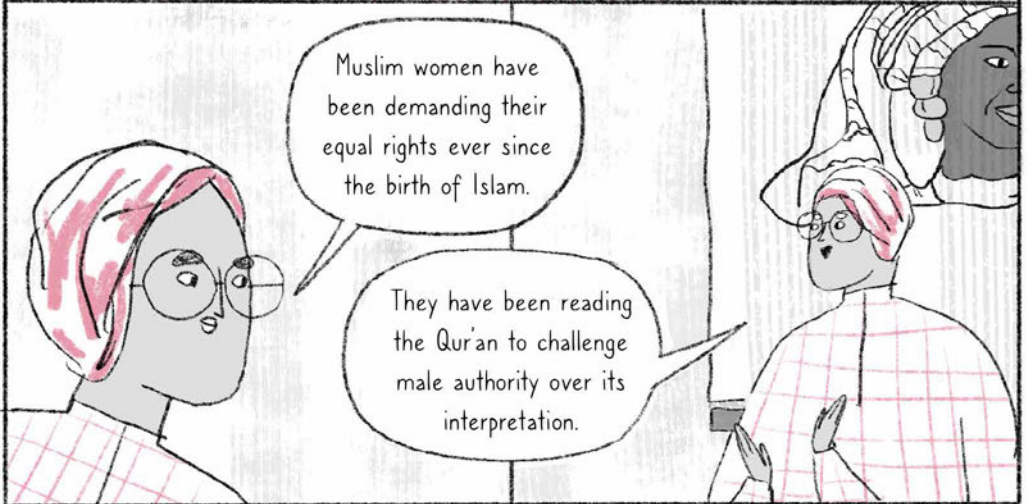
Do Muslim Women Need Saving?

Many people in the West think that Muslim women are oppressed victims of their religion and their traditions.

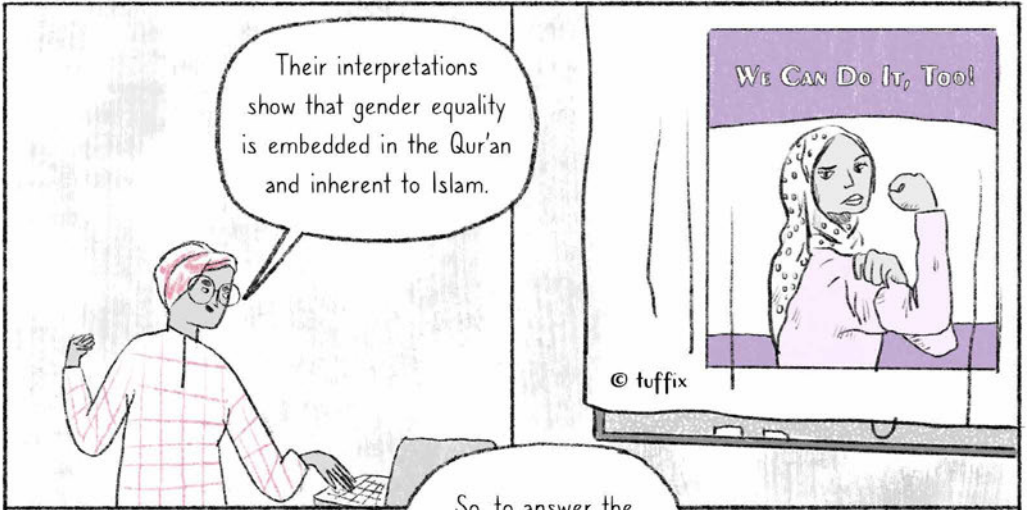
Here's why I think this is false.

Muslim women fight against gender inequality and discrimination.











# Representation

When the terms "Islam" or "Muslims" are mentioned, they often evoke preconceived notions or stereotypes in people's minds. These associations stem from the influence of colonialism, which played a pivotal role in shaping these ideas. Exploring the concept of representation becomes valuable in unraveling the reasons behind these associations.

Representation is not a simple or neutral process. It's tied to power dynamics and politics. Stuart Hall, a thinker in this field, talked about "The West and the Rest" and how those in power control how different groups are portrayed and understood. They shape representations to reinforce their own dominance. Representations can either support or challenge existing inequalities in society. Stuart Hall also looked at how representation affects our identities. The way groups are represented can impact how we see ourselves and how others see us. Some representations can create shared cultural identities, but they can also stereotype or exclude certain groups. Hall called for us to critically examine representations to fight against oppressive forms of identity construction.

Edward Said uses the concept of Orientalism to critique the Western representation of the "East" and the construction of a Eurocentric view of the Orient. Orientalism is a concept that challenges the notion of knowledge as being purely objective. It argues that Western scholars and artists, influenced by colonial ideologies, depicted Eastern cultures as exotic, backward, and inferior. This portrayal served to perpetuate stereotypes and justify the domination of colonial powers over Eastern societies.

Through this lens, knowledge about the East became a tool of control and domination. Orientalist representations often overlooked the diversity and complexity of Eastern cultures, reducing them to simplistic and static caricatures. This approach allowed Western powers to justify their colonization and subjugation of Eastern peoples, presenting it as a mission of civilizing or enlightening the "inferior" cultures.

You know what? Even if you're tired or too busy to challenge these false representations, your mere existence as a European Muslim demystifies this inaccurate division of East and West. So, sit back, relax, and create your own narrative.



Chapter Three

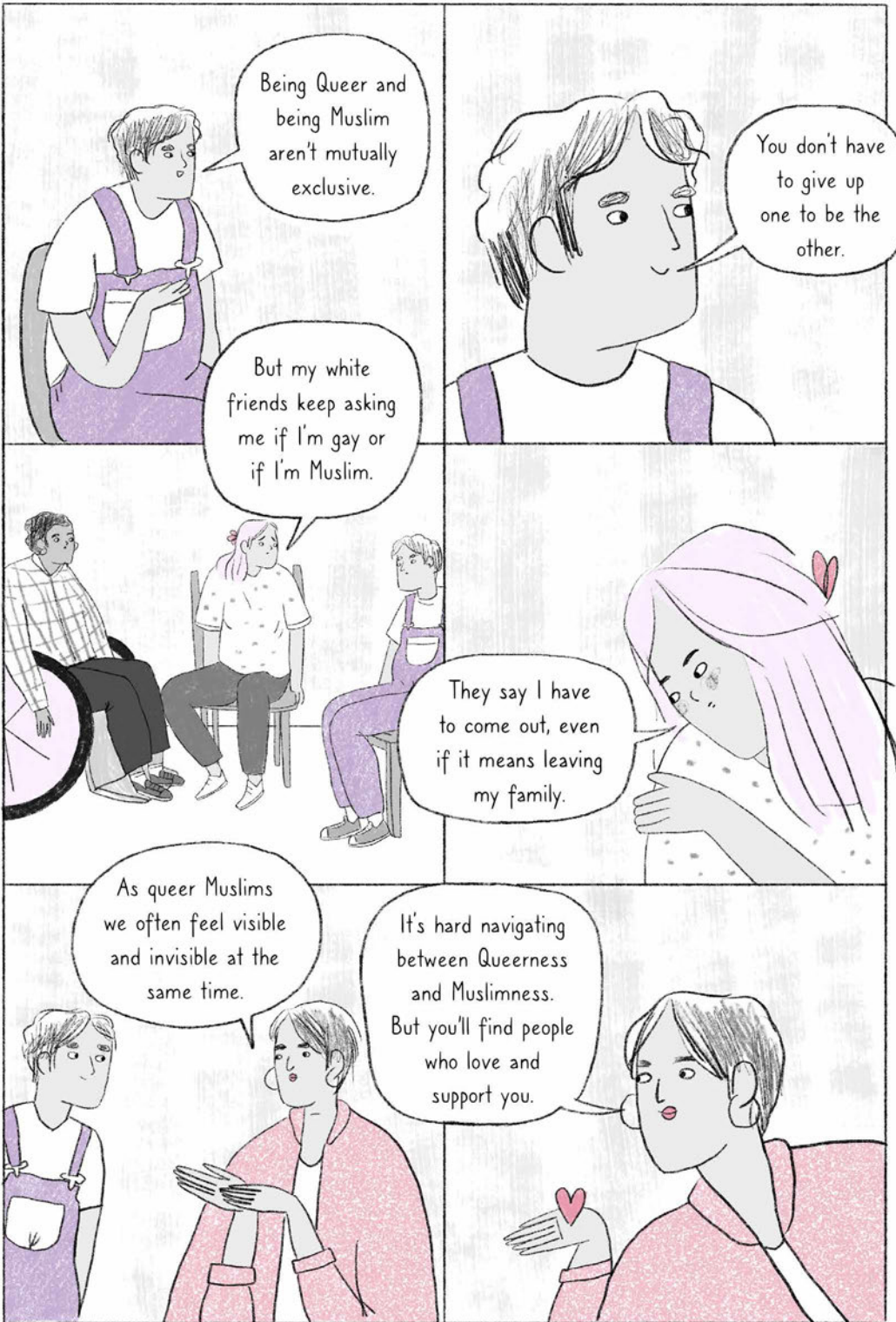
Love is Revolution



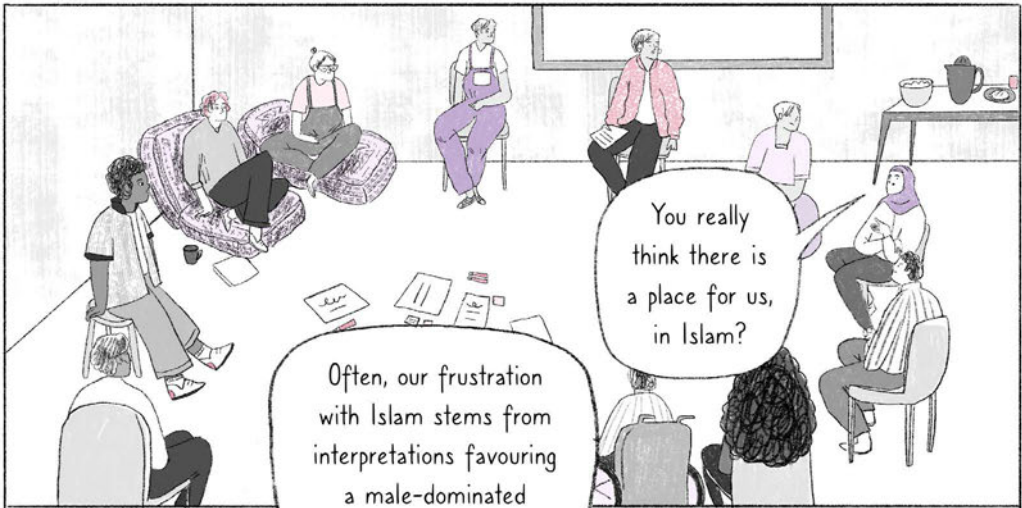
Queer Muslim\_a\* Workshop.







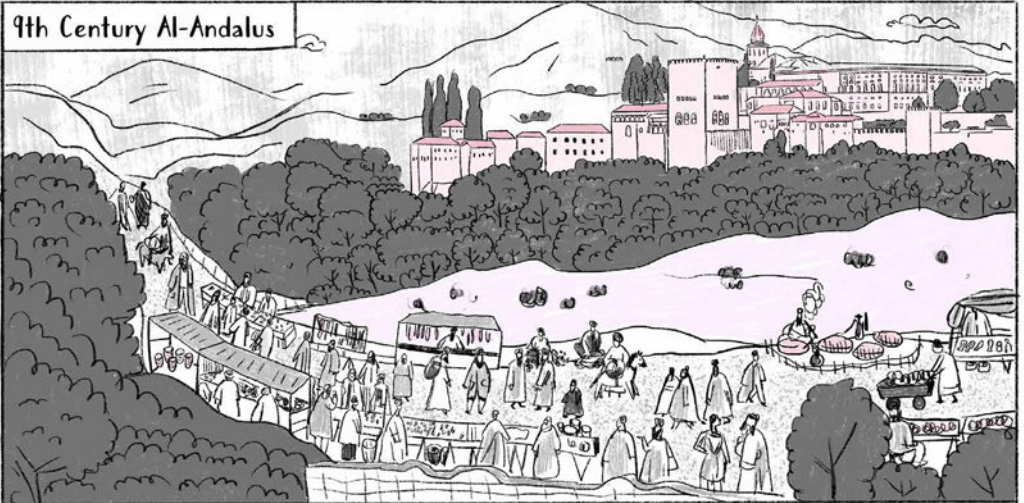




Often, our frustration with Islam stems from interpretations favouring a male-dominated perspective, that silence other voices.



9th Century Al-Andalus







I'm performing this evening at Alhambra.

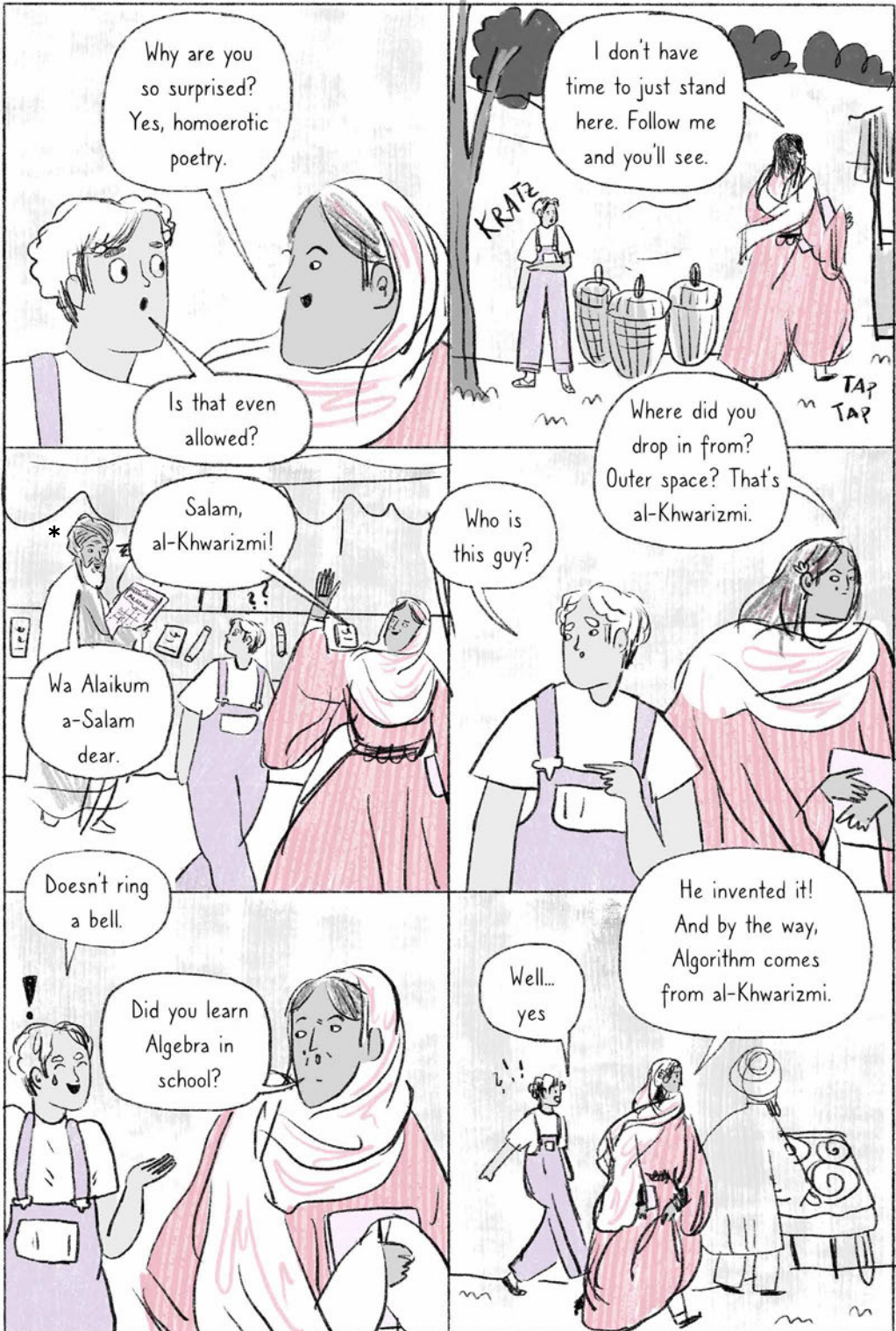
!!  
And I am running late.

Nice!!!  
What kind of performance?

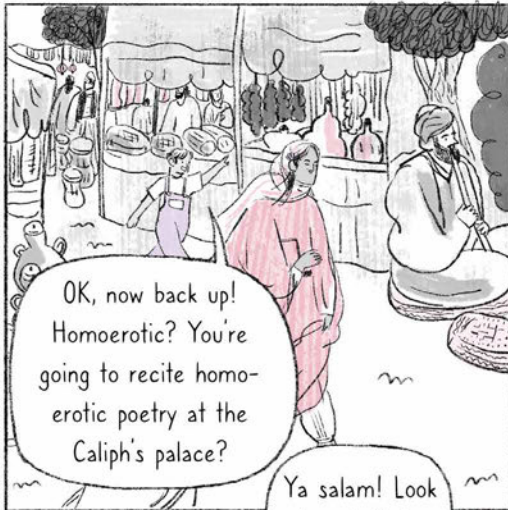
?!?  
You're obviously not from here, if you don't know who I am.

I recite the Qur'an and homoerotic poetry.

HOMO-what???



\* Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi 780-850



OK, now back up!  
Homoerotic? You're  
going to recite homo-  
erotic poetry at the  
Caliph's palace?

Ya salam! Look  
at you! You're  
gorgeous.



You know there  
are Muslims at the  
palace, right?!

I'm Muslim  
too!

Thank you,  
sweetie.



Sorry habibti,  
we won't make  
it tonight.



Good luck!

Hind is the daughter of  
Lakhmid, the Christian king  
of Hira. And Al-Zarqa  
is a sweet Muslim woman  
from Yamama.



Who are  
these two?

Hind and Al-Zarqa.  
Such a lovely  
couple.



A  
COUPLE???



Like...  
lesbians?  
But that's  
Haram!

Haram???  
Who told you  
it's Haram?


Let me tell  
you something  
about the  
tribe of Lut.

The Qur'an! It says  
that gay people, Luti,  
are Haram.

The Tribe of Lut was destroyed  
for their kufr and their violent  
rejection of their prophet Lut. They  
did many bad things. And among  
these bad things is sexual coercion  
of other males.



\* Ahmad Ibn Hazm 994-1064



The Qur'an does not promote nor reject the love between Hind and Al-Zarqa.

Islam does not label people. We talk about emotions and desires. Just like in my poems.

Ibn Hazm is right. And anyway, what are the "lesbians" you mentioned?

OK, I'm confused. Can homosexuality be part of Islam?

What Ibn Hazm is suggesting is what we'd now refer to as a 'sexuality-sensitive' perspective. You should check it out!

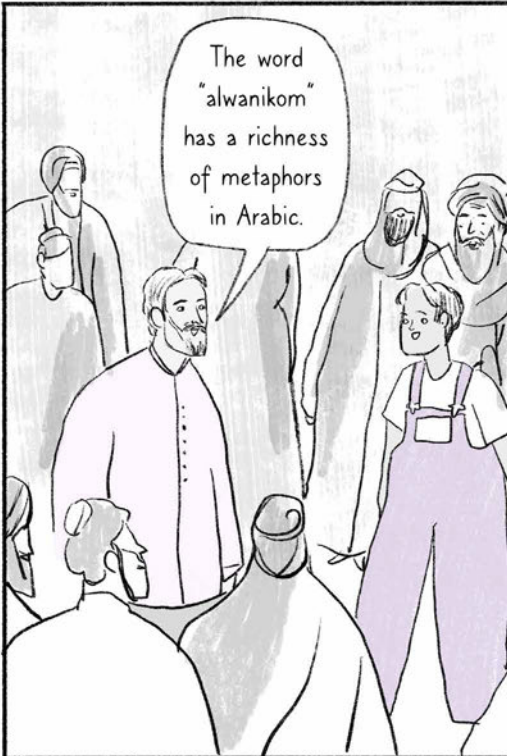
The Qur'an does not mention homosexuality. Neither positively, nor negatively. But!

\*

There are signs for the diversity of humankind, including diversity of our sexualities. Take for example Surat Ar-Rum.

»And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors (alwanikom). Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge..«  
(30:22) – Rudi Paret.





# ISLAM



Sexuality

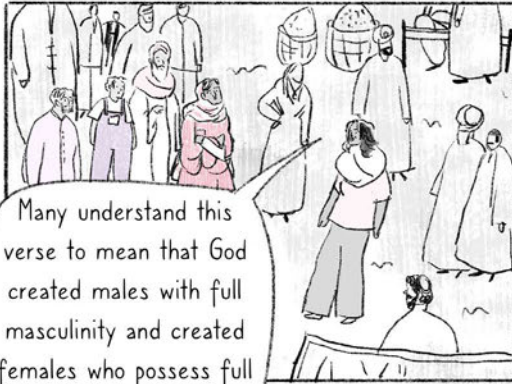
HOMO-  
EROTIC

# QUEER



»O humanity! Indeed, We created you from (min) a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.«  
(49:13) – M. A. Rassoul

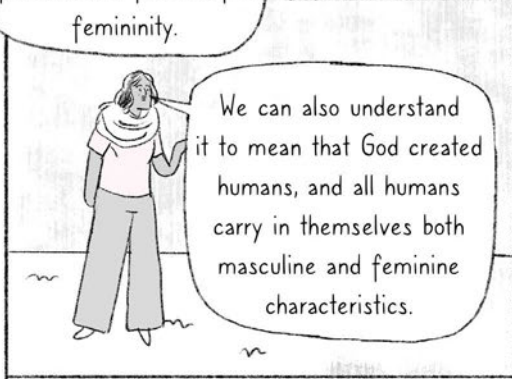
\* Olfa Youssef (born 1964)



Many understand this verse to mean that God created males with full masculinity and created females who possess full femininity.



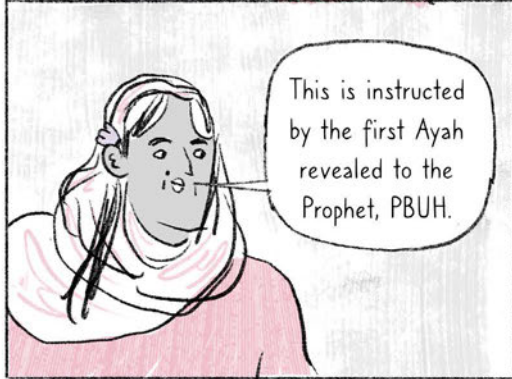
BUT! Pay attention to this teeny-weeny word "min" here!



We can also understand it to mean that God created humans, and all humans carry in themselves both masculine and feminine characteristics.

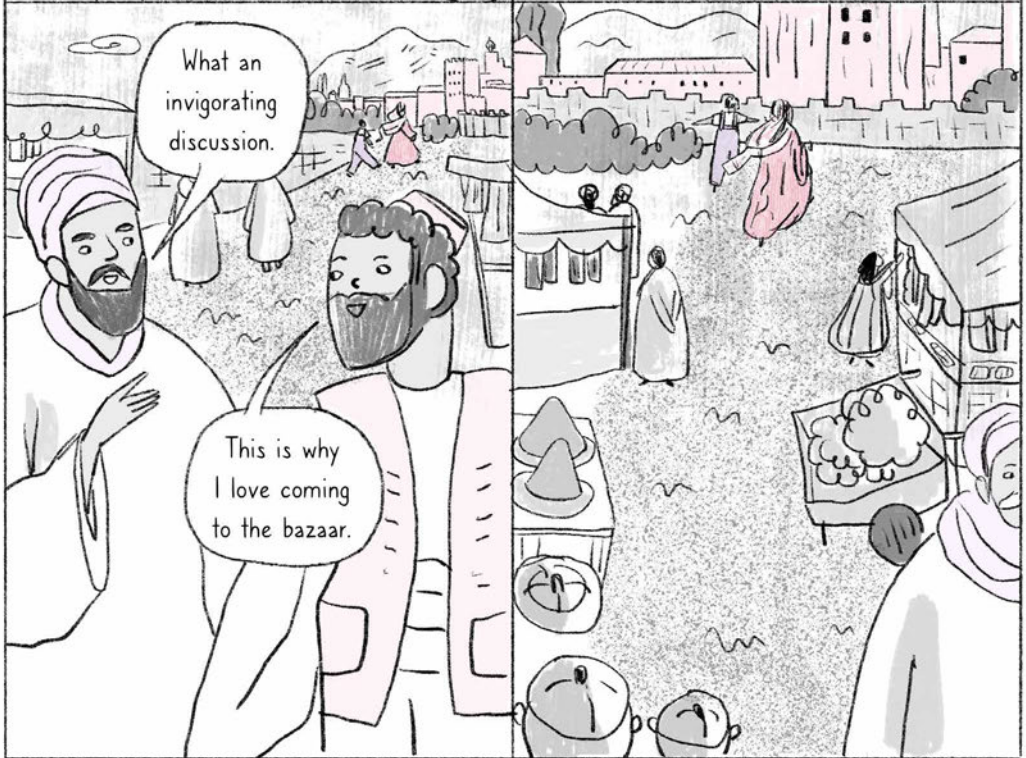


The Qur'an promotes the pursuit of knowledge, urging us to contemplate its lessons and employ our intellect to grasp its meaning, rather than merely accepting information without thought.



This is instructed by the first Ayah revealed to the Prophet, PBUH.

