

Call for Papers

Last date for submission of abstracts: **4th April 2014**

Muslim Women's Activism

26th June 2014, Enterprise Centre, University of Derby

A conference hosted by the Centre for Society, Religion or Belief, University of Derby & New Horizons in British Islam

<http://www.derby.ac.uk/education/centre-for-society-religion-and-belief/>

Across the globe, Muslim women's activism is gaining visibility and range from participation in protest marches about women's choice and anti-war campaigns, to more literary forms of protest such as blogs and poetry. Establishing women's refuges, improving girls' education and engaging in inter-faith dialogue are other forms of activism. In the West, public debate around the niqab (face veil) demonstrates the delicate balance that Muslim women must establish between the secular and sacred, between religious choice, dogma and public liberties. In religious, academic and popular discourses the hijab and other 'modesty issues' have become over-signified as symbols of Muslim women's identity, however many Muslim women (both those who wear the hijab and those who do not) assert that there is much more complexity and variety in their lives and activism. The so-called Arab Spring saw women gain social visibility unprecedented in the Middle East. Yet a focus on clothing and modesty represent the ironies, contradictions and delicate negotiations that Muslim women constantly undertake. In most contexts, their visibility enhances and hinders the impact of their work. Like all women, Muslim women in Britain

are constantly redefining their hopes and ambitions, for themselves, their careers, their children and their communities.

Despite the success and set-backs they experience, Muslim women are challenging patriarchy within the contexts of Islam (and beyond) and are developing new 'women-friendly' religious paradigms and spaces. In doing so, they demystify their faith, interrogate misconceptions about Islam, challenge Islamophobia, engage in inter-community dialogue and also raise important questions about reform in Islamic thought and practice. Although Muslims women's activism usually take place within the feminist legacy of rights and respect for women, the relationship between feminism and Muslim women is by no means straightforward, with some women embracing feminism and others eschewing it – a reflection of the different ways through which women choose to articulate their struggles.

This conference will examine:

1. social, religious and historical contexts of Muslim women's social and political activism
2. the impacts of Muslim women's agency
3. challenges and strategies for the future
4. current academic and grassroots level experience
5. forms that their activism takes, e.g. textual production, intellectual or academic writing, street protests, online campaigning, dialogue work, etc.

Proposals for papers, panel discussions, workshops and poster presentations that focus on one, or more, of the above themes

are invited from scholars, community activists and policy makers. For the purposes of the conference, we do not define the term 'Muslim women's activism', but rather envisage that contributions will broaden our understanding of what activism means and involves amongst Muslim women today.

Please submit a title and abstract of no more than 300 words, indicating whether it is a paper / panel / workshop / poster presentation, plus a name and short biography (150 words maximum) of the presenter/s, institutional affiliation/s (if relevant), and contact details to Dr Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor (s.contractor@derby.ac.uk) by 5pm on Wednesday **4th April 2014**. Successful participants will be notified by **25th April 2014**. A registration fee of £30 will apply for all speakers and delegates. A reduced fee of £15 will apply for students, representatives of voluntary organisations and those not in paid employment. A few travel bursaries are available for post-graduate students and for those not in paid employment – please enquire about these by e-mail. Further details about the registration process will be circulated and posted on our website (<http://www.derby.ac.uk/education/centre-for-society-religion-and-belief/>) in late March 2014.

Dr Kristin Aune, Director, Prof Alison Scott-Baumann, Dr Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor, Rabiha Hannan and Dilwar Hussain

Centre for Society, Religion and Belief, University of Derby & New Horizons in British Islam