

# INTRO

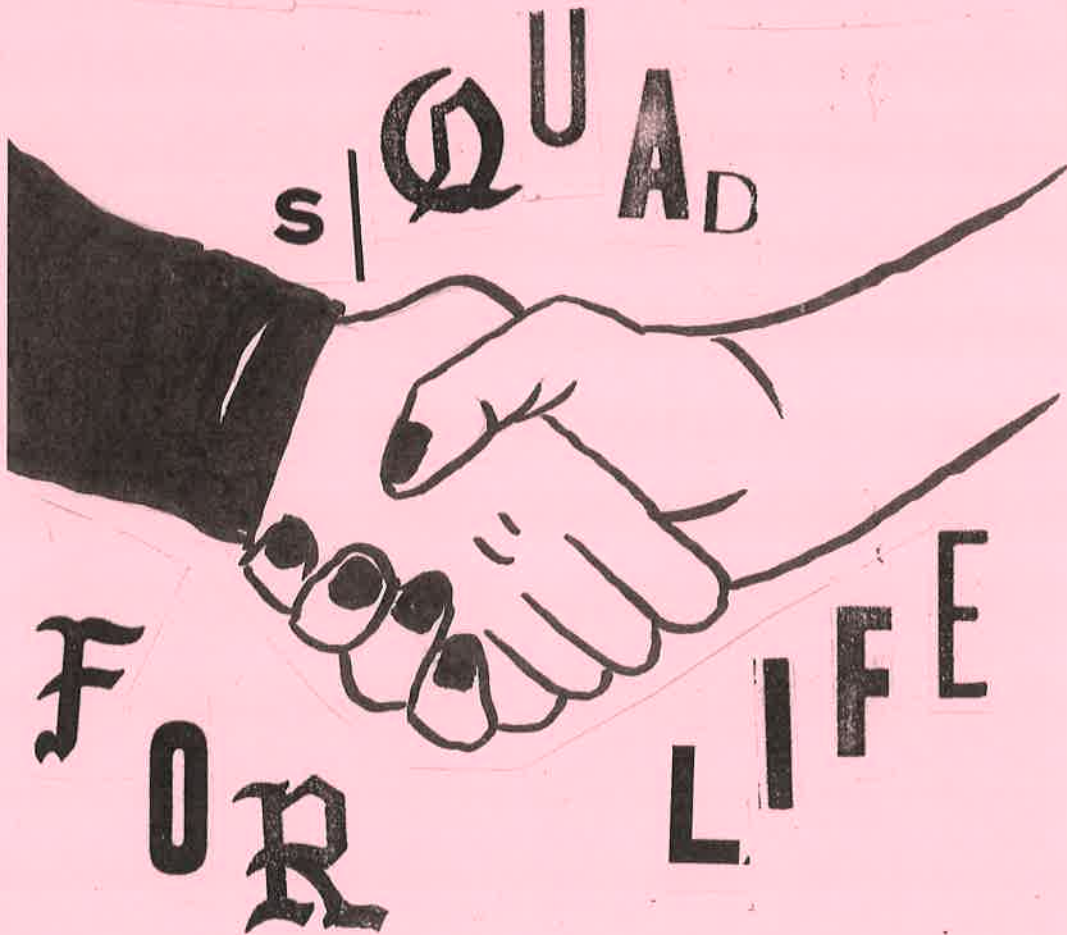
When the new wave of modern day feminism took the Internet by storm, the most widespread topic in this activism is fighting for the female right to wear whatever we want, without being criticised or sexually exploited/ assaulted. This was important especially with the rise of rape culture, where most of the time, victims of rape are disregarded based on what they were wearing, and that they 'were asking' to be assaulted the moment they leave the house in a 'suggestive' way of dress. To this day, feminists on the internet still stand for this activism and continue to fight against the rape culture, unjustified cases of sexual assault and 'slut-shaming', a term used when a woman is discriminated for her sexual confidence (either by clothing or lifestyle).

However, if a woman has the right to wear as little as she wants, surely we should be able to wear as much as we want, right?

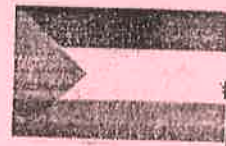


This zine is a protest, a long winded "F---k You", to the false feminists, the media, the world politicians and the Islamophobes who are revoking Muslim women the right to veil and the right to freely believe in our religion. From the rude and hateful activists of FEMEN, to ignorant mainstream media and pop culture, to France's ban of the burqa and quite recently, the *burkini*. The notion that the veil is oppressive and a symbol of oppression towards Muslim women is a ridiculous and false notion, and this zine has an aim to dismiss that, as well as shine a more positive light on the veil and the women who embrace it.

P.S: I am fully aware that while there are a lot of negativity centered on the hijab and my religion, there are still respectful people (Muslim and non-Muslim) who accept differences and stand for the rights of others. I love all of you and I too, will fight for you and your rights to the deathhhh.



This is my first zine. Thank you so much for reading, and may peace be upon you always.

