

Confronting Islamophobic Violence & Discrimination

February 5th, 2017

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It is difficult to find words to express the grief and trauma caused by the Islamophobic violence occurring across North America. The North American Drama Therapy Association stands with our Muslim members, clients and friends in expressing our heartbreak and outrage at Islamophobic violence that has killed six Muslims and seriously injured many other people who were praying at the Centre Culturel Islamique de Quebec.

We wish to express our profound grief and condolences to the friends and family of

Abdelkrim Hassane, 41,

Aboubaker Thabti, 44,

Azzeddine Soufiane, 57,

Ibrahima Barry, 39,

Khaled Belkacemi, 60,

Mamadou Tanou Barry, 42

The former president of the mosque, Mohamed Labidi, has asked that the victims be personified, highlighting their humanity, ["It's a family, a partner, part of a family, a father..."](#) **Abdelkrim Hassane**, 41 moved to Quebec city in 2012, he was a computer analyst, and is described by his widow as ["decent, honest and forthcoming. He loved Quebec because he thought the city was just so magnificent, and peaceful, but mostly because our kids loved it here."](#)

Aboubaker Thabti, a 44 year old pharmacist with two children was described by a close friend as so kind and loved by everyone.

Azzeddine Soufiane, 57 and long-time Quebec City resident from Moroccan descent, father of three, an engineer by trade who worked as a grocer and butcher was ["known throughout the community as an approachable, supportive figure... He really loved Quebec,... a true Québécois, who had called the province home for 30 years."](#)

Ibrahima Barry, 39 immigrated to Canada from Guinea, he worked in information technology at the health insurance board of Quebec. He was a father of four children under the age of thirteen. His friend describes him as a dedicated family man who was always with his children.

Mamadou Tanou Barry, 42 also emigrated from Guinea. He worked in the IT field and had two sons aged 2 and 4. Friends say that he and Ibrahima Barry were good friends who were always smiling and cheerful. [“They were people who were well integrated in Quebec. They had good work, they took care of their kids and their family”.](#)

Khaled Belkacemi, a 60 year old agri-food engineering professor at Laval University, son says: [“My father, was a good man, an example of resilience, a man loved by all, a professor and researcher emeritus, a fighter, a man who left his country \(Algeria\) to give his family a chance to live far away from horror.”](#)

These few words do not do justice for these men whose stories remain incomplete. Those who did not have the opportunity to know them personally, will never know the multiple stories, meaningful relationships and societal contributions that are lost with this horrific act of violence.

The Political Context

The North American Drama Therapy Association condemns all forms of Islamophobia, and we recognize that these acts of violence belong to a larger system of cultural oppression which breeds hatred, fear and ignorance towards Muslim people. To this end, we are greatly concerned about the executive order issued by President Donald Trump’s administration on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, banning Syrian refugees indefinitely, while enacting a temporary ban on refugees from other countries and citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen from entering the United States. The ban is unconstitutional and discriminatory, separating families and disrupting the lives of people who have been living, studying, and working in the United States contributing to America in many meaningful ways. Many people impacted by this ban know the US as their home, and we worry about the destructive and traumatizing impact on people’s sense of safety and belonging. We also condemn the ban for repeating the same mistake that was made during the Holocaust when thousands of Jews were refused entry into the United States, Canada and many other North American countries and were sent back to Europe where many of them were ultimately killed.

As drama therapists we commit to actively understand how cultural oppression impacts us, our clients and our work, and we recognize discrimination’s traumatic impact on physical and mental health. While we are aware that this violence is traumatic for all communities, we acknowledge the additional vulnerability for groups who face racism, religious intolerance, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia and all other forms of cultural oppression. As we understand invisibility and omission are important factors of cultural oppression, we apologize acknowledging that this statement does not address the complexity of multiple oppressions occurring towards numerous different communities. We know that this violence further exacerbates the wounds of collective and intergenerational trauma.

We do not support the increasing division and othering and we denounce language and policies that target Muslims and other minority groups, giving ammunition and a misguided

legitimization for people's violence and hate towards identifiable groups, promoting xenophobia towards Muslims, Indigenous people, Latinx, LGBT2SIQ communities, Jews, people of colour, people with disabilities, immigrants, and refugees. [The Southern Poverty Law Centre](#) has been documenting an increase in racial slurs and physical violence committed against Muslims, people of colour, immigrants, Jews and members from LGBT2SIQ communities.

We have the power to impact the world in which we live. Notice the collective resilience of massive world-wide protests denouncing Trump's executive order; vigils held across the world to commemorate the tragic loss of Muslim life and protest Islamophobic violence in our communities; Several lawsuits and a temporary nationwide block on Trump's ban; and the countless acts of solidarity enacted by ordinary citizens, many of which go unnoticed by the media. "Despair occurs in isolation, whereas hope occurs in collectivity and comes out of being able to take action". (Quinlan & Duggleby, 2009, p.215). There is hope, in the words of the late Augusto Boal, founder of Theatre of the Oppressed, a man who resisted and survived cultural repression under many different repressive regimes:

"Together we are stronger than we are alone".

As mental health professionals we do not remain silent in the face of collective trauma. We will be holding spaces for our clients' trauma work, their grief, their mourning, their fear, shame, anger, sadness and all the indescribable emotions that language is too inadequate to capture. The NADTA acknowledges that this is heavy and difficult work, and we would like to offer a space intended to hold the holders. A Diversity Call, to process the impact of this work and therapists personal experiences of the multiple threats to civil and human rights facing us today. Upcoming information about the call place and time.

Our thoughts are with the grieving families and friends of Abdelkrim Hassane, Aboubaker Thabti, Azzeddine Soufiane, Ibrahima Barry, Khaled Belkacemi, and Mamadou Tanou Barry and with all the people whose sense of safety has been impacted by the violence created by citizens and governments alike.

Respectfully,
The North American Drama Therapy Association