INDIGENOUS AND MUSLIM YOUTH BELONGING IN TORONTO, CANADA: NAVIGATING URBAN CITIZENSHIP AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

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INTRODUCTION

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My PhD research focuses on Indigenous and Muslim youth belonging in the city of Toronto, exploring how youth navigate urban citizenship and the right to the city.

Why my fascination for this topic? I identify as a First Nations/Ojibwe Muslim from Whitefish River First Nation.

Research interests Media Geographies, Cultural geography, Urban Geography and I love maps but not just any forms of maps. Specifically Counter-maps. This opinion/research project will be used as a small part of my larger dissertation.
KEY THEMES

- The Racial State
- Constellations of Coresistance
- The Right to the City
- Positionality
THE RACIAL STATE: SENSE OF (UN)BELONGING

- Historical/Contemporary context
- Sense of (un)belonging
- In recent news: Reacting to the legacy of Residential Schools and Acts of Islamophobia
- Indigenous knowledge sustained by Oral Traditions
Since the hate-motivated attacks on a Quebec City mosque in 2017, Canadians have begun to recognize our country is not immune to the development of hatred and racism.

Indigenous youth in inner-cities face multiple issues associated with a history of colonization and racism such as poverty, unemployment, incarceration and institutionalization. These challenges serve as barriers to their own well-being and seriously hinder the progress toward enhanced community health (Brown et al, 2005).

My research investigates the possibility for Indigenous and Muslim urban resurgence, especially through the theory of constellations of co-resistance. Leanne Simpson (2014) articulates “we need to develop personal relationships with other communities of coresistors beyond white allies” (13).
RIGHT TO THE CITY (REAL AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION)

- French intellectual Henri Lefebvre coined the term “right to the city” and suggested “Formal and legal rights are never God-given, rather rights are always the outcome of political struggle. They are the manifestation, the result of collective claims made by mobilized citizens” (Purcell, 2013, p.146).
- Real and Active Participation rather than a revolutionary approach to this theme.
EXAMPLE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO BOTH GROUPS

Legal Services:

- NCCM - The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit organization that protects Canadian human rights and civil liberties, challenges discrimination and Islamophobia, builds mutual understanding, and advocates for the public concerns of Canadian Muslims.
- ALS - Aboriginal Legal Services. The ALS maintains that aboriginal individuals require equitable treatment in the justice system, access to the legal and related resources within the justice system, as well as understanding of the system and their options.

Youth Mental Health & Wellness:

- Naseeha Mental Health Hotline – A safe zone for youths and individuals to talk and get the help they need
- Hope for Wellness Hotline – offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous peoples across Canada

Employment and Training Opportunities:

- MAC – The Muslim Association of Canada -The Muslim Youth Fellowship is a non-partisan program which provides politically motivated students the opportunity to complement their academic studies with hands-on experience working with an elected government representative.
- Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training - was created in 1991 to meet the unique training and employment needs of aboriginal peoples. Miziwe Biik provides the Greater Toronto Area's Aboriginal community with training initiatives and employment services.
THE ROLE OF THE MOSQUE

• Mobilization for political events would come at a cost (Nima, MA Major Research Project, 2018)

• First and Second Generational Disconnect – First Generation Muslim immigrants here prioritize the longevity of the community/congregation-the Second Generation are particularly more politically motivated.

• “If something happens in the media or like anything, we can’t get political in the mosque because we’re under surveillance. So every time we come with a proposal, for example, there was a bombing in Beirut like a year or two ago, and we wanted to hold a vigil, the vigil just like lighting candles that’s it and they said we can’t do that because it can get political, and we’re not allowed because we have non-profit status and if we get political, we can get stripped of that. We can go as individuals but not as a community, solidarity isn’t like that” (BS Focus group - women).

• Canada Revenue Agency’s (CRA’s) Advisory on Partisan Political Activities (Blumberg, 2008)
POSITIONALITY

- Authenticity of being an Indigenous/Muslim Scholar- The journey of a biracial graduate student
- Webinar with Indigenous Health Geographer Chantelle Richmond
- Relationships and Restoration – Canada was founded on the structural disempowerment of Indigenous peoples
FUTURE PROJECTS?

- Idea of a Podcast modelled after Jerry Seinfeld’s Comedians in Cars getting Coffee
- Sharing Stories of How Muslim, Black, and Indigenous Youth navigate the city at a local GTA Café owned and operated by Black and Indigenous people
- Covering different topics of how youth navigate the city through music, spoken word poetry, employment, public transportation etc. to provide rich candid dialogue that is not in an academic setting
BIBLIOGRAPHY


• https://www.stepstonesforyouth.com/resources/youth-resources/services-for-indigenous-youth/