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The Muslims in Canada Archives (MiCA)
STATEMENT ON LANGUAGE IN DESCRIPTION

STATEMENT

Archival collections often contain offensive language that does undue harm toward certain individuals, groups, and communities through archival description (i.e. finding aids, titles of files, and so on) and/or the views of the creator (i.e. seen in the documents themselves). Users may come across language that is, for example, sexist, Islamophobic, homophobic, racist, transphobic, xenophobic, and so on. The Muslims in Canada Archives aims to describe archival materials in our collections respectfully and in a manner that is responsible and accountable to creators, users, subjects of records, and the larger communities that are affected by archival representation.

We operate with an ethics of care framework centered on radical empathy marking our archival relationships with record creators, users, subjects of records, and the larger communities.¹ While we recognize that items in archival collections are a reflection of the time/era that they were created and the views of the creator, it is the responsibility of the archivist(s) to mitigate the potential harm in the language by providing ample context to their usage. In the event that our staff has used offensive or harmful language in any archival description, we will update those accordingly and, in order to remain fully transparent and responsible to all, maintain a history of any changes in the description.

Any offensive or harmful language that belongs to the archival items themselves and, therefore, reflects the views of their creator is useful and crucial information about the creator, the time/era it was created, and other relevant contexts of its creation. These contexts, while harmful, are rich in historical information and it is the responsibility of our archivist(s) to provide additional information to contextualize the offensive language. While our policy is to provide additional context to items with harmful language, we will also treat each instance of harm on a case-by-case basis because we recognize that offensive and harmful language come in varying degrees. In such cases, we may consider consulting the communities, groups or individuals who have been harmed for advice on our next steps.

CONTACT US

Should you find any offensive or harmful language in our archival collections, please do not hesitate to contact MiCA's coordinator, Moska Rokay, at moska.rokay@utoronto.ca. We welcome the feedback.

¹ See MiCA's "Protocols of Practice" policy document for more on ethics of care frameworks. This framework was explicated by Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor in the following paper: Caswell, Michelle, and Marika Cifor. "From human rights to feminist ethics: radical empathy in the archives." *Archivaria* 81, no. 1 (2016): 23-43.