

LANA SIRRI

# Shababz!

A Graphic Journey through  
Islamic Feminism

Illustrated by Irem Kurt

Amsterdam University Press

## **Shababz!**

A Graphic Journey through Islamic Feminism

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## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter One: The Gang</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Speaking and Being</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Love is Revolution</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Echoes of Manhood</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Chapter Five: Legal Illuminations: Deciphering Justice in Faith</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Chapter Six: Echoes of the Past</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Chapter Seven: Breaking Boundaries</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Chapter Eight: Voices Unsilenced: A Queer Muslim Dialogue</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>Chapter Nine: Memories and Manifestos: A Journey Continued</b>	<b>185</b>







**Dear young reader,**

*Be curious!* You're an amazing human being. I know, hearing it again from an "older" person might feel repetitive, but I mean it! Sometimes things seem really tough, unfair, and just plain harsh. There might be moments when anger and frustration seem like the only feelings around. And sometimes it feels like the world isn't quite ready to understand you. But guess what? You hold incredible power within you. The power to turn these experiences into valuable knowledge. The power to image a world that celebrates every part of who you are. The power to make a difference. My hope is that this book helps you to accept, understand and celebrate yourself, your communities and your faith. But remember, I only offer insights here. Ultimately, it's your journey to take. So, go ahead and ask those big questions. Search for answers, and don't be afraid to question those answers too. Be critical, especially when faced with authority figures or ideas that might seem fixed. And always remember, you're not alone. You just need to find those who are taking the same journey, and those who will cheer and support you along the way.

**Dear fellow PoC reader,**

*Be inspirational!* You've faced countless challenges in life, confronting diverse forms of discrimination and exclusion, and perhaps still do. Navigating your own path, you've bridged the gap between the wider society and your predecessors who sought better opportunities elsewhere for our generation. Out of this hardship, your creativity arose, enabling you to build communities. You're the steadfast shoulders upon which the younger generation stands. You've laid down the foundation, allowing them to move

ahead and grow. Your legacy, rooted in the timeless wisdom passed down by your ancestors, embodies strength and endurance. However, just as you once dismissed the struggles and contributions of those before you, thinking 'we know best,' undoubtedly, you'll encounter similar sentiments from the younger ones. Remember, your pursuit of knowledge and growth is ongoing. You learn from both your elders and your youngsters. Even if their perspectives sometimes puzzle you, they possess invaluable insights. Be compassionate. Deep down, they value your guidance. I offer this book merely as a supplement to your own experiences and knowledge, a tool to aid you in guiding them through life's twists, offering support and understanding as they navigate their journey.

**Dear *white*\* wreader,**

*Be active!* You play a big role here. The journey that these youth are about to take is often paved by you. It's within your power and reach to illuminate their way with streetlights or, under the guise of going green, plant trees that might inadvertently overshadow or replace these guiding lights. With this book, I hope you will explore Islamic feminisms and critical theory, but more importantly gain insights into the life-experiences of young Muslims in Western societies. However, your journey doesn't end with awareness; it begins there. If you are a teacher, educator, social worker, or trainer, use your position to uplift marginalized communities and create inclusive spaces. Use your privileges not to speak on their behalf, but to amplify their voices. Listen to their experiences so you can reflect on your own biases and behaviors and then actively work to change discriminatory attitudes. This is a journey we cannot and should not undertake without you, as each of us is an indispensable thread woven into the fabric of our society.

