

# KICKstart

PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH



## what to WEAR?

by Lynda Trono and Shahina Siddiqui

### A program for youth on countering Islamophobia

**T**HE PURPOSE OF THIS ONE-HOUR PROGRAM IS to help youth think about their own experiences of discrimination and compare them with the experience of Muslim youth.

#### PREPARATION

- Preview the suggested YouTube clip and have it ready to go if you choose to use it. (See “What Muslims Experience.”)
- Write out the discussion questions in advance on newsprint.
- Make copies of “Joel’s Story,” the three case studies on page 24 under “Countering Islamophobia,” and “Suggestions for Countering Islamophobia.”
- Bring Bibles for each participant.

#### OPENING (5 min.)

Ask the group:

- What do you think of when you think of Muslims and Islam?  
List all the responses on newsprint. Some may be correct; some may be stereotypes that have been

learned from media and Western society. List them all. If no one mentions the hijab, niqab, and burka, take a moment to explain what these are and some of the controversy surrounding them (see “Muslim Dress”). Ask:

- What is Islamophobia?  
Take different suggestions and agree on one. (The main point is that it is a fear or hatred of Muslims and/or Islam.) Explain that the focus of this workshop is on how people dress, including Muslims.

#### OUR OWN EXPERIENCES (10 min.)

Break into pairs and respond to the following questions:

- What do you wear to school each day?
- How do you decide what you are going to wear? Where does fashion come into your decisions? How about making yourself attractive to others? Staying warm, covering your body?
- What parts of your body should be covered? Why?  
Talk about the answers to these questions in the whole group.

*continued on page 24*

# The Workshop



## WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS (5 min.)

Read Matthew 6:25–34. It will hold people’s attention better if each person has a Bible and you take turns reading, one verse per person.

- What is Jesus saying about what you wear?

## WHAT MUSLIMS EXPERIENCE (10 min.)

Read “Joel’s Story.” If possible, also watch a YouTube video clip about discrimination against a young Muslim wearing the hijab. The 19-year-old believes she didn’t get a job because she wore her hijab during an interview. See [youtube.com/watch?v=XvNwiMLEqXI](http://youtube.com/watch?v=XvNwiMLEqXI).

In groups of four, talk about the following questions:

- When are youth discriminated against because of what they wear?
- Have you experienced discrimination because of what you were wearing?
- Do you think a person has the right to choose what he or she wears? What are the limits to this?

You may wish to discuss the highlights of the conversation in the larger group. If so, plan for extra time for this.

## COUNTERING ISLAMOPHOBIA (20 min.)

Divide into three groups and give each group a case study, below. Have them talk about what they would do in each case and then act it out for the rest of the group.

1. A young Muslim woman with a niqab (face veil) is in

line for coffee in front of you at a coffee shop. The vendor raises her voice, saying, “I can’t see you and I can’t hear you!” even though the order was made in an audible voice that even you heard. The woman repeats her order. The vendor ignores her and moves on to you. What do you do?

2. A Muslim boy dressed in traditional clothes is being chased in your neighbourhood by other youths calling him a terrorist. He seeks protection from you by knocking at your front door. What do you do?

3. You have just finished soccer tryouts at your school. Alia is excited to have been chosen for the team. While you are talking about it the coach comes up to the two of you, points at her hijab, and says, “You’re not going to wear that during the games, are you?” What do you do?

After each scenario is dramatized and participants have made suggestions about how to respond, encourage further reflection by asking the whole group:

- What further action might you take?

## FURTHER ACTION (10 min.)

Read “Suggestions for Countering Islamophobia.” Have you tried any of these? What other ideas do you have?

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR COUNTERING ISLAMOPHOBIA

- Make friends with Muslims at school. Be curious. Ask them questions about Islam. Just like Christians, Muslims do not all believe the same things. There is a wide spectrum of beliefs and practices.
- Read “What Muslims Believe” on page 26 and talk about it with your friends. How are Christians and Muslims similar? How are we different?
- Seek out an opportunity to visit a mosque and find out about how Muslims worship.
- Learn about Ramadan (the month of fasting from sunrise to sunset). Have your youth group try fasting for a day. Talk about what you learn. Note that Muslim youth, because of their age, are not expected to fast to the same degree that adults are, but are introduced to the concept as they grow up.
- Have the youth group purchase *A World of Faith: Introducing Spiritual Traditions to Teens* by Carolyn Pogue (Wood Lake Publishing Inc., 2007; available from [UCRDstore.ca](http://UCRDstore.ca)) and read the section on Islam to learn more about Islam and how teens in Canada experience their faith.

