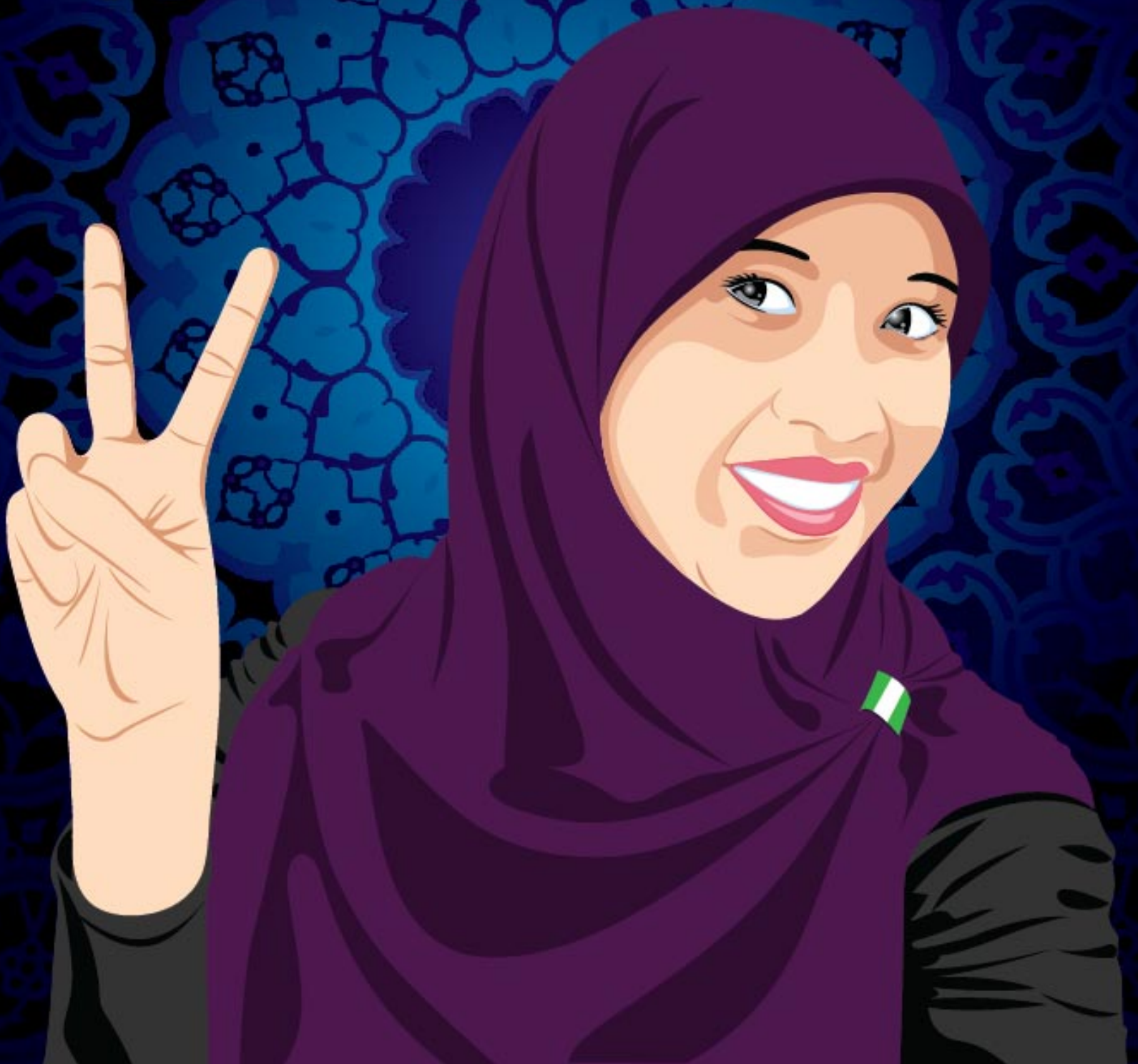


At That Moment I Took Off The

HIJAB!



