

## ***Stop using other marginalised groups as an excuse to attack Muslims***

Islamophobia is being spread through our culture by those criticising Muslims while presenting themselves as advocates for gay rights, animal welfare and gender equality.

[Miqdaad Versi, \*Independent\*, January 2, 2017.](#)

Islamophobia has been brought into the mainstream in Britain *Artform Canada/Flickr*

The cause of [LGBT rights](#) has found an unlikely champion in the form of *The Sun* newspaper. It has found no problem in arguably encouraging Islamophobia by [calling on gay rights charities such as Stonewall](#) to “fight Islam”. Yes, that is the headline they used. This, it’s worth remembering, is from the same newspaper which launched the “[Eastbenders](#)” campaign to remove the BBC soap’s first gay characters, and which ran the headline “Straight sex cannot give you Aids – official”, which I would suggest [whipped up](#) hatred towards gay people [living with HIV](#).

Never mind the apparent hypocrisy, this is an example of how important social issues such as gay rights can be used to stoke up bigotry elsewhere. This is how Islamophobia has become normalised within our society, where [37 per cent](#) now say they would be likely to support a political party that promised to reduce the number of Muslims in Britain, and where [more than](#) 30 per cent of young children think Muslims are “taking over” England.

Another example of this tactic is women’s rights: consider Trevor Kavanagh, who normally does not discuss feminist issues in his column in the equality-loving *Sun*. Yet here he makes an exception. He [calls](#) on feminists to fight for Muslim women and to stand up against the [veil](#).

Or what about animal rights? Katie Hopkins, a staunch [defender](#) of fox hunting, shows her strong belief in animal rights as she rails against [halal](#) slaughter. Rod Liddle goes on a

rampage against halal slaughter without stunning (15 per cent of all halal meat in the UK) but chooses to entirely ignore kosher slaughter (100 per cent of which is without stunning).

We would be hard-pressed to call these columnists passionate activists for gay rights, women's rights or animal rights – yet they are using these issues to create a semblance of moral and ethical righteousness with which to mask their bigotry. The result is clear and undeniable: the bully pulpit stokes hatred and turns marginalised groups against each other. It foments an anti-Muslim narrative and strengthens the far right by allowing them a mainstream source for their anti-Muslim hatred.

Of course gender equality, LGBT rights and animal rights are evolving social issues that both religious and non-religious communities can find challenging to navigate. They are emotive subjects. But the line between fighting the cause and fomenting hatred is thin; it is a line that must be trod carefully, with minority groups standing up united against bigotry and hatred.

If we don't stand together, we risk strengthening the far right – the only group which is thriving in an environment where their anti-Muslim views have been allowed to slip into the mainstream.