**Dear younger me,**

*Be resilient!* Now you know what you wish you knew back then. What a ride it's been, teaching you so much about life and why people around you acted the way they did. You learned that sometimes things aren't as they seem

\* The categorization of PoC and white is not intended to exclude others through identity politics, but rather to highlight the process by which groups of people come to be socially constructed, and thus experience certain privileges or disadvantages.

to be. People often say, "It's complicated," but honestly, it's not. Someone once said "framing things as complex is just a way to deter from the ugly, very simple truths"— you realized these simple truths. You learned how to channel your emotions, the comfortable, easy ones and the more difficult, challenging ones. Through this understanding, you grew, flourished, and were able to give back to your community. Along the way, you met awesome people and found supportive allies. You immersed yourself in exciting conversations about important topics that shaped your world, such as Islam, race, gender, and sexuality. Yet, most significantly, you uncovered Islamic feminism, igniting a fire within you and leaving you constantly thirsty for more. You realized it's okay to talk about things others might avoid, break "taboos," and by doing so, enrich yourself and those around you. It's been a journey to get where you are now, and it's been totally worth it.

Lana Sirri  
March 2024





Chapter One

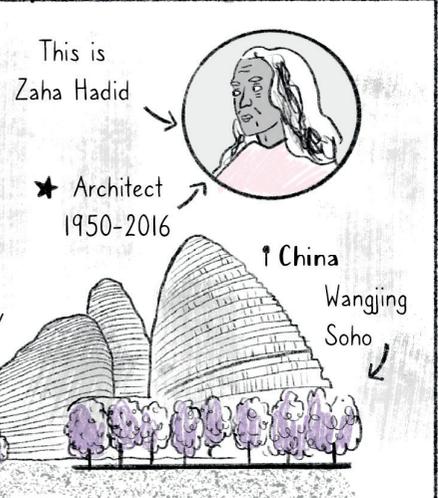
The Gang

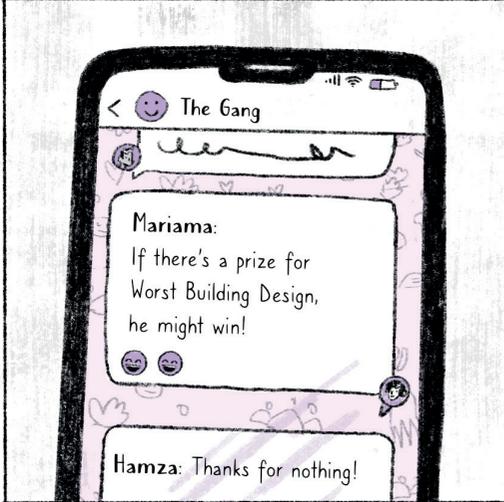




PONDER









Hamza







Zahra

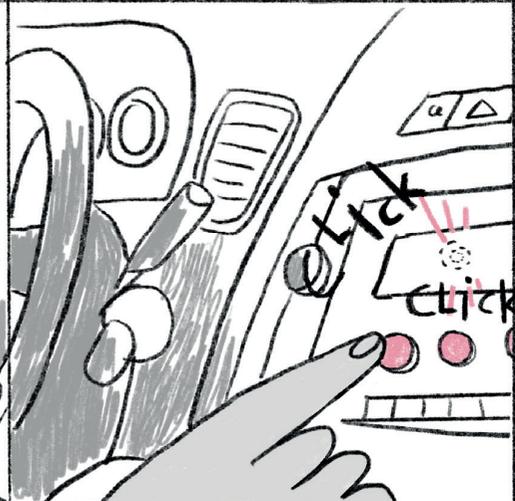


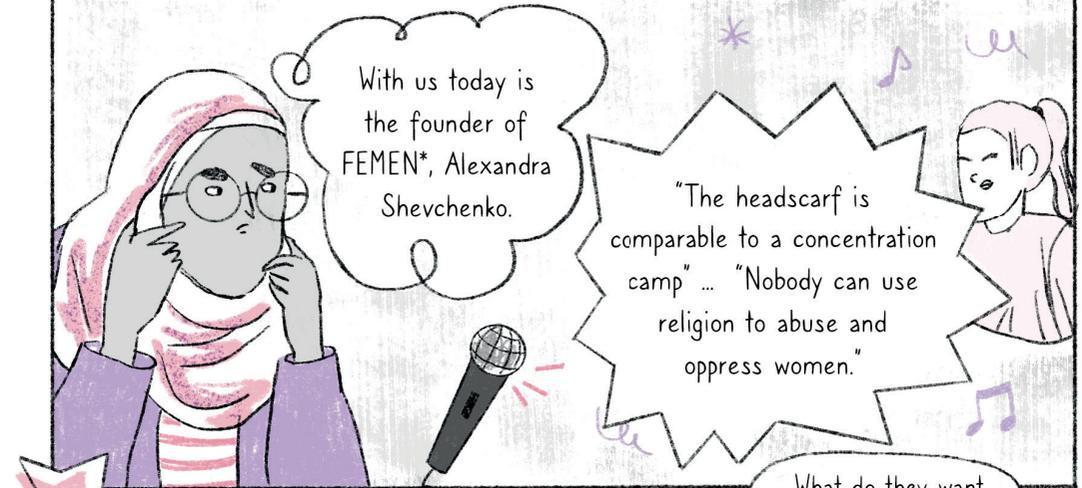
Be a good girl.

Ain't I always?

Did you submit your application yesterday?

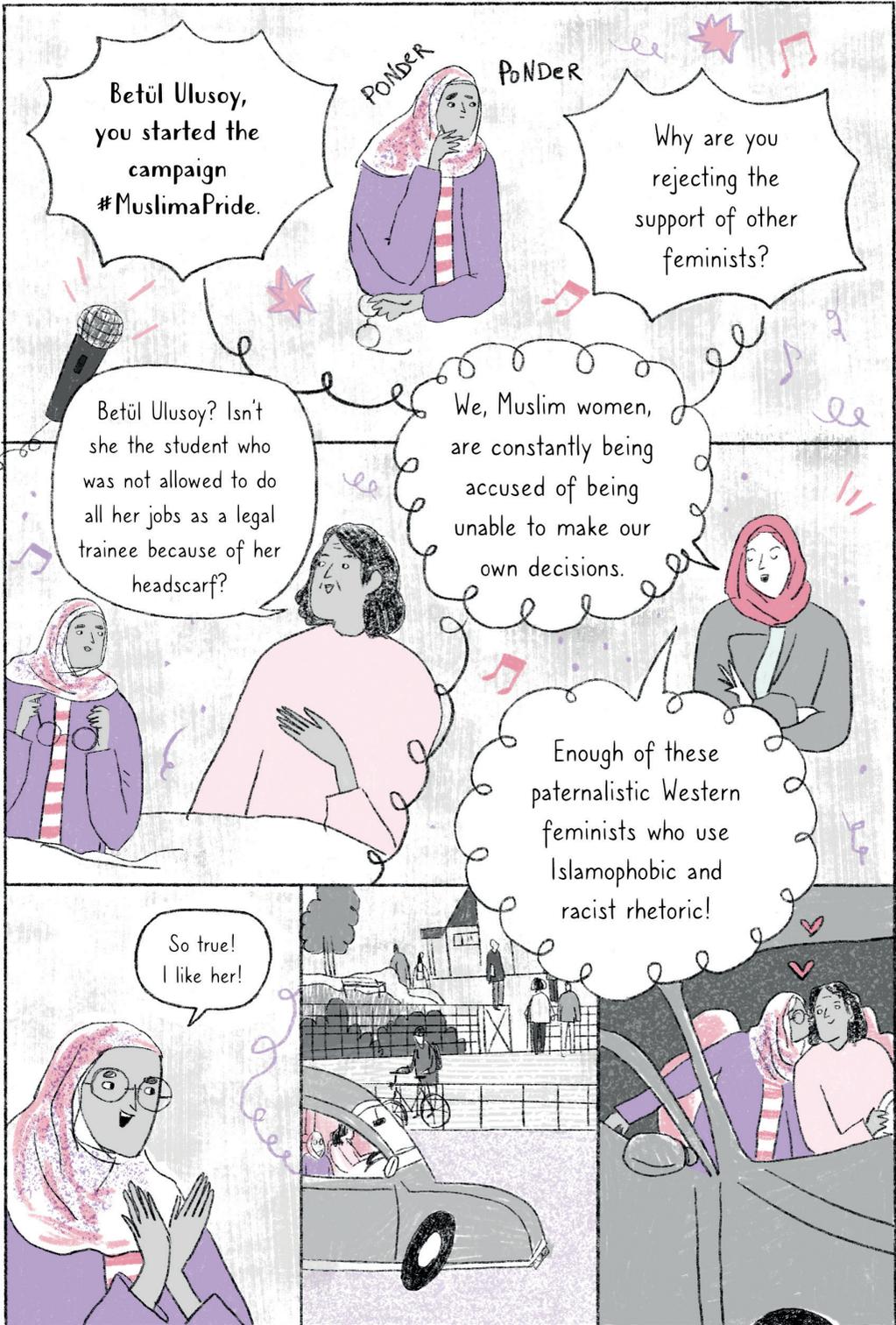
Yes, mom! I'm hoping they'll accept me at LegalEmpower.