My understanding of Islam and my encounter with the hijab are perhaps much different from others.

While many people first learn about hijab in various ways when they embrace Islam after being guided to the right path, I, however, have been a Muslim all my life. Also, hijab was never something new to me as I had been brought up in a Muslim family and more or less a Muslim society in Nigeria.

Being raised in such a beautiful tropical country where the light of Islam have been shining as early as the 1st century of Hijrah through Muslim traders and expeditions during the reign of the Arab conqueror, Uqba ibn al Nafia (622-683) whose Islamic conquests, under the Umayyad dynasty, in Amir Muavia and Yazid periods, spread all over Northern Africa or the Maghrib Al-Arabi, including present-day Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Morocco. This means that Islam was well established before the British arrived to colonize the nation, and has taken roots since. I can say that most Muslims around me, no matter how ignorant, have had some sort of emotional attachment to Islam.

Avoiding Tensions in My Early Years

Spending my early years of education at a private Islamic elementary school, many Islamic concepts were at the tips of my fingers. I knew by heart almost all what was there in the Islamic subject syllabus and even started memorizing few chapters of the Qur'an since I was young.

Several years later I decided to move to a public school where non-Muslims and Muslims freely mixed. There, I had two best friends, both non-Muslims. We were good friends. However, never did any of us bring up the subject of religion for fear of being insensitive and disrespectful to each other.

It was also here that I began to develop a sense of inferiority as a Muslim due to my lack of adequate knowledge and deep understanding of Islam. Veiled and

pious students were perceived as 'backward' and 'less intelligent' among the students and sometimes even among the teachers. Even though I had two best friends who were very kind and supportive, I tried as much as possible to avoid questions about Islam.

My perception of Islam was rather poor. This was because of the mentality and atmosphere of the society I was living in.

Despite the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of Nigeria, many of us were falsely led to believe that religion was something personal and that no one should talk openly about it, otherwise tension would occur. We got the impression that bringing up religious issues makes people perceive you as an extremist.

Also, within the Muslim community itself, superstitious beliefs, ethnic obsession and conservative tendencies which had nothing to do with Islam were rampant. These altogether gave me the impression that Islam and my adherence to it should be nothing more than merely practicing daily rituals.

I saw Islam only in mosque, on the prayer carpets, and in some other deeds like charity and listening to Islamic talks and songs. Other than these, I did not see much of Islam in my surroundings.

I could say that even up to 70% of my Muslim friends wore hijab; probably less than half were doing it with proper Islamic understanding. And I, unfortunately, was simply following the crowd.

During these times of confusion and intellectual destitution, I wore hijab, but honestly, it was mere blind obedience. The cultural sentiment supporting 'a decent way of dressing' was strong in our community so most girls feared being criticized. Some, however, rebelled and took a totally opposite approach. I could say that even up to 70% of my Muslim friends wore hijab; probably less than half were doing it with proper Islamic understanding. And I, unfortunately, was simply following the crowd.

Obsessions... Taking Off the Veil!

After completing my elementary school education (with excellent results and I was the best student! How I wish I had pride in Islam and my hijab at that time!), I was offered a place in an elite boarding school. I became excited as I saw a bright future awaiting there. The school was one of the best in the country, and only students with excellent academic achievements were offered places. I eagerly accepted the offer, not knowing what was ahead of me...

My early years in the elite school were full of educational activities, fun, prestige and pride. My obsession and thirst for knowledge were fully satisfied, and I began mixing with Muslim students from different backgrounds, mostly rich and so-called 'modern'.

Without realizing, I was brought into a world of material obsession, false pride, counterfeit self-esteem and arrogance. Conscience almost had no place in the 'elite' society and religious inclinations were considered taboo, outlawed and sometimes even became the laughingstock. Hijab was silently seen as 'second-class' and a sign of lowliness.