»Read in the Name of your Lord Who created-«  
(Sure 96:1)

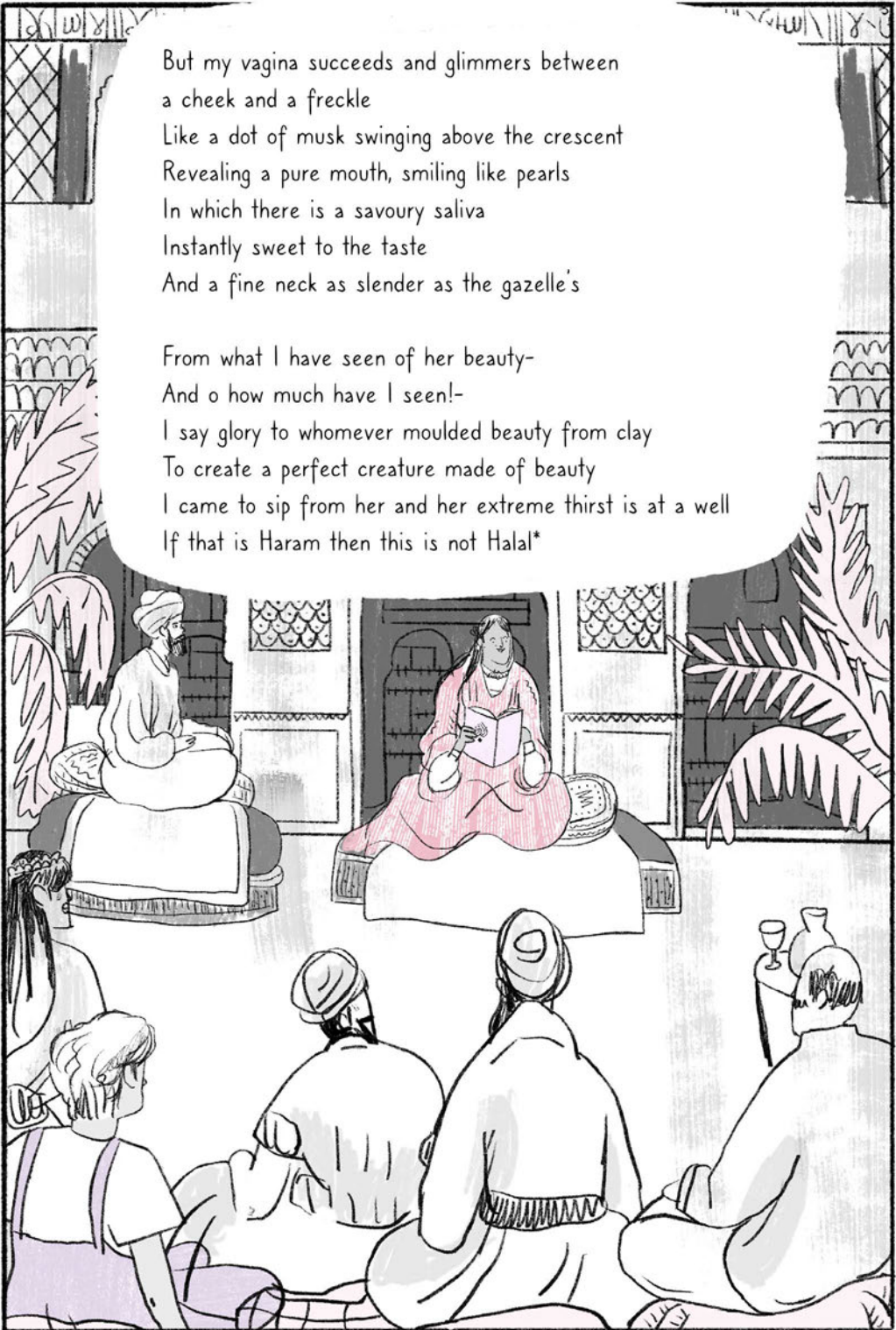




\* Mukhannathun: A term used in Classical Arabic to describe individuals who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth.

But my vagina succeeds and glimmers between  
a cheek and a freckle  
Like a dot of musk swinging above the crescent  
Revealing a pure mouth, smiling like pearls  
In which there is a savoury saliva  
Instantly sweet to the taste  
And a fine neck as slender as the gazelle's

From what I have seen of her beauty-  
And o how much have I seen!-  
I say glory to whomever moulded beauty from clay  
To create a perfect creature made of beauty  
I came to sip from her and her extreme thirst is at a well  
If that is Haram then this is not Halal\*



\* Arabic poem from the 9th century. Cited from: Habib, Samar. 2009. Arabo-Islamic Texts on Female Homosexuality 850-1780 A.D. Teneo Press.



Damn!



Queer Muslim\_a\* Workshop.





## Sexuality and Islam

Muhsin Hendrick and Scott Kugle are important scholars who have looked at how Islam can be understood in relation to different sexual orientations and gender identities. They believe that we need to consider all aspects of Islam, not just the rules, but also the spiritual and moral sides. They argue that values like compassion, justice, and love can help us address the experiences of LGBTQ+ people within Islam. They want us to question conservative interpretations that discriminate against and exclude them.

Scott Kugle's work focuses on gender and sexuality in Islam's history. He delves into diverse interpretations that question the notion of universal heterosexuality and conformity to gender assigned at birth. Kugle says that Islam has room for diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. He thinks it's important to understand the historical context of religious texts and how interpretations have changed over time. This is what he calls a "sexuality-sensitive" interpretation of Qur'an.

Hendrick and Kugle both want Islam to be inclusive and to respect the rights and dignity of all people, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity. They want us to critically think about traditional interpretations and rethink how we understand Islam so that LGBTQ+ individuals can be accepted and treated fairly.

Sexuality is a hot topic among Muslim communities, and there are multiple perspectives and different opinions within the Muslim communities when it comes to understanding and accepting sexual diversity. But it is important to understand that we cannot talk about sexuality in Islam without considering the postcolonial context of homonationalism, the division between the West and the rest, and Orientalism, all of which come together to reproduce colonial ideas about Islam being incompatible with democracy, gender diversity, and LGBTQ+ rights.

Take my advice (following the Prophet's wisdom): Do not shy away from the topic of sexuality; engaging in a conversation with your friends, family, and teachers, checking the websites of Muslim LGBTQ+ organizations, or picking up a book is a good start!



Chapter Four

Echoes of Manhood







Look at them, going to concerts! Back in our day, there was no time for partying, just work!



We worked from morning till night, taking care of our families. But these kids, they do whatever they want.



Amo\*, we work too!



I spent the whole summer saving up for a car! Wallah!



A car? See? I told you! We worked to support families, and he wants a car!

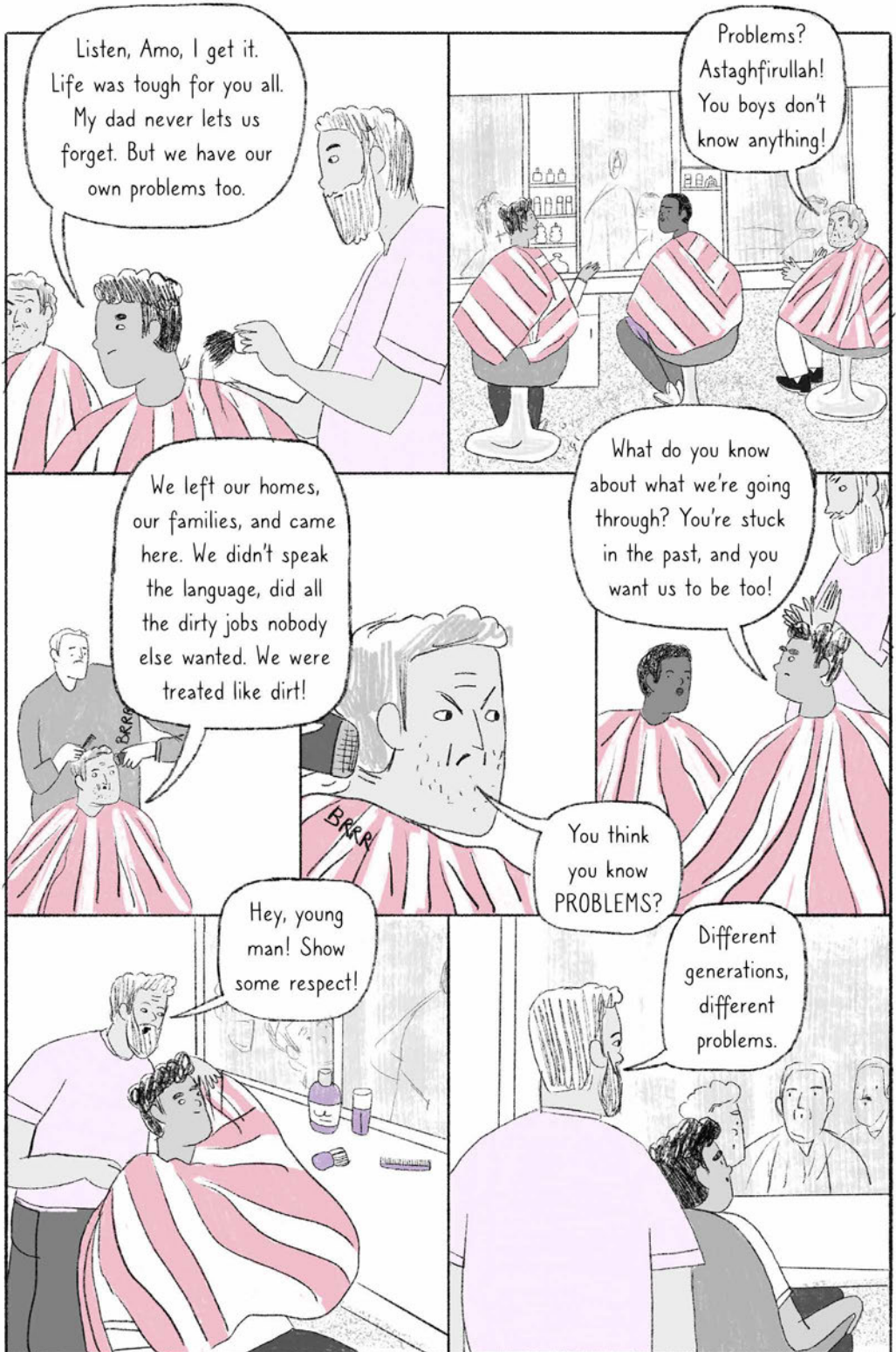


Come on, let them enjoy life! Isn't that why we worked so hard?



So that our kids could have it better?

\* Amo: a reverential term, literally means "uncle", used to show respect to elders.



Listen, Amo, I get it. Life was tough for you all. My dad never lets us forget. But we have our own problems too.

Problems? Astaghfirullah! You boys don't know anything!

We left our homes, our families, and came here. We didn't speak the language, did all the dirty jobs nobody else wanted. We were treated like dirt!

What do you know about what we're going through? You're stuck in the past, and you want us to be too!

You think you know PROBLEMS?

Hey, young man! Show some respect!

Different generations, different problems.









\* Na'eeman\*: an idiomatic expression used to congratulate the recipient on their clean state or fresh look.

FÜR  
VOLK  
UND  
HEIMAT

BERLIN  
More security  
for our women.  
Awd wählen

Bro! I can't believe we  
snagged tickets to the concert!  
It's completely  
sold out now!

Oh, man! That's  
awesome. I'm  
so excited.

Yeah, Yasin  
is performing  
tonight, so he  
hooked us up.

Stop  
islamisation.  
Awd wählen

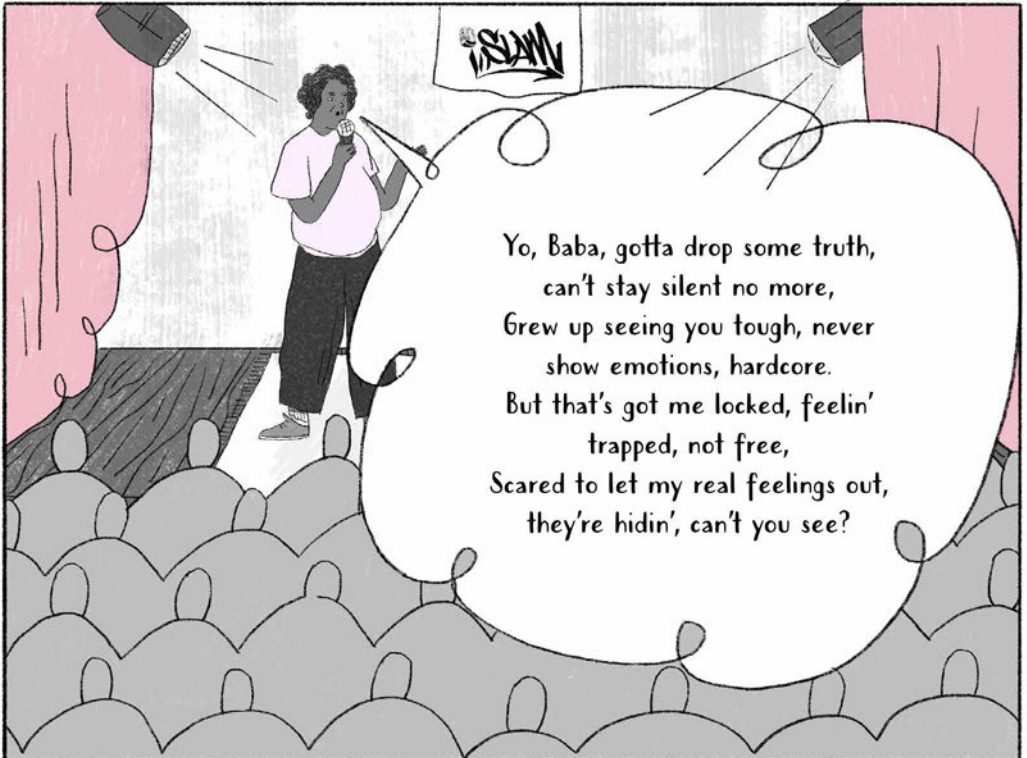
BLING

BLING

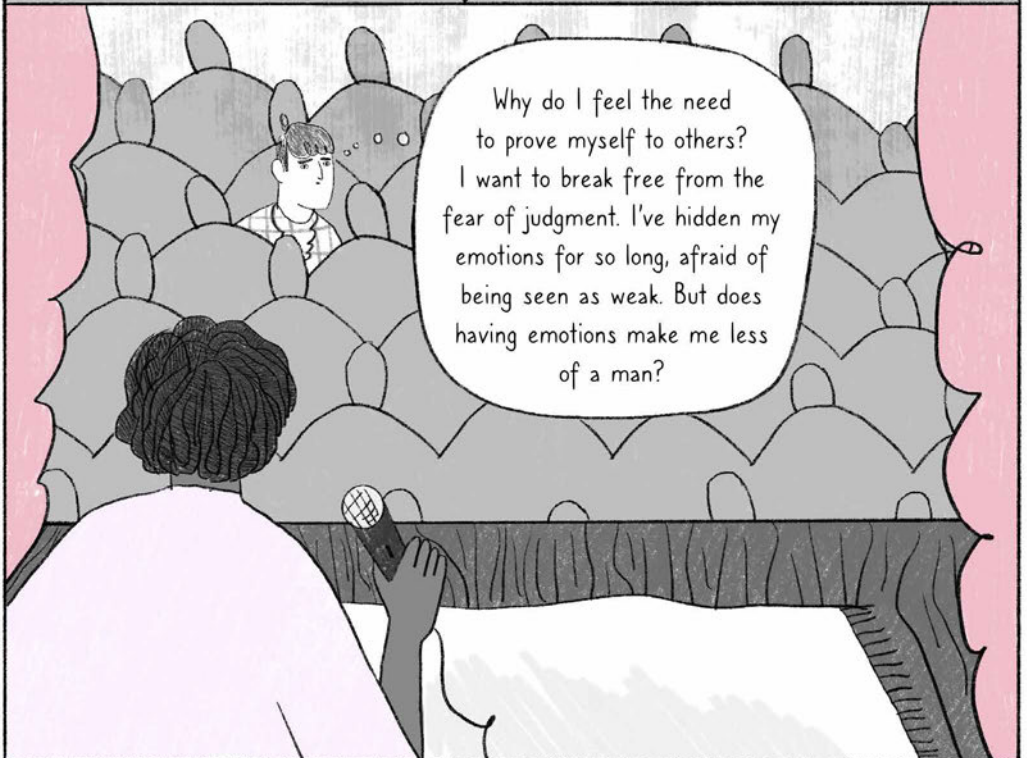




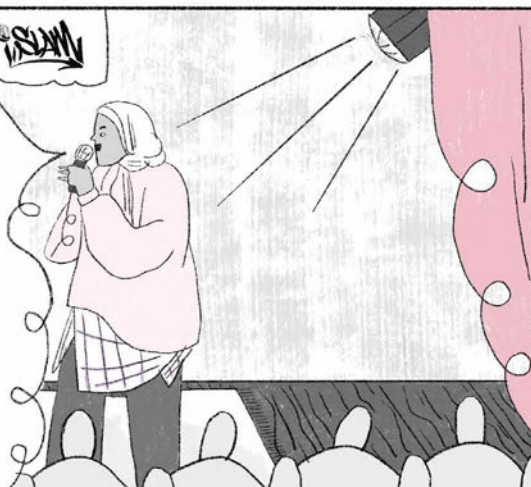
i,Slam started as the Muslim version of Poetry Slam. It empowers young Muslim individuals in their identity and personality. In doing so, they view art as a tool for empowerment. i,Slam creates opportunities through art projects and the realization of a "safe space."




Yo, Baba, gotta drop some truth,  
can't stay silent no more,  
Grew up seeing you tough, never  
show emotions, hardcore.  
But that's got me locked, feelin'  
trapped, not free,  
Scared to let my real feelings out,  
they're hidin', can't you see?



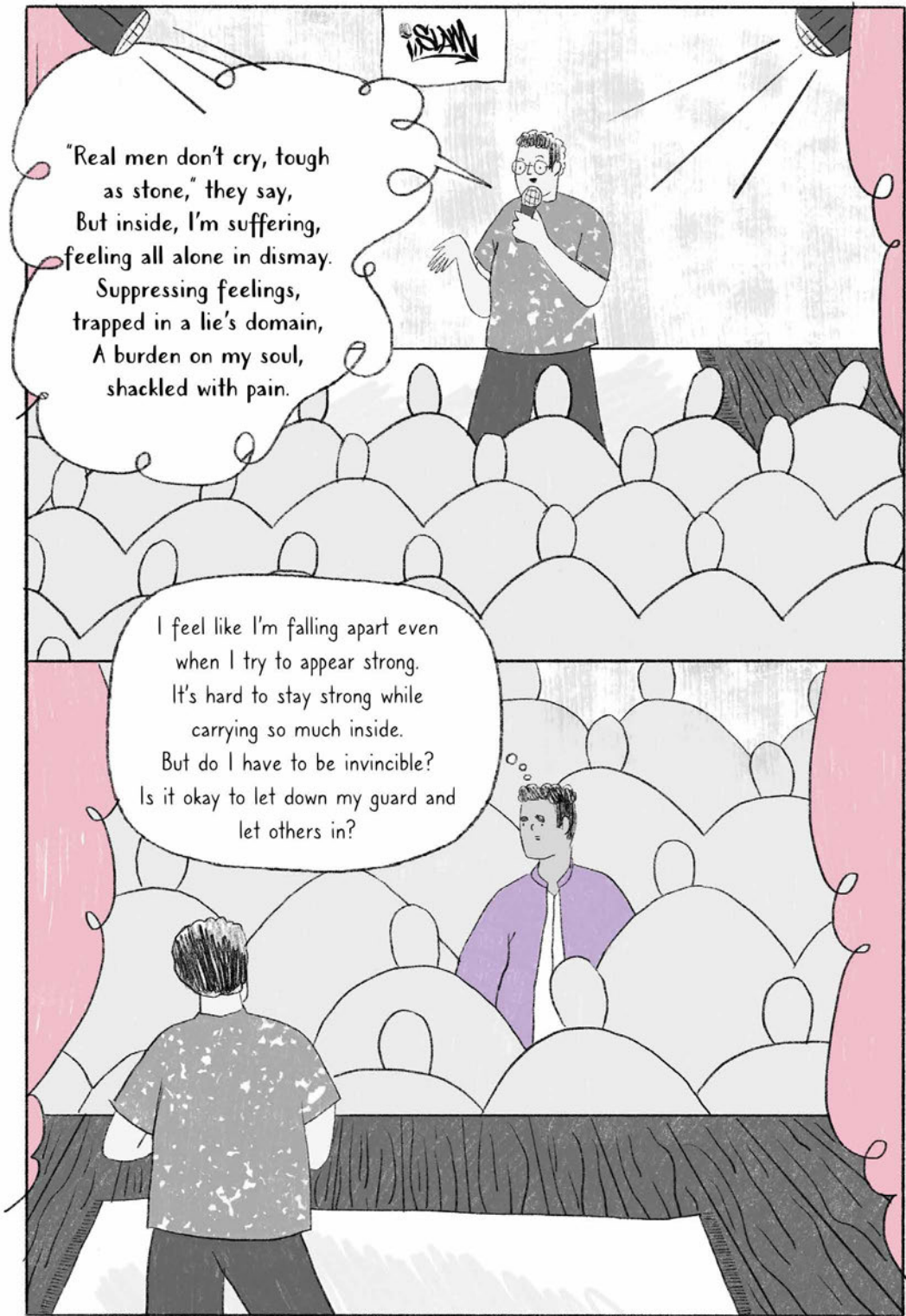
Why do I feel the need  
to prove myself to others?  
I want to break free from the  
fear of judgment. I've hidden my  
emotions for so long, afraid of  
being seen as weak. But does  
having emotions make me less  
of a man?



They want me walkin' their path,  
like it's been laid, But I break out,  
gotta live my own way, unafraid.  
Tryna be real and true, but they  
shut me out, yo,  
Stuck in the past, can't see  
beyond their narrow flow.



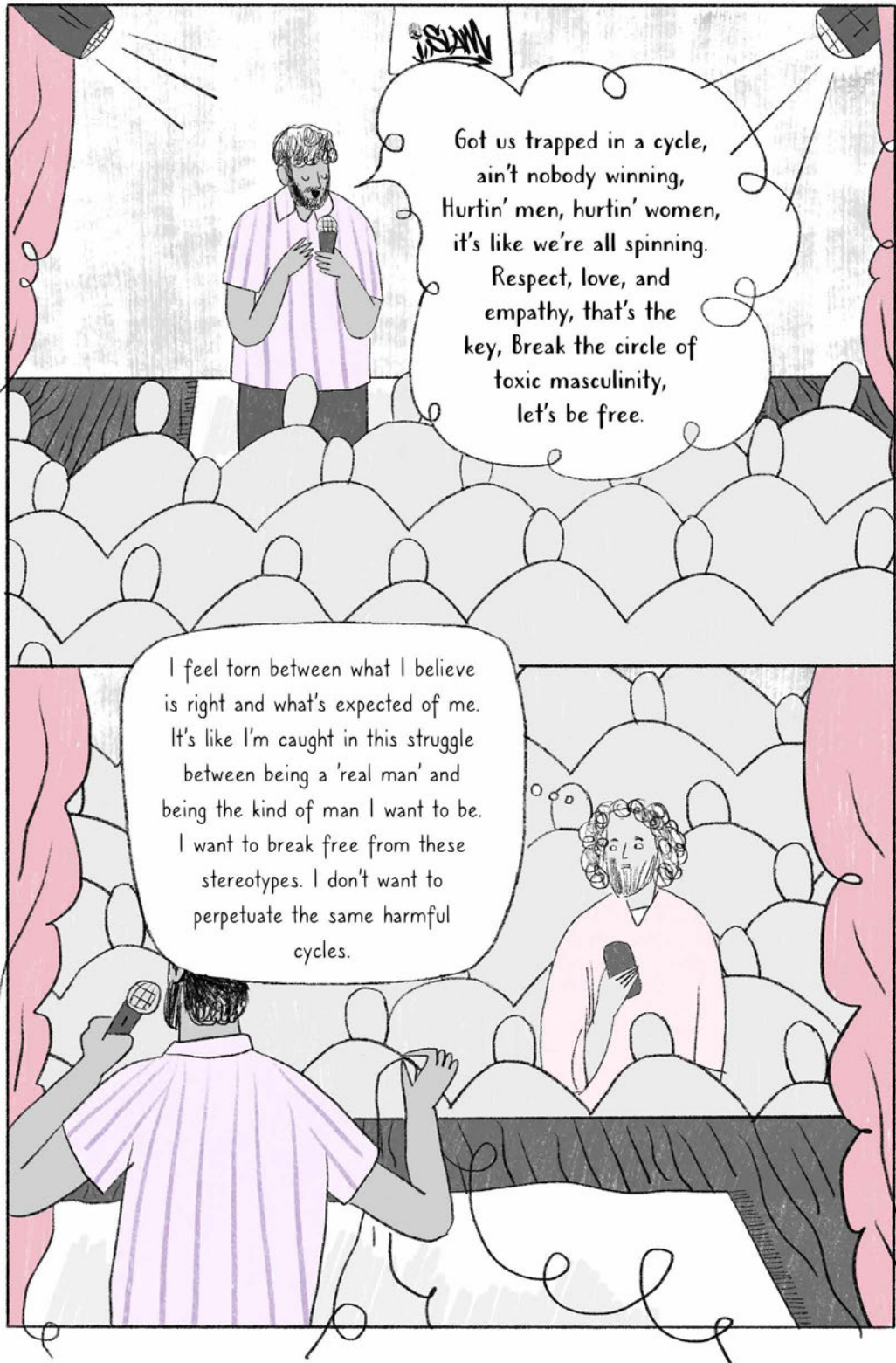
I love my family, but  
they don't get me. I feel as  
if they try to relive their lost  
lives through me. But I have  
my own wishes and dreams.  
Is it betrayal to go my own  
way?

