



**WHAT WILL THEY SAY?
THE PRICE THAT WOMEN PAY**

**BELIEVING IN THE
MAKE BELIEVE**

**ONE GOD &
MANY IDOLS**

**PRIDE: A
DARK ABYSS**

**THE CUNNING
CHAMELEON**

THE DARK SIDE: NOTHING IS AS IT SEEMS



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CONTENTS

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 4 | JUST ASK
Answered by
Brother Omar Zia |
| 5 | MY PERSPECTIVE
Believing in the Make Believe |
| 6 | QURAN AND HADITH GEMS
One God & Many Idols
Pride: A Dark Abyss |
| 8 | HEAR ME OUT
How Busy is Too Busy?
The Cunning Chameleon |
| 10 | POETRY
Under the Sea, Mother Earth
Written in the Scars |

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 12 | FEATURE
What will they Say
The Price that Women Pay |
| 14 | CREATIVE NON-FICTION
The Dark Side of the Internet
The Dark Side of Social Media Fame |
| 16 | IN THE SPOTLIGHT
Interview with Meena Waseem |
| 17 | FIND MY FUTURE
The Dark Side of Higher Education |
| 18 | KITCHEN CHRONICLES
Tres Leches |
| 19 | NEWS AND CURRENT EVENTS
The Mighty Watermelon |

Dear Reader,

Assalamualaikum!

It is an honour, and my honest pleasure, to be writing this Editor's Note to you. When my team and I met up to decide on the theme for this issue, none of us were prepared for the ideas that were about to come to life. The result was a heart-to-heart that was fuelled with so much passion, that the meeting ran an hour and a half overtime, and we had to have an emergency meeting the next day just to conclude our conversation.

I took away an important lesson from those two days: **Nothing is as it seems.** And as I sat down to create this theme, I thought about everything I learned from my team's personal experiences with the world and within themselves. I thought about all the moments of celebration Allah SWT grants us throughout our lives, like the birth of a loved one, and the quests we undertake as a people trying to define successes like the pursuit of a good career and/or higher education. I thought about the gifts Allah SWT grants us in the form of memories, from traveling to marriage, and in the stories shared by my team, I thought about the reality we all face day to day, in how there is a dark side to almost everything. The question then became: how do we combat the influence of evil throughout our lives, through every moment, gift, and experience Allah SWT gives us?

Our **Feature** explores the influence of cultural and societal norms within broken marriages and divorce, shedding light on the lasting consequences of IPV (intimate partner violence) as in the example of the tragic death of Sania Khan just months prior. **MY Perspective** covers the negative effects of the internet upon our youth and teaches parents how to navigate it safely with their children, while a **Quran Gems** piece clarifies the dangerous effects of Al-Kibr (pride) within the context of Islam. Be sure to check out our **News and Current Events** article, to learn about the history of watermelon in Palestine and how it became a powerful symbol of resistance and freedom.

Our hope is for you to truly reflect upon the lessons shared by our youth within these pages and allow it to move your heart to be guided, firm, and steadfast upon the path that is Right and Straight.

Sincerely yours,
Sara Ansary
Editor-in-Chief



1. What are some strategies that can help us deal with anger in a halal way, so we can avoid bottling it up until we explode?

It's important to note that, as human beings, we will experience a wide range of emotions and it is perfectly normal to feel angry. There are several trials that we may face on a daily basis, which may increase levels of stress and/or frustration. Examples include someone being late for an appointment, or a group partner forgetting to prepare for their part of a presentation, or a teacher who tests you on material you haven't learned yet. There may be people in your life who may cause you to be angry such as a nosy friend who always wants to know every minute detail of your life, or a younger sibling who is always making your bedroom messy, or a ghost who never replaces the toilet roll when it's finished! We may even become frustrated with our own selves; for example, we may procrastinate studying for an upcoming test, and then be upset after getting a less-than-satisfactory grade.

So, how do you maintain your cool? We begin by recalling the story of a man who came to the Prophet (saw) and asked for sincere advice. The Prophet (saw), based on his knowledge of this man and those listening for the answer, responded by saying "Don't be angry." The man asked again for more advice, and again, the Prophet (saw) responded with "Don't be angry." The man asked a third time and, yet again, the Prophet (saw) responded with "Don't be angry." What's the point of this dialogue? The point is that as we travel through the days and weeks of our lives, we are bound to come across situations that cause us to experience stress and frustration. As Muslims, we want to practice patience and forgo people's shortcomings, which, of course, is very commendable. But, if we allow all of these issues to go unresolved, we may reach a point where something trivial or minor, such as someone sneezing, causes us to 'blow up' unnecessarily. Often, it's in these 'explosions' of rage that we harm others, and harm ourselves.

So, first-don't let things get bottled up. Resolve issues swiftly when they occur, and move on with life. Second, if there is a recurring issue, have a sincere, heart-to-heart with the offender so they understand the negative impact they are having on you and/or others. Third, Sura al-Asr teaches us four qualities that can help us in life. Among these qualities is patience; so be patient in allowing an offender to become better, and be patient with yourself as you work on managing personal stress. Finally, as we work to become better human beings and better Muslims, let's keep in mind the advice of the Prophet (saw) who taught us that true strength is not based on the ability to fight and knock someone down-true strength is being able to control one's anger.

2. How do you deal with parents or family that constantly put you down without being empathetic to what you're going through?