\* FEMEN is a Ukrainian feminist group known for its topless protests.

\*\* Khalas: can be translated to mean "enough", or "done".



Betül Ulusoy,  
you started the  
campaign  
#MuslimaPride.

PONDER PONDER

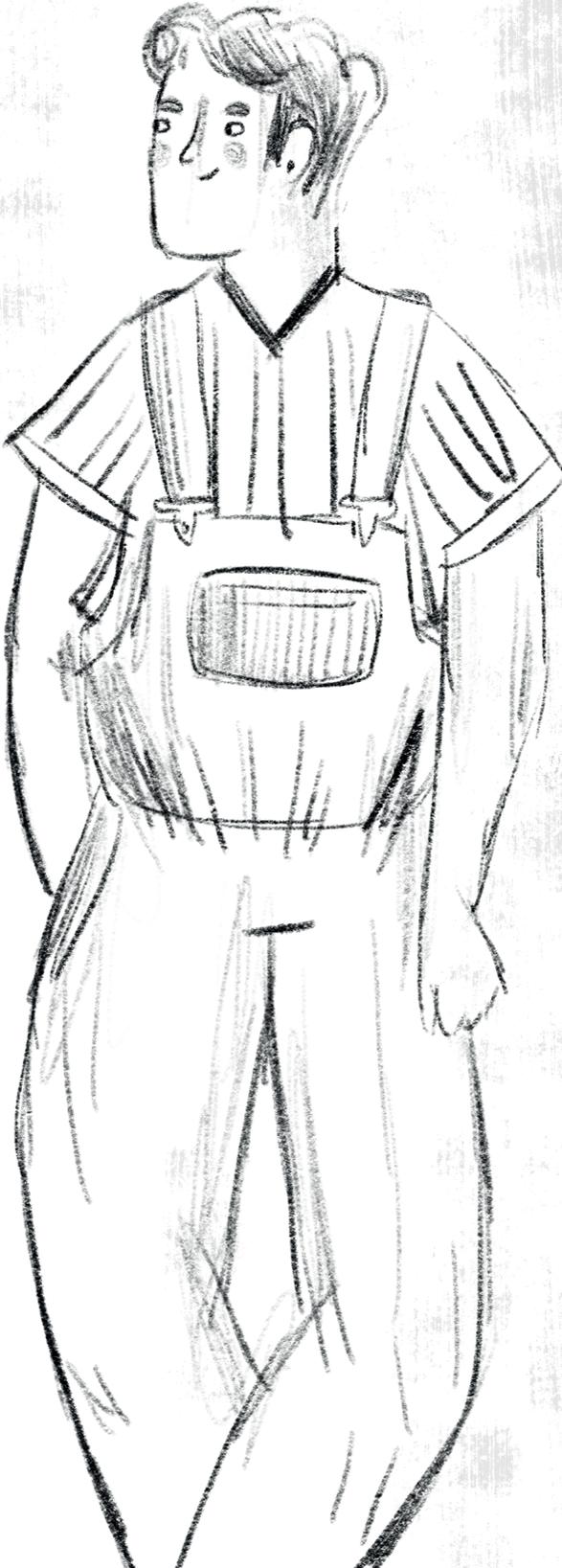
Why are you  
rejecting the  
support of other  
feminists?

