



# NAVIGATING ELECTION SEASON

A Trauma-  
Informed Guide

For Survivors of  
Harm & State  
Violence

# GROUNDING IN ABOLITION

HEART is a nonprofit organization working to uproot gendered violence, promote sexual health, and advance reproductive justice for the most marginalized Muslims. As an organization that works with survivors of violence, we recognize that violence and harm can take many shapes. Elected officials are passing abortion bans that are resulting in pregnant people being denied life saving reproductive health care. They're funding global military occupations instead of critical social services, and criminalizing our voices of dissent. Community leaders and organizations are proudly endorsing candidates who have actively harmed our communities. Fear mongering and shame based tactics are being used to apply pressure on individuals to vote a particular way. Religion is being weaponized to morally police voters. At many levels, the power, control, and agency that an individual has is being denied as they move through this election season. We see our survivor community and uplift the agency of survivors of all types of violence to choose for themselves how and if to engage in this year's election cycle.

## ABOLITION AS ABLUTION: STOP POLICING TO CLEANSE YOUR HEART

We are a long ways away from a world that has the infrastructure and resources to no longer rely on the state, but we can start thinking about that through our actions now. How are you moving in abolitionists ways in your daily life to ground your interactions in compassion not judgment? In order for survivors to move with agency, we must challenge ourselves to identify the ways in which we mimic policing with ourselves and each other and to disrupt the policing in our hearts and center care. Policing each other's actions and voting preferences can add to the trauma survivors are already experiencing. We believe survivors should have the right to center their own experiences and make informed decisions about what is best and most aligned with their moral conscience and values.



# HEART'S GUIDANCE TO OUR MUSLIM COMMUNITIES ON THE 2024 ELECTION CYCLE

As we approach the 2024 elections, we hold the deep grief and rage many in our communities are feeling in the highest regard. At the same time, we recognize the sense of urgency to hold those in positions of political power accountable for their support of the multiple genocides of the Palestinian, Sudanese, and Congolese people. We are collectively unwell and need support where we can find it. The following is a practice of community care as we attempt to demystify the election process. For those of us who are in the privileged position to vote this election, we offer the following guidance to ensure we approach this season in trauma informed, survivor centered, and principled ways:

## ADMINISTRATIVE VOTING GUIDANCE AS YOU HEAD TO THE POLLS (OR NOT)

1. Learn about the voting deadlines and guidelines for your state. Check your voter registration status, and plan ahead to make sure your ballot will be counted either through mail or at the ballot box. To check your voter registration status and make updates to your preferred voting method, click [here](#) and then choose the specific state you are registered for. You can also check deadlines for early voting, mail-in-ballot, and general election deadlines [here](#).

**Note:** In the upcoming general election, you are able to vote for any candidate from any political party in any race despite your registered party affiliation. For more information about party affiliations, click [here](#).

2. Learn what ballot measures you can vote on in this election. Aside from candidates, there are many issue-based ballot measures that may determine critical laws that could impact reproductive rights, policing, and our organizing around collective wellness. Look up your ballot [here](#) by putting in your address.
3. Understand the policy positions of the various candidates that are running for local, state, and national office. In addition to their policy positions, examine who their campaign donors are - the money trail will reveal who the candidates are accountable to once and if they get elected into office. These donors often influence their policy decisions once in office.

# COMMUNITY CARE & AGREEMENTS FOR MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Practicing community care requires addressing anti-Blackness. We bring this offering as loving accountability to our community. We're all hurting as we witness the multiple genocides of our global communities and we're not making it easier on each other by participating in the same systems of harm through micro and macro aggressions. Black Muslims in the ummah have always been hurting- it is incomplete to lump anti-Blackness in a list with all other systems of oppression **because anti-Blackness is at the foundation of it all- an individual can experience all the harm and still be anti-Black.** Naming anti-Blackness is not a distraction from the larger movement to free our communities from imperialism and oppression. It is both counter-productive to the movement and anti-Black to ignore this conversation. We are enabling the systems of harm by silencing Black voices who are disproportionately impacted by structural oppression.