Peer pressure was immense and I did everything possible to fit in with the society and its trends. I knew I had to act 'modern' and 'elite' to be accepted, although deep inside, I could feel that there was something wrong with the way things were going.

Finally, I decided that my hijab was not so important anymore and I gradually took it off, though on certain occasions I tried to wear it.

Having left the hijab, my feelings were mixed. I felt free to some extent, and that I was no longer restricted to anything but on the other hand, continuous guilt overwhelmed me.

Without the hijab, I began to feel vulnerable, unprotected and undignified, despite the fact that I was doing so well to fit in, and I was highly accepted by my friends.

Again and again, I pushed the feelings of guilt away from my mind as I tried to believe that I was simply going through a new phase in life, and that I would eventually get used to life without hijab.

Life went on for another five years and I was then in my final year of that elite high school. Despite my successful academic life during those five years, spiritually I was impoverished.

Not only because of taking the hijab off, but I had also ignored much of other religious responsibilities. I took my daily prayers and the Qur'an recitation very lightly. I mixed with friends who are completely ignorant about Islam; they led me away from the true path. Islam was nowhere in my life.

During those years I slowly developed a strong liking and interest in a posh and fancy lifestyle. I turned to western music for tranquillity and art for some meaningless pleasure. However, the inner contentment and peacefulness I was looking for were never there. At times, only temporary pleasure was felt and another day, it would be gone.



Towards the end of my high school education, life became more and more miserable. Confusion, mix-up, sadness and uncertainty refused to leave my mind. With all the successful future awaiting, supportive and cool friends around me, and straight A's in my hands, I found life empty. My inner self was yearning for something; something that could give me peace and serenity. Something that could grant me eternal happiness. Something that would allow me to be honest and true to myself.

One night, I sat alone, miserable and sad. Not knowing what to do, I took ablution and prayed Isha' prayer. The moment I prostrated, the most magical thing happened. I burst into tears and uncontrollably sobbed. Not understanding why I cried, I kept doing so as my heart was suddenly immersed with indescribable pleasure I never experienced before. I never wanted to stop as I felt that my tears and humble prostration were making me so close to God. It was a moment I would never forget all my life.

Having finished praying, I sat for a while, puzzled and perplexed. My mind was so peaceful and the huge stress haunting me all these years was completely gone. I then drifted off to sleep, pondering in confusion. My heart was completely at ease.

Clicks...

The extraordinary incident had a massive impact on me afterward. Slowly, I began to distance myself away from my friends and participated less in the 'elite' environment and activities. I spent a lot of time alone, thinking and pondering deeply on the meaning of life and what was the ideal lifestyle that would give me happiness and contentment. There had to be more than just what everyone else was going after: fun, gossiping, material aggrandizement, sex, fame, etc.

I would never be enslaved by anyone, psychologically or physically, did not have to live to please others and did not have to go against my conscience in order to be accepted, as I had submitted myself fully to God.

God surely wanted me and everyone to be noble individuals who live with dignity, and not according to our shallow, fleeting desires. Bit by bit, hatred towards arrogance and pride filled my heart. I knew it was time for change.

I left high school and entered a matriculation centre for pre-university academic development. By that time, I continued spending much time alone, thinking and reading books about Islam. Some of my friends noticed the changes within me but said nothing. A close friend was bizarre to see me buying books about Islam all the time. Hijab was still not fully embraced, but I observed my daily payers and Qur'an recitals much better.



I began performing extra prayers, observing the pious and veiled students around me and spending time in the mosque. Of all, I could say that what led me to a better overall understanding of and fondness towards the beauty of Islam were the books I read and the deep contemplation I had daily. Prayers, on the other hand, gave me the inner strength not to be influenced by the outside world. More and more pleasure was filling my life every moment, though I was apparently lonely.

Changing Paths

Three months later, I was offered a medical scholarship for undergraduate studies overseas. All my life, I had been dreaming to go to the UK or the USA, but I piled up all my courage and decided to go to an Arab country instead, Egypt.