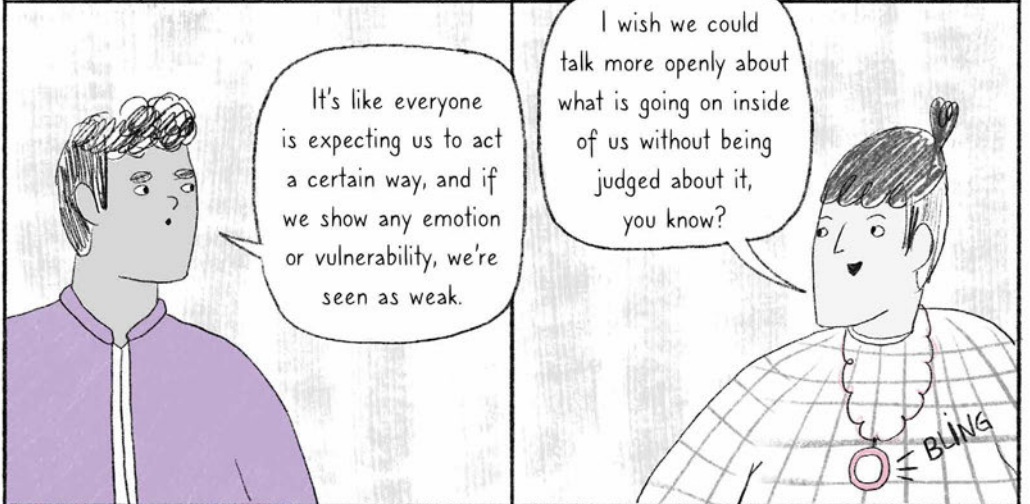
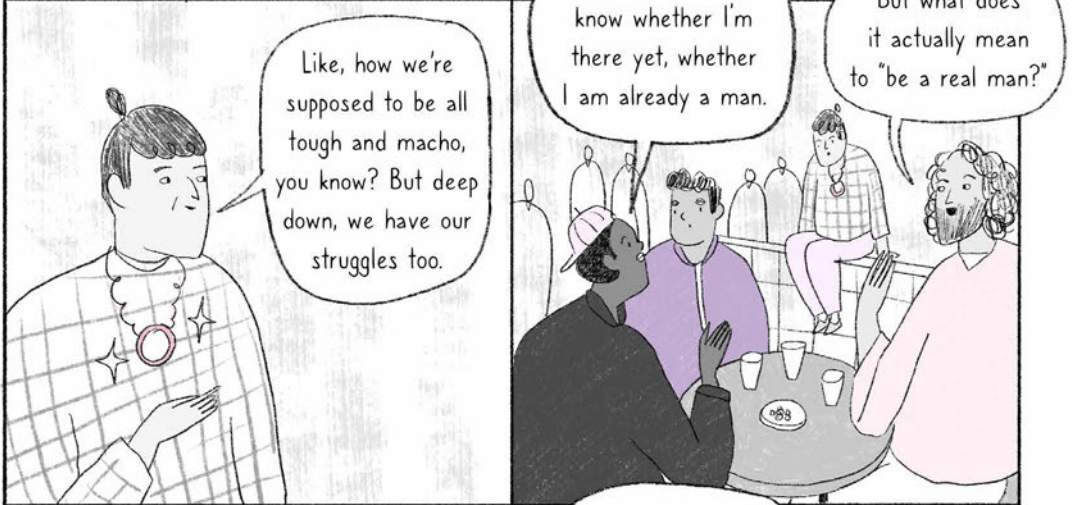


"Real men don't cry, tough  
as stone," they say,  
But inside, I'm suffering,  
feeling all alone in dismay.  
Suppressing feelings,  
trapped in a lie's domain,  
A burden on my soul,  
shackled with pain.

I feel like I'm falling apart even  
when I try to appear strong.  
It's hard to stay strong while  
carrying so much inside.  
But do I have to be invincible?  
Is it okay to let down my guard and  
let others in?







You must protect  
your sister.

Be A Man

Caring is courageous.

Empowered  
vulnerability fuels  
my masculinity.

Don't Cry

Stop acting  
like a girl.

Men are strong.

Strong enough to be  
gentle, bold enough  
to be equal.

Real men don't  
show their emotions;  
toughen up.

Don't express too much  
affection or vulnerability;  
it's a sign of weakness.

Crafting a masculinity  
that cares, shares, and  
repairs.





It's tough, you know. People on the street look at us like we're over-the-top, super macho dudes or criminals or shit like that.

Yeah, it's like they expect us to fit into this box just because we're black and brown men.



And then there's my parents, always telling me to be a man and protect my sister.

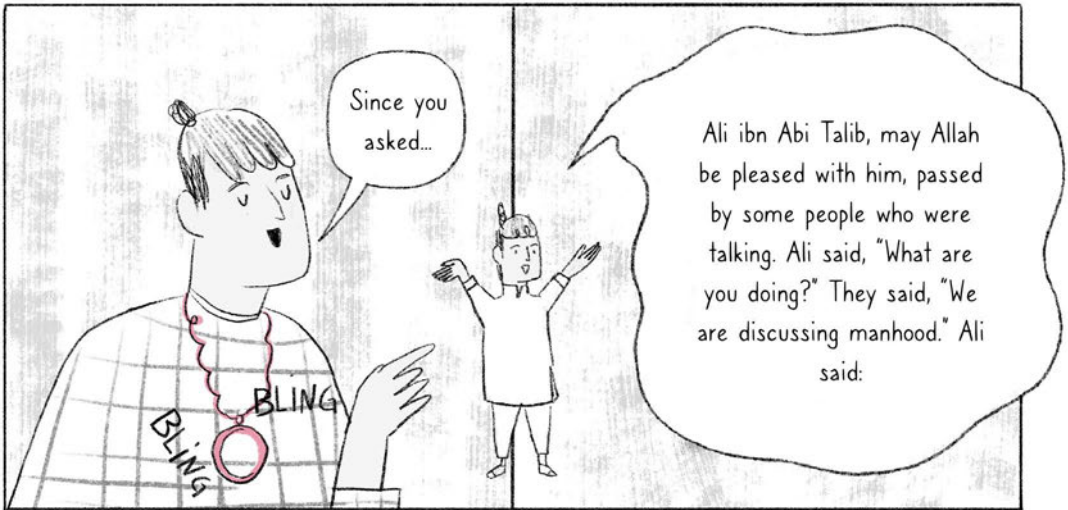
But I don't want to be her Wali. I just want to support and be there for her, like a good brother should.



Man, do you ever wonder what it really means to be a man?

Here, let the sheikh tell us what Islam says about it.

\* Wali: is an Islamic concept that refers to a male legal guardian or 'protector'.



"Has not Allah Almighty sufficed you in His book wherein He said, 'Verily, Allah commands 'adl and ihsan' (Surat An-Nahl, 16:90)

What remains of manhood after this?



# Masculinity

*Khaleek zalameh! Be a man!*

How often have you heard this before? This is a part of something called **toxic masculinity**. But what is masculinity, really?

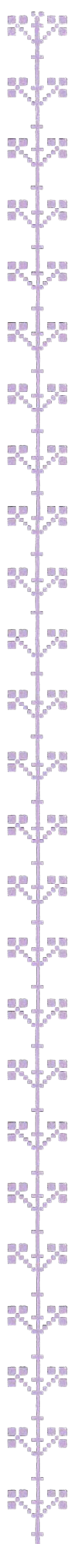
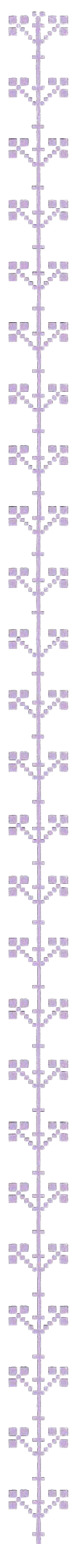
bell hooks (it's not a typo, her name is written in small letters. If you want to know why, don't hesitate to ask and explore!) was an important American educator, who studied how boys and men think and act. She said that being a man is not something you're born with, but something you learn from the world around you. Boys are taught to be a certain way, to act tough and not show emotions. This can make it hard for them to be themselves and treat everyone fairly. hooks also talked about toxic masculinity, which is when boys and men show harmful and mean behaviors because they think that's what being a man means. But she said that these behaviors are not what being a man is about. They happen because of the pressures and ideas that society puts on boys and men. The good news is that we can learn to be better and challenge these ideas.

hooks wanted boys and men to join together with girls and women to make things fair for everyone. She believed that everyone should be treated with kindness, fairness, and respect. She also said it's okay for boys and men to have feelings and show them. Keeping feelings inside can be bad for you and your relationships. It's important to learn how to express your feelings and be open with others.

So, remember, being a man is about being yourself, treating everyone fairly, and showing kindness and respect. It's okay to have feelings and talk about them too.

bell hooks' thinking aligns with Islamic teachings, as many Islamic scholars and educators emphasize the importance of **emotional intelligence**. They highlight the necessity for men to understand and manage their emotions, cultivate emotional awareness, communicate effectively, and foster healthy relationships.



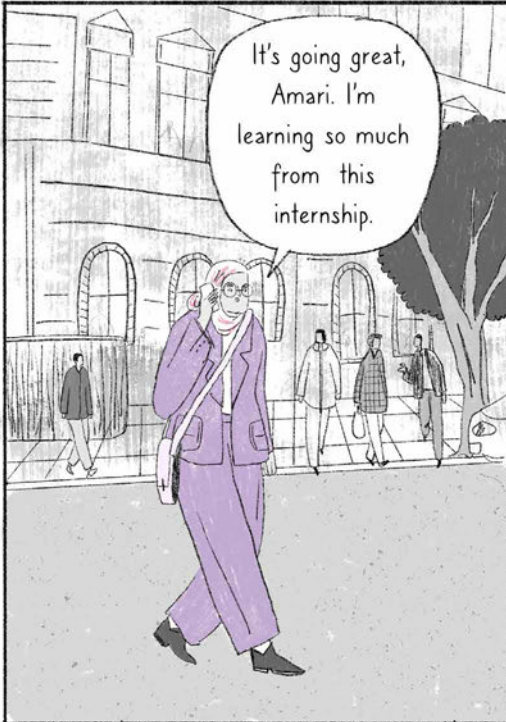


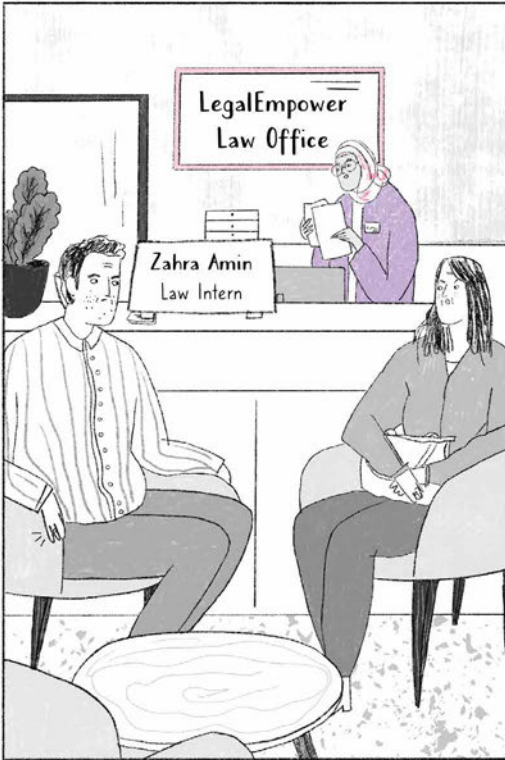
Chapter Five

Legal Illuminations:  
Deciphering Justice  
in Faith











### WHO WE ARE

KARAMAH is a nonprofit organization committed to promoting human rights globally, especially gender equity, religious freedom, and civil rights in the United States. It pursues its mission through education, legal outreach, and advocacy.



### OUR MISSION

KARAMAH's mission is to educate all people on the just, gender equitable foundation of Islam. We produce, promote, and publish Islamic scholarship, from a non-patriarchal perspective, through our programs and publications. We contribute to social and legal discourse by emphasizing core Islamic principles of civil and human rights. We challenge and inspire Muslim women to become leaders in their communities and throughout the world.

### OUR VISION

"We have given dignity (karamah) to the Children of Adam." (Qur'an 17:70). Inspired by this verse, we strive toward the day when every person can reach his or her full potential and we all treat one another with respect and compassion.





The Qur'an did not address the question of hadanah directly, but there is a verse and numerous Hadiths that support the mother's right to keep her children's hadanah even in the event of her remarriage.

Wait, so what does the Qur'an say about hadanah?

Yes, Mom! I know it's late. I'm just about to head out.

No. You don't need to pick me up. I'll take the train.

Mom, did you know that historical records about the Sahabah\* indicate that mothers were given; ...

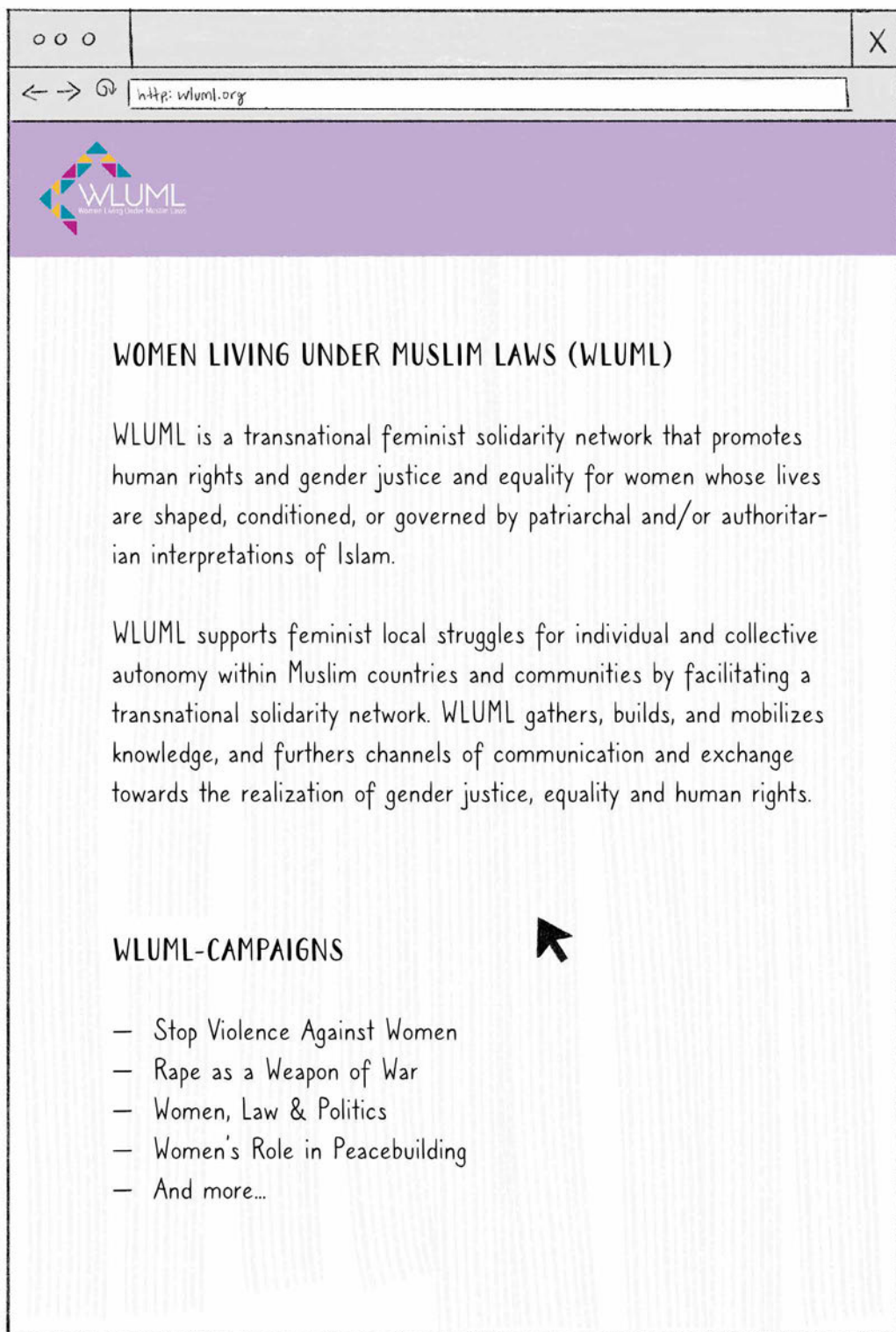
... preference over fathers in matters of hadanah during the early stages of their children's lives?

\* Sahabah are the companions (followers) of the prophet Muhammad.









## WOMEN LIVING UNDER MUSLIM LAWS (WLUML)

WLUML is a transnational feminist solidarity network that promotes human rights and gender justice and equality for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned, or governed by patriarchal and/or authoritarian interpretations of Islam.

WLUML supports feminist local struggles for individual and collective autonomy within Muslim countries and communities by facilitating a transnational solidarity network. WLUML gathers, builds, and mobilizes knowledge, and furthers channels of communication and exchange towards the realization of gender justice, equality and human rights.

### WLUML-CAMPAIGNS

- Stop Violence Against Women
- Rape as a Weapon of War
- Women, Law & Politics
- Women's Role in Peacebuilding
- And more...



WLUMI, Assalamu aleikum, Saba speaking. How may I help you?



Wa Aleikum assalam, dear Saba. It's Naila from the EmpowerLegal Law Office.



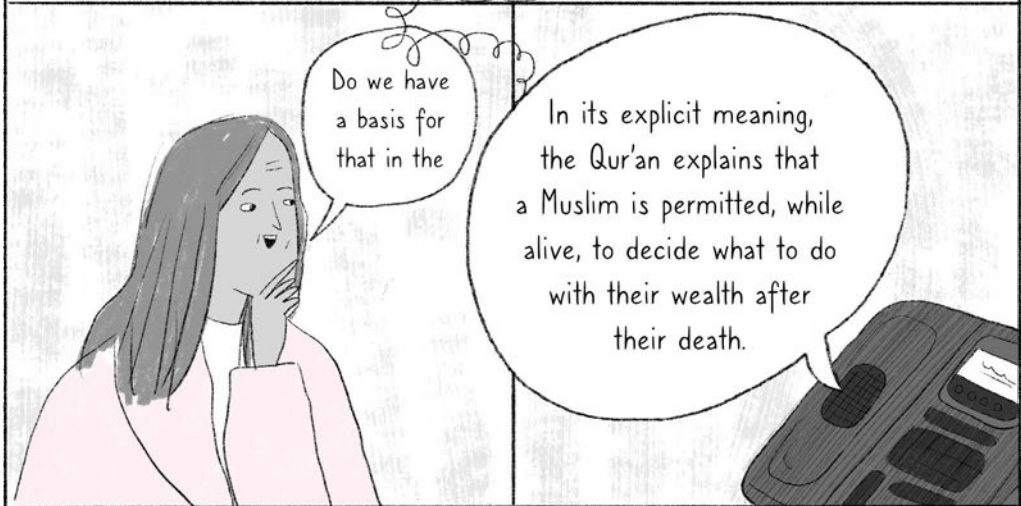
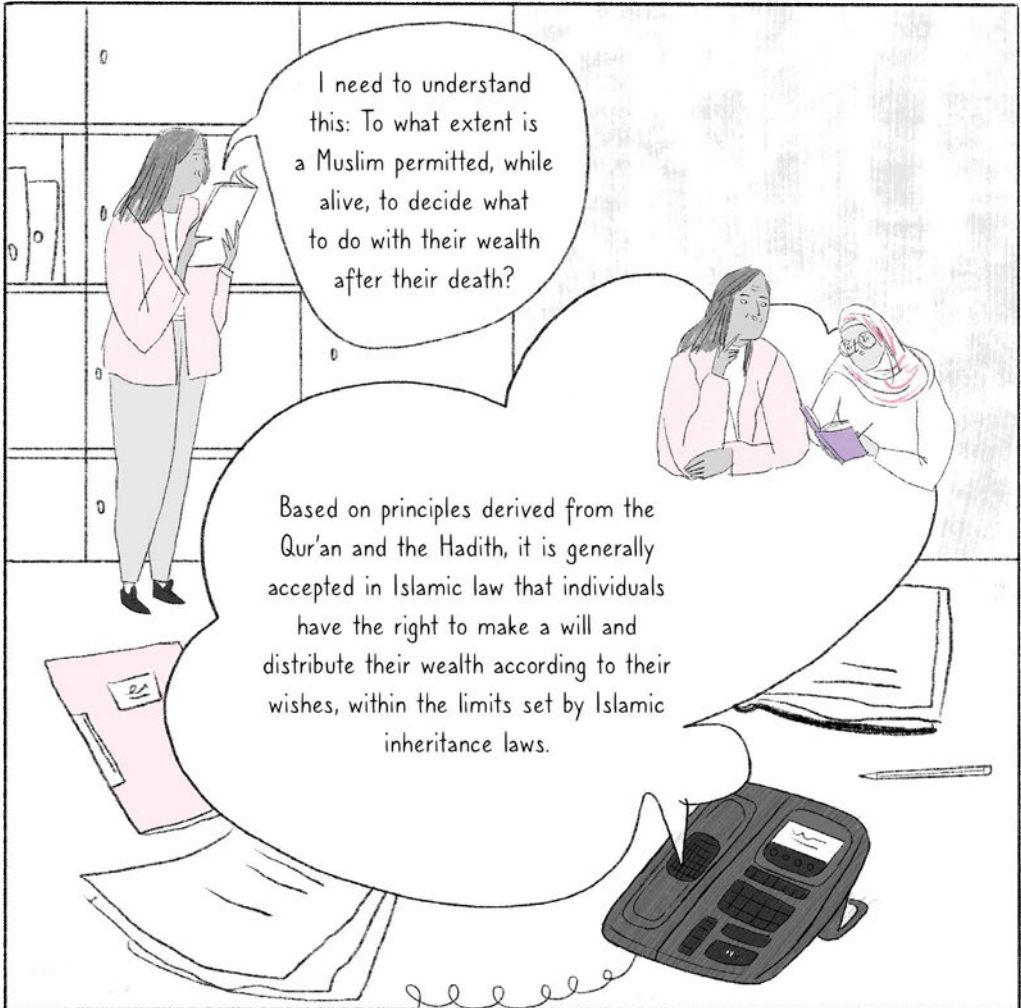
I'm working on an inheritance case. A man is suing his sister for receiving an equal share. Is that in accordance with Islamic law?



Give me a second to retrieve the file on inheritance in Islam.



Yes, can you hear me? I've got it. Here it is.



Die Sure an-Nisā'says:  
"For men there is a share in what  
their parents and close relatives  
leave, and for women there is a  
share in what their parents and  
close relatives leave – whether it  
is little or much. These are  
obligatory shares."(4:7)

Fachr ad-Dīn al-Rāzī  
(1149-1209) confirms  
that, claiming ...



"Know that the explicit  
meaning of this verse  
validates the legitimacy  
of writing a will about  
all or part of my wealth  
as I please".



Saba, dear, that  
was extremely  
helpful. Jazakillahu  
Khairan!



A few weeks later

Islamic Law

Justice and  
Beauty in  
Muslim  
Marriage



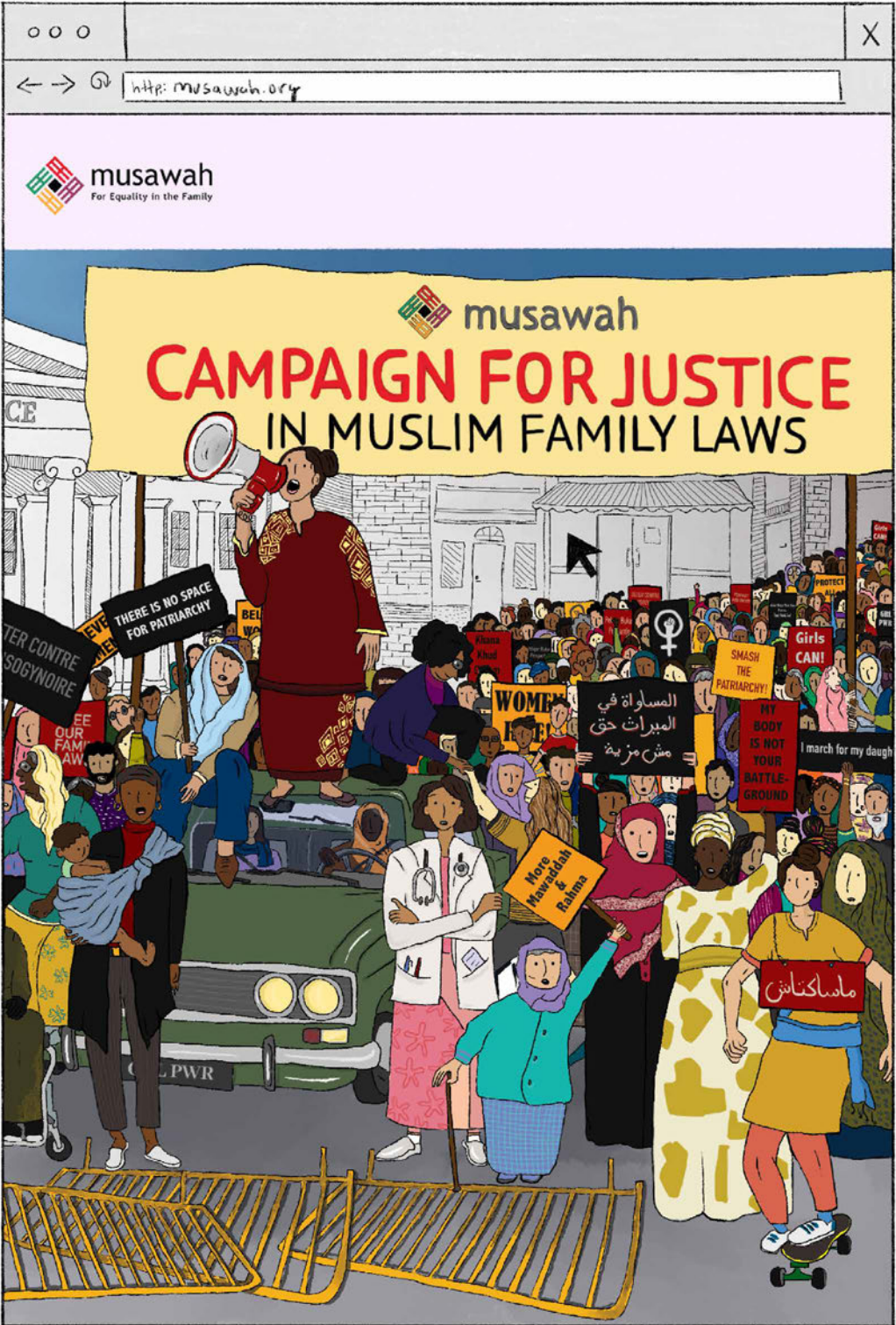
Thank you for joining me at the library.