The distance between parents and their children is often vast and this is true in multiple scenarios, regardless of faith or location or place of birth. The issue is about time; Ali ibn Abi Talib shared advice to parents stating, "Do not raise your children the way your parents raised you; they were born for a different time." The difference in time refers to the fact that stress factors are different from generation to generation. For example, most parents were born before 1995, which is when the internet was introduced into daily life; as well, most parents were not born with a smart phone in their hand, as all children born after 2008 were. This digital divide can serve as a barrier for parents who have not experienced the stresses of social media on children growing up today. Parents may not have experienced the stress of online learning or having to truncate two years of childhood because of a strange virus that shut down the whole world. Empathy occurs when someone has shared an experience, or shared a similar experience-or, when someone takes time to learn and understand what another has experienced.

So, how do we help our parents and/or family members develop that empathy? First, when someone is causing harm to you, articulate this to them using the W.I.N. method which involves three sentences: (a) WHEN you put me down or insult me (b) I feel bullied, hurt, unheard, worthless, etc. (c) So, I NEED you to lend me an empathetic ear, and ask me questions to learn about what I'm going through. This way, you can be supportive to me and help me with whatever it is that I'm going through.

Second, start with the assumption that your parents and/or family have no experience with what is causing you grief, and take time to explain it to them gradually. Be patient-try to resist the urge to say "you don't understand" or "you don't care about me" as this will shut off the path to receiving the help you need. Third, demonstrate empathy to others whether it be siblings or your parents. For example, ask your parents how their day went, and if they express feeling stressed, use empathetic language such as "That sounds like it was a tough day" or "I can only imagine the challenge you are facing" or "Please let me know how I can help." This may seem like an overly simplistic approach and, often, the solutions in our lives are indeed simplistic-repeated over time, with patience, empathy can grow and positively impact our family dynamics.

BELIEVING IN THE

MAKE BELIEVE

Aleesha Merchant, 16

It is no secret that people from all over the world flock to America in hopes of a better life for themselves and their families. America is considered the place to go for a 'better life', but how come? The Oxford English Dictionary defines the American dream as "the ideal that every citizen should have an equal opportunity to achieve success and prosperity through hard work, determination, and initiative"¹. However, is the same level of success truly plausible for someone who cannot afford to go to university, compared to someone who can? Can they reach the level of achievement they are capable of without the resources that someone of a higher socioeconomic status has? Is 'the American dream' equally attainable for everyone, regardless of their ethnicity? The simple problem with aiming for a singular American dream is that for each individual, the road to 'happiness' is not paved equally.

For instance, white supremacy is a large issue that the American dream ideology has fueled. Many white people have come to believe that they are the "embodiment of the American dream", and that they will single-handedly "make America great again"². An example of white supremacy was back when Donald Trump was President and Islamophobia loomed over Muslim Americans due to the fact that many of his supporters were white supremacists who had voted in a leader who championed their views. At one point, Trump imposed a 'Muslim Ban' during which 91% fewer Muslim refugees were admitted to the United States³.

The American dream is a concept that empowers people to believe they can do anything as long as they work hard. However, by idealizing this, we do whatever it takes to attain something that can only ever be a dream, because real life in the West is nothing like what it is made up to be in second and third world countries. America uses the powerful image they hold in the minds of foreigners to their advantage to fuel their economy. For example, today, the most prominent signs of achieving the American dream is to own a house, have a family, and a stable job. As a result, house prices have skyrocketed to unattainable levels because everyone is trying to attain this notion of success, even if it makes them miserable.

Regardless, many still believe in the American dream despite all evidence pointing out its fraudulent nature. What keeps us believing? For some, the American dream is a reason to work hard and something to strive for as the world burns around us. For others, living in America in itself is a dream because wherever they came from, life is much worse—and racism and inequality is something they can learn to live with. The America we live in is far from a dream, but when there is no hope left to hold on to, we choose to close our eyes and make believe.

¹. Churchwell, S. (2021). *A brief history of the american dream*. Bush Center. <https://www.bushcenter.org/catalyst/state-of-the-american-dream/churchwell-history-of-the-american-dream.html>

². Kendi, I. (2020, June 4). The American Nightmare. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/american-nightmare/612457/>

³. Bier, D. (2018, December 7). *Trump Cut Muslim Refugees 91%, Immigrants 30%, Visitors by 18%*. Cato Institute. <https://www.cato.org/blog/trump-cut-muslim-refugees-91-immigrants-30-visitors-18>

One God & Many Idols

Rahima
Adeel

It is my personal belief that one of the greatest detriments to society, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, or socioeconomic status is its worship of celebrities, such as those in the entertainment and athletic industries. What is the obsession over an actors' dress or online chat room to debate about why they did not win the role of 'best lead'? The time and energy lost is too great and the level of care is a one-way street. How does it serve us to repeatedly watch match highlights or purchase sports paraphernalia for 'our team'? Think about it. Fans are serving, I mean funding, their heroes. Many people make entertainers and athletes their 'idols', despite the aspects of their fame and fortune as well as personal lives that promote and overlook Islamic permissibility and societal standards. Many celebrities engage in immorality such as shirk¹, vanity, arrogance, greed, materialism, promiscuity, infidelity, alcoholism, substance abuse, etc. These behaviors should never be ideal. A wholesome movie here or there and sportsmanship are one thing. But, the laziness, obsession, and distraction that accompany this type of worship is zombie-like.

In Arabic, 'Ilah' is a term that means 'god' and refers to anyone or anything that is worshiped. Islam is a monotheistic religion that expresses we only worship Allah². So, we should ask ourselves: are we inadvertently worshiping celebrities? We need to be smarter with our time, energy, and money. The first two will never return and the third is better spent on ourselves, savings, or charity.

We live in very dark, ugly, and destructive times mystified as enlightenment, beauty, and pleasure.

