

## Young Muslim Voices

*These statements are adapted from media stories. Sources are indicated. Print out on cardstock, cut into cards, and place in an envelope for students to pass.*

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A lot of Muslim students are scared. Some are scared to go outside. They're scared that Trump has empowered people who have hate and would be hostile to them.  
—Abdalla, 21

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/11/us/police-investigate-attacks-on-muslim-students-at-universities.html? r=0>

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Instead of occupying myself with a teenager's normal concerns, like homework, clothes and hanging out with friends, I've had to contend with growing anti-Muslim sentiment. I've adjusted my routines to avoid attacks and I worry about how I appear to the rest of society. I have repeatedly felt compelled to justify my faith and to distance myself from terrorists who murder in the name of my religion. I feel like the past two months have probably been the hardest of my life. —Hebh, 15

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/15/nyregion/young-muslim-americans-are-feeling-the-strain-of-suspicion.html>

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I am part of a generation of Muslim Americans who have grown up amid the fight against terrorism, in an America in which anti-Muslim hostility, by many measures, has been historically high. —Hebh, 15

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/15/nyregion/young-muslim-americans-are-feeling-the-strain-of-suspicion.html>

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I remember seeing micro-aggressions that my mom faced because she wore a hijab. I, too, wore a head scarf when I was younger, but after enduring "weird" looks and treatment, I took it off. I didn't feel comfortable anymore. —Jensine, 17

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/15/nyregion/young-muslim-americans-are-feeling-the-strain-of-suspicion.html>

I was raised in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. I feel like it's them against us, that everybody's out to get you and you have something to prove. Our aspirations are the same as any other American or teenager or youth. It feels like they're trying to shoot down our dreams and aspirations simply because we practice a different religion. —Shafiq, 19

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/15/nyregion/young-muslim-americans-are-feeling-the-strain-of-suspicion.html>

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I was born and raised in the New York area. I didn't tell a lot of people I was Arab in high school. But when I entered college, I began to introduce myself as Arab and Muslim. I got a surge of self-confidence leaving Long Island and leaving high school, which were both constricting environments. I found that it was much easier to get to know others if I totally accepted my religious and cultural identity. The reality is that I'm just as Muslim and just as Arab as I'm American, and it's possible to be all three. —Zayneb, 19

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/15/nyregion/young-muslim-americans-are-feeling-the-strain-of-suspicion.html>

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Instead of shrinking in the face of growing anti-Muslim sentiment, I have redoubled my conviction to embrace the complexities of my identity publicly. I am in high school in Long Island and have been feeling a backlash from my classmates. Since Paris, other kids in the class talk about getting rid of Islam. I've never wanted to identify more as an Arab and a Muslim. —Zayneb's younger brother

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/15/nyregion/young-muslim-americans-are-feeling-the-strain-of-suspicion.html>

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I live in Dallas, Texas. My parents emigrated here from Pakistan. Most mornings, I take the train to get to school. But after Donald Trump's victory in the presidential election, my parents ask me to drive. They were worried for me. They are scared for me to go outside, as someone who wears a hijab. Being an American is a very prominent part of my identity. It's shaped my values and my beliefs. The fact that half the nation doesn't think I'm American enough — that hurts. —Aysha, 21

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2016/11/11/young-muslims-texas-struggle-see-place-trumps-america>

The election results were a discomfiting reminder of the way many Americans perceive me. Growing up in Houston, Texas, I'm used to feeling like an outsider, but not to the degree I experienced since the election. I already knew there was the fear, but I didn't know there was the hate, too. When people look at me, all that they can see is a foreign woman. —Zainab, graduate student

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2016/11/11/young-muslims-texas-struggle-see-place-trumps-america>

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I've never heard anyone call me a terrorist until this year. My parents are immigrants from Somalia, and they left it because of the civil war. I remember one day, I went to a football game. And then they were saying some mean things to me, like "you terrorist," and then I got angry. And they're like, "She's probably going to blow us up, because she's so angry right now." I knew that I wasn't accepted, but then he kept saying those things, like that I'm not American, that I'm not from this area. Even though I was born and raised here, I'm not someone that deserves to live here. —Shukri, middle school student

<http://money.cnn.com/2016/10/25/news/trump-rhetoric-school-bullying/>

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I remember what it felt like when we first immigrated here, starting middle school outside of Dallas. They called me and my family names. In the seventh grade, when I started wearing the hijab, one girl that I thought was a friend stopped talking to me at school. My school bus driver called me a "terrorist." For a while I stopped wearing the hijab. I wanted to not go to school. I would rather be home-schooled. It was terrible. But as I got older, the teasing and taunts bothered me less. I decided to wear the hijab again, because now I felt proud to wear it. I want to educate people about Islam. —Zahra, 17

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/09/09/u-s-to-track-religious-discrimination-in-schools-as-anti-muslim-sentiment-grows/?utm\\_term=.737bccd98c50](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/09/09/u-s-to-track-religious-discrimination-in-schools-as-anti-muslim-sentiment-grows/?utm_term=.737bccd98c50)

Rather than having to engage with celebrating Trump supporters, I skipped class the morning after the election. I decided to avoid a situation where things could get out of control. For my own sake, I wanted to minimize interactions. I do plan to continue wearing my hijab and praying in public spaces, although I have friends who have stopped doing both. Even prayer can incur suspicion among non-Muslims.  
—Aicha, Senior at Dallas Tech