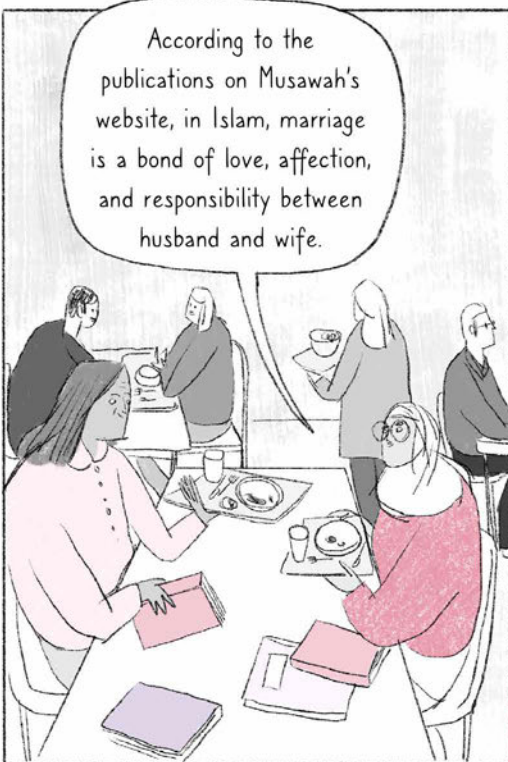
Sure! I'd love to learn more about this. It's treated as so taboo to talk about.

Yes, unfortunately, sexual violence in marriages is a harsh reality that occurs everywhere.









According to the publications on Musawah's website, in Islam, marriage is a bond of love, affection, and responsibility between husband and wife.



There's an Islamic term used in this context, Mubadala ...

It basically means that sexual relations between husband and wife should be reciprocal.



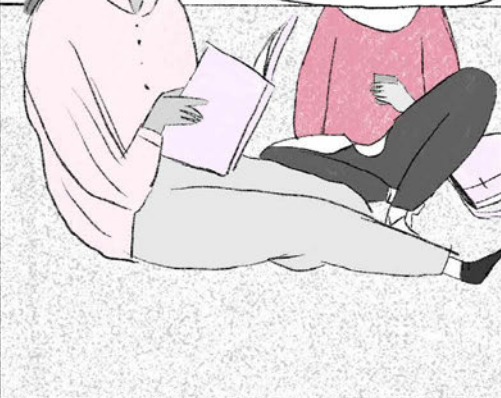
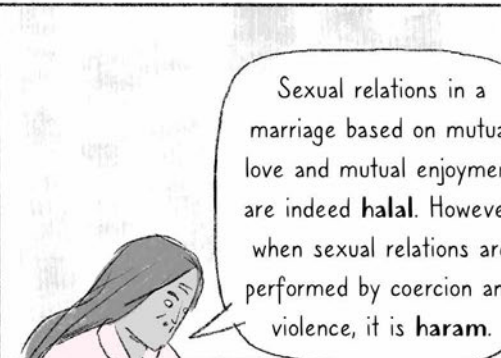
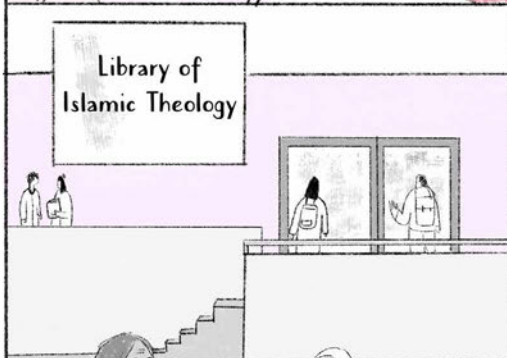
Look, it is based on this verse in the Qur'an.

"Your spouses are a garment for you as you are for them."  
(Surah 2: 187)





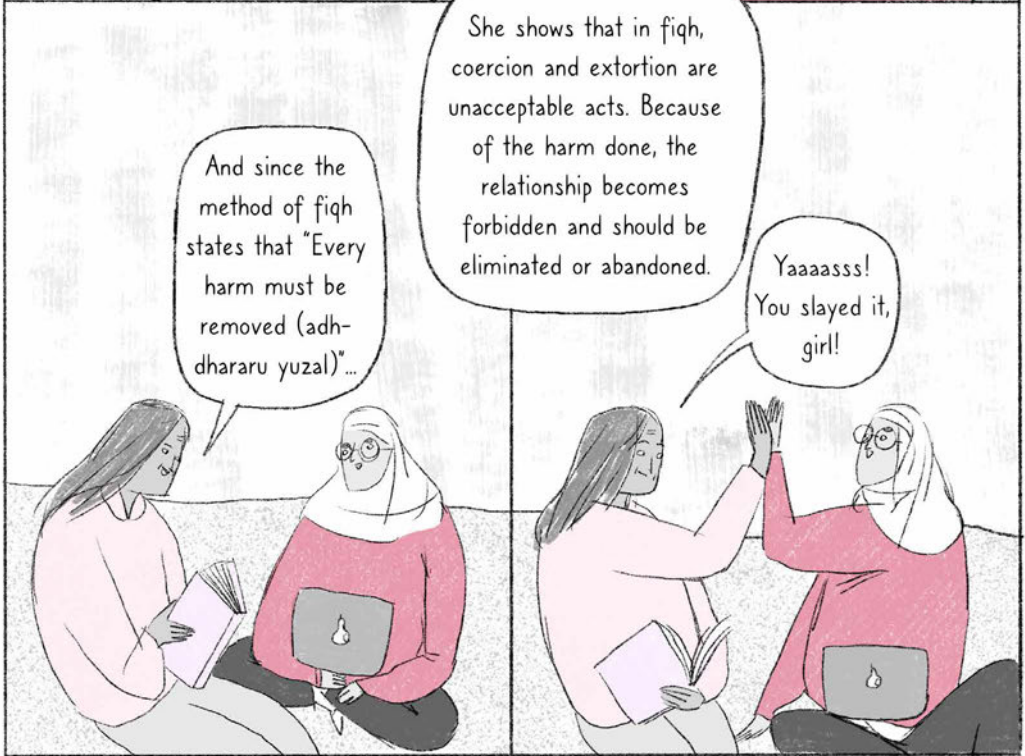
“And one of His Ayaat (signs) is that He created azwaj (mates) for you from anfusikom (your souls) that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.”  
(30:21)





I have it!  
Look!

Ziba Mir-Hosseini,  
co-founder of  
Musawah, wrote a lot  
about the topic.



And since the  
method of fiqh  
states that "Every  
harm must be  
removed (adh-  
dhararu yuzal)"...

She shows that in fiqh,  
coercion and extortion are  
unacceptable acts. Because  
of the harm done, the  
relationship becomes  
forbidden and should be  
eliminated or abandoned.

Yaaaaasss!  
You slayed it,  
girl!

A few months later

I'm so excited to meet the team from Sisters in Islam. Thanks for inviting me to this seminar.

You've been doing an outstanding job and have shown remarkable growth. You're going to be a great lawyer one day.

EG

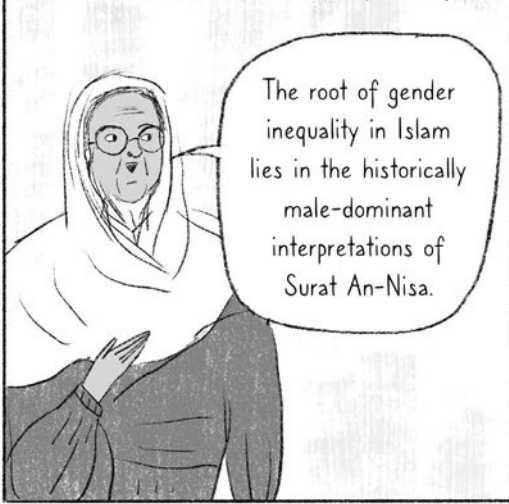
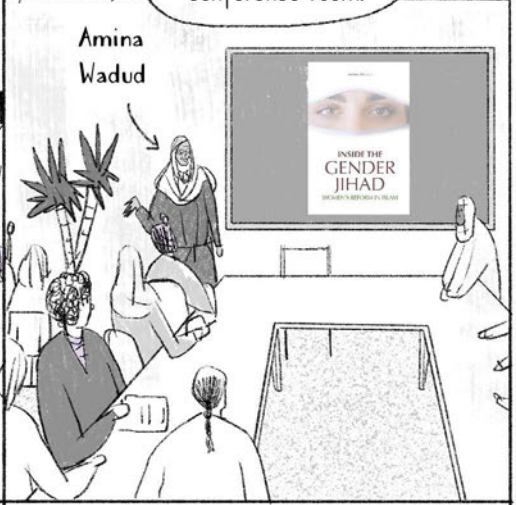
Sisters in Islam,  
3rd Floor

Office 2nd Floor

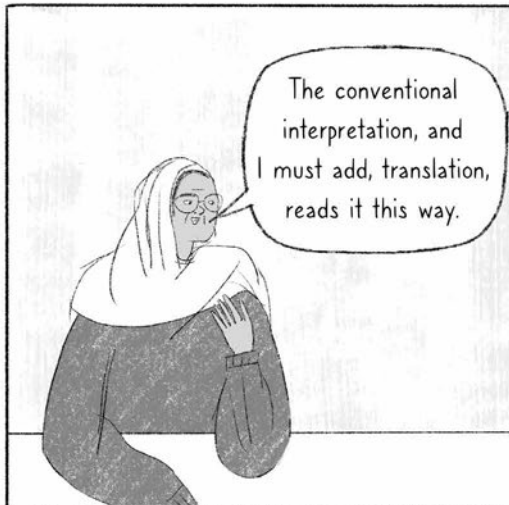
Co-Working  
1st Floor

It's here.

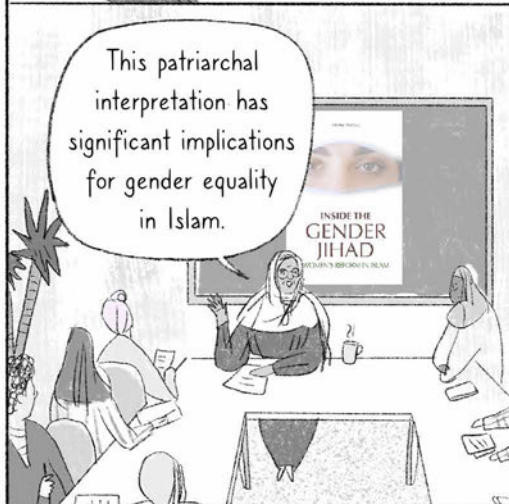
Sisters in Islam  
Advocacy, Research, Outreach &  
Empowerment Legal Advisory



"O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single nafs (soul) and from it created its zawj (mate) and from them twin hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women."  
 (4:1) Amina Wadud



"O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and women."  
(4:1)



I  
God's primary creation is man, not woman, since woman is believed to have been created from man (Adam) and is therefore ontologically derivative.

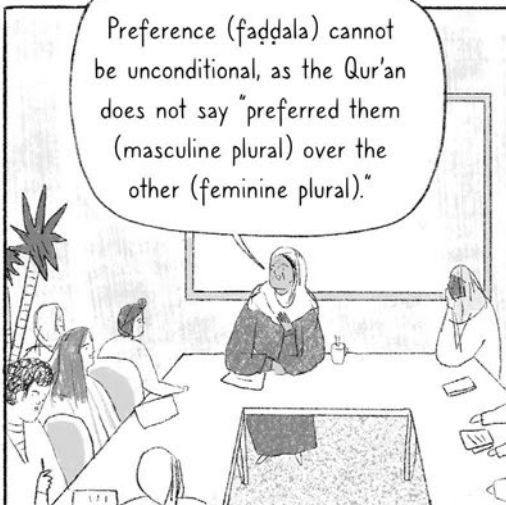
II  
That woman was created not only from man but for man, which makes her existence merely instrumental and not of fundamental importance.






"Men are quawwuna 'ala (are in charge of, guardian of/ superior to/have authority over) women because Allah faddala (hath made the one of them to excel the other/ preferred some of them over others), and because they spend of their property (for the support of women)."  
(4:34)

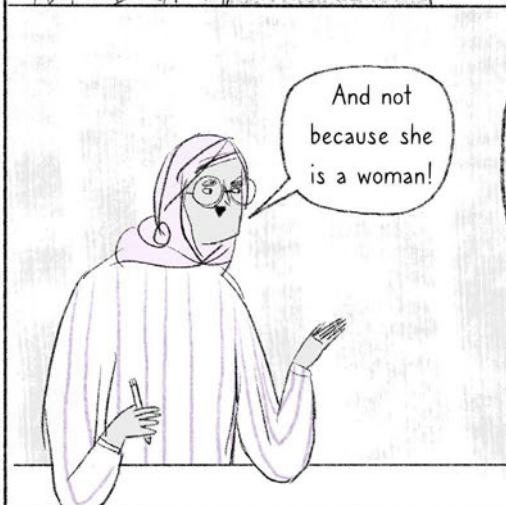





Preference (faḍḍala) cannot be unconditional, as the Qur'an does not say "preferred them (masculine plural) over the other (feminine plural)."




It says preferred ba'd (some) over ba'd (others). Qawwammuna is a protection of the wife because she is a mother.



And not because she is a woman!




So, not only does the verse specifically refer to marital relations, and not relationships between a brother and his sister, ...

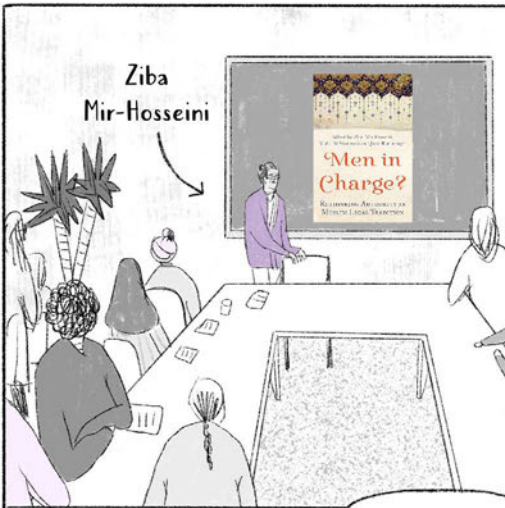


...or a father and his daughter. It emphasizes male responsibility toward his wife rather than his superiority?

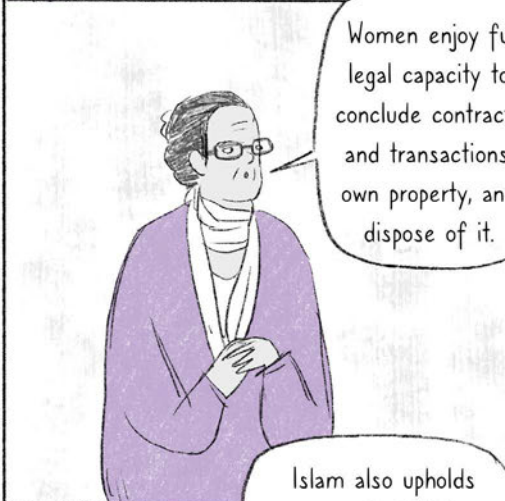
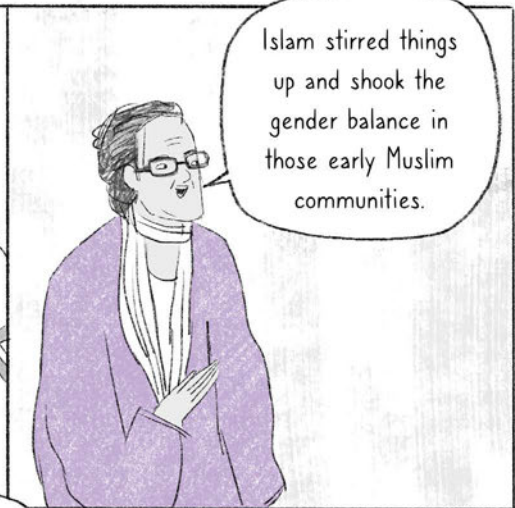
Exactly!



To delve deeper into the topic of gender equality in marriage, I'm delighted to introduce Prof. Ziba Mir-Hosseini.



Islam stirred things up and shook the gender balance in those early Muslim communities.

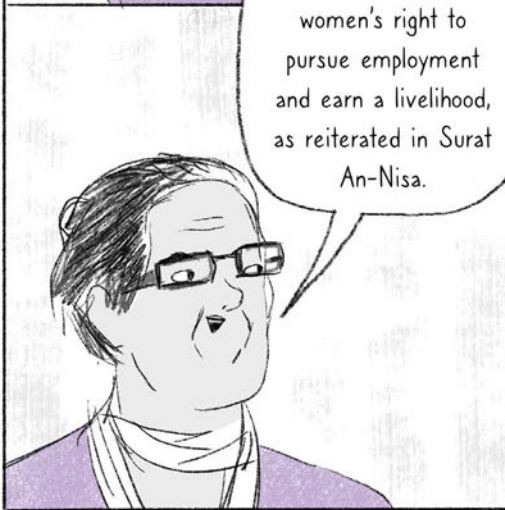


Women enjoy full legal capacity to conclude contracts and transactions, own property, and dispose of it.



Including married women?

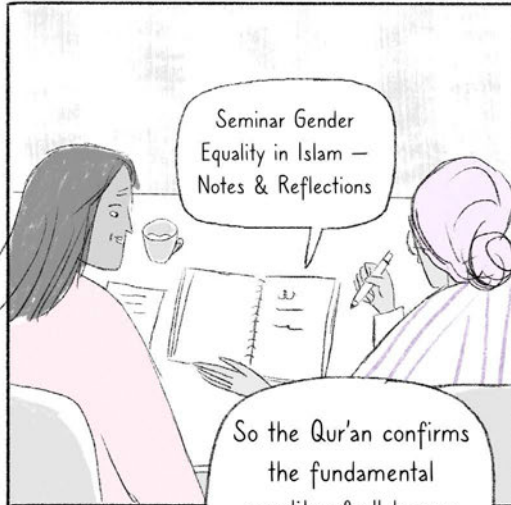
Marriage does not affect a woman's status in this regard, and a married woman is not required to obtain her husband's permission when dealing with her own assets.



Islam also upholds women's right to pursue employment and earn a livelihood, as reiterated in Surat An-Nisa.

**"Men are entitled to what they have earned and women are entitled to what they have earned."**  
(4:32)





Seminar Gender Equality in Islam - Notes & Reflections

So the Qur'an confirms the fundamental equality of all human beings and their unity of origin.



What I gathered from today's presentations is that all humans originate from a single nafs (soul), a soul that God breathed into humankind.



This also means that the fundamental equality of all human beings is divinely ordained and cannot be diminished by any individual.

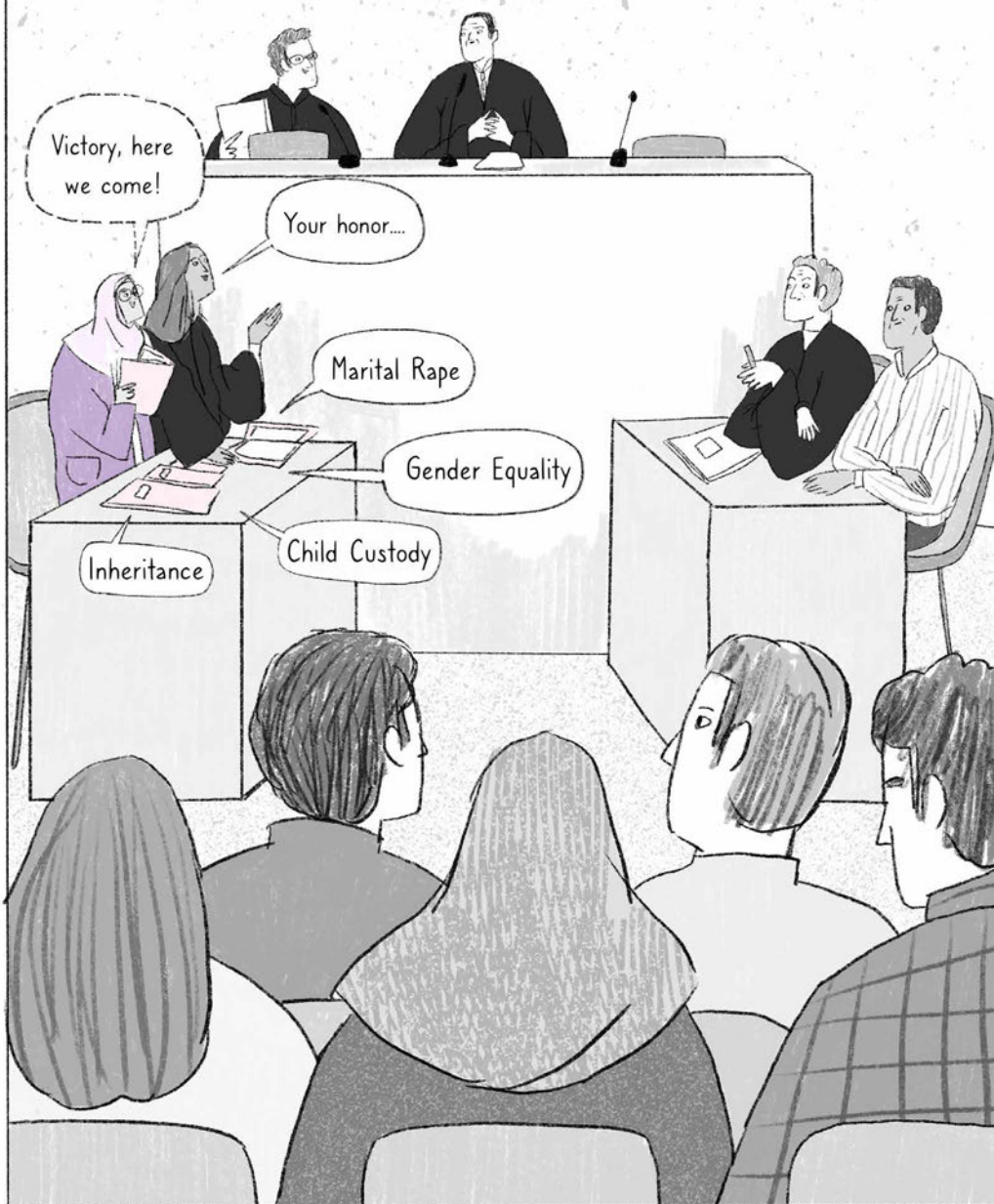


What an inspiring day!



EG

After Months of Hard Work



# Feminist Tafsir & Feminist Ijtihad

## Pop Quiz:

What is the first Ayah (verse) revealed to the Prophet Muhammad?

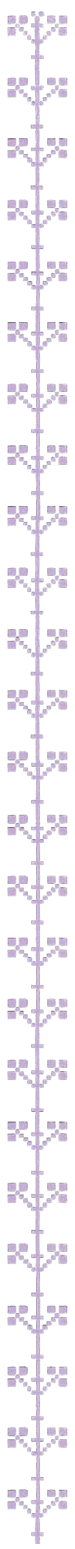
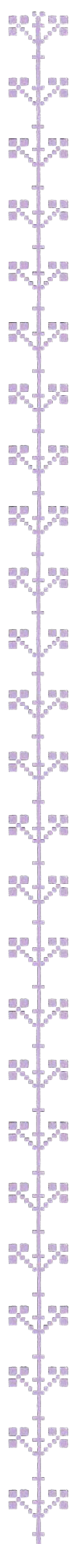
## Answer:

The Ayah that is considered by Muslims as the first revelation to the Prophet is in Surah Al-'Alaq:

» Read, in the name of your Lord« (96:1) **اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ**

The right to acquire knowledge is strongly emphasized in the Qur'an. Reading and seeking information are considered core elements of the Islamic worldview. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of striving for knowledge and advises believers (of all genders) to pray for the improvement of knowledge. The word Qur'an القرآن is derived from the verb qara'a (to read), and its first message calls for reading. All references to 'ilm (knowledge) are gender-neutral and not directed towards a specific gender. A famous prayer of Prophet Muhammad is: »Oh Allah, Grant me knowledge of the ultimate nature of things!«. And one of the most well-known Hadiths states: »Seek knowledge even if you have to go as far as China«, meaning that knowledge can be acquired from anywhere and should not be limited to Arabic or Muslim knowledge.