Again, this is not to suggest forgoing wholesome entertainment and sports entirely. However, expressing unhealthy measures of loyalty only funds the agendas of those that seek to profit from our time, energy, and money. Would entertainers and athletes have so much fame and fortune without their fans? Probably not. This loyalty is better devoted to Allah, His causes, and serving humanity for His sake.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) said, 'The life of this world compared to the Hereafter is as if one of you were to put his finger in the ocean and take it out again then compare the water that remains on this finger to the water that remains in the ocean'³. As Muslims, our purpose is not to create permanent dwellings, fill our stomachs with delights, adorn ourselves with bedazzlements, and seek pleasure to no end. Rather, we are journeying back to Allah through obedience, prayer, acts of service, perfecting character, and refraining from sins. We are a people of action. We are a people of example. We are a people of tawheed⁴.

¹Shirk: Idolatry; associating partners with Allah (God)
²Arabic term for 'God'
³Sahih Muslim No 2858
⁴Tawheed: Monotheism; oneness of Allah (God)

Pride: A Dark Abyss

Maha
Ali

Allah¹ said, "But if We give them a taste of prosperity after being touched with adversity, they say, "My ills are gone," and become totally prideful and boastful."²

Surely Allah chooses whom He may grant a droplet of His mercy. Any disbeliever can be guided by Allah's will and can become a believer. Once the journey of a believer begins on the Straight Path there are many tests that lie ahead, a difficult one being pride and arrogance. Shaytaan³ poisons a believer's mind with thoughts of pride. They may begin to belittle others and think that they are better believers than someone else. The believer may take pride in their religious sacrifices such as covering themselves, consistently praying five times a day, etc.

Shaytaan can influence them to subconsciously boast. They will feel superiority and will grow disdainful. This exaggerated self-importance is arrogance. It begins with a small spark, a little feeling of pride that quickly grows into a fire, begetting thoughts of self-importance and arrogance.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)⁴ said, "A person in whose heart is a mustard seed weighing the worth of pride will not enter Paradise."⁵

It is necessary to suppress any pride inside us because it nullifies any good efforts by bringing us towards a bad outcome in the Hereafter. So, a believer should fight within themselves to get rid of their inner pride.

What is the remedy to get rid of pride? First, identify why you are proud and earn your gratitude back. A good way to earn your gratitude back is to reflect, repent, and redeem. Reflecting is to look back at the past and realize how you acted, repenting is to sincerely ask for forgiveness from Allah, and after this InshaAllah⁶ you will be redeemed. Read this dua for refuge from arrogance:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي صَبُورًا واجْعَلْنِي شَفُورًا واجْعَلْنِي
فِي عَيْنِي صَغِيرًا وَ فِي أَعْيْنِ النَّاسِ كَبِيرًا

(O Allah! Make me one who is most patient and make me grateful; and make me small in my own eyes but great in the eyes of others).⁷

Second, work hard and recognize the hard work of others. A good deed is to put in effort to cut out belittling thoughts. This can increase empathy and understanding while reducing pride.

We do not have control over our destiny, on good events or bad. Allah (SWT) is in control, so we have nothing to be proud of and should focus our efforts on being humble and grateful instead.⁷

"Verily, Allah is beautiful, and He loves beauty. Arrogance is to disregard the truth and to look down upon people."⁹
- Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

¹Arabic term for God.
²Al-Qur'an, Surah Hud, verse 10. Translation provided by Dr.Mustafa Khattab, The Clear Qur'an.
³Satan: the devil.
⁴Peace be upon him.
⁵Sahih Muslim, Chapter 1, Faith (Kitab Al-Iman), Hadith No.165
⁶By the will of Allah.
⁷'Oh Allah, make me. . . (2014, December 6). In The Pursuit of Writing. Website. <https://julierberman.wordpress.com/2014/12/05/oh-allah-make-me/>
⁸iLoveUAllah. (2016, October 6). Two Ways To Kill Your Pride [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIJXNrZkThI&feature=youtu.be>
⁹Hadith - Sahih Muslim: 91

HOW BUSY IS TOO BUSY?

Be it millennials or Gen Z, if not for academic assignments and professional presentations, many enjoy pre-occupying themselves by going shopping, heading to parties, socializing with friends, gaming, and mindlessly scrolling on various forms of social media. In today's world, "Busyness is now used as a status symbol," says Patrick S. Is this a good or bad thing?

Being too busy can result in having no time to reflect on yourself, people, and things around you. Allah SWT instructs us to remember His signs which are on the earth, in the universe, in us, and in the Quran, and also to reflect on the purpose of our creation.¹ SubhanAllah², Allah SWT has given an excellent example of reflecting through his beloved Prophet Muhammad PBUH.³ For instance, in the cave of Hira, Prophet Muhammad PBUH spent time thinking and reflecting on his emotions.

Subsequently, relationships may also suffer when you have no time for others. Even while we are physically present, we are not. Being busy consumes both physical and emotional energy.⁴ In both professional and personal relationships, it is simple to lose your spark. Relationships with parents and families give adolescents emotional support, security, and safety from an early age.⁵ And thus, can positively influence their behaviors in adulthood.

Being too busy has many dark sides, one more dangerous than the other. Today, we often see a rise in how individuals have extensively planned for the future, in addition to increased mobile use that may disconnect one from reality. Looking at content which sometimes may not be useful for them, or engaging too much in unnecessary social activities may cause overwhelm if you are unable to fulfil personal commitments you have made. Thus, this has the potential to lead to anxiety disorders and mental health disorders.⁵

Islam instills in us the virtue of moderation in all things. Islam encourages us to carry out our matters in a moral way that aligns with the Quran and Sunnah.⁶ A way where we can be present in every moment, where we can reflect and connect with ourselves and observe our thoughts. Its modern name is mindfulness, and as Muslims, we must maintain mindfulness during our Salah.⁷ Which furthers one's understanding of why the Prophet PBUH emphasized the importance of reading the Quran daily. Even if it is a couple of ayahs just so that we can ponder upon each verse. We put so many alarms on our phones and a lot of reminders for various tasks but how many of us put an alarm to breathe? Or to take a break? Or to simply just take some time for ourselves when we look at the sky or listen to the chirping of birds, admitting the beauty of nature and praising Allah SWT? Though shifting your priorities may be challenging, making time for yourself a priority while putting aside work can dramatically enhance your quality of life.

