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### Being Muslim

I have been hearing the word terrorist almost my whole life. When some people hear the word terrorist, they immediately think of an Arab Muslim man with a traditional red Keffiyeh. Maybe they are confused on why us Muslim women must be covered from head to toe and wear a hijab. Perhaps they're genuinely interested in the religion. Maybe they think of terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda, Isis, and the Taliban. However, any person of any religion or race can be a terrorist. Ever since 9/11 happened some people are still uncomfortable and anxious when they see someone who is visibly Muslim. I understand where they are coming from, I would be scared as well. But fearing a whole religion because these terrorist groups who claim they are Muslim while committing one of the biggest sins in Islam are not real Muslims. One quote that stuck with me from the Quran is "Killing one innocent person is like killing the entire humanity and saving one person is like the entire humanity." The media plays a big part as well. Being biased and only showing the bad sides of Muslim people and countries. I want to prove to everyone that no matter how the media portrays Muslims, it's not true at all.

Many people believe that Muslim women are forced to wear the Hijab and are forced to wear modest clothing and cannot do anything without a man. That is totally understandable because many women who live in Muslim countries like Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia, and many other countries are forced to wear it. Those who do not wear modest clothing are seen as outcasts

and will get yelled at and get told to wear modest clothes. Just like in America if a person is not wearing shoes or a shirt, you will look at them weirdly. People would use that example and say woman in Islam are oppressed. However, I feel safer in a Hijab and in modest clothing. I think of it as my crown and think of modest clothing as protection. When I was around three to five years old, my mom would tell me that I would wear her Hijab all the time. I fell in love with it at such an early age and still love it to this day. Even though I didn't wear it all the time since I was a child, I fully started wearing it at eleven years old. When people see a Muslim woman in a Hijab, they instantly know that she's part of Islam and I love that I represent Islam by wearing it. Many people also believe that Muslim women are aren't able to do anything like driving, getting educated, and having a job. Because In Afghanistan, the Taliban banned women from going to school. It's common to see women in Muslim countries not having an education. But that misconception some people believe is false. In Islam, education is highly encouraged. There are many educated Muslim women in the world today like Ilham Omar and Malala Yousafzai. I've seen many Muslim doctors, nurses, lawyers, and business owners. I can see why people think that Muslim women can't do anything without a Muslim man because just a few years ago in 2018 the ban on women driving was lifted in Saudi Arabia. I know I would hate asking another person to drive me places all the time. I remember I was in the 8th grade, and my friends and I were sitting at our table talking and enjoying food when a boy across from our table put his lunchbox on his head and tried to make it a hijab. My friends and I were shocked, and we went to tell one of the school administrators, but they didn't do anything about it. I did not want to be a tattletale but in that instance, it was reasonable to be one. If people were in my shoes, I believe that they would without question tell someone about it. It is upsetting that none of the deans, vice principal, or the principal spoke to him about it and told him that was wrong and that he should apologize.

Another misconception about Muslims is that they are aggressive and evil. Some people believe that because of these terrorists who claim that they are Muslim represent the whole religion. The word Islam translate to peace. I remember being young shopping with my mom and seeing people saying harsh and rude comments. Saying stuff like “Go back to your country.” “Go bomb some buildings.” My mom always told me to ignore people who say these Islamophobic comments. She told me many scary stories of how people would attack Muslim people. I will never forget the day I was watching the news and the security camera footage capturing this Muslim woman with a hijab in checking in at a desk and this noticeably strong and tall White man fist punch her in the head and started attacking her. I will never understand the hate some people have towards Muslims and get so mad that they must attack places worship. I know people get their news from social media, news channels, and their families. Even when the media shows Muslim countries, they only show the bad parts of it. They never show the real beauty of it. Sometimes I would ask people what they think of my home country Somalia, and they would describe as poor, and unsafe just like the media.

In addition, some non-Muslims believe that Islam is extremely strict. Some people think that Islam is strict because we are not allowed to drink, eat pork, and wear clothes that show the shape of your body. I can see where they are coming from, and it makes sense. Because in American culture, drinking is so normalized and drinking alcohol has often been associated with having fun. To give you an idea, The world cup that was hosted in Qatar said that alcohol was prohibited. Which makes sense because it's a Muslim country. It taught me that we don't need alcohol to feel joy and happiness in our life. And that we can get joy from other things in life

People have always told me during the summer, “Don’t you get hot in that.” And I would always reply, “No.” Because I really didn’t get hot in it, the hijab is very thin. But sometimes I feel jealous when it’s summer and I see girls my age with crop tops and shorts on and their hair out. And when going to the lake or beach, seeing girls with bikinis on while I wear a burkini swimsuit. Just imagine it being a scorching hot day and seeing a girl covered from head to toe. I understand that Islam may seem strict to those who don’t practice it, but we do it for Allah.

In the end, there are many misconceptions people have about Islam. Such as, people believing that Muslims are aggressive, and evil, Islam being too strict, Muslim women being forced to wear the hijab, and so much more. By reading this essay I hope you learned something new about Islam.