Friends and teachers laughed at my decision. But I was determined; I wanted to learn the Arabic language and more on Islam. Also, I wanted a new environment where I could start a new and meaningful life all over. My intention of going to Egypt was only one at that time, to find God. I wanted to find God.

I flew to Egypt after four months.

With God's grace, I was introduced to new friends. Most were very kind, Islamic and ambitious. They brought me to many Islamic programmes and talks where Islam was presented to me so differently and beautifully. I began learning about Islam in more details and began appreciating it in the true sense. SubhanAllah!

I finally saw Islam from a totally different perspective and everything made a perfect sense. God had answered my prayers. I put my hijab on again, as I felt closer and closer to the truth of God. By having strong belief and love of God, wearing the hijab became so easy to me as I saw everything else - especially people's negative remarks and reactions - meaningless, unimportant and superficial.

Understanding the true Islam and having the hijab with me again led me to immeasurable dignity and self-esteem. I found no more reason to be inferior or be compelled to please others. The superiority and truth of Islam shone into my heart.

In God I eventually found true pride, honour and prestige. Heart at ease, I experienced total freedom because I knew that I was meant to obey God and only Him alone. How beautiful those feelings were! I would never be enslaved by anyone, psychologically or physically, did not have to live to please others and did not have to go against my conscience in

order to be accepted, as I had submitted myself fully to God. I learned the biggest lesson ever: Absolute freedom and independence are only found in obedience of and submission to God.

Life after that was full of inner satisfaction and pleasure. Of course, every human is subjected to trials and difficulties, but with the presence of God in my heart, things became easy. I travelled to many places, supporting Islamic and humanitarian work. I had continuous transits at different airports and visited places where Islam was not known.

Never once during my journey or my trips that inferiority ever approached me. Rather, I was proud wearing the proper Islamic dress and the more people stared, the prouder I felt. Whatever those stares meant, I kept telling myself silently, 'Yes, this is me. I am a Muslim. And I cover myself to obey God.' My only hope in doing this was that these people would be curious and attracted to learn about the truths of Islam.

From an article exclusively written for OnIslam www.onislam.net by RaudahMohdYunus. Story is adapted by MPAC and published with the kind permission of OnIslam.

To learn more about hijab or to request for any of the MPAC Hijab Brochures, visit www.mpac-ng.org



Sekhina

generosity
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is Changing Lives



When you make donations, you touch lives directly.

Since 2009, the MPAC has managed the Sekhina Fund to provide free medical assistance to qualified Nigerians. To date, millions of naira have been spent on beneficiaries and smiles put on the faces of so many families. You too can help us provide hope and love to more Nigerians of all religious and ethnic background.. As we know, generosity may sometime mean giving from little, or much. In whatever situation we give, generosity is actually an investment in our own future as God is the One who provides and He expects us to share generously.

Who is he that will loan to Allah a beautiful loan, which Allah will double unto his credit and multiply many times? (2:224)

In a Prophetic narration related by Abu Huraira and contained in Sahih Al-Bukhari, a man asked the Prophet (PBUH), "O Allah's Messenger (PBUH)! What kind of charity is the best?" He (PBUH) replied. "To give in charity when you are healthy and greedy, hoping to be wealthy, and afraid of becoming poor. Don't delay giving in charity till the time when you are on the death bed and then you say, 'Give so much to so-and-so and so much to so-and so,' (because) as at that time, the property is not yours but it belongs to so-and-so (i.e. your inheritors)."

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Factsheet

1. One of MPAC's community outreach projects created in 2009, the project provides HOPE and LOVE to all Nigerians that have the least chance of medical treatments in our society.
2. To date the project has provided free medical care to more than 45 Nigerians locally and overseas.
3. To date more than N35 million has been spent to provide free medical care for Nigerians, irrespective of their religious or ethnic background.
4. Sekhina Fund is entirely supported by individual donations.
5. Zakaat and Sadaqat are accepted into the Sekhina Fund.
6. The Sekhina project operates a 100% donation policy. So, all donations go to fund free medical treatments.
7. Sekhina project is fully managed by professional medical practitioners who work as volunteers.
8. Transparent and rigorous policy on application processing ensures that money is provided only to those in most urgent need.