Muslim feminists want to have the right to read and understand the Qur'an for themselves, instead of just accepting what others tell them it means. They want to read and understand the Qur'an, using **Ijtihad**, which involves independent thinking and critical examination of religious texts like the Qur'an. They believe that they should have the freedom to think and interpret religious texts on their own. They seek to explore new ways of practicing Islam that promote equality and respect for all individuals, regardless of gender, and revisit old, marginalized, and silenced ones. Muslim feminists also engage in a concept called **feminist Tafsir**, which involves interpreting and explaining the Qur'an from a feminist perspective. They aim to demonstrate that the Qur'an supports the notion that all individuals, regardless of gender, should be treated equally and could make informed choices. They firmly believe that the Qur'an is a message from Allah and that it teaches essential principles, including the equality of all people. They strive to uphold the idea that all Muslims should have the right to express their true selves and make well-informed choices based on the teachings of the Qur'an.



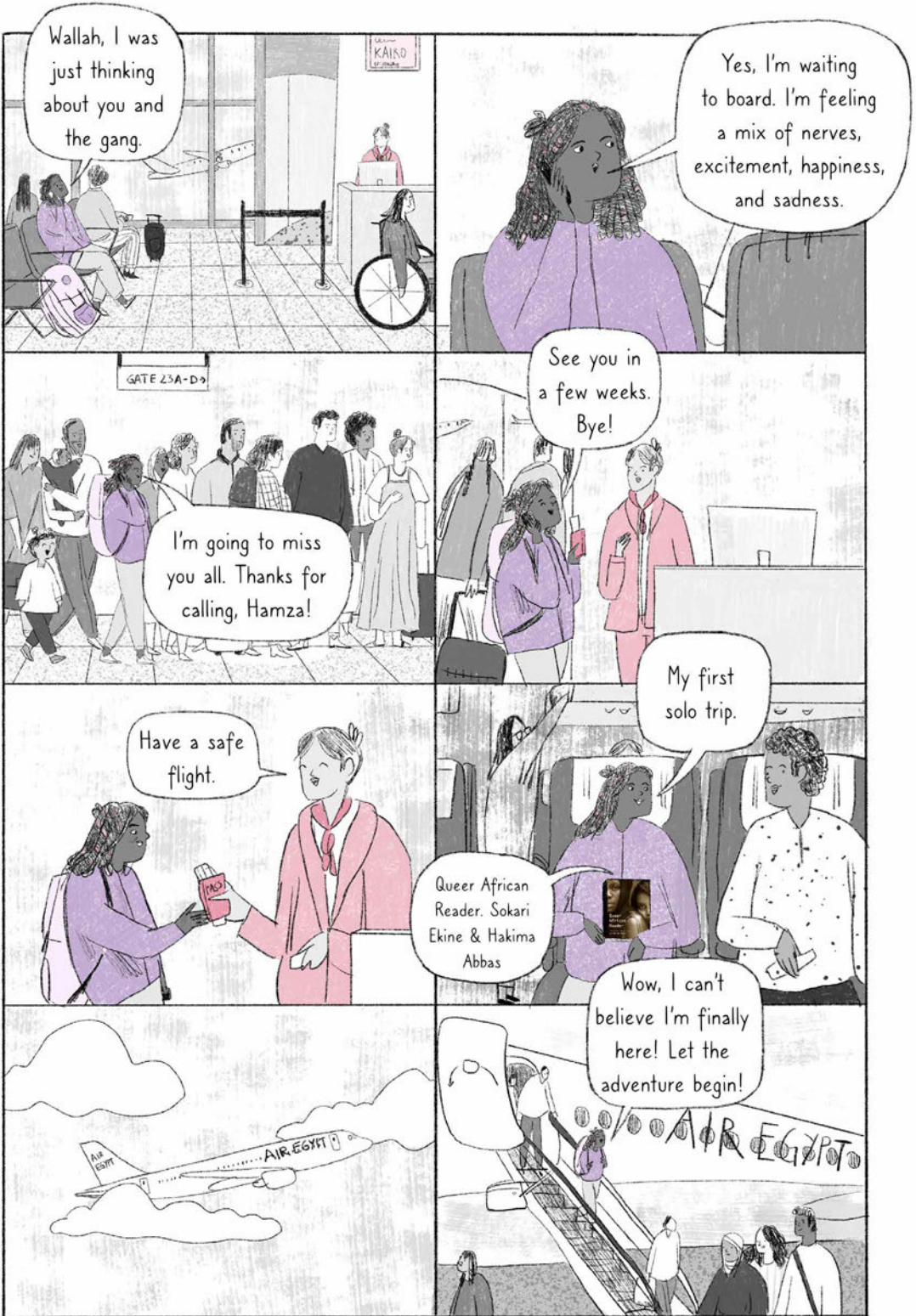
Chapter Six

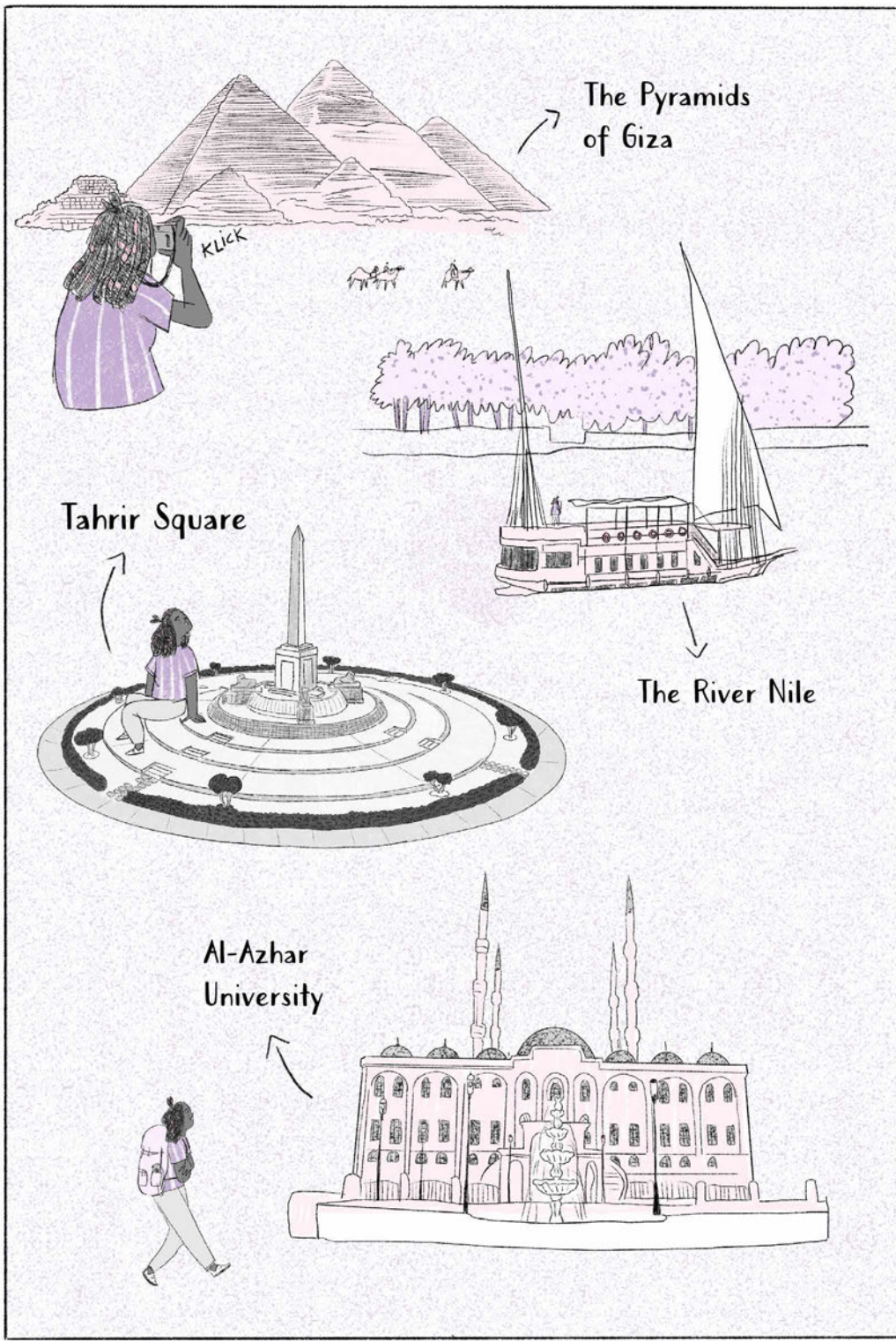
Echoes of the Past



Summer Break



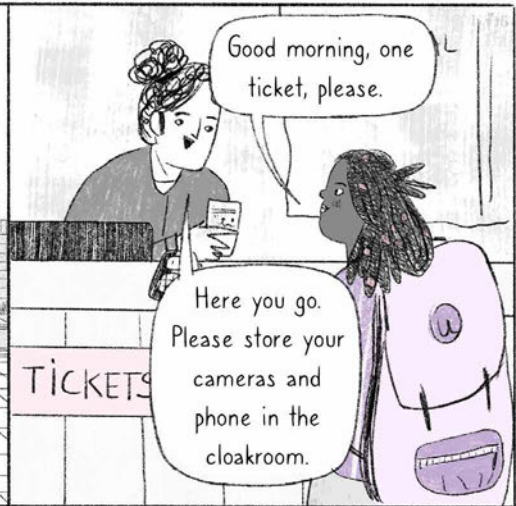




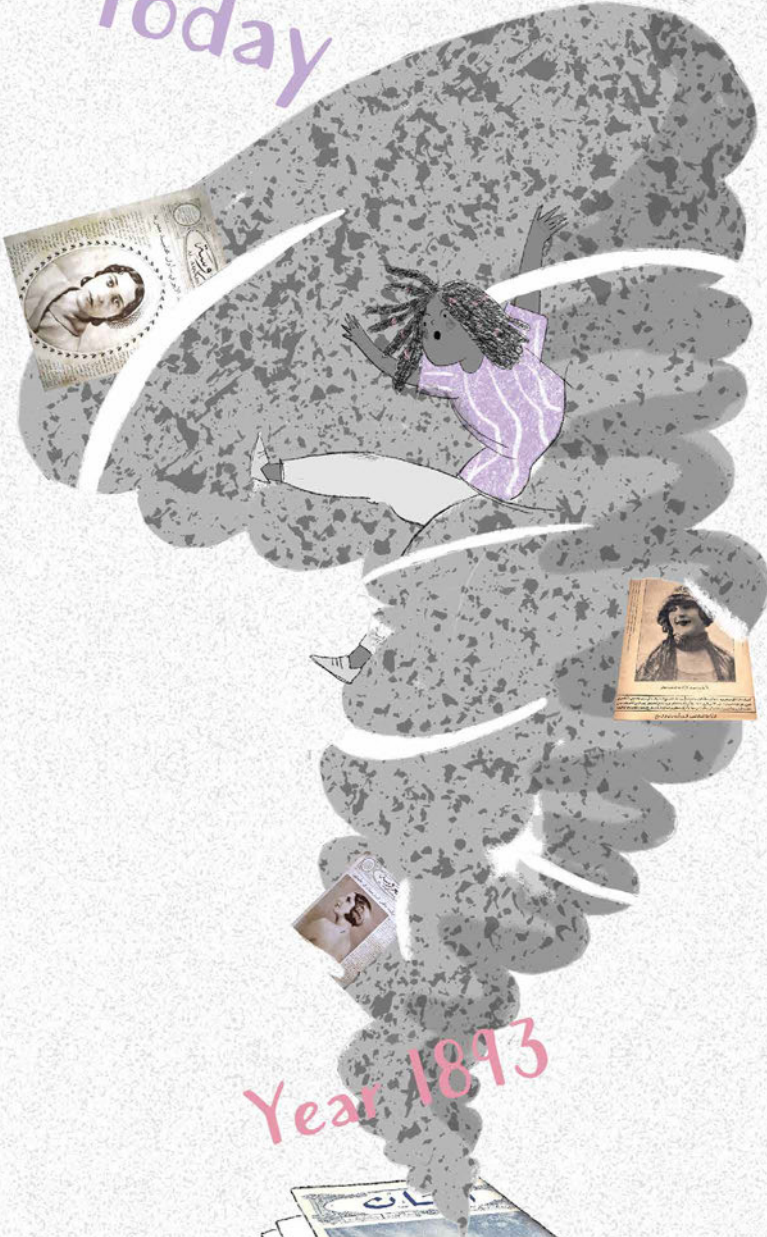




I wish I could capture this in a photo. It's incredible how it has endured.

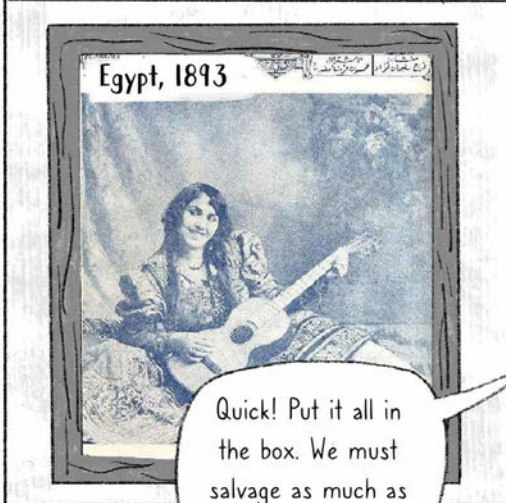
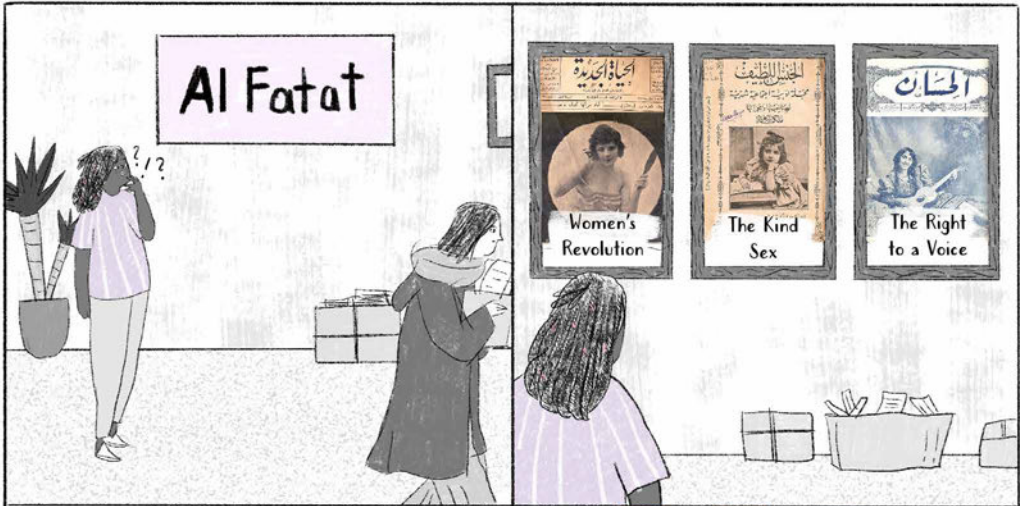


Today



Year 1893





Quick! Put it all in the box. We must salvage as much as we can.





Basic literacy only? And once they finish elementary, they're supposed to focus on domestic skills like sewing and embroidery? How can I encourage my female students to pursue higher education?

**Restricting Access to Education**

My article got rejected! They claim we're disrupting the social order! We're forbidden from participating in demonstrations or having a voice in public!

**Limiting women's participation in public life**

And now Lord Cromer introduces new laws that strengthen male authority in marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance.

**Undermining women's rights**



Somewhere else

Women are writing articles and making their voices heard.

Evelyn Baring,  
1st Earl of Cromer  
(1841-1917)  
British Statesman and  
Colonial Administrator  
Appointed the Controller  
General of Egypt

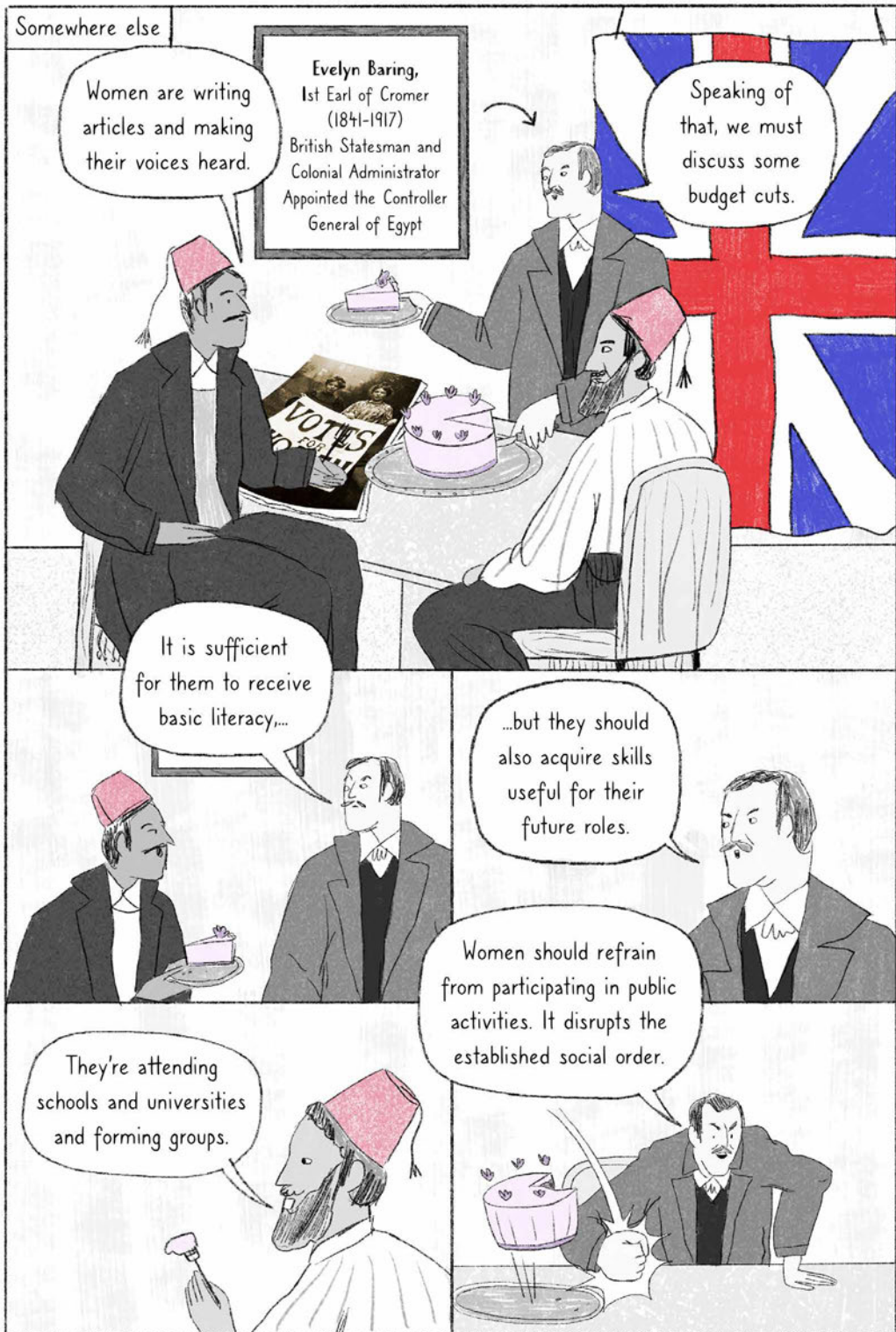
Speaking of that, we must discuss some budget cuts.

It is sufficient for them to receive basic literacy,...

...but they should also acquire skills useful for their future roles.

Women should refrain from participating in public activities. It disrupts the established social order.

They're attending schools and universities and forming groups.





You see, dear? The British claim they want to "civilize" and "liberate" us.



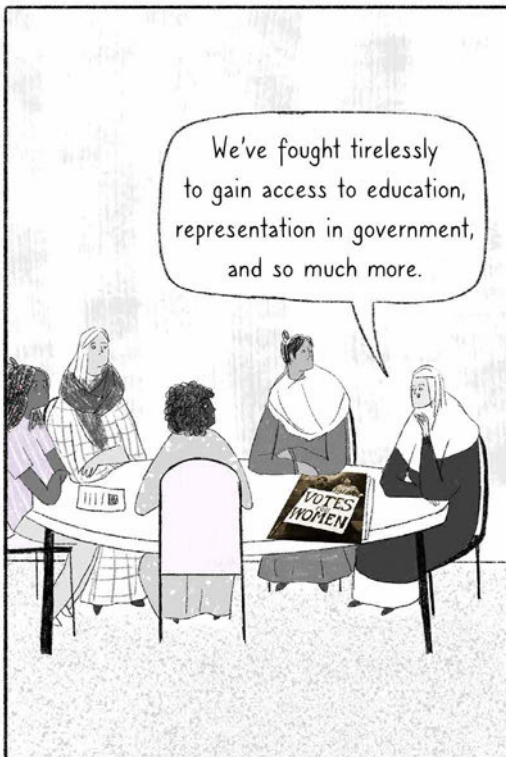
But what are they really doing? Collaborating with a select few of Egypt's elite to enforce their colonial control and perpetuate gender inequality.



Cromer's misogyny while he claims to fight for women's rights in Egypt is simply appalling.



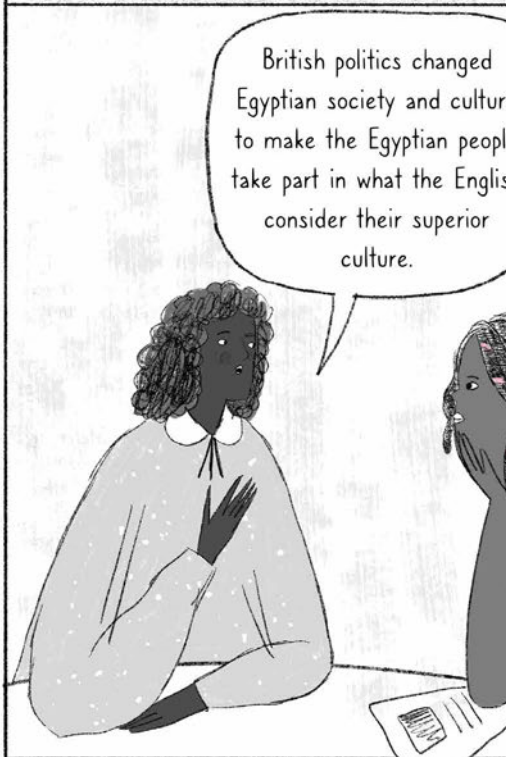
Did you know that he's the president of the Men's League for Opposing Women's Suffrage?



We've fought tirelessly to gain access to education, representation in government, and so much more.



And we've had some remarkable Brothers standing beside us, I must say!

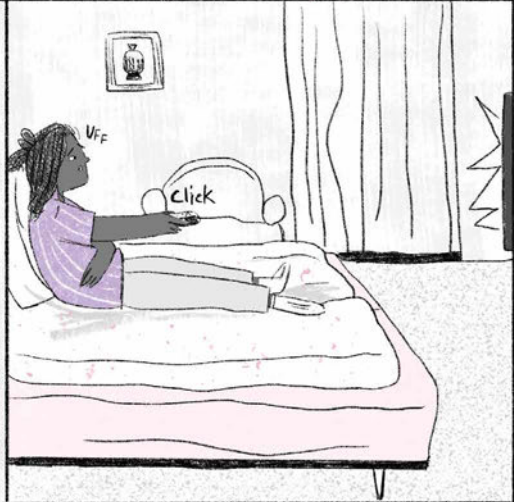


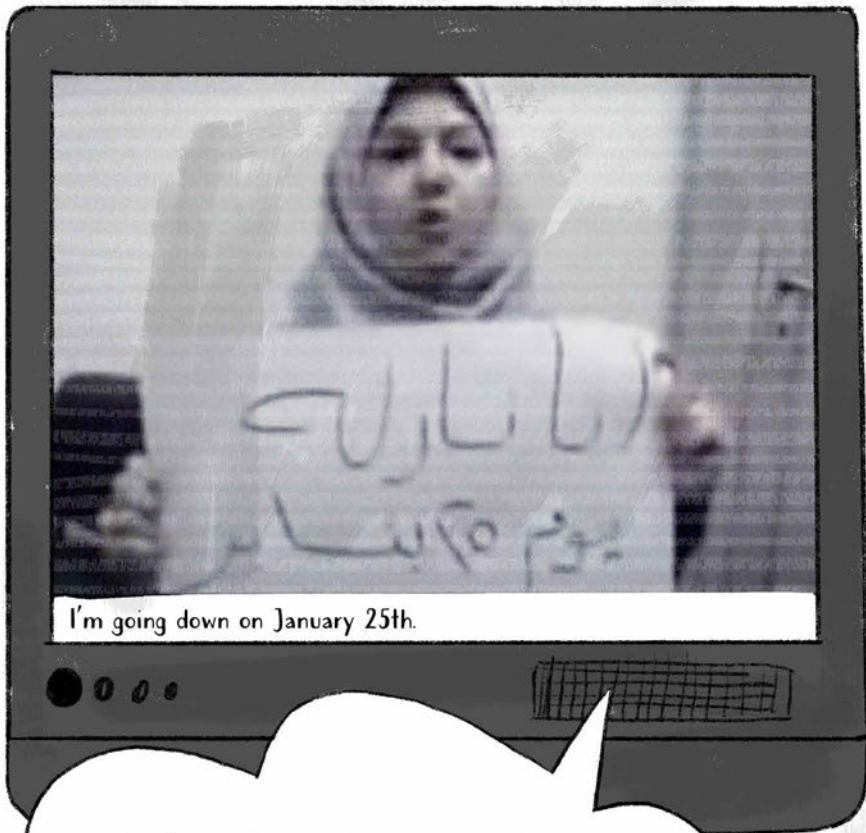
British politics changed Egyptian society and culture to make the Egyptian people take part in what the English consider their superior culture.



