

Raihaana Adira

My name is Raihaana Adira and I'm a Muslim student from Toronto entering my fourth year at McGill University. I am pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in International Development and World Islamic Middle East Studies.

I have been active in the Muslim community since I was born. From the ages of 4-18, I attended religious school every Saturday. As a teenager, I ran various youth and early childhood programs at my mosque and volunteered as a religion teacher for the community. In grade 12, I did an independent study project focused on creating dialogue and coexistence. Following this, I decided to pursue my undergraduate studies at McGill due to its prestigious Institute of Islamic Studies.

At first, I had a difficult time in university owing to my Muslim identity. I joined a sorority but left due to bullying related to my background and my field of study. For example, I was told by a peer not to join sorority events because my presence "promotes terrorism." The problems continued beyond the sorority. I held a position in the Arts Undergraduate Society but my contract was not renewed, I was made to understand, because of my major. Throughout my university years, I have been accused of being antisemitic and hating all Jewish people for no reason other than my field of study.

Last year, I took a political science class which culminated in a trip to Israel. It was a truly eye-opening experience and was the first time I saw Jews and Muslims living side by side in peace. Based largely on that, I drew closer to the Jewish community and joined them in their fight against the current wave of antisemitism. Having already experienced discrimination due to my own personal background, I greatly empathized with what so many Jews at my school were going through. Shockingly, my activism resulted in significant ostracization from my Muslim communities, be it religious, academic or social. There are many people whom I once considered close but now refuse to take to me. It is incredibly painful, to say the least.

The division between the Muslim and Jewish communities in Canada that has so greatly spilled into the open over the past few months is a tragedy. As illustrated by my experience, both communities face significant discrimination. I have personally been called both an antisemite and a Nazi-Zionist. I truly don't know where I belong or where I can find a safe home.

For the safety of everyone in this country, all hatred must be fought with vigour. Simultaneously, one must not be isolated by one community for speaking out in support of another. As long as that continues, the hatred plaguing our country will continue.