Right now someone is praying to benefit from your generosity. Some have lived with ailments so long they are close to despair. Set up a standing order or make one-off donation and help us give love and hope to those on our waiting list. The Prophet (PBUH) said "Charity does not decrease wealth." [Muslim]

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Donate to Sekhina Fund Dedicated Accounts

Muslim Public Affairs Centre-2; A/C No: 1771097834 @ Skye Bank

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"And if Allah touches thee with affliction, none can remove it but He: But if He bestows upon you a favour, remember that He is the Possessor of every power to do all that He wills." (Qur'an 6:17)

Contact Sekhina team at:

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Muslim Public Affairs Centre (MPAC) is an incorporated public service agency working for Muslim Defense, Muslim Empowerment and for promoting individual liberties, religious, civil and political rights of Muslims. MPAC is equally devoted to promoting the integration of Islam into the Nigerian pluralism, for a positive and constructive relationship between Nigerian Muslims and other elements in the society; building the Nigerian Muslim constituency to become an influential component in Nigerian politics, at all levels of the policy-making arena; and making Islamic ethical values available to the Nigerian political process. As an experienced and independent voice within the Nigerian Muslim community working for the good of the society, MPAC operates on the core Islamic values of justice, mercy, human dignity, freedom, sanctity of human life and equality for all.



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DIVERSITY IS A WONDERFUL THING

Welcome & Love It!



Hijab: A Muslim Police Officer (Iraq)



Hijab in the US Air Force



Turban: A Sikh Police Officer (UK)



Turban: A Sikh Military Officer (United States)



Making Hijab Part Of The Australian Police



Incorporating Hijab Into The UK Police Force

Muslims' Show

A Question of Style.....

www.facebook.com/themuslimshow



Basic Religious & Civil Rights



29/02/13: Muslim students under the aegis of Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria, Lagos State Area Unit, protesting the punishment of two pupils (for wearing hijab) in Lagos State by their principals.

At That Moment I Took Off The
HIJAB!



Hijab In The Media

In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful.

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MPAC Expresses Deep Shock Over Hijab Persecution Cases

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Press Release: [FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE](#)

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MY HIJAB

It is About A Woman's
RIGHT and **FREEDOM**
To **CHOOSE**

It is
NOT CULTURAL



It Is A **RELIGIOUS**
OBLIGATION

It is
CONSTITUTIONAL

At That Moment I Took Off The

HIJAB!



BE

helpful
patient
authentic
remarkable reasonable
different
everywhere
responsible
available
consistent
exciting
visible
memorable
Original

My Hijab, My Brand!

Why She Won't Wear Hijab

"I'm so tired."

"Tired of what?"

"Of all these people judging me."

"Who judged you?"

"Like that woman, every time I sit with her, she tells me to wear hijab."

"Oh, hijab and music! The mother of all topics!"

"Yeah! I listen to music without hijab...haha!"

"Maybe she was just giving you advice."

"I don't need her advice. I know my religion. Can't she mind her own business?"

"Maybe you misunderstood. She was just being nice."

"Keeping out of my business, that would be nice..."

"But it's her duty to encourage you do to good."

"Trust me. That was no encouragement. And what do you mean 'good'?"

"Well, wearing hijab, that would be a good thing to do."

"Says who?"

"It's in the Qur'an, isn't it?"

"Yes. She did quote me something."

"She said Surah Nur, and other places of the Qur'an."

"Yes, but it's not a big sin anyway. Helping people and praying is more important."

"True. But big things start with small things."

"That's a good point, but what you wear is not important. What's important is to have a good healthy heart."

"What you wear is not important?"

"That's what I said."