It dehumanized the Egyptian people, magnifying the double-othering experienced by Egyptian women due to our race, religious beliefs, and gender.





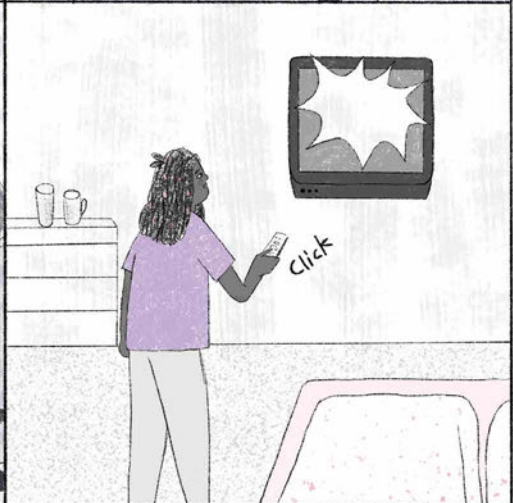
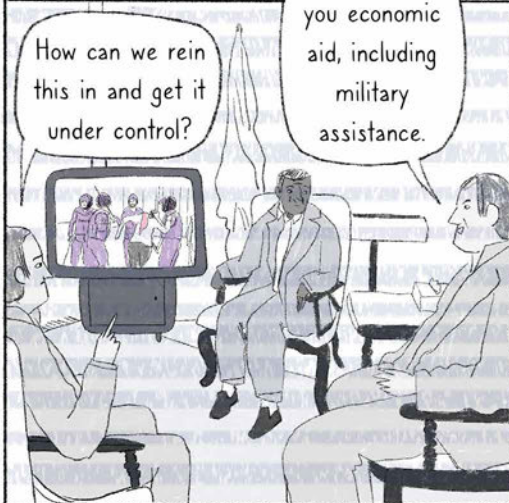
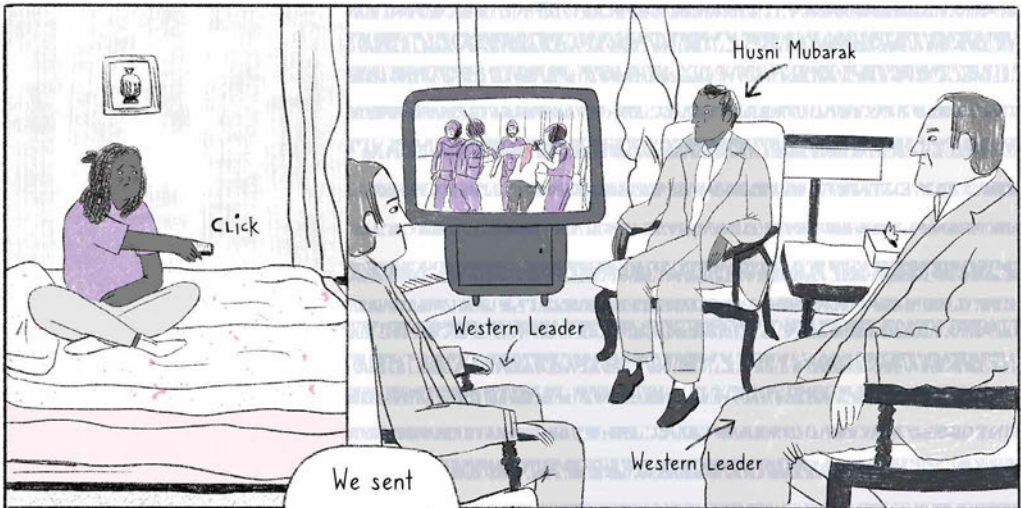


Don't be afraid of the government, fear none but God! God tells us:

**"Indeed, Allāh will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."**

(13:11)

Don't think you can be safe anymore!  
None of us are! Come down with us, and demand your rights, my rights, your family's rights.





## Mariama's Journey- Blog

### **Reflections from my recent journey to the Global South**

Traveling to the Global South made me realize the ever-lasting impact of European colonialism on gender power relations in previously colonized countries. Whether it was the colonized elites or the Western colonizers, patriarchy thrived with their collaboration. Can we discuss gender relations and women's rights in Muslim countries without acknowledging colonialism?

Doubtful.

It's a stark reminder that even today, Western powers maintain a grip on many other countries, and this is why struggles such as those faced by women seem to be repeating, as the structures that colonialism established remain firmly in place.



# Patriarchy

Patriarchy comes from the Greek (patēr) "father or chief" and (arkhē), "domination, authority, sovereignty". Patriarchy is a social system that has been in place for a long time (too long in my opinion). In a patriarchy, certain positions of power and privilege, like being in charge at home, at a big company or in the government, are mostly held by men. It means that men are often seen as more important or have more authority than women. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that not everyone fits neatly into this binary classification. There are individuals who do not identify within this traditional framework and still suffer under the patriarchy. Patriarchy is a pattern that has been there for a long time in many societies. But more than just a pattern, patriarchy also promotes laws and other social structures that help maintain the power and privileges in the hands of men. These laws and structures are like building blocks that hold the system in place. For example, in some places, there might be laws that treat people differently. These laws might give men more rights and opportunities while limiting what women can do. This can make it harder for women, and other marginalized groups, to have the same chances and opportunities as men. There are also other social structures, like traditions and expectations, that reinforce the idea that men should be in charge and have more power. These structures can include things like expectations about gender roles, where men are expected to be strong and leaders, while women are expected to be nurturing and submissive. These laws and social structures are like a big puzzle that keeps the system of patriarchy in place. But it's important to know that these things can change. People can work together to challenge and change these laws and structures to create a more equal and fair society.

## **Patriarchy Wears Many Masks!**

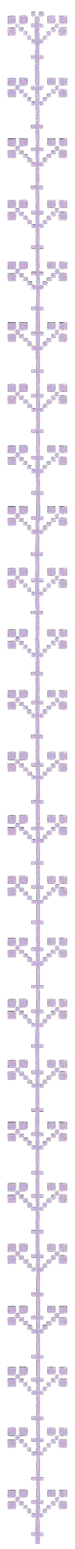
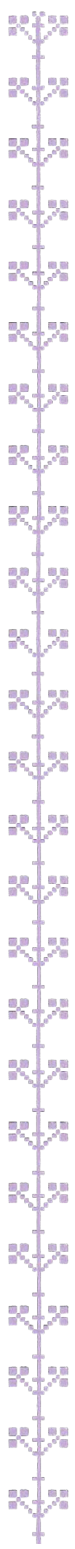
Different societies have different traditions, beliefs, and power structures that influence how patriarchy operates within them. And to fight patriarchy and change this system, we need to understand how it works and what supports it.

For example, in many cultures, biology was used as a main brick to support patriarchy. People believed that men and women are different because of their biology. Simone de Beauvoir, a famous French feminist, challenged this idea that was used to justify women's inferiority and women's oppression. She wrote the book *The Second Sex*, where she said something really

important. She said, "One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one." This means that being a woman is not just about biology, but it's something that society teaches us. Beauvoir explained that men used the idea of biological differences to justify treating women unfairly. But she argued that this was not fair and that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men. And to challenge these inequalities, women should have economic power.

Simone de Beauvoir approached the concept of biological differences not with outright rejection but with critical examination of their applications. Islamic feminists such as Amina Wadud offer a distinct perspective. They challenge the notion that gender inequality is inherently rooted in biological differences or that these differences are supported by specific Qur'anic verses. Instead, they attribute women's oppression in certain Islamic societies to the interpretative lens through which the Qur'an has been read and understood, emphasizing the role of hermeneutics in shaping societal norms. They say that some people have misunderstood the Qur'an and have used it to justify treating women unequally. Amina Wadud believes that biological differences, like being male or female, should not determine a person's value or importance in Islam. She says that being a woman does not limit her abilities or her role as a khalifah (a president of a country or a leader of a community). She believes that women have the same agency, or power to act, as men, and this power has been given to them by God.



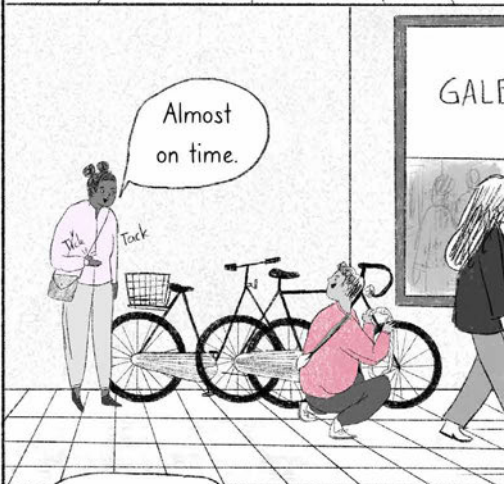


Chapter Seven

# Breaking Boundaries









Breaking Barriers:  
Muslim Women  
Reclaiming Agency



Exhibition rooms

# Helen Zughuib\*\*

## — Changing Perceptions

Interesting! Helen Zughuib is actually a Christian Lebanese artist. Post 9/11, she witnessed how the abaya was being presented as a symbol of oppression of Muslim women. That's why she started this work.

This one looks like a Mondrian!

Abaya Mondrian, 15x20"  
Gouache on board, 2008

Yeah, pretty much!  
The artist wanted to juxtapose the black abaya with elements from known Western artists, like Mondrian.

The Red Veil, 15x20"  
Gouache on board, 2010

So, she mixes elements of both the 'West' and the 'East'?

Yes! But there's always the feeling that you must choose. Like you can't be both, or more.



Do you notice any difference with this one? In all other images the woman's mouth is covered, sometimes even her entire face. And yet this blonde's mouth here is not.



Abaya Leger, 15x20"  
Gouache on board, 2008

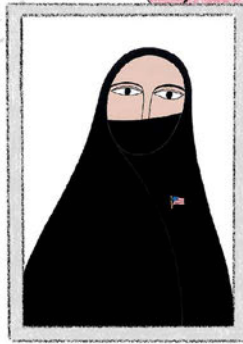
Still! It shows that the blonde one, meaning of course, the Western woman, is free, as she can speak if she wants. But the Muslim woman is silenced.



Could it be the same woman? Maybe the covered one IS the blonde?



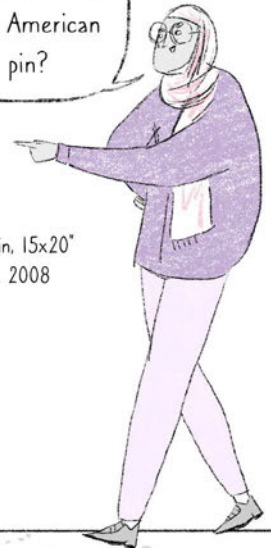
Look at this one here. Why does she have the American flag pin?



Abaya with Flag Pin, 15x20"  
Gouache on board, 2008



Maybe she wants to show that Arabs, or Muslims, can be American as well? Like us! We can be Muslims AND Europeans!



\* 'abāya: long-sleeve, loose garment that covers the whole body, traditionally worn by both men and women.

\*\*All artwork on this double page: © Helen Zughuib, www.hzughuib.com

I love this artist. I often check her blog. She's a psychologist and self-taught comic artist and illustrator. And she's half Tunisian, half German. Just like you, Hamza - half and half.

Hey, I'm more than just the sum of my parts! And just like this one, I am still part of the puzzle that makes Germany what it is.

Soufeina Hamed\*

tuffix



Why do we need labels anyway?

Like this artwork, we are all so many things, you can't just put us into one category.



I sometimes think those at the top want to fool us, especially as we navigate through all these labels and categories, trying hard to find ourselves in this crazy store. I just want to figure out who I can be.

Hang in there, habibti! They'll save you! Ha ha ha



Just like you showed the other day in your presentation, Mariama. Society singles out Islam as the only patriarchal religion. As if Christians or 'secular' Germans got rid of their patriarchy.

OMG! Why are white women so fixated with my Hijab? Can't they accept that I love wearing it? Some white feminists don't get that different women have different experiences and beliefs. They can't grasp that you can be religious and feminist too!

Do you really feel this way?

WAS SOLL'S? DU WIRST ES EH NIE ALLEN RECHT MACHEN.



"HM, HEADSCARF. TOO FUNDAMENTALIST."

"HM, JEANS. TOO LIBERAL."

It's tough, Hamza. Dealing with racism from outsiders who think they know better, and then facing power struggles about gender within our own community. It feels like a constant battle, no matter where we look.

Absolutely! As Muslim hijabi women, we deal with a double patriarchy - one from our own community and another from society at large. And seriously, why is everyone so obsessed with what we wear?



Beyond Faith

Look! The artist here captures the style of small businesses set up by first-generation immigrants in the UK.



My parents are first-generation immigrants in Germany. I wonder what their experiences were like.



UNGLISH

At least they had their own businesses, unlike our grandparents who were brought here to do all the dirty work.

HA! This artist calls herself "Unghish," a mix of Urdu and English!

Usarae is all about exploring the experience of having a dual identity as a first-generation immigrant.

She created her own label to express being a British Pakistani woman who speaks both languages, before others could label her. Awesome!

\*\*\*



- \* Afghan Cuisine.
- \*\* My English Parents
- \*\*\* Sweet Shop.

Yeah, I wonder how different it is for us, being second, third, or fourth generation here.

Sometimes, I feel like we don't have much in common with our parents. They had their stories and struggles, and we have ours. But both sides don't seem to understand each other.

# ALHAMDU\*

## Muslim Futurism



Saba Taj  
Prayer is better than  
sleep, 2016

Ah, cool! Alhamdu  
is short for al-hamdu  
li-llah

"ALHAMDU | MUSLIM  
FUTURISM"  
is an art project that  
explores Muslim  
Futurism. What's that  
all about?

It says Muslim Futurism  
imagines a Muslim future  
free from the oppression of  
today, set in an utopic  
tomorrow based on Islamic  
principles of justice.

I like this one!  
A diversity of Muslim  
people, mixed  
nationalities, living  
together peacefully  
in the future.

MIPSTERZ  
Tapestry of Muslim  
Futures, 2022



It looks as if she's staring right at me!



Interesting! It's like reversed Orientalism.



The woman challenges colonizers' fantasies about Muslim women and stares back, demanding answers for their atrocities.

Roya Ahmadi  
Imagining Ardabil,  
2020



I love how the women support each other here. That's true sisterhood, standing together against oppression.

MIPSTERZ  
Somewhere in  
America, 2013



# ALHAMDU

Muslim Futurism

Hisham Bharoocha  
ONE, 2022



Here the artist shows how Muslim culture is not one-dimensional but diverse and rich, woven by the experiences and identities of people from many different backgrounds.


Samira idroos  
the force is female,  
2020



# ALHAMDU

Muslim Futurism

Yasmeen Abedifard  
Caliphate, 2022



In this image, the artist explores the tensions that arise when colonialism describes non-Western cultures as "traditional" while considering themselves "modern."

Can a woman be seen as more than just an object? Does she always have to hide or disguise herself? Do these conditions have to involve fighting?

And she uses comics, animations, digital and analog art to depict gender and sexuality in Islamic art.

Sara Alfageeh  
The call, 2022



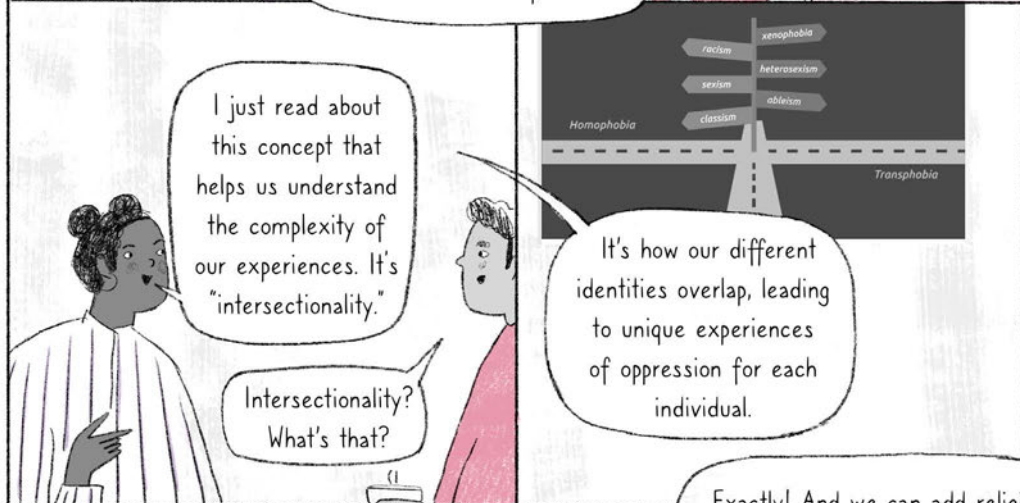
It's like, BOOM!!  
So powerful, right?

A joyous Muslim future begins  
when we resist against anti-Black  
racism, Islamophobia, Orientalism,  
homo- and transphobia, sexism,  
ableism, nationalism, imperialism,  
militarism, and everything  
in between.





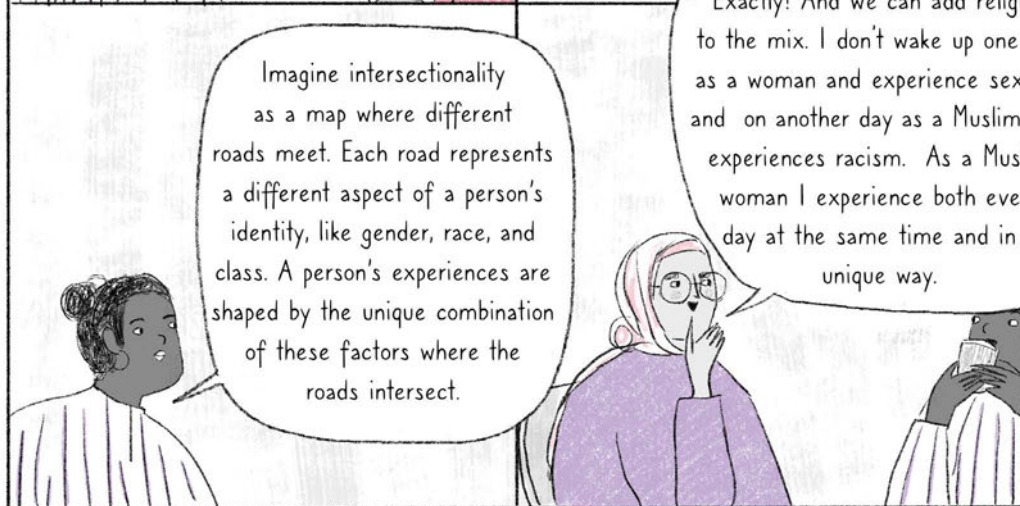
I gotta be honest, I never thought about seeing things from your perspectives. I thought we all shared similar experiences as Muslims in Europe.



I just read about this concept that helps us understand the complexity of our experiences. It's "intersectionality."

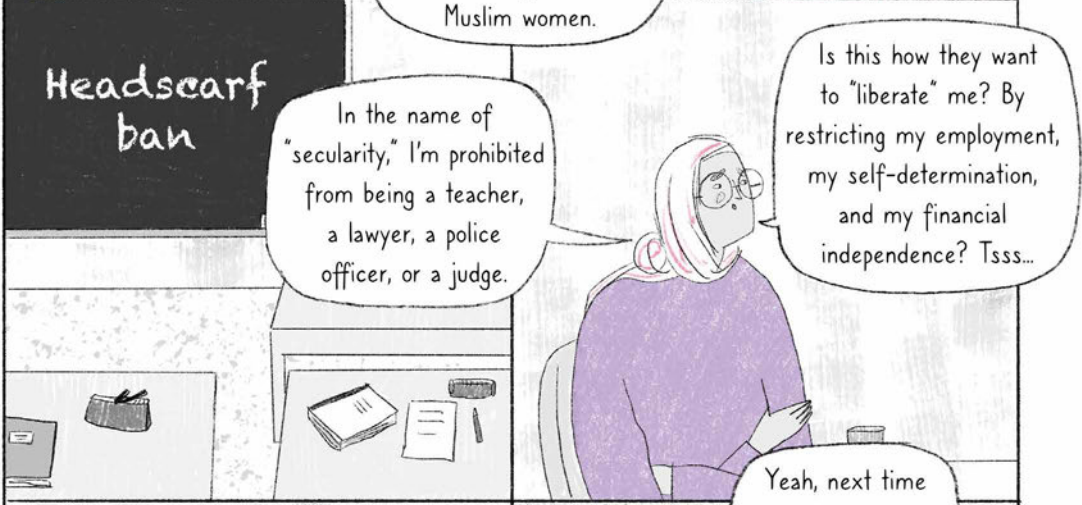
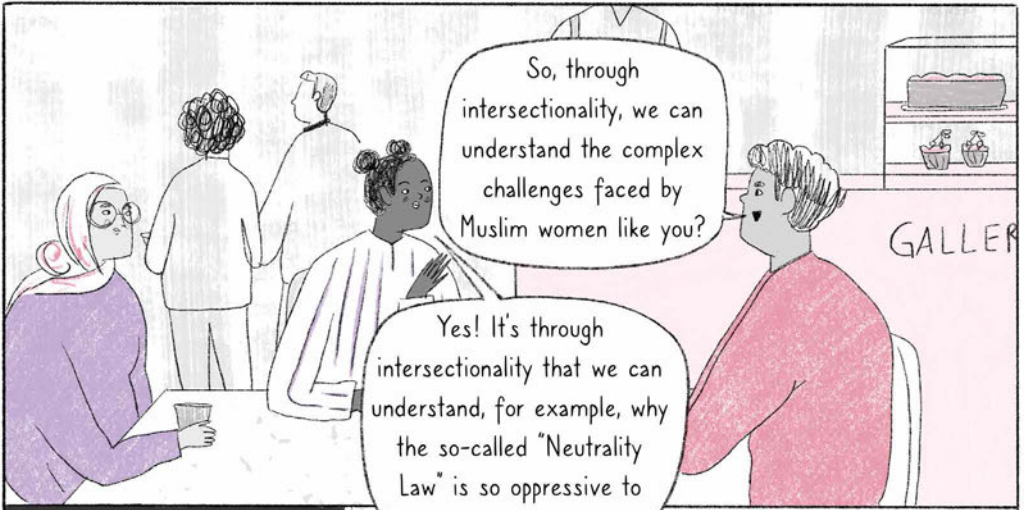
It's how our different identities overlap, leading to unique experiences of oppression for each individual.

Intersectionality? What's that?



Imagine intersectionality as a map where different roads meet. Each road represents a different aspect of a person's identity, like gender, race, and class. A person's experiences are shaped by the unique combination of these factors where the roads intersect.

Exactly! And we can add religion to the mix. I don't wake up one day as a woman and experience sexism, and on another day as a Muslim who experiences racism. As a Muslim woman I experience both every day at the same time and in a unique way.

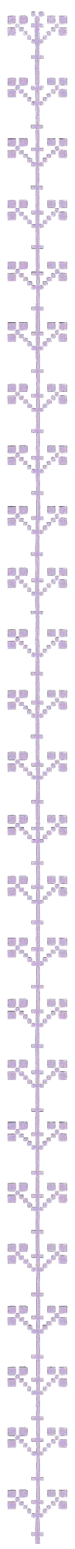
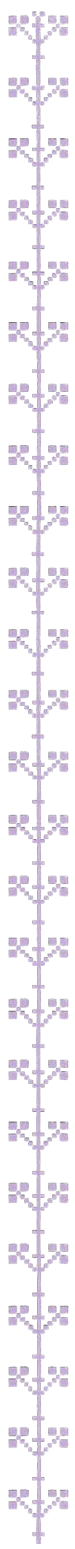


# Intersectionality

Intersectionality, based on Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework, is a concept that helps us understand how different forms of oppression and discrimination intersect and affect people's lives. To understand this, we can imagine a crossroad or traffic intersection, where each road is representing a different social identity or experience. People have multiple identities and experiences that shape who they are. These identities can include aspects like gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, ability, and more. Each of these identities is like a road leading to a person's unique experiences and challenges. Now, imagine that each of these roads has its own set of rules and traffic signals. These rules represent the different forms of discrimination and oppression that exist in society. For example, one road may have a red light representing gender-based discrimination, while another road may have a stop sign representing racial discrimination.