¹Allah, Arabic term meaning God.

²SubhanAllah, Arabic term meaning "Glory Be to God"

³PBUH, Acronym for "Peace and Blessings be upon him"

⁴N. (2022, August 12). Self-reflection practices through the lens of Islam.

⁵Relationships with parents and families: Pre-teens and teenagers. Raising Children Network. (2021, November 29).

⁶Sunnah, Arabic term meaning The Teachings and Practices of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH

⁷Salah, Arabic term meaning Prayer(s)

THE CUNNING CHAMELEON

In a world of faux and filters, seek honour and honesty.

While we cannot always pick and choose who stays in our life, I believe it is best to recognize that the chameleon's words and actions reflect their own internal state and not ours. Try not to let their words and actions affect your self-worth, identity, and happiness. Islam encourages positive mental health and does not prevent healthy boundary setting. Boundaries teach others what we accept and how we expect to be treated. Engage politely, cautiously, and fairly as is necessary. This is especially difficult when chameleons are in our family, community, place of worship, and political office. However, this is when a believer's character is put to the test. In a world of faux and filters, seek honour and honesty.

Have you ever met the human version of a chameleon? This is a person that changes their disposition based on the environment. You may notice how they are with you and feel discomfort when you notice them behaving completely differently with another person or crowd. Chameleons are all around us. They are in our families, communities, places of worship, and political offices. Chameleons lie, manipulate, and abuse. They charm and con their way out of culpability and responsibility. They may even go from 0 to 100 in playing the hero to victim and vice versa. Chameleons present a masquerade.

A chameleon's false self is deceitful and deeply harmful and if not mediated, can be harmful to those closest to them or under their care. They have the propensity to break promises and oaths which may lead to distrust and inconsistency in both personal and professional relationships. This includes: a man that is kind to his neighbors yet secretly abuses his wife; a community activist that advocates for the vulnerable yet is indirectly racist; a religious scholar that is praised for his knowledge yet has hidden streams of impermissible income; and, a politician that promises economic security yet evades taxes.

Allah¹ says, 'And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know it' (Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 42)

Do not ruminate on the words and actions of others. In this temporary world, Allah sees and hears all. And remember, people are not all good nor bad. Many times, they are a test for us. Sometimes, part of the test is to be silent and others, to speak up. Do not treat others poorly or reduce their haqq² and know that if this happens to you, Allah's just prevails in both worlds. As frustrating as it may get, uphold ties, maintain your good manners and etiquette, and seek your reward from Allah. Fight fake with faith.

¹Allah, Arabic term for God.

²Haqq, Arabic term for rights.

UNDER THE SEA

Maryam Ali, 26

MOTHER EARTH

Maryam Ali, 26

Coral reefs trapped
in a sauna bleed a
rainbow of algae.

Asphyxiated by
garlands of plastic,
a gift from humankind

Drunk on cyanide,
moonshine distilled
by fishermen.

Bleached white,
catacomb of crumbling
skeletons fingertips
outstretched

Vivisected by humankind
she is put on display
the spoils of our enterprise
splayed out to view.

The fruits of our labour
stain her green tresses
black to match our
burning coal and oil.

Her chest pried open
robbed of her jewels

oceans expired
her remains an
empty museum.

We are scientists
but our ideas are
a kind of disease.

WRITTEN IN THE SCARS

Sara Ansary

I wonder how often
the moon ponders her end
(a time that will come
when she's shaken
to her utmost convulsion
and earth throws up
her burdens from within)

I wonder how the rotation
feels around the bend
taking hits centuries old,
just the whole story
of her existence

Like it didn't hurt;
the pain a paint of her age,
the craters merely empty holes
that we never celebrate

And every day is different,
every month is the same.
A cycle that recalibrates
how to perform for more
than her own needs,

And isn't that just so heavy?
that the moon is responsible
for more than herself

How the tides of the earth,
tides of our inner being
completely relies on what she does

And it's only remembered
every few centuries
(an inspiration given on a day
she declares those tidings)

When a poet comes along
to witness through god-honest tears
how important consciousness
is to bear for ourselves.

WHAT WILL THEY SAY?

THE PRICE THAT WOMEN PAY



"Every woman has the right to live in safety and with dignity, free from intimidation and the threat of violence"

In the year 2022, being a woman should equivocate freedom, safety and equality.

We have come a long way since the start of the women's rights movement in the mid-1800's and achieved many milestones. These milestones, however, are overshadowed by crimes against women that are growing in number. Increased occurrences of intimate partner violence (IPV), also known as domestic abuse, occur every single day. The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies IPV as a major global public health concern resulting in long-lasting health, social, and economic consequences. The manifestation of domestic abuse is deep seated within the roots of our cultures. South Asian women for instance, are encouraged to stay with their abuser to save face in the public eye because **"what will people say."** Separation and divorce are highly stigmatized and considered shameful. By committing such an act, you and your family are at risk of ostracization. And if you dare dishonor your family name, you will be disowned, you will be alienated, and you will be shunned. The harsh reality is that the onus falls on the women to bear the consequences, and the ones paying the ultimate price are our mothers, daughters, and sisters.