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2016/11/11/young-muslims-texas-struggle-see-place-trumps-america>

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When I went to school that day I was excited. I built a clock to impress my teacher but when I showed it to her, she thought it was a threat to her. It was really sad that she took the wrong impression of it. They arrested me and they told me that I committed the crime of a hoax bomb, a fake bomb. I was happy the charges were dropped. I didn't really care that the police didn't apologize for arresting me.  
—Ahmed Mohammed, 14

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/09/16/us/texas-student-ahmed-muslim-clock-bomb/>

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Ever since the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center, Muslims in America are viewed negatively. Even though this happened almost 15 years ago, when people find out I'm Muslim, they immediately become cautious with me, suspicious. There's this fear that a lot of Muslims are terrorists. —Farhana, 16

[http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak Out: Challenging Muslim Stereotypes.html?story\\_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1](http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak Out: Challenging Muslim Stereotypes.html?story_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1)

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People have told me they think Islam discourages females from learning and that we're nothing more than objects to produce babies. In reality, Islam teaches people to treat females with respect and give them the same rights as men. I wish that people would understand that not all Muslims are Islamic extremists who deny women rights. .... —Farhana, 16

[http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak Out: Challenging Muslim Stereotypes.html?story\\_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1](http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak Out: Challenging Muslim Stereotypes.html?story_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1)

I was in class once and we were learning about the 9/11 attacks. The conversation shifted to terrorists and Saddam Hussein's name came up. (Saddam Hussein was the leader of Iraq and a key target of the U.S. war on Iraq that began in 2003.) One of my classmates turned my way and, with a sly smile, joked that I was related to Saddam just because my last name is Hussain. I snapped back "You are an idiot, you know that? I mean, seriously, Saddam was a dictator in the Middle East. I'm not even Arabic and not all people with the last name Hussain are terrorists." I looked straight into his eyes. The classmate who teased me shrunk back in his seat; his face was red and he didn't say anything else. —Farhana, 16

[http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak\\_Out:\\_Challenging\\_Muslim\\_Stereotypes.html?story\\_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1](http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak_Out:_Challenging_Muslim_Stereotypes.html?story_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1)

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You know what? I am white and I am a Muslim. When I first came to New York I was surprised people stereotyped Muslims like that because being a white Muslim is normal in my native country of Turkey. From my perspective, my skin color doesn't define who I am or where I come from. I think what matters is what's on the inside anyway. —Hande, 16

[http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak\\_Out:\\_Challenging\\_Muslim\\_Stereotypes.html?story\\_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1](http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak_Out:_Challenging_Muslim_Stereotypes.html?story_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1)

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Americans judge Muslims because of what is happening in other countries like Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. In those countries they mistreat Muslim women. But that doesn't mean all Muslims treat women badly. What happens over there is over there and shouldn't be a reflection of all Muslims. —Hasan, 19

[http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak\\_Out:\\_Challenging\\_Muslim\\_Stereotypes.html?story\\_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1](http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak_Out:_Challenging_Muslim_Stereotypes.html?story_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1)

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My parents and those of my Muslim friends are pretty liberal. For example, my parents don't force their decisions on me ... and they let me hang out with my friends. My mother doesn't wear a hijab and never asked me to wear one. It is my choice alone. I started wearing one last year in 9th grade. The hijab is mainly for covering up the girl's shoulders, neck, and hair because in Islam it's considered appropriate for a woman to cover her body and hair. I also wear it as a personal statement against all the media images of women wearing hardly any clothes. —Shameera, 15

[http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak\\_Out:\\_Challenging\\_Muslim\\_Stereotypes.html?story\\_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1](http://www.ycteenmag.org/issues/NYC249/Speak_Out:_Challenging_Muslim_Stereotypes.html?story_id=NYC-2015-11-08&printable=1)

I was amazed to see teachers calling me “towel head” and my principal call me “ISIS.” Teachers in one school I attended said I was disturbing the class because I wear the hijab. I can’t imagine seeing anyone else that’s looking different in class having to go through something like that. —Kadidja, 15

[http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/jehron\\_muhammad/Jehron-Muhammad-Students-speak-out-on-discrimination.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/jehron_muhammad/Jehron-Muhammad-Students-speak-out-on-discrimination.html)

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I felt in danger coming to school during the week since the election. I asked my fellow classmates to hold each other accountable to eliminate hurtful insults and threats in the future. My whole life I’ve gotten looks when I go into the supermarket, or a coffee shop, or anywhere else. But every time I walk into school I felt safe and welcome. But since the election, I’ve had my mom calling me after a late night yearbook session, asking me if my teacher walked me to my car. I’ve been given pepper spray and taught how to use it because of all this. School has always been a safe place for me and I want that to remain the case. —Rameen, high school senior

<http://portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/332336-211795-students-speak-out-against-discrimination-at-school>

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I remember four years ago when I was first bullied for being Muslim. The last day of eighth grade year, I was just going home, and then this boy — I think he was a year younger than me — he pulled off my hijab. And at the time, I was wearing a longer one, so it was more easy to kind of like pull off from the back. And then I also had like a pin underneath to hold it in place. And then that kind of came loose. So, like, at the time I was just trying to think of like five different things at one time, like trying to get the pin to not stab me in the neck, and then turn around to see who this kid is. —Hafsa, 18

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/teaching-different-is-okay-to-combat-islamophobia-in-u-s-schools/>