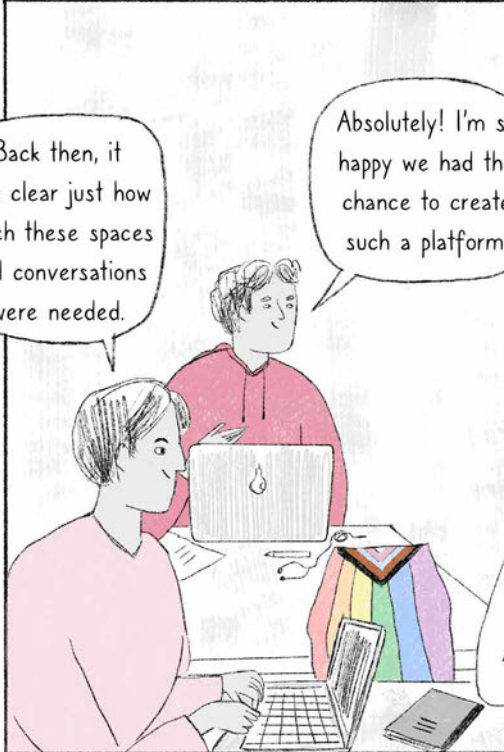
Here's where intersectionality comes into play. When we approach the crossroads, some people may find themselves at the intersection of multiple roads. For instance, a person could be both a woman and a Muslim, or a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and have a disability. These intersections represent the unique experiences and challenges faced by individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups. Now, imagine that the traffic signals and rules from each road start interacting and overlapping at the intersection. This can create a more complicated and sometimes unfair situation. For example, if both the road representing gender discrimination and the road representing racial discrimination have a red light, it means that someone at the intersection of those roads is facing the challenges of both forms of discrimination simultaneously. Intersectionality teaches us to pay attention to these intersections and recognize that people's experiences are not determined by just one form of discrimination. By understanding intersectionality, we can better address and fight against the interconnected systems of oppression and work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

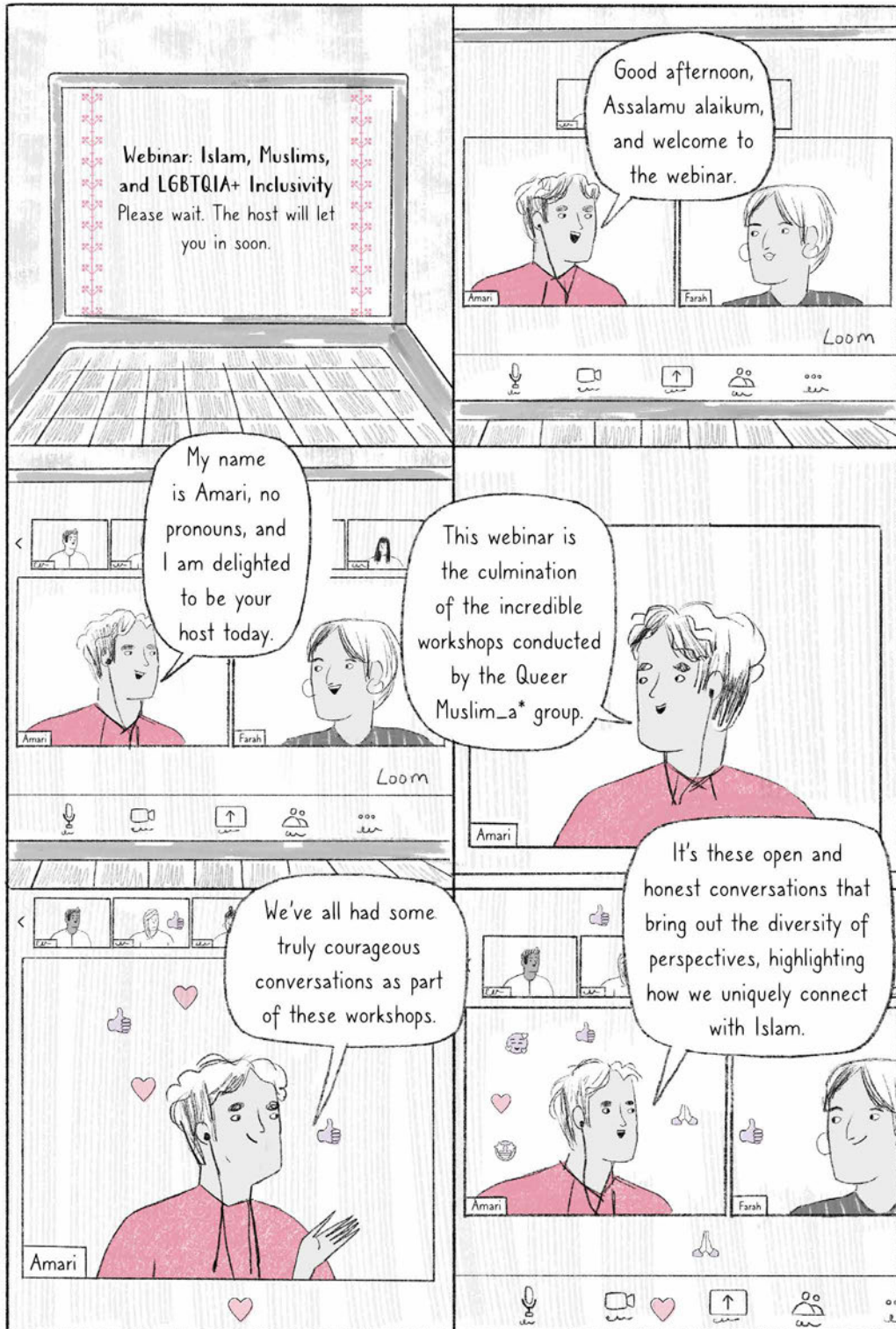
Just as traffic intersections can be busy and chaotic, intersections of identities can also be intricate. However, by recognizing and challenging power dynamics and oppressive structures, we can strive towards fostering equality and justice for everyone. Exploring our social identity is an ongoing journey. By acknowledging the social categories that make up who we are, and understanding how they are constructed, we can develop a deeper understanding of ourselves and others. Remember that each person's identity is unique and multifaceted, and it is crucial to respect and value the diverse experiences and challenges that different social categories bring.

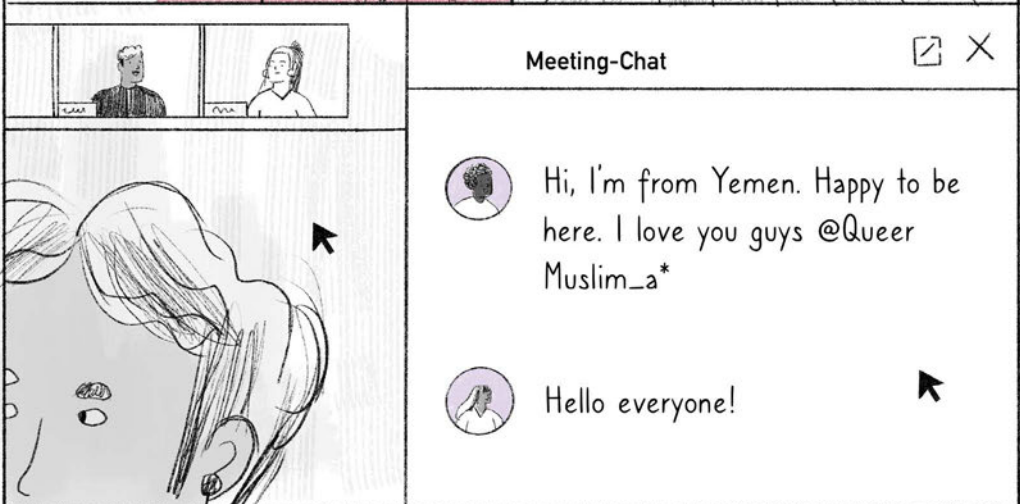


Chapter Eight  
Voices Unsilenced:  
A Queer Muslim  
Dialogue







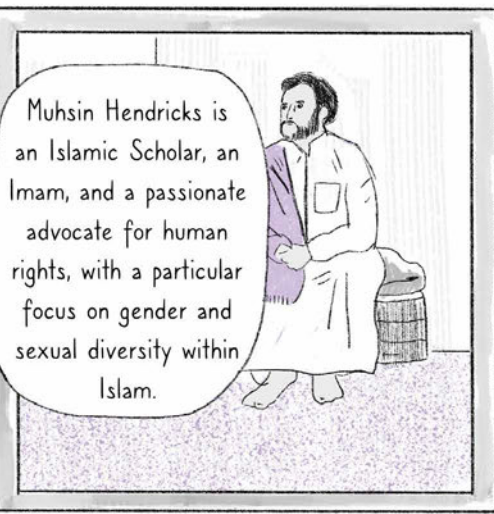




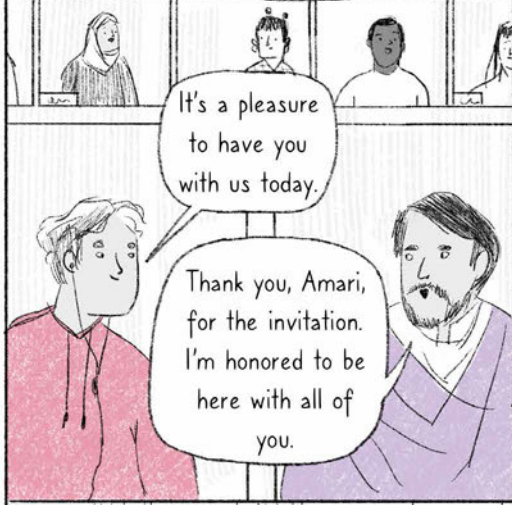




And now, without further ado, I'm excited to introduce our first guest speaker: Imam Muhsin Hendricks.

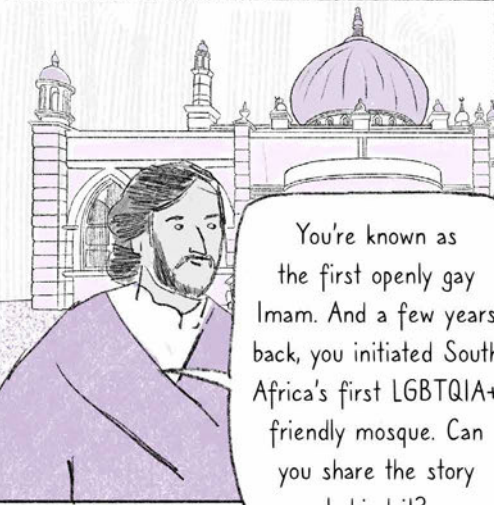


Muhsin Hendricks is an Islamic Scholar, an Imam, and a passionate advocate for human rights, with a particular focus on gender and sexual diversity within Islam.

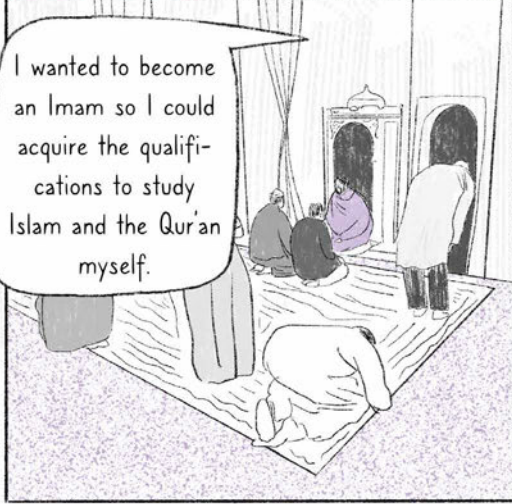


It's a pleasure to have you with us today.

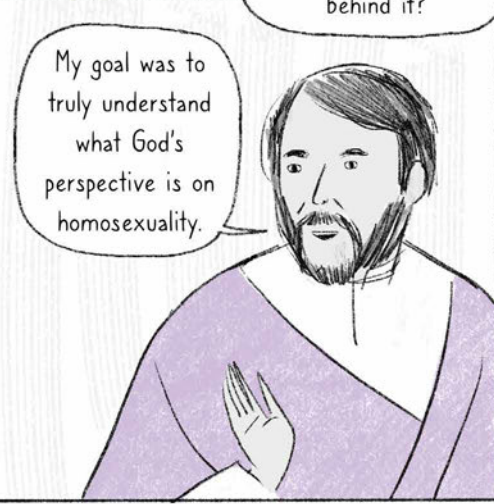
Thank you, Amari, for the invitation. I'm honored to be here with all of you.



You're known as the first openly gay Imam. And a few years back, you initiated South Africa's first LGBTQIA+ friendly mosque. Can you share the story behind it?



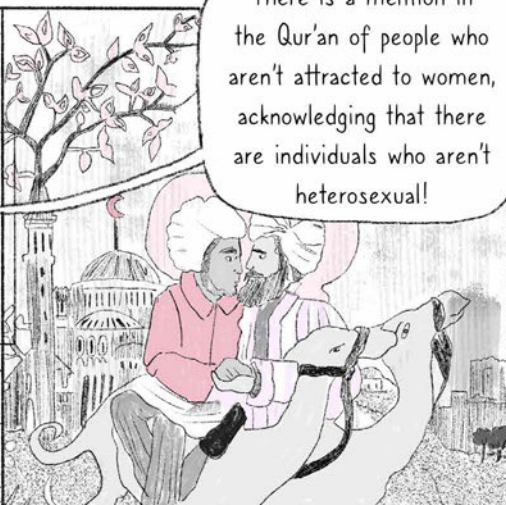
I wanted to become an Imam so I could acquire the qualifications to study Islam and the Qur'an myself.



My goal was to truly understand what God's perspective is on homosexuality.

It's quite fascinating to discover that the term "homosexuality" doesn't even appear in the Qur'an to begin with.

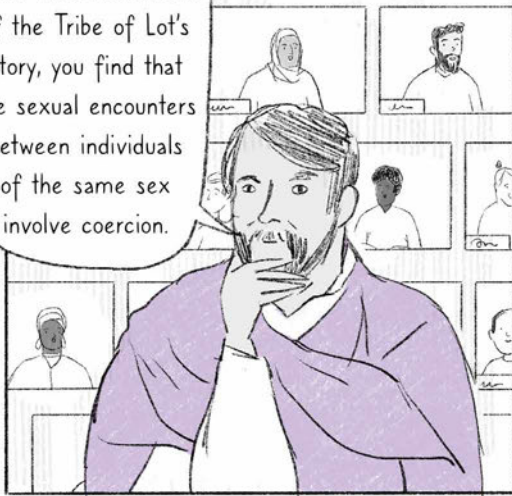
There is a mention in the Qur'an of people who aren't attracted to women, acknowledging that there are individuals who aren't heterosexual!



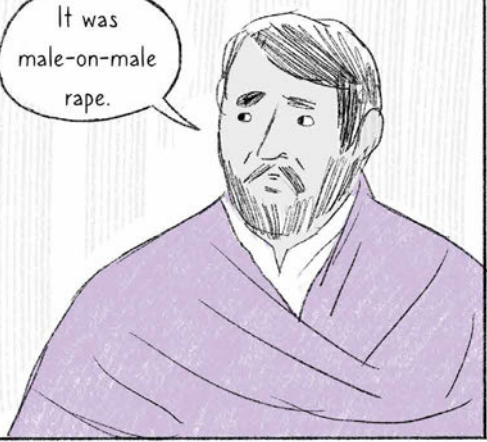
The condemnation of homosexuality primarily stems from the story of the Tribe of Lot.



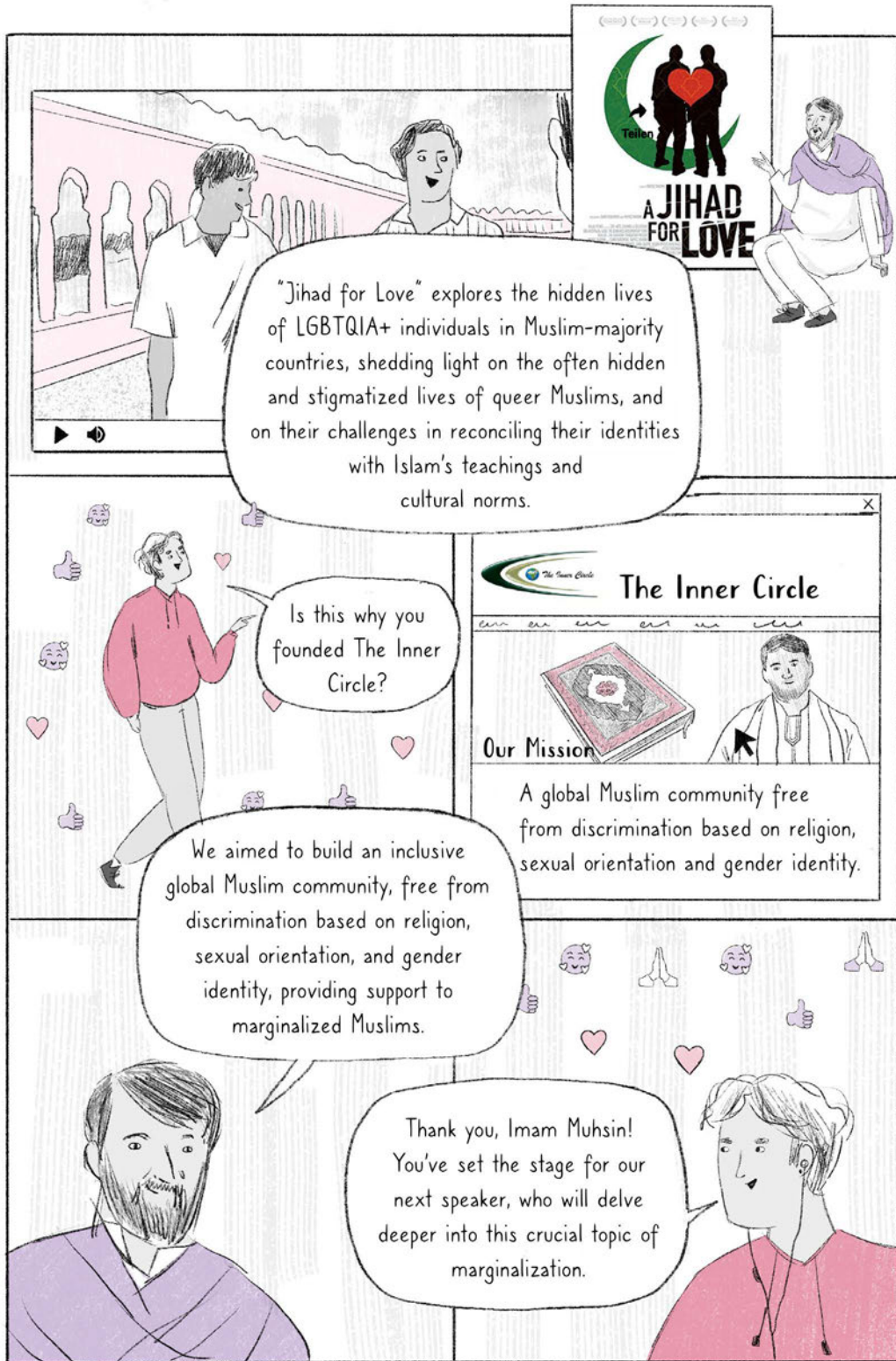
However, when you delve into the context of the Tribe of Lot's story, you find that the sexual encounters between individuals of the same sex involve coercion.



It was male-on-male rape.



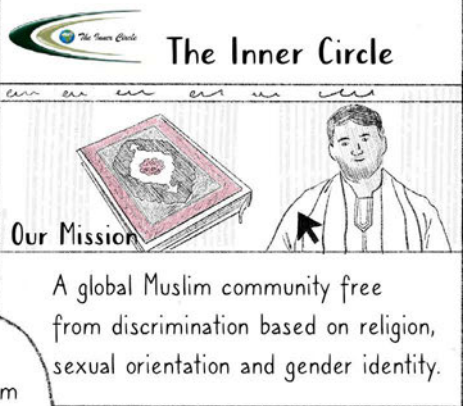




"Jihad for Love" explores the hidden lives of LGBTQIA+ individuals in Muslim-majority countries, shedding light on the often hidden and stigmatized lives of queer Muslims, and on their challenges in reconciling their identities with Islam's teachings and cultural norms.



Is this why you founded The Inner Circle?




We aimed to build an inclusive global Muslim community, free from discrimination based on religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity, providing support to marginalized Muslims.



Thank you, Imam Muhsin! You've set the stage for our next speaker, who will delve deeper into this crucial topic of marginalization.




I woke up like this  
And **FLAWLESS**

Welcome to Helem's new digital platform

An online resource for information and engagement on queer rights and liberation in Lebanon and the Southwest Asia and North Africa regions.


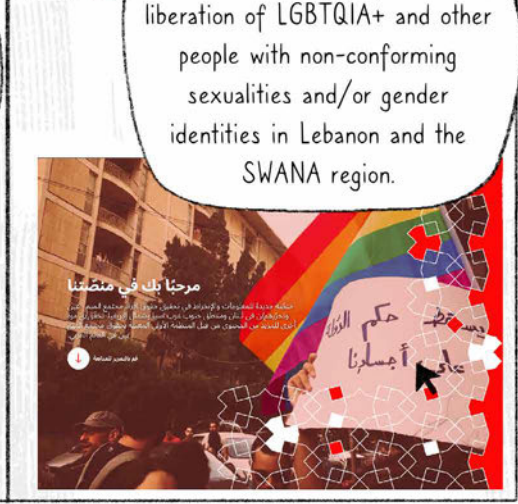


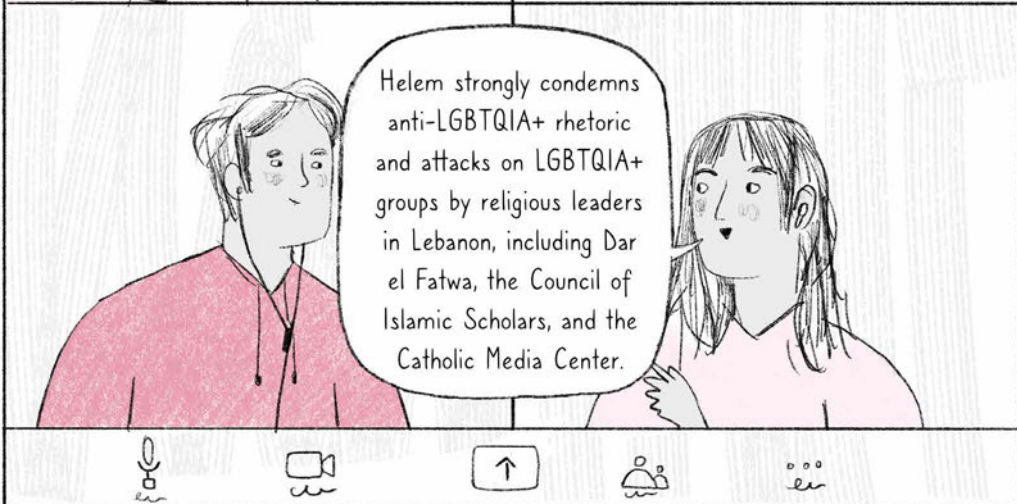

Thank you, Amari, for extending the invitation to Helem to be part of this discussion.

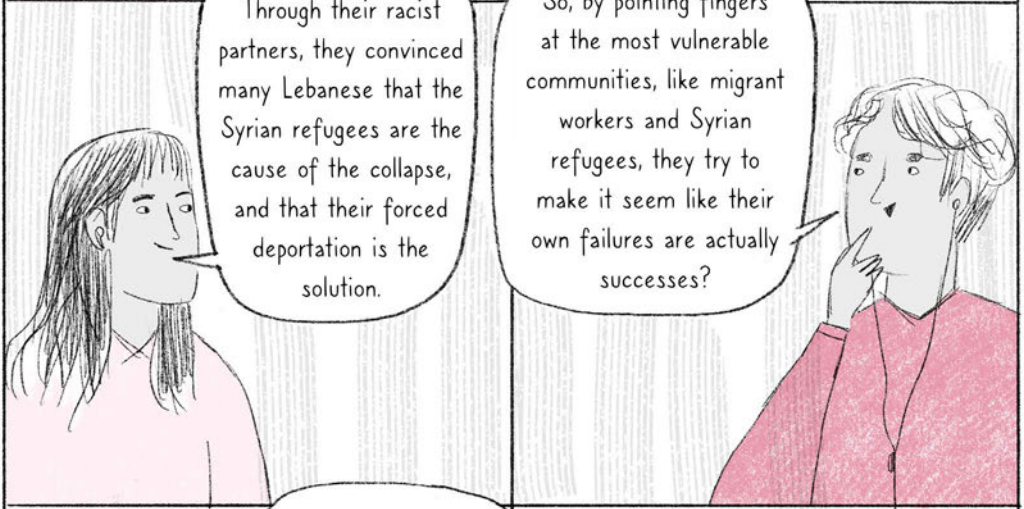


We lead the fight for the liberation of LGBTQIA+ and other people with non-conforming sexualities and/or gender identities in Lebanon and the SWANA region.

You know, Amari, Helem is the first LGBTQIA+ rights organization in the Arab world.

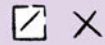








## MEETING-CHAT



LGBTQIA+ Muslims deserve to be heard and supported.



This goes against the teachings of Islam!



It's incredible to see this intersectional dialogue happening!



Why are we even having this discussion? It's a contradiction to be both Muslim and gay.



I appreciate the diversity of voices represented here.



I'm sorry, but Islam doesn't support homosexuality. This webinar is promoting something that goes against our faith.



It's crucial to recognize that there isn't a single 'Muslim' or 'LGBTQ+' experience.



This is just a Western influence corrupting our religious values.



As a queer Muslim, it's empowering to see others like me embracing their identities and navigating the complexities with grace and strength.



It's sad to see Muslims embracing such immoral lifestyles.



We must challenge the stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding LGBTQ+ individuals within the Muslim community.



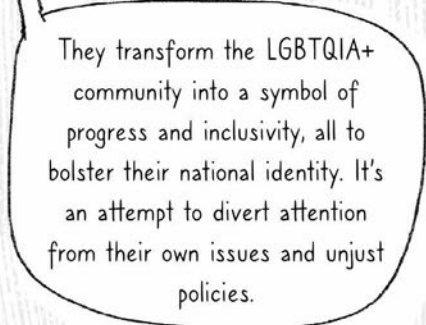
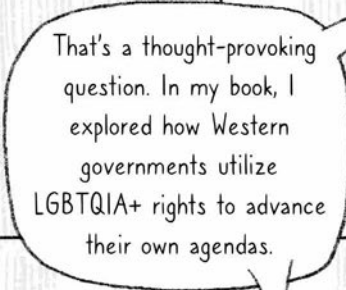
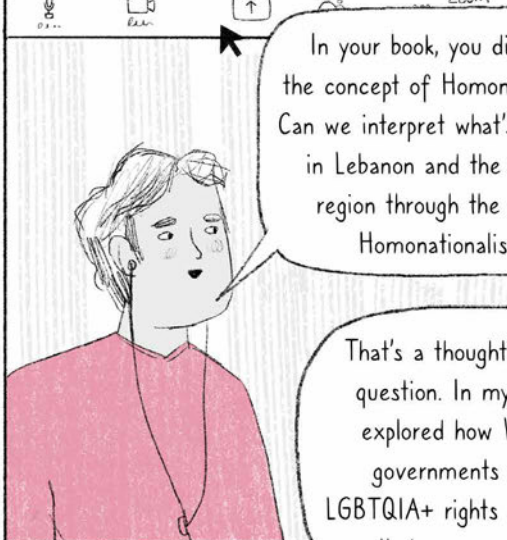
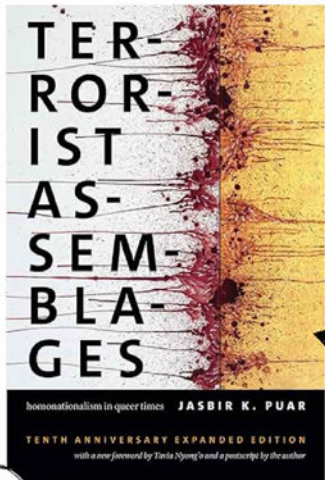
I'm disappointed to see so-called 'progressive Muslims' endorsing something that contradicts the Quran. This is a deviation from true Islam.