"Then why do you spend an hour every morning fixing up?"

"What do you mean?"

"You spend money on cosmetics, not to mention all the time you spend on fixing your hair and low-cal dieting."



"So?"

"So, your appearance IS important."

"No. I said wearing hijab is not an important thing in religion."

"If it's not an important thing in religion, why is it mentioned in the Holy Qur'an?"

"You know I can't follow all that's in Qur'an."

"You mean God tells you something to do, you disobey and then it's OK?"

"Yes. God is forgiving."

"God is forgiving to those who repent and do not repeat their mistakes."

"Says who?"

"Says the same book that tells you to cover."

"But I don't like hijab, it limits my freedom."

"But the lotions, lipsticks, mascara and other cosmetics set you free?! What's your definition of freedom anyway?"

"Freedom is in doing whatever you like to do."

"No. Freedom is in doing the right thing, not in doing whatever we wish to do."

"Look! I've seen so many people who don't wear hijab and are nice people, and so many who wear hijab and are bad people."

"So what? There are people who are nice to you but are alcoholic. Should we all be alcoholics? You made a stupid point."

"I don't want to be an extremist or a fanatic. I'm OK the way I am without hijab."

"Then you are a secular fanatic. An extremist in disobeying God."

"You don't get it, if I wear hijab, who would marry me?!"

"So all these people with hijab never get married?!"

"Okay! What if I get married and my husband doesn't like it? And wants me to remove it?"

"What if your husband wants you to go out with him on a bank robbery?!"

"That's irrelevant, bank robbery is a crime."

"Disobeying your Creator is not a crime?"

"But then who would hire me?"

"A company that respects people for who they are."

"Not after 9-11"

"Yes. After 9-11. Don't you know about Biola who just got into med school? Or Dr Ibipo?"

"The Debater-haha!"

"Yes. And the other one, what is her name, the girl who always wore a white hijab... ummm..."

"Zainab?"

"Yes. Zainab. She just finished her MBA and is now interning for GE."

"Why do you reduce religion to a piece of cloth anyway?"

"Why do you reduce womanhood to high heels and lipstick colours?"

"You didn't answer my question."

"In fact, I did. Hijab is not just a piece of cloth. It is obeying God in a difficult environment. It is courage, faith in action, and true womanhood. But

your short sleeves, tight pants..."

"That's called 'fashion', you live in a cave or something? First of all, hijab was founded by men who wanted to control women."

"Really? I did not know men could control women by hijab."

"Yes. That's what it is."

"What about the women who fight their husbands to wear hijab? Students in some of our public schools flogged mercilessly for wearing the hijab and ladies on NYSC camps have face expulsion and harassment simply for using the hijab. Did you not hear about the recent cases of girls flogged in some

schools in the country simply for wearing the hijab? Even qualified applicants or employees being asked to remove the hijab or lose



employment/ promotion opportunities. How about women in France who are forced to remove their hijab by men? How about women that have to go out and protest their right to wear the hijab? What do you say about all these?"

"Well, that's different."

"What difference? The woman who asked you to wear hijab...she was a woman, right?"

"Right, but..."

"But fashions that are designed and promoted by male-dominated corporations, set you free? Men have no control on exposing women and using them as a commodity? Give me a break!"

"Wait, let me finish, I was saying..."

"Saying what? You think that men control women by hijab?"

"Yes."

"Specifically how?"

"By telling women how and what to wear, dummy!"

"No, the Quran prescribe dressing code for Muslims- men and women. Besides, doesn't TV, magazines and movies tell you what to wear, and how to be 'attractive'?"

"Of course, it's fashion."

"Isn't that control? Pressuring you to wear what they want you to wear?"

[Silence]

"Not just controlling you, but also controlling the market."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, you are told to look skinny and anorexic like that woman on the cover of the magazine, by men who design those magazines and sell those products."

"I don't get it. What does hijab have to do with products."

