

The Role of Humiliation and Dignity for Structural, and Political Violence

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This paper examines why assaults on the personhood, value, and dignity of a population, serve as counterproductive strategies for addressing issues of political violence. Sixteen months of fieldwork among a Muslim American community in central Florida, gathering data through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, revealed an increased climate of alienation, mistrust, anger, and fear toward law enforcement agencies, and a concern that the humiliation generated by the USA PATRIOT Act diminished the likelihood of Muslim Americans establishing a community-based partnership with police agencies in addressing issues of political violence.

This paper also examines peacebuilding themes for improving interpersonal relationships between Muslim Americans and police agencies, including the need for law enforcement agencies to make a concerted effort to educate themselves on the basic tenets of Islam, along with its diverse customs and culture, to establish an open active dialogue with community members, and to sustain a relationship with the Muslim American community based on the Islamic foundational concepts of mutual participation, respect, dignity, honor, and social justice.

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