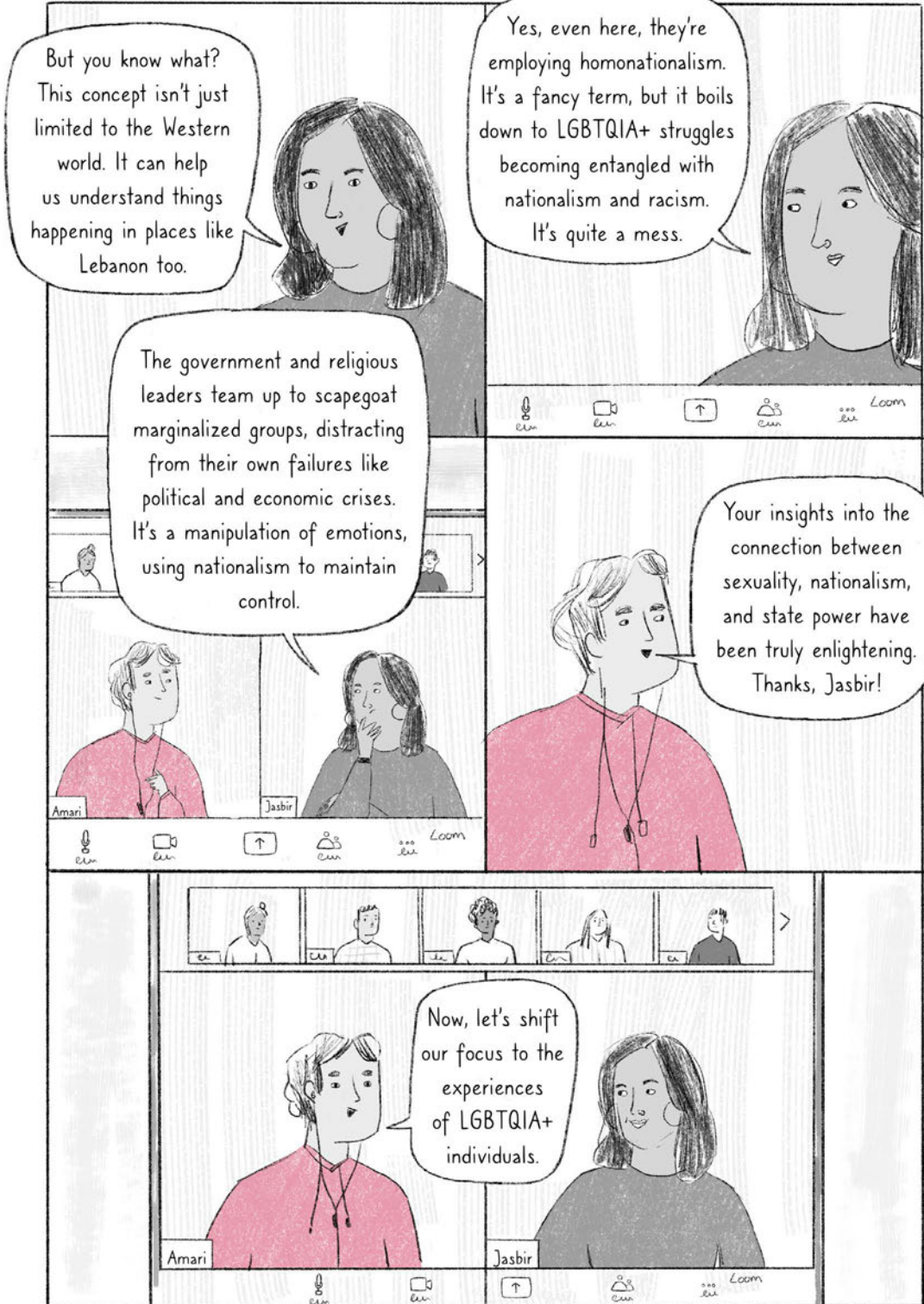


I've been struggling with reconciling my faith and sexuality, but this webinar has given me hope and a sense of belonging.

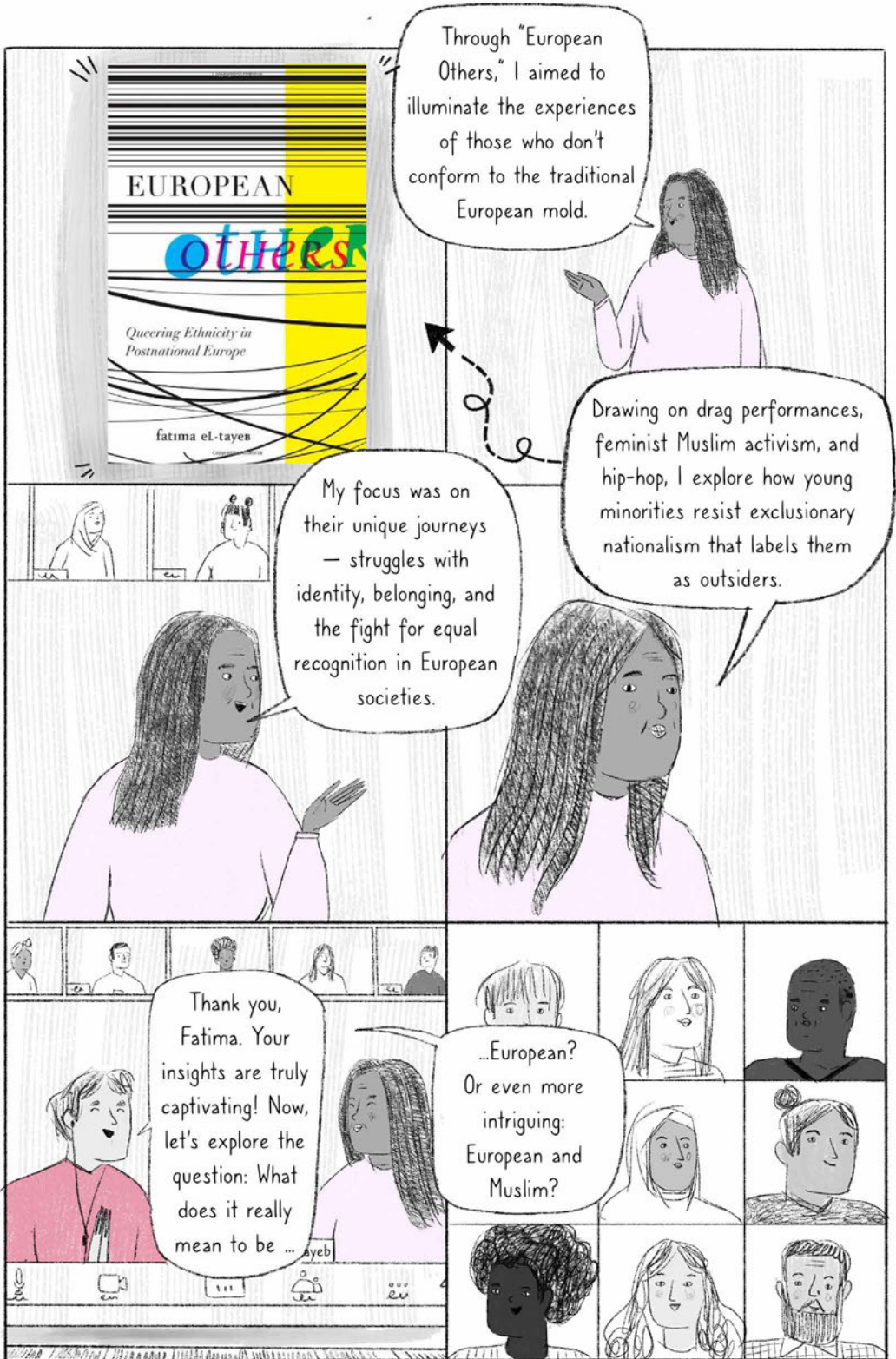


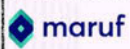
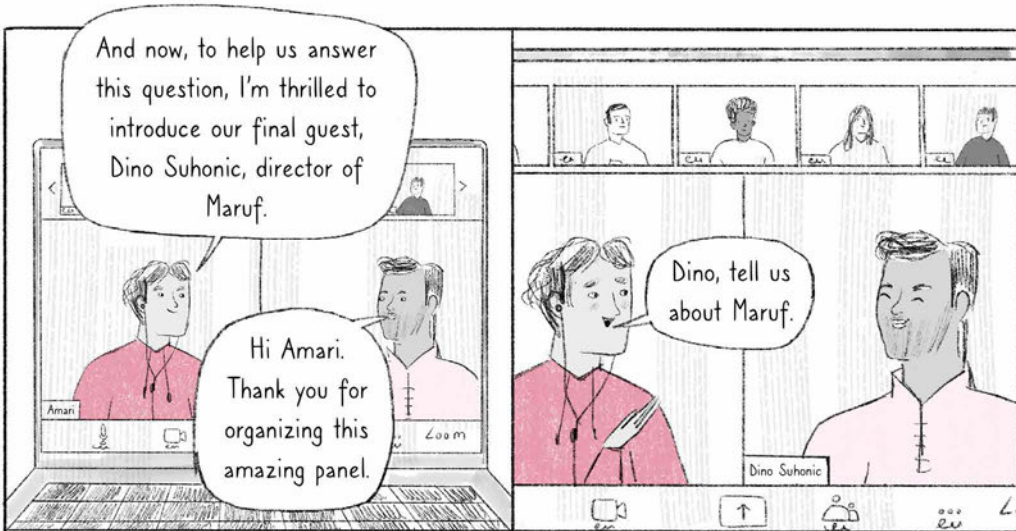
We need more inclusive spaces like this to address the unique experiences and needs of LGBTQIA+ Muslims.











Queer Muslim

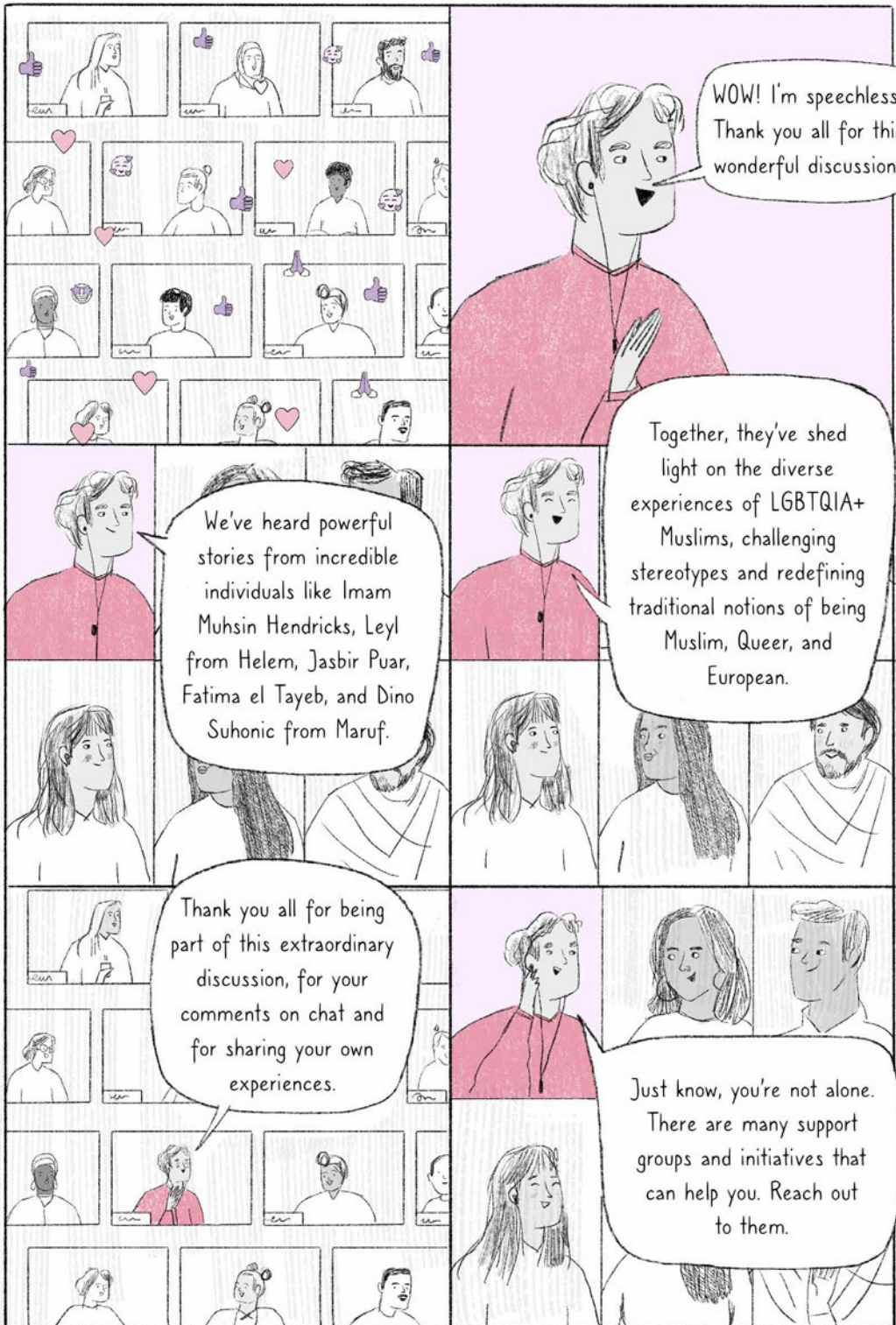
About Maruf

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## International Platform for Queer Muslims





WOW! I'm speechless!  
Thank you all for this wonderful discussion!

Together, they've shed light on the diverse experiences of LGBTQIA+ Muslims, challenging stereotypes and redefining traditional notions of being Muslim, Queer, and European.

We've heard powerful stories from incredible individuals like Imam Muhsin Hendricks, Leyl from Helem, Jasbir Puar, Fatima el Tayeb, and Dino Suhonic from Maruf.

Thank you all for being part of this extraordinary discussion, for your comments on chat and for sharing your own experiences.

Just know, you're not alone. There are many support groups and initiatives that can help you. Reach out to them.





## Homonationalism & Queer Feminism

This term was coined by Jasbir Kaur Puar, an American queer feminist and professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University in the USA. You ask, what is "queer feminism"?

Well, **queer feminism** (or queer theory, queer studies) explores the intersections of gender, sexuality, and other social identities. It challenges the notion that there are only two genders (male and female) and that individuals can only be attracted to the opposite gender. Queer feminists believe that gender can be more fluid, and individuals can identify as different genders or not strictly identify as either male or female. It also recognizes that people can be attracted to different genders, not just the opposite one. Queer feminism focuses on accepting and celebrating these differences, asserting that regardless of who one is or whom they love, they deserve to be treated with kindness and respect. It fights against discrimination and bullying based on an individual's gender or sexuality. Considering the framework of queer feminism, an exploration of Islam reveals how its teachings and values can find resonance within this perspective.

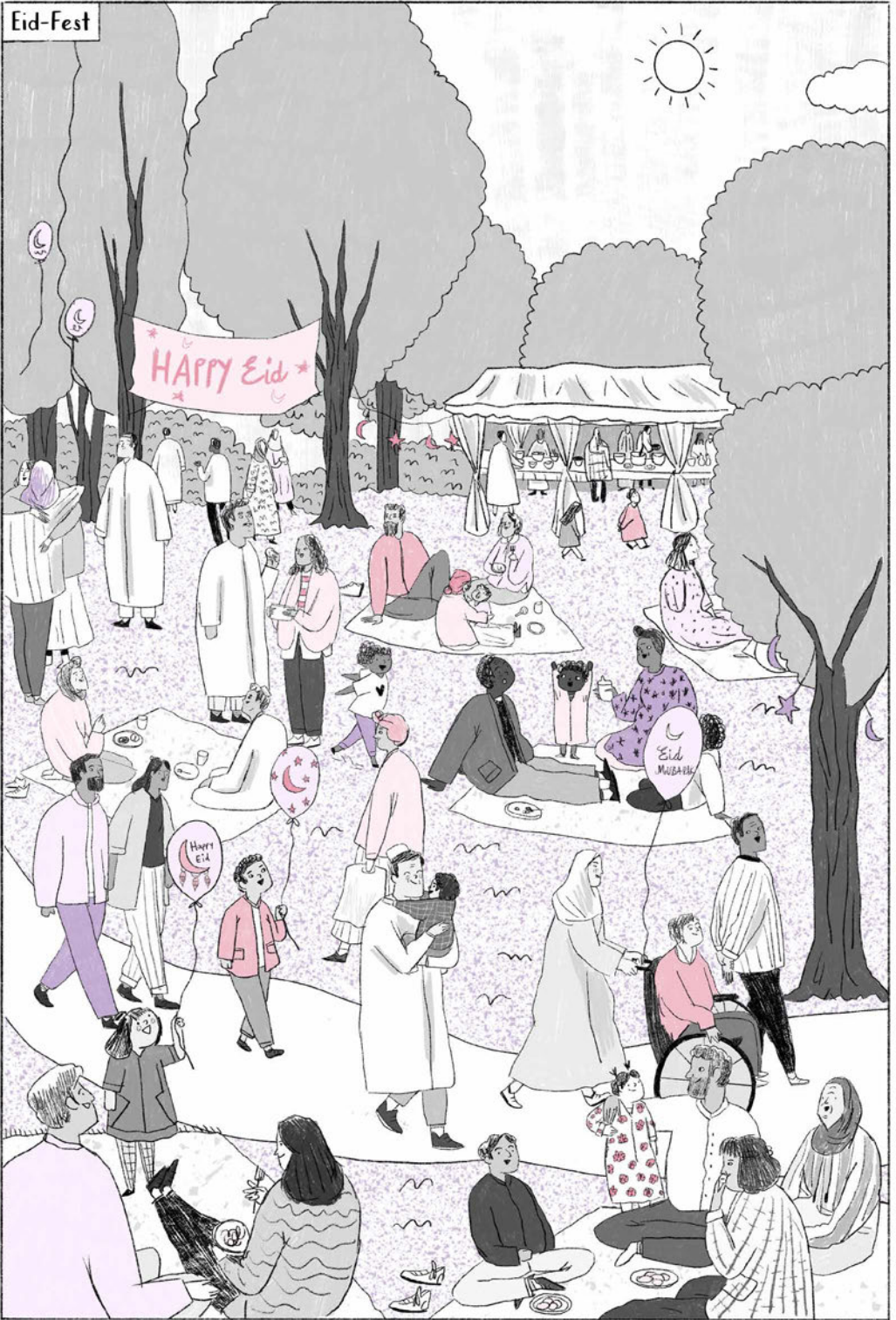
But let's return to the concept of **homonationalism**. As you hear the word, it combines two terms: "homo" and "nationalism." Jasbir Puar examines the connection between these two words. She argues that Western governments, such as Germany and the Netherlands, sometimes utilize or pretend to support the rights of LGBTQIA+ people within their own nations. They do this to enhance their own image and to criticize other countries, generally non-Western ones, that may not have the same level of acceptance or laws protecting LGBTQIA+ rights. Instead of genuinely caring about LGBTQIA+ rights, these Western governments may use it to portray other countries (and their people) as "homophobic" or "backward," claiming that their "culture" is incompatible with democracy. Additionally, some movements fighting for LGBTQIA+ rights in Western countries align themselves with nationalist ideas to promote their own countries. But this collaboration often excludes other groups of people seen as different from the majority of their country based on their ethnicity or religion. What happens is that these movements, while focusing on the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community, may overlook the rights of these other individuals. Moreover, homonationalism is problematic because it oversimplifies the struggles and complexities experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in non-Western cultures, perpetuating stereotypes, and misunderstandings, and fails to recognize that LGBTQIA+ rights movements and activism exist in various forms and contexts worldwide.



Chapter Nine  
Memories and  
Manifestos: A Journey  
Continued



Eid-Fest









What about you Hamza?

Good news, guys! I got accepted into the Architecture program!



Woohoo! Congrats, brother! I'm super proud of you!

Wouldn't have made it without your support, guys!

SCRATCH!

YEEAH



And how's work at LegalEmpower?

My internship ends in three weeks.



You know, Amari? I also learned so much about our religion, its beauty and its potential for a just society. I've set my eyes on Law School.



Hu ha

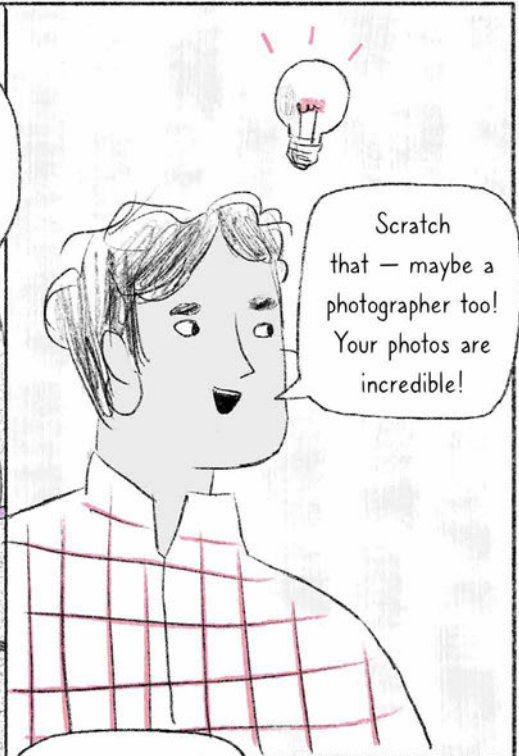
Hahaha

Haha

Awesome! We'll probably need your legal expertise at some point to get us out of trouble, hahaha!



Mariama, your blog is pure gold! You're seriously talented! You should totally be a writer.



Scratch that — maybe a photographer too! Your photos are incredible!



Oh, I'm so glad you enjoyed it! I'm already itching to go traveling again.



The trip opened my eyes to so much, but it was especially helpful for grasping the reasons behind the way some things are today.



A couple of hours later

Hey, remember that last week at school?

Ah, yeah! The "Project Week" memories!

How could we forget your epic presentations on Islam and feminism? The teacher almost lost it!

We've been through so much and learned a ton about ourselves, our communities, and society.

If only I knew back then what I know now...

Haha! What would you have done differently?

Exactly! With all this knowledge and experience, what do we envision for ourselves? For our community?

Tough question! But maybe we should think about it differently: Now that we know what we know, what do we want? What are our dreams?

I can feel it! A manifesto is brewing! Get ready to shake things up!



Dear reader,

As you turn the pages of our graphic novel, you'll see we've intentionally left the next six pages blank, and it's for a reason. We want you to be part of our journey and help us craft something extraordinary— a manifesto that encapsulates the wisdom we've gained from our and your experiences.

You see, this isn't just a passive story; it's an interactive exploration of life, society, and change. We invite you to embark on a journey of self-reflection and active engagement. Take a moment to look inward and contemplate how the themes we've encountered resonate with your own life.

With these empty pages, we encourage you to transform your thoughts and experiences into valuable knowledge. Share your visions for a world that's just and equitable, a society that thrives on acceptance and understanding, and a religion that remains dynamic, open to adaptation, and welcoming of fresh interpretations. Whether you're a young reader, a trainer, or a teacher, this space is yours to fill and shape a brighter future.

Through this invitation, we hope to spark conversations, ignite inspiration, and cultivate a community of change-makers. Let's empower one another to stand up for what we believe in and drive positive transformation.

So, seize the opportunity, pen your thoughts, and let your voice soar. Your manifesto will not only reflect your journey but also contribute to a collective movement for a better tomorrow.

Together, let's make a difference—one page, one reflection, and one dream at a time.

With hope and anticipation,

Mariama, Amari, Hamza & Zahra















# Special Thanks

A big thank you to Irem, for embarking with me on this somewhat bumpy, but nonetheless exciting journey. You skillfully brought to life on paper what I envisioned in my mind. Working together on this book has been a real joy.

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And for the love of my life, Tamer, thank you for being my inspiration. This book has been written for you.

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**Dr. Lana Sirri** is a Palestinian scholar and activist who specializes in the intersections of Islam, race, gender, and sexuality. Committed to decolonizing feminist studies on Muslim women, she is an affiliated expert with the Centre for Intersectional Justice (CIJ) and co-founder of the Berlin Muslim Feminists group. Lana has published numerous articles and two monographs on Islamic feminism. Through her graphic novel, Lana aims to pass on knowledge to young people that her younger self had sought for a long time.



**Irem Kurt** is an illustrator and comic artist who creates illustrations for NGOs, associations, publishers, and institutions, focusing on various socio-political issues. In addition to her creative work, she is actively involved in her community, fostering empowerment spaces with her OUSA Collective. She lives and works between Frankfurt am Main and Berlin.