## JOEL'S STORY

**TWO YEARS AGO I CONVERTED TO ISLAM.** It was kind of a big thing in our house because both my mom and dad are United Church ministers. But they supported me all the way and even made me read the whole Qur'an before they would let me convert.

I've learned lots since becoming part of the Muslim community. But one experience stands out for me.

One day last summer I decided to walk to the mosque because that's supposed to be a good thing to do. I wore my thaub, which is a kind of long, white tunic with white pants and a white hat called a kufi. It was pretty far, so I took a shortcut along the railroad tracks behind some houses. I saw some guys standing around a barbecue drinking beer.

They yelled at me, "Hey, Jew!" They weren't exactly being friendly.

I stopped.

"Actually, I'm a Muslim," I said.

"Same thing," they replied.

"Actually, it's not," I started to say, and they started cursing, using Jesus' name. I decided it would be better to move on than to offer any explanations.

That kind of stuff has never happened to me before. Sometimes I've felt put down because I wasn't wearing the "right" clothes but I've never felt threatened before. I think it had to do with being religious. I think it's probably even worse if you're not white. I worry about my Muslim sisters because most of them wear a hijab, which could make them a target at any time. I think they're pretty brave to stand up for what they believe.



## MUSLIM DRESS

**HIJAB:** a head covering worn by some Muslim women. It covers the hair and neck but not the face.

**NIQAB:** a head covering worn by some Muslim women. It covers everything except the eyes.

**BURKA:** an outer garment covering the entire body of a woman, often with a mesh screen for the eyes

**One of the least-understood aspects of Islam** is the status of Muslim women and their role in society. Many believe that Muslim women are oppressed and point to the hijab as a symbol of that oppression.

The Islamic dress code requires both men and women to dress modestly. Different Muslim cultures have different interpretations of what that means. Many Muslim women understand that by covering themselves, they are making a statement that they are not sexual objects. They want to be valued for their personalities rather than for their looks. Some Muslim women do not wear the hijab and only cover their hair during worship or prayer.

Recently in France, the niqab has been banned. This means that those women who choose to wear it as an expression of their faith will now be fined. French society at large has assumed that women's husbands force them to wear the niqab. An even larger fine will be imposed on husbands who do so. This law unfairly penalizes women who choose to wear a niqab by confining them to their homes and will have serious consequences for their families. Many believe it is unconstitutional.

# What Muslims Believe

by Joel Trono-Doerksen

## WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT GOD

As Muslims, we believe that God is one and only one. Qur'an 112:1 says, "Say: He is Allah, the One and Only." This is a fundamental article of our faith. By believing he is one, we also believe that he has no father and no son, as it says in verse 3 of the same chapter, "He sires no offspring, nor is he anyone's offspring." We worship the same God as Christians worship, but instead of three in one, we believe in simply one God.

## WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS

We believe Jesus is one of the greatest people to ever walk the earth. He is one of the five principal prophets in Islam. They are Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. It is actually a requirement of our faith to love Jesus and believe in his miracles, which are very similar to those in Christian scripture, such as healing the blind, curing the sick, and his virgin birth. Jesus is mentioned 28 times in the Qur'an as well. But where we differ from Christians is the question of divinity. We believe it is unfitting for God to have children. Therefore, we love Jesus, but we do not ascribe a godly aspect to him.

## THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

**The first pillar of Islam** is the *Shahada*, or proclamation of faith. By believing in your heart that there is only one God and that Muhammad is the final Messenger of God, then you are a Muslim.

**The second pillar** is *salah* or prayer. We are required to pray five times a day at different times.

**The third** is *zakat* or charity. As Muslims, we are required to give at least 2.5 percent of our earnings to the needy.

**The fourth** is *sawm* or fasting. We are required to fast for the month of Ramadan from dawn to dusk. That means no liquid either. It's harder when it's summertime.

**The fifth** is *hajj* or pilgrimage. If we are physically and financially able, we must journey to the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia in the month of Dhul-Hijjah in the Islamic calendar.

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