Consider the story of Sania Khan, a South Asian muslim woman and former resident of Toronto, who survived an attempt on her life at the hands of her ex-husband, and lived in constant fear before she filed for divorce. Sania's family disowned her and threatened suicide if she tried to move back to her hometown Chattanooga, Tennessee. Alienated by her family and shunned by the community, Sania created tiktok videos documenting the stigmas of a South Asian Muslim woman navigating divorce proceedings and the backlash that came with it. Sharing her experiences, Sania's advocacy for other South Asian muslim women and victims of marriage trauma were both a source of comfort and empowerment for her. Just days shy of moving back to her hometown, Sania was shot and killed in cold blood by her ex-husband, who then shot himself in a final move for control. While Sania's death was a tragedy, IPV is an issue that affects people of all ethnicities, cultures and faiths in every part of the world. Every day women succumb to IPV and suffer from injustices. The numbers are rising rapidly, and the weight of the impact is bearing down on us to share.

Canada, W. and G. E. (2022, February 7). Government of Canada. Women and Gender Equality Canada. Retrieved August 21, 2022, from <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-violence-knowledge-centre/intimate-partner-violence.html>
 Explainers, FP (2022, August 10). The horrifying story of Sania Khan, the US woman killed by ex-husband for talking about divorce on TikTok. Firstpost. Retrieved August 21, 2022, from <https://www.firstpost.com/explainers/the-horrifying-story-of-sania-khan-the-us-woman-killed-by-ex-husband-for-talking-about-divorce-on-tiktok-11041001.html>
 Ziafati, N. (2022, June 29). 'I want change,' daughter says after jury shares recommendations at Ontario Inquest. Ottawa. Retrieved August 21, 2022, from <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/i-want-change-daughter-says-after-jury-shares-recommendations-at-ontario-inquest-1.5966299>

Statistics Canada reports that six women are killed every day due to IPV. Let that sink in. In June 2022, an inquest for the circumstances surrounding the deaths of three women circa 2015 in Renfrew County, Ontario was concluded. Seven years after the triple murder, a jury verdict made 86 recommendations aimed at preventing similar tragedies for victims of IPV. These recommendations included formally declaring IPV an epidemic, establishing an independent commission dedicated to eradicating it, implementing the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence in a timely manner, and adding the term "femicide" and its definition to the Criminal Code. In response to the verdict, the Ministry of the Attorney General stated that "every woman has the right to live in safety and with dignity, free from intimidation and the threat of violence" (Ziafati, 2022) and extended their thoughts and prayers to the families of the victims. However, are thoughts and prayers enough? It took seven years for the courts to make these legislative recommendations for "timely" action by the federal government. The ordinance needs to be implemented now. The disconnect is between the people, you and I, to actually want a change and advocate for the women of our lives. Lives are at stake, and the significant disconnect in the Canadian judicial systems response to femicide and crimes against women, in addition to the systematic inaction on IPV, is a significant contributor towards escalated femicide statistics and the heavy tax that women everywhere continue to pay.

We as parents should raise our daughters to speak up for themselves instead of teaching them to be silent. As a community, we need to have the difficult conversations that no one wants to have. We must destigmatize divorce and marriage trauma. One way to accomplish this is to educate ourselves on the resources that are available for victims and survivors of IPV, and normalize the use of programs and institutions dedicated to them. Sakeena Homes, for example, is an organization that provides compassionate resources to those facing trauma, abuse, violence and homelessness, and advocates to break down the barriers that our cultures impose. This is but one of many steps we can take in the right direction towards a future that is reflective of our sunnah. Aligning ourselves with the words of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), we must protect the women, and now, the onus is on all of us to act.

THE DARK SIDE OF THE INTERNET

 Hajira Malik, 18

Whether it's finding a good recipe, staying in touch with friends and family, googling directions, networking for work, or finding a potential spouse—the internet connects us to all aspects of life. The downside? It's not all positive. Pornographic content, cyber predators, phishing scams, offensive images and messages, inappropriate content of all varieties—the internet has it all.

How can children safely navigate the internet? A lot of parents worry about allowing their children to use social media. Studies have shown that social media use is associated with emotional and mental issues, including anxiety, depression, stress, loneliness, and low self-esteem, physical issues, such as poor sleep quality, and general issues, such as access to misinformation or extreme political views. Anyone can take advantage of being anonymous online so there's always the danger of connecting to predators or cyberbullies.

Social media is not the only culprit—access to any device is enough for young people to be exposed to the dark sides of the web. Targeted advertisements are everywhere. Say your child has to google an article for school. The article asks them to accept cookies, which gives them access to the child's personal information. The search result will probably have targeted ads. Pornographic ads target males as young as ten, to convert them into lifelong customers for that kind of content, which teaches them violence and sexual objectification, and can impact their future relationships. Games have the added risk of stranger danger—online chat rooms become

magnets for cyber bullying and inappropriate content. Child predators know that most online multiplayer games, like Fortnite or Roblox, have young children playing with people of all ages, and they can weaponize those platforms to groom unsuspecting children under the guise of mentorship, even with parental controls in place.

How can parents teach their children to navigate the internet safely? In Muslim households, there's the added stigma of discussing the inappropriate things that children might come across online because it's seen as shameful or embarrassing. The most important thing parents can do is have open conversations with their children. No matter how much you try to protect your kids, they will inevitably be exposed to the dark sides of the internet. When that happens, they need to know how to safely deal with those situations in a healthy manner, even when you're not around. Remind them of the effects of different types of content on their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Start teaching them internet safety from a young age. There are all kinds of children's books out there that cover internet safety, like *What Does It Mean To Be Safe* by Rana DiOrio, a picture book that teaches children about safety both in the context of tech, and in other contexts too.

