



Restorative Justice Solutions to Hate Crime



Introducing Community Justice Initiatives(CJI)

- A grassroots restorative justice, volunteer-based, peacebuilding organization
- With over 45 years' history, we have creatively and innovatively applied restorative justice principles to address needs identified by our community
- CJI is reputed world-wide for starting the first **Victim Offender Reconciliation Program** that provides dialogue opportunities with people involved in the justice system




Focusing on the Sulah Project. What is Sulah?

- In the Middle-East or South Asia country, is synonymous with meanings like: Peaceful Resolution or Amicable settlement, Reconciliation, Treaty etc.
- This project stem from a community consultation conducted by Waterloo Region's Crime Prevention Council and the Coalition of Muslim Women of KW in November 2018 in response to an increase in the spate of Islamophobia in the region.
- In April 2019 recommended that restorative responses be made available for individuals in the community experiencing Islamophobia and other forms of interpersonal racism.



ADDRESSING TODAY'S TOPICS:

- ▶ **EXPERIENCE OF SULAH PROJECT AND THE "COMMUNITY JUSTICE INITIATIVES" AS A GRASSROOT ORGANIZATION IN ADDRESSING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SOLUTIONS FOR HATE CRIME VICTIMS:**
- ▶ Community Justice Initiatives do not embrace the use of the word Hate.
- ▶ Hate implies a feeling or a person that cannot be transformed – where we believe that through relationships there is a possibility of transformation.
- ▶ Language is very important especially if we want affected parties to engage in any dialogue.
- ▶ We utilize the Transformative Mediation Model as our framework for how the dialogue is set up with two trained facilitators.
- ▶ Our process is voluntary and largely driven by the needs of parties in conflict to determine how they want the conflict to be resolved.




EXPERIENCE OF SULAH PROJECT AND THE “COMMUNITY JUSTICE INITIATIVES” AS A GRASSROOT ORGANIZATION IN ADDRESSING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SOLUTIONS FOR HATE CRIME VICTIMS:

- Where the perpetrator of the harm is open to acknowledging their role leading to the incident and be accountable for their action.
- Victim witnessing the shift, might begin to understand why what happened did happen to them, they begin to process the incident by putting the events of that day in perspectives and articulate the impact of that experience.
- One significant value of utilizing restorative justice approach as a response to hate or identity based harm is the recognition of the voice of the victim in the determination of the outcome of the process.
- Participants want to leave in a community where their peace and wellbeing are not threatened by harm or any form of attack, vilification or acrimony.



Challenges that the project faces while working with different institutions/ laws and addressing the need to develop restorative justice solutions for hate crime victims:

- ▶ The challenges confronting Sulah are mostly institutional.
- ▶ The Attorney- General of each province as legal officers in the provinces determine the extent to which alternative justice or community justice programmes are recognized under a formal criminal justice system.
- ▶ Limited Authorization: in Ontario, there is no alternative measure for hate motivated offences on the ground that it goes against public interest.
- ▶ A similar moratorium on the utilization of restorative justice approach to sexual offences exists in another province of Nova Scotia in Canada.
- ▶ So, government restriction in utilizing restorative justice process limits the potentials of fully integrating alternative justice practices in addressing identity based harm.
- ▶ Delay due to the bureaucracy in many of the relevant government agencies.




What are your referral channels that help hate crime victims to reach the organization:

- ▶ **The Crown Attorney's office**- cases where there is possible identity-based harm and diversion is deemed appropriate.
- ▶ **The police through their Equity office**- this relationship create room for a holistic approach to resolving conflicts especially where the threshold for criminal liability is not met but there is an important need to foster social cohesion in our community.
- ▶ **The Region of Waterloo, Housing Services**- We work with the Waterloo Regional Housing directly in dealing with cases of identity-based harm involving tenants. This has helped in preventing an escalation of conflicts or dangerous confrontations.
- ▶ **The Equity team at the Waterloo Region School Board** in addressing incidents of possible racial harm by engaging their students and teachers on ways to build and strengthen relationships.



What are your referral channels that help hate crime victims to reach the organization:

- ▶ **Post-secondary Institutions-** like Universities and Colleges – We work with their equity offices, student union government and other socio-cultural organizations on campus and off-campus to sensitize them on our work.
- ▶ **Internal Referrals from CJI Programmes- The Victim Offenders Reconciliation Programme (Vorp- Diversion), Community Mediation etc.**
- ▶ **Community Agencies-** We have partnership with organizations that may deal with identity-based conflicts involving vulnerable groups like new-immigrants or racialized groups.
- ▶ **Hate Reporting Tools** by the Coalition of Muslim Women of Kitchener Waterloo.



Awareness raising training programs for the broader community.

- ▶ We work with ten peer workers from CMW who speak 8 languages and they are empowered to work with their various communities on ways of addressing incidents of identity-based harm.
- ▶ We equally open up our Transformative Mediation to members of our community and many of those who complete this training are recruited into our volunteer pool.
- ▶ TM training to staff of government institution doing correctional work, justice ministry and probation officers and community leaders.
- ▶ Islamophobia training
- ▶ Outreach –presentation in high schools, university are engaging us for training opportunities too.
- ▶ Outreach- public awareness and collaborative work with visits to barbershop and hair-salons, minority owned businesses, local restaurants etc.
- ▶ Outreach with- regular presentation with Housing authorities, refugee and settlements institutions, recently delivered training on Restorative Justice, formal criminal justice system and identity-based harm to youths nominated from various racialized communities in Waterloo region in conjunction with the Waterloo Regional Police.