Betül Ulusoy? Isn't  
she the student who  
was not allowed to do  
all her jobs as a legal  
trainee because of her  
headscarf?

We, Muslim women,  
are constantly being  
accused of being  
unable to make our  
own decisions.

Enough of these  
paternalistic Western  
feminists who use  
Islamophobic and  
racist rhetoric!

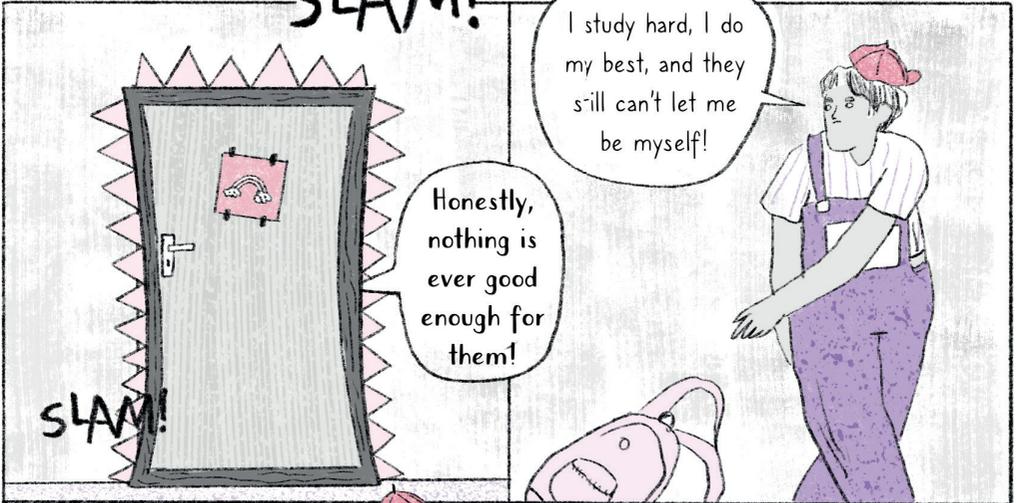
So true!  
I like her!



Amari



SLAM!



I study hard, I do my best, and they still can't let me be myself!

Honestly, nothing is ever good enough for them!

SLAM!



Why don't they just leave me alone?!