When used correctly, the internet can be an uplifting and motivational tool to broaden your horizons and lean into your passions. Teaching your children how to use it safely and effectively is a skill that will serve them for the rest of their lives.

Effectiviology. (n.d.). Retrieved August 18, 2022, from <https://effectiviology.com/dangers-of-social-media/>

DARK SIDE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FAME

 Yasmin Said, 20

 When everyone knows. Your name, how you drink your favourite coffee to the breed of that pet cat of yours that you have had for nearly five years. At an initial glance it all seems rather strange, where there's an apparent fall of that wall of privacy to an open door that leads to a realm of normalcy that everyone just *knows*. As humans, naturally one may be enticed to the idea that with an increased number of followers this equates to an increased number of "friends" to recognition of an overall change in the way one may perceive you. Yet, does the cost outweigh the benefit? To let yourself be *perceived* a certain way at the cost of your privacy?

With such an obvious answer the question still remains unanswered.

The idea of "putting up" with the flaws of social media can often be argued due to what is known as instant gratification. Being *instantly* satisfied that you see your numbers rising and you being recognized by people and brands heightens this desire to want more. *More* of the recognition, *more* of the fame, the crave that once was not enough. It creates this false feeling that life is centered around you—for you and *by* you. I say false as that is exactly what it is. This temporary feeling of fulfilment because having prestige for a moment weighs greater than those lingering hate comments you try to suppress.

Yet does the cost *really* outweigh the benefit?

To some it does, hence why the dark side of social media use is not often discussed. The reality is, that the more your presence is out there, the more it increases your chances of getting hate, becoming a victim of having a stalker stalking, and having to individuals impersonate impersonating you and your identity. The unglamorous side of what is often glorified. To have it all—until you do not. In addition, a hidden side of social media that presents itself as problematic is the large availability and access to misinformation. Often concealed in the form of truth, individuals unaware of the information that they are consuming are often unable to differentiate between what is true versus what is inaccurate. However, what happens when one does? One may be likely to conform because they notice others are also doing so. According to a 2017 study, British adolescents aged 14–24 reported that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter increase self-consciousness and the "fear of missing out"—thus, later heightening one's risk for mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression.¹

Although everyone may know, sometimes it is better that the once revealed image of your life and who you are in parts remains hidden, so that you can have a wall of privacy to an open door that leads to a realm of normalcy that is not one that everyone else just *knows*.

¹ Baccarella, C. V., Wagner, T. F., Kietzmann, J. H., & McCarthy, I. P. (2018). Social media? It's serious! Understanding the dark side of social media. European Management Journal, 36 (4), 431–438. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2018.07.002>

MEENA WASEEM

In this segment of "In the Spotlight", we thought we would highlight one of the brightest stars in our community. Meena Waseem is a fourth-year student at the Smith School of Business at Queen's University and has consistently served her different communities. Her activism spans from health equity, education, and immigration to embedding diversity and inclusion in corporate workplaces. This year, she is taking it one step further and running for a position as a school board trustee. We decided to take a closer look with an exclusive interview.

Q: So Meena, you are running for school board trustee to represent Kitchener in Waterloo Region District School Board. Can you speak a little about why you are going forward with this decision as a youth?

I want young people in this region to see their stake in our future. I'm 21, and the youngest person running in my region's municipal elections right now. This wasn't an easy decision to make at this time in my life, but my goal is to draw my age group's attention to the public school board in Waterloo Region. We're coming on two years of the pandemic, and public education has been disrupted in so many ways. Teachers and staff are burnt out, and critical community building was lost in those years.

Students with learning disabilities, students from low-income families, families who face barriers to advocating for their children, and others underrepresented in the education system need more support than ever before. Young people, especially those fresh out of WRDSB schools, know this region's education and hold a unique perspective to equip students with the skills and support we wish we had. For me, I've navigated the WRDSB in many ways.

I have friends from high school who are married, or still in school. I see the way young people in our region are growing, and our city must grow with our needs too. A strong education system in the region sets us up for success.

Q: You have had the opportunity to work in different provinces and cities. Why come back to Kitchener?

What a great question, wow. The main reason I'm running, and running at 21, is because Kitchener-Waterloo is one of the fastest-growing regions in all of Canada. This means we're in a unique time where we have to be proactive in strengthening our public services and municipal elected teams.

If we don't make our public education strong now, it'll be much, much more costly to try to address the consequences later. I believe young people need to be a part of this shift because we are the region's future.

We're the future employees, employers, politicians, etc. Many of the pressing challenges we see in large cities, like the housing crisis, gun violence, the opioid crisis, the loneliness epidemic, (and many more), are consequences of a rapidly growing community with underinvestment in public resources. Anyone who works in these sectors can help drive change by equipping people early. Being proactive now will save us time, energy, and the costs of trying to improve our systems before it's too late.

Q: What are some areas you would like to focus on during your 4-year term?

The most important areas for me are physical and psychological safety, building a love for long-term learning, and increasing access to equitable opportunities.

Q: What place does the community have in what you would like to do and who you are?

When I was in high school, I had a lot of teachers, peers, community members, and local organizers invest their time and energy into me. Because of this support, I was able to receive a number of scholarships and awards that made it possible for me to attend the Commerce program at Queen's University. With a program that costs almost \$18,000 a year, this was not an accessible program for me, but my community helped open the doors for me to learn the language of business through accounting, finance, human resources, business law, and more. I volunteered in a variety of programs in my community, so I often saw that lack of funding, poor team management, and inequitable community engagement were the consequences of well-intentioned but under-supported leadership.