## 1. Center the Most Impacted

- a. Dominant white supremacist culture by design pits communities of color to fight each other and is demonstrated by non-Black people of color prioritizing their safety over that of Black people. It shows up in the erasure of the oppression of Black people. In every crisis, Black folks are the most marginalized, and until we center Black global struggle, we are not centering the most impacted. For example, there are Black Palestinians that are impacted by the genocide in Occupied Palestine; there are Black migrants that are home help for Lebanese families evacuating their homes that are currently being abandoned by their host families.
- b. We see an invisibilization and minimization of the oppression of predominantly Black countries such as the Congo, Haiti, Yemen, and Sudan. The smaller scope of mobilization and attention to these struggles is apparent and a function of anti-Blackness.
- c. In a domestic context, restrictive abortion bans and criminalizing legislation, especially in swing states target Black pregnant people. The safety of Black women, Black Muslim women, and Black pregnant people is disregarded repeatedly in our communities when they are the most disproportionately impacted.
- d. We need to dismantle anti-Blackness; only then can we also dismantle anti-Shiism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny.

## 2. Simultaneity: two or more (conflicting) truths can co-exist at the same time

- a. Our communities are being harmed by external factors, and we also are harming each other through our bigotry and oppression. We are working to care for each other and keep each other safe, and we are still leaving some people behind. We can be marginalized and also participate in the marginalization of others.
- b. How have you seen these dynamics play out in our communities in the current sociopolitical context?

## 3. Cultivate Belonging

- a. We recognize the importance of global solidarity and recognize when we uplift calls to global solidarity, we explicitly want to name that means everyone in our ummah (community). With power and white supremacy functioning in our communities, we all have biases and encourage everyone to unpack that which may be showing up for us as we witness and process multiple genocides. Anti-Blackness, Anti-Shia sentiment, Xenophobia, Anti-Arab Racism and Gendered islamophobia are all very present in our communities today. There is no place for such harm in our practice of global solidarity.

## 4. Practice gratitude to those who build the systems to care for us and keep us safe.

- a. It is notable how power and privilege operates in moments of crisis and mobilization: for example, what happens when the community is confronted with crisis? Most often, it is the people on the margins - Black and brown people, queer and trans people, survivors of violence - who are on the frontlines, designing community driven solutions that keep our communities safe, and building organizations that become a refuge for the vulnerable, while those who have power and influence may actively obstruct those efforts.
- b. That leaves us to further interrogate the distance between those who are closest to the center, who have the power to create change, and those who are more marginalized, but are mobilizing our communities in the moments of greatest crisis and are on the frontlines of that change with sparse resources and even sparser community support.
- c. Practice gratitude to our siblings on the margins and all the ways they've been pushed out for their contributions, while recognizing our movements would not be where they are today if it wasn't for their courage, their leadership, their commitment. Push for their care, their inclusion, and their belonging in the community spaces you are a part of.

# MOVING IN TRAUMA INFORMED WAYS: GUIDANCE FOR ADVOCACY AND MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Recognize the deep trauma in our communities and how trauma may influence our decision making at this moment. The trauma is valid; we can support those who are refraining from engaging in the political process just as we can hold those who are actively engaging civically to hold the line around our collective liberation. We each have a role to play; these roles are fluid and may not always look the same. It is critical for us to know our role, and to know our limitations, while actively preventing more harm to each other.

1. We encourage organizers and organizations as they engage civically to uplift the lived experiences of and calls to action from directly impacted community members with regards to reproductive rights, global solidarity with those impacted by multiple genocides, and those criminalized for their campus activism. We hold these as the current priorities of our movement work at HEART.

- a. Deepen your organization's understanding of how these issues intersect with the care, healing, and safety of the most directly impacted Muslims.
- b. Provide culturally accessible, comprehensive political education to the communities you serve to invite informed decision-making.
- c. Uplift the existing resources developed by our communities.

2. If you are not a directly impacted person, be mindful with your organization's public comments regarding candidates, to not add any additional harm to what individuals may be navigating their feelings and decisions regarding this election cycle.

- a. Be mindful of any public endorsement or support of candidates and how it may trigger individuals who have been directly affected by the ongoing violence.

Moving in trauma informed ways requires discernment around tone when discussing abusers who have caused grave harm. We are collectively responsible for caring for each other through this election and recommend we all move in such ways that honor the complex feelings people may have.