"It has everything to do with that. Don't you see? Hijab is a threat to consumerism, women who spend billions of dollars to look skinny and live by standards of fashion designed by men...and then here is Islam, saying trash all that nonsense and focus on your soul, not on your looks, and do not worry what men think of your looks."

"Like I don't have to buy hijab? Isn't hijab a product?"

"Yes, it is. It is a product that sets you free from male-dominated consumerism."

"Stop lecturing me! **I WILL NOT WEAR HIJAB!** It is awkward, outdated, and totally not suitable for this society ... Moreover, I am only 20 and too young to wear hijab!"

"Fine. Say that to your Lord, when you face Him on Judgment Day."

"Fine."

"Fine."

[Silence]

"Shut up and I don't want to hear more about hijab, niqob, 'iborun', scarf....!"

[Silence]

She stared at the mirror, tired of arguing with herself all this time.

Successful enough, she managed to shut the voices in her head, with her own opinions triumphant in victory on the matter, and a final modern decision accepted by the society - but rejected by the Faith:



"Yes!" - to curls on the hair - "No!" - to hijab!

"Yes!" - to curls on the hair - "No!" - to hijab!

"And he (/she) is indeed a failure who corrupts it [the soul]!"

[Surah As-Shams, Quran 91:10]

Subhana'Allah!!!

"Nay! You prefer the life of this world; While the hereafter is better and more lasting."

[Surah Al-A'la, Quran: 87:16-17]

"You are the best community (Ummah) raised up for (the benefit of) humanity; enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong and believing in Allah."

[Surah Al-Imran, Quran: 3:110]

A Public Opinion

DEBATES | OPINIONS | FORUMS



Home > Opinions > Society > Should the Hijab be banned in schools, public buildings or society in general?



Should the Hijab be banned in schools, public buildings or society in general?

YES

or

NO



Related Topics: Hijab, Muslim, Building, Islam, United States

24% Say Yes

76% Say No

Yes the hijab should be banned in society in general. All Muslim ceremonial dress, including the hijab, should be banned in public. Major Nidal Hasan (Fort Hood shooting) wore the required ceremonial "dressings" prior to his "martyrdom." Young elementary girls wear the required hijab after having their female parts excised without anesthesia (female genital mutilation). Remove the "garb" from society, and a lot of the barbarism goes with it.

Posted by: Anonymous

Like Reply



The hijab should be banned. We believe it should be banned, if you have moved to a certain country you have to respect their rules. It can be a matter of health and safety, moreover people believe it hides the identity of the person which can be a problem in immigration and identification.

Sincerely -A

Posted by: Anonymous

Like Reply



While I don't agree with government control of religious practices, this is more of a safety issue than a personal freedom issue. The problem with wearing an object that obscures the face is the danger of robberies and violence committed by people who would escape because of their anonymity.

Posted by: AutomaticKenny

Like Reply



Prettyvince50 is an idiot. They should be allowed to do what they want. The fact that prettyvince50 thinks that they usually commit heinous crimes is just so ignorant to say. Obviously you do not anything about Muslims. Maybe you should do some research before saying something stupid.

I don't understand what the big deal is. Christians wear cross necklaces and nobody gives them trouble about it. Muslims have a bad rep because of 9/11, however not every Muslim is like that.

So before you say something stupid (prettyvince50) do you research.

Posted by: Isabelswims1

Like Reply



No, I disagree, to wear a Hijab or not is a decision to be made by the individual based on their beliefs. Hijab is a part of the Muslim faith and it is a right of an individual. To ban Hijab is to ban an aspect on one's faith. Although personally I wouldn't choose to wear one, I think that forcing that decision is not reasonable. It is their personal choice, let them decide.

Posted by: LeftyBionde

Like Reply



Hijab should not be banned in schools, public places or society in general. Different cultures have different things. While these are not offensive to others they should be permitted and be accepted by other cultures and societies.

Why Is
My Hijab
Your
Problem?

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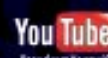
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