Every opportunity I've pursued since leaving Waterloo Region has been with the intention that I will come back and pay it forward and invest in my community. Running as a school board trustee is one way I can bridge my professional and personal experiences with my passion for public education in this region and give back.

Q: Does being a Muslim influence this decision? How will you bring Muslim youth concerns to the table?

Absolutely! My identity as a Muslim has been the driving force behind many of my community involvements – sadaqah (charity) is mandatory, and we're encouraged to give through whatever means we have. My family really instilled the importance of giving without expecting anything in return. Part of the reason why I chose to wear the hijab was that I wanted my actions to help de-stigmatize Islam and help others better understand the life of a young Muslim woman in – what we colonially know as – Canada.

As a youth, let's mobilize and help spearhead change. Visit meenaforschools.com for more information on how to vote and get involved!

It's no big secret that grades are inflated due to two years of pandemic schooling. These widely high marks make it difficult for universities to decide whom to accept, leading to stricter admissions standards. Simply meeting the criteria isn't enough, you have to go above and beyond to merely get in. This leads to competitive, high-stress situations for students leaving high school, and students finishing undergraduate programs. Requirements rise every year, and uncertainty grows with the prerequisite list. I, a grade 11 student, interviewed Inam Khan, a third-year dental student at the University of Toronto to gain insight into admissions, stress, and money in a world where everyone is trying to start young.

Attending a post-secondary institution is not cheap—the average undergraduate student in Canada pays \$6,693 for tuition in 2022, with a 1.7% annual increase.¹ Dentistry, the program Inam is currently studying, costs approximately \$45,000 a year for domestic students.² Once you graduate and become a professional, you need to pay back your loans. In professional school, you may be forced to get a line of credit, which is interest-bearing.

"Everyone is young, they don't have life experiences to handle things that may come up," says Inam.

"Many underestimate the workload of university coming in from high school, there's 'infinite work' and not enough time to do all of it."

Because we work so hard to get to the next stage of our lives and attend these revered institutions, it creates a paradox of belief that once you just make it in you can stop working so hard. All of your labor will pay off, and you will be where you need to be. "Life only gets harder though," Inam says with forced enthusiasm. You expect to relax after 'making it', but now you have to finish with flying colors so that you can succeed.

Let's say you don't make it into the program or school you applied for—what happens? Everyone has different perceived stakes, and not getting in could mean the end of the world to some while others can wait for another opportunity or are grateful for the time to build their portfolio. Consider how long you want to be in school. Is it possible to get a job with the credentials you already have? Are there alternative pathways you haven't considered?

Inam stands by the fact that education is an investment in yourself. Try to take all the opportunities you have so you can make the most of it and graduate with no regrets. If you're feeling stressed, take some time to self-reflect and brainstorm ways that you can integrate wellness practices into your daily life. Allah SWT has a plan for you, and your qadr is written. Make du'a and ask for assistance during this turbulent time in your life and remember that it is up to you to wait however long and work hard—insha'Allah, it will all be worth it.

¹Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. "Tuition Fees for Degree Programs, 2021/2022." The Daily - , 8 Sept. 2021, www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210908/dq210908a-eng.htm

²How Much Does the Dentistry Program Cost? | Faculty of Dentistry, University of Toronto, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Toronto, www.dentistry.utoronto.ca/node/2264#:~:text=The%20tuition%20fees%20for%20the,academic%20and%20dental%20instrument%20fees.

THE DARK SIDE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Author: Firdose Khan, 15

Interviewee: Inam Khan, 24

TRES LECHES

Recipe by
Nabiha Suri

INGREDIENTS

CAKE

- 1 1/2 tsp of baking powder
- 5 large eggs
- 1 cup of sugar
- 1/4 tsp of salt
- 1 cup of all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp of vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup of whole milk

SYRUP

- 1 can of condensed milk
- 1/3 cup of heavy whipping cream
- 1 can of evaporated milk

CREAM

- 1–2 tbsp of sugar (depending on how much whipping cream added)
- 1–2 cups of heavy whipping cream (depending on how much cream you want)
- Berries (optional)

This cake is scrumptious and melts in your mouth!

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350° fahrenheit.
- 2 Grease a 9x13 casserole dish.
- 3 In a bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder and salt.
- 4 Sift that mixture into a larger mixing bowl.
- 5 Separate the 5 eggs into 2 large mixing bowls by whites and yolks.
- 6 With an electric mixer, beat the egg yolks with 3/4 cup of sugar until you see a light yellow colour.
- 7 In the yolk mixture, add the whole milk and vanilla extract. Mix that together with a spatula.
- 8 Beat the egg whites for about a minute then add the leftover 1/4 cup of sugar. Mix until stiff peaks form.
- 9 Pour the yolks mixture onto the flour mixture and use a spatula to mix them together.
- 10 Add the whites mixture on top of the yolk and flour mixture. Fold gently with a spatula.
- 11 Pour all of the batter into the casserole dish and bake for around 30 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.
- 12 When it's done baking, let it cool until it reaches around room temperature.
- 13 In a large measuring cup, Mix the condensed, evaporated and heavy whipping cream together.
- 14 With a fork, poke holes all over the top of the cake.
- 15 Pour the milk mixture onto the cake and wait for all of it to absorb.
- 16 To make the cream, add in heavy whipping cream and the sugar. (Add the same amount of heavy whipping cream in cups then the sugar in tbsp.)
- 17 Mix them with an electric mixer.
- 18 Frost the cake, then cut up berries and to add them on the top, and enjoy.

THE MIGHTY WATERMELON

Symbol of Freedom, or Racist Trope?

