Editorial

Muslim scholars in liberal democracies, especially women, often face discrimination, Islamophobia, and racism in academia. This discrimination can occur in hiring, selections, or promotion reviews, to mention only a few instances. In Muslim-majority contexts, their experiences of discrimination might be entirely framed around their gender, as patriarchal norms often relegate them to the peripheries of their professions. There are both overt and covert attempts to silence women's voices, and sometimes women choose to remain silent to avoid retaliation and sidelining. Women recognize that by being 'too visible', they are seen as a threat. Their silence, therefore, provides an 'invisibility' which makes it easier for them to navigate their professional spaces. The kinds of negotiations that typically accompany women as they try to participate in the proverbial public sphere or professional work environment has worsened in recent years. For example, since the Gaza Genocide, which started on October 8th, 2023, scholars of all religions, including women, were penalized and fired for speaking out about the Palestinian quest for self-determination and ending the Occupation. In the case of Muslim women in academia, instead of benefiting from their unique perspectives as women, there are numerous stories of Muslim women being silenced in Western countries, particularly in the U.S.

Yet, Muslim women scholars contribute significantly to creating more inclusive environments and broader understandings of faith, society, and the world. In educational research, women's scholarship sets the stage for future young women's voices impacted by education, evidence, and as a result impacting social change.

One may argue that all women face similar inequalities in education and higher education. Nevertheless, no one denies that the positionality of Muslim women at the intersection of gender, race, and religion is critical because they are on the margins of each of those categories. Noticing and addressing the intersectionality of women in the context of religion and race provides a framework for women-to-women solidarity, multi-faith (both intra-faith and interfaith) dialogue, and race relations based on equity and justice. As a team of women who manage this journal, we are aware of this intersectionality as we navigate inquiries and submissions.

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To support more women's voices, we saw it as important for JEMS and our readers to designate a special issue to Muslim women educators and their scholarship. This is valuable to readers for several reasons: first, to provide a space for Muslim women scholars to discuss research and topics pertinent to women, such as women students' experiences in schools and universities, uncensored. Second, to highlight trends in education and gaps in Muslim women's scholarly work and their engagement in educational and empirical research. Third, to elevate the voices of women scholars and the multiple perspectives on issues of religion, society, policy, and schooling, among others. In this special issue, we achieve this through original published research, an invited special essay, and book reviews and essays focused on women.

This special issue is based on an education symposium that JEMS held in Rabat, Morocco, in 2023. The editorial team released a call for proposals on women's scholarship and received over 120 proposals. Twenty-four presentations made the program, and about ten passed the first review for publication and then went through extensive blind reviews and revisions. The final product is a collection of high-quality research articles led and conducted by Muslim women scholars (and male colleagues in some cases) from Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, and Nigeria. The first contribution is an invited essay by Professor Supriya Bailey, who reviews major achievements in women's status and scholarship in Muslim countries and communities without ignoring the challenges that lie ahead. This special essay brings Muslim women, and women in general, to the forefront of scholarship in education. The special essay sets the tone for the research articles that follow, focusing on women and their education.

The first research article is from Nigeria, and it highlights the role of women in higher education leadership, especially Muslim women scholars, and the importance of empowering them and increasing their participation in academic spaces in Nigeria. The author, AbdulGafar Olawale Fahm, highlights the achievements and challenges of women in the context of Nigeria and its Muslim population. The second article by a group of women scholars—Fatima Kizil, Noor Ali, Amaarah DeCuir, Carolyn Lane, and Sahar Khawaja—discusses Muslim women and their positionalities as women and Muslims in academic institutions in the United States. The third article comes from Egypt by Doaa Baumi and Joel David Pierce who focused on scriptural reasoning and interfaith dialogue, focusing again on the need to find tools and pedagogical methods to provide support and empowerment to women scholars and students. The fourth

research article by Rania Sawalhi, Ghaith Hawari, and Rneem Alhawari delves into the area of careers and women's leadership training in Arab contexts. The final and fifth article, by Bushra Feroza Turk, addresses a sensitive topic in the context of Turkey regarding veiled women and their treatment in education sectors.

In the review essay for this special issue, Hanane Gouddar and Abdelghanie Ennam focus on the role of Muslim women and their contributions to Western knowledge. This essay is then followed by two book reviews exploring topics such as women students and their experiences in higher education, as well as women students' experiences in madrasas in Pakistan. In this section, two handbooks are also reviewed: one on gendered Islamophobia and another on women in the Middle East. The final section of this rich and engaging special issue is a conversation with Dr. Fatima Sadiqi, conducted by our Book Review Editor, Dr. Isra Brifkani. We hope that the questions raised in the interview spark more conversations and field research to bring women's scholarship to the forefront of academic inquiry. We also hope that this issue will generate more questions that challenge the status quo of women and girls and their education in Muslim societies.

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