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To be Human

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To be Human

What is it like, being a Muslim? – A question I've been asked many times in the span of 17 months that I spent in the United States of America.

Mind you, I have nothing against the United States; otherwise I wouldn't fly twenty-one hours and settle here to pursue my education. However, coming into the states, I had a preconceived notion about how people were in the country. The land of the free where you as an individual can make things happen, where everyone is accepted and where as a woman, I can attain the freedom I lost when I moved to Bangladesh.

To a certain extent, everything mentioned above is true but I emphasize again, to a certain extent. I was asked critical questions about my faith, my culture and apparently, majority of people think of the outside world as unsafe.

What is it like, being a Muslim? – I can assure you it isn't like what Donald Trump describes it as. Being a Muslim is not being a terrorist; it is not about following the "Shariah" law fanatically; and it definitely is not about practicing "Global Jihad" (Donald Trump Campaign Rally).

The words Jihad and Shariah Law are greatly misinterpreted:

Firstly, Jihad derives from the word Jahada, which means to struggle or strive in the cause of Allah (Islamic FAQ). Furthermore, there are four kinds of Jihad – Jihad by the heart that is the highest form, is to strive against one's own temptation or desire towards worldly pleasure; Jihad by the tongue and Jihad by the hand is to spread the message of God; and finally the least favorable of all is Jihad by the sword, which is to defend one's religion against oppressors or transgressors (Islam FAQ & ISCA).

Secondly, Shariah Law means "path" or "way" and derives from the word Yarah, which is from the Torah. It is a combination of five branches – *adab* (behavior, morals and manners), *ibadah* (ritual worship), *i'tiqadat* (beliefs), *mu'amalat* (transactions and contracts) and *'uqubat* (punishments). One also needs to fully understand that the law by no means is supposed to be forced upon people and may only be implemented if people wanted the law (Rashid Qasim). Countries that force Shariah onto their people and use it as a form of oppression have chosen to ignore the true meaning of it and instead have turned the law into a frightening, and torturous platform.

Having said all that, when Trump throws around words that people do not understand and are already swimming in fear due to 9/11 and other continuous incidents in the western world, Muslims are obviously going to be subjected to being terrorists or violent people. When the media emphasizes on the veiling of women and the oppression it causes, what are most westerners supposed to believe when they even haven't met a Muslim woman in their lives, let alone know anything about Islam other than the fact that the whole population of Muslims, 1.7 billion according to a

2010 survey (Islam by Country), hates the west or shall I quote Trump, “Islam hates us” (The American Muslims Trump Doesn’t Know About). I cannot speak for Islam itself, but I will reiterate that Islam is not a person and to personify a religion based on terroristic attacks that were done under the name of the religion is being ignorant to the majority of Muslims who are merely trying to live life as humanely as possible!

What is it like, being a Muslim? - When I discuss about integrating into various societies with my parents, we always come to a conclusion that Islam has given us the chance to define ourselves and settle down according to the societies we are in. Yes we have to follow the core rules and as Muslims, it is our responsibility to come together as a community and welcome people of other faiths. As per Shedinger, he states that Cesari argues that Muslims focus collectively instead of individually (646). I think, because we live in an individualistic society, we as a nation have created a mind like Trumps where one has a mind of his own and the freedom to afflict everyone due to freedom of speech.

Finally, *what is it like to be a Muslim?* Being a Muslim right now is to frustratingly emphasize that terrorism has no religion. Being a Muslim is to tell you that I am just as human as you are and all I want is love and unity and live together with our differences and similarities.

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