Faria Malik, 28

Could you imagine being arrested for holding a watermelon slice up to the sky? That's exactly what happened to multiple Palestinians, after Israel implemented military order 101, which effectively banned Palestinians from carrying any political symbols, including possessing or wearing the colors of their flag. What do watermelons and the Palestinian flag have in common? They're both red, green, black and white.

In fact, the humble watermelon has a storied past, both as a symbol of resistance and oppression. So how did this colorful summer fruit become both a meaningful emblem and a derogatory racial trope?

We can trace the first recorded instance of the watermelon's symbolism all the way back to 1801. A British officer, stationed in Egypt, wrote in his diary that the watermelon was "a poor Arab's feast," and that he had seen locals eating it "ravenously, as if afraid the passer-by was going to snatch [the watermelons] away." His journal was rife with dehumanizing language, and a general disgust for the Arabs he met on his travels.

So the watermelon's first role as a symbol was negative—what was it about the watermelon that made it so insulting?

Negative symbolism of the Watermelon:

Uncleanliness — It's a messy fruit to eat, therefore those who eat it must be unclean.

Childishness — It's brightly colored, sweet, and not considered to be nutritious, therefore those who eat it must be childish.

Laziness — Watermelon is an easy crop to grow, and can't be eaten while working, therefore those who grow it or stop to eat it must be lazy.

Public Disturbance — One person usually can't eat an entire watermelon on their own, so people who gather to share a watermelon must be 'disturbing the peace'.

These negative connotations were weaponized against Black people by American media following the American Civil War too. Before emancipation, some enslaved people were permitted to grow and sell their own watermelon crops. This was considered a "kindness" from white slave owners. After emancipation, Black people continued to grow, sell, and eat watermelon, and the fruit came to symbolize Black freedom and Black self-sufficiency. To white people that opposed emancipation, this newfound freedom was seen as a threat to the racial order. Subsequently, the media worked overtime to amplify the association between Black people and watermelon as a negative one. Movies, textbooks, novels, and newspapers worked in tandem to turn the watermelon, once a symbol of freedom, into an ugly, racist stereotype.

In 1980, Israeli forces arrested three artists for violating military order 101. One of them asked, "Well, what if I just wanted to paint a watermelon?"

The officer replied, "It would be confiscated."

The most fascinating takeaway about the history of the watermelon? The dichotomy of the watermelon's symbolism throughout history—to the oppressors, it has been used as a threat and an insult. To the oppressed, it has surfaced time and time again as a symbol of resistance, and the perpetual fight for liberation and justice.

¹Avery Family Papers, Records of the Antebellum Southern Plantations, Series J, Part 5, Reel 11, Frames 673-676. <http://wcaleb.rice.edu/omeka/items/show/98>

²Black, William R. "How Watermelons Became Black: Emancipation and the Origins of a Racist Trope." *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2018, pp. 64–86. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/26381503.

³Born Without Rights: Israel's Use of Draconian Military Orders to Repress Palestinians in the West Bank. Human Rights Watch Report, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/12/17/born-without-civil-rights/israels-use-draconian-military-orders-repress>

⁴Caricature from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 1869.

⁵Doyle, Charles Williams. A non-military journal, or Observations made in Egypt: describing their country, its inhabitants, their manners and customs. p. 15, p. 22. 1803.

⁶Henry Barnes and the Alabama overseer: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mesn.010/?sp=26&st=text>

⁷Military Order 101: https://www.btselem.org/demonstrations/military_order_101

⁸"Palestinian Flag" by Khaled Hourani.

Ramallah Journal; A Palestinian Version of the Judgement of Solomon: <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/16/world/ramallah-journal-a-palestinian-version-of-the-judgment-of-solomon.html>

⁹Watermelon flag: Alternative flag for Palestine. <https://disarmingdesign.com/product/watermelon-flag/>

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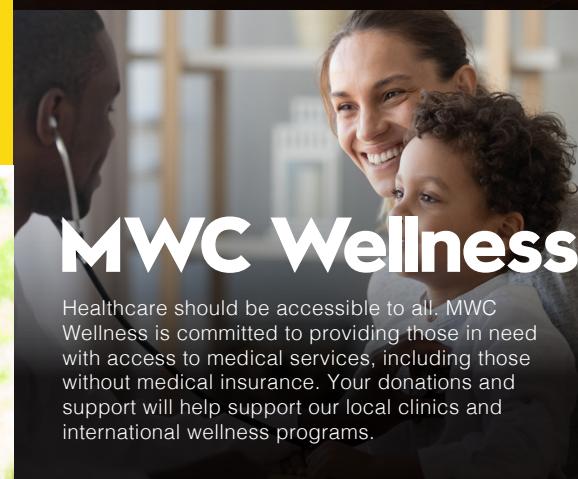
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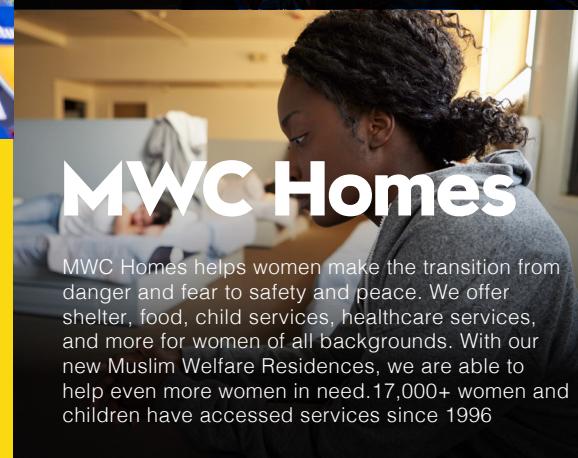
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