FLOP  
FLOP



PING  
PING

Die Gang

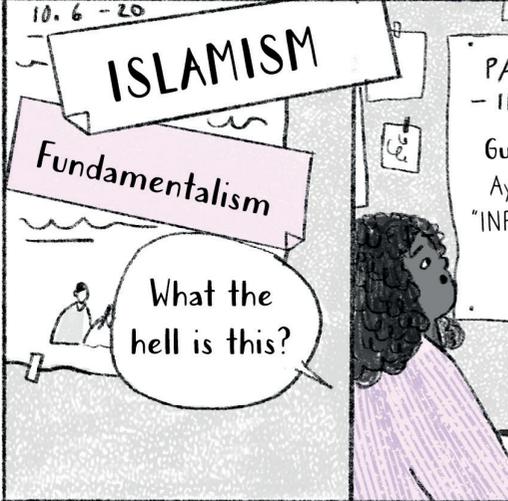
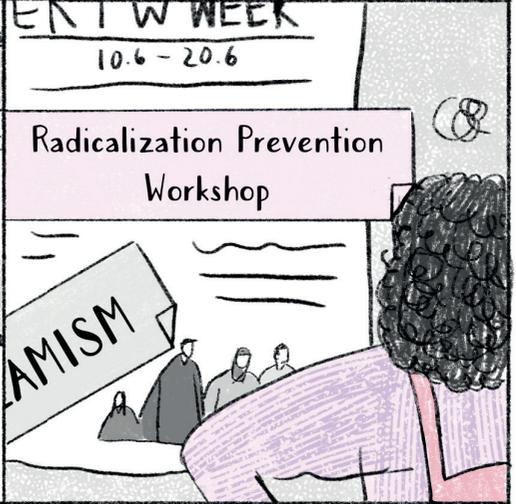
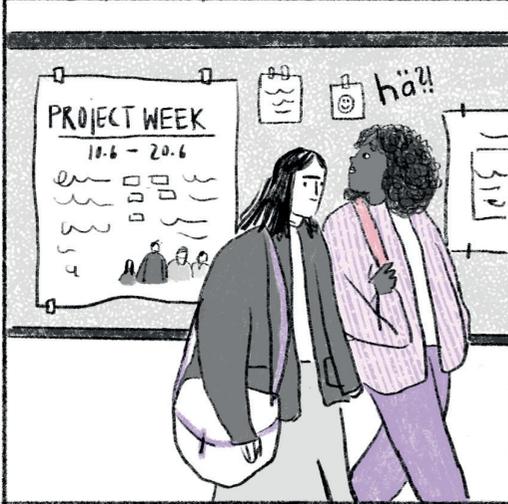
Mariama:  
Where are you,  
Amari?

Amari: ...

Click  
Running late...  
Click



Mariama









# Colonialism, Postcolonialism and Decoloniality

I know! Three big words! But don't let them intimidate you. These words hold the key to understanding the epic economic, socio-political whirlwind we're living in, especially if you're one of the awesome underdogs in the Western hustle.

Once upon a time, there was **Colonialism** — a chapter in history when powerful nations went around the world, taking control of other lands and peoples. It was a time of great injustice and exploitation, with many peoples suffering under the weight of racist colonial rule. One of the most impactful consequences of colonialism was the enduring political and economic domination by powerful Western nation-states, which has had profound effects on the lives of colonized communities. The legacy of colonialism includes deep-rooted power imbalances, social divisions, and economic inequalities that persist, even after formal independence. Understanding the political economic effects of colonialism is crucial for addressing these historical injustices and working towards more equitable and inclusive societies.

**Postcolonialism** describes the peculiar social, economic, and political condition of formerly colonized societies. Post-colonial studies emerged as an engaged and critical theoretical framework, to analyze and contribute to fighting the enduring effects of colonial control and exploitation. National liberation movements were the collective struggles for independence, where people fought against colonial rule to gain their freedom and self-determination. These movements aimed to reclaim cultural, political, and economic sovereignty, and to establish a nation-state that represents the colonized people's aspirations and values.

After gaining independence, formerly colonized countries embarked on the path of self-governance. However, post-colonial states inherited from colonial regimes some of the structures and institutions of inequality and control. National liberation leaders and parties have often turned into new exploitative dictatorships and ruling groups that have come to enjoy the support of powerful states in the neocolonial world order, in exchange for their violent perpetuation of the status quo in the post-colonial world.

So, things didn't really work out the way anti-colonialist liberation movements had hoped for.

And now, there's **Decoloniality** — a fresh path inviting us to reflect on and correct the mistakes of the past. It's like a new beginning, a chance to make things right. Decoloniality urges us to acknowledge the harms caused by colonialism, not just in the past, but also in the present. It encourages us to challenge unjust systems, to embrace diversity and inclusivity, and to work towards a future where everyone's voices are heard and respected.

**Islamic feminism can indeed be viewed as a decolonial movement** that seeks to challenge the dominant narratives and structures imposed by colonial powers. It values diverse perspectives, emphasizing gender equality and addressing wider injustices like economic, racial, and environmental issues. By reclaiming agency and embracing inclusivity, Islamic feminism contributes to decolonization and creates a more equitable world.