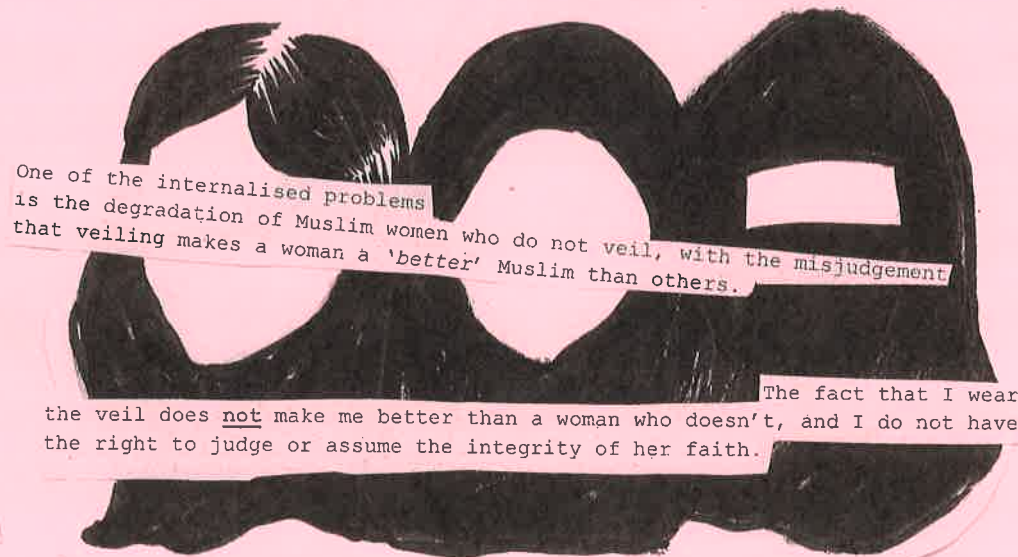


#freepalestine

-loathe.child

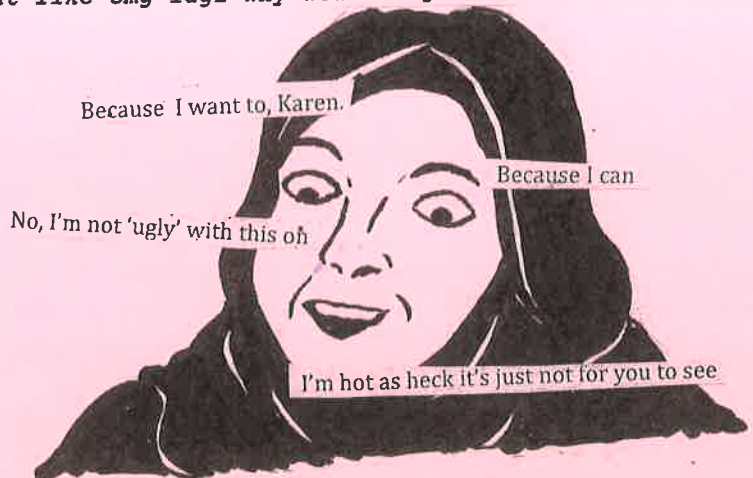
Hard to believe, but the veil is a freedom of choice.

When a woman in hijab, or niqab, or burka, walks on the street, people from a mile away can point a finger and say "That's a Muslim". But not all women in Islam actually wear the veil. It is actually quite common especially in south east Asia that some Muslim women do not wear the veil, even if they are practicing Muslims, and it's actually.. Totally fine. In fact, it is in our good deeds, mannerism and fulfillment of our duties as a Muslim that are extremely important, and donning the veil does not necessarily make someone a perfect Muslim, because we are all in fact, regular human beings.



Which is why the notion that the veil is oppressive is a constructed image that is extremely ignorant to the experience of all those who wear it, and the people who stand by this notion have probably never had a conversation with a Muslim woman, or don't even bother to know about the actual lives of Muslim women.

"But like omg idgi why would anyone even wear it ??????"



The truth is, Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab do so out of a freely reasoned choice and we are completely happy and satisfied with that decision. This is extremely baffling to 'feminists' with only a single sided opinion on what is 'liberation' and 'freedom' for women, and continue to deny the truthful opinions of women who \*gasp\* actually likes?? The hijab??

The first and most obvious reason is because it's a cultural or religious dressing. Like how many other cultures have their own traditional dressing. I feel like this shouldn't be a very difficult concept to wrap our heads around unless you are deliberately closed minded about any cultural background or traditions around the world. It bothers me that countries still practicing their traditions and faiths are deemed as 'backward' in this rapidly modernized world. We cannot let global modernization wipe out our traditions and cultural background.

I've seen a rising trend of people embracing their cultures on social media and I think it's wonderful. Imagine how completely boring the world will be without the differences in cultures and traditions. And the people who wish the world to be rid of religion, cultures and traditions are the ones who are spiteful and intolerant towards the people who are 'not like them'. I beg to question these people;

"How far up is your head in your ass to think that everyone in the world should be like you?"

Anyway, since the hijab is a feminine 'icon' of the religion, it became a form of identity and a direct connection between our faith and us. For some of us, it is also a reminder that with this headscarf, we are representing our religion and we should be mindful of our actions and mannerism on a daily basis. For some others, it's simply a rite of passage as a Muslim woman.

From my own understanding, Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab do so for the love of Islam. Women who believe and understand Islam do not see the religion as oppressive or 'anti-women' as the popular misconception claims. This is extremely hard for the ignorant society to accept because they have a fixed negative opinion of the religion which they feel should apply to everyone, and feel inclined to 'save' these oh so oppressed Muslim women.

**Side Note:** The occurrence of people who insist on claiming this and that horrible thing in Islam on the internet have become so rampant that I no longer become mad, instead roll my eyes and scroll away.



Briefly explained, the 'hiding' of the body is for the safety of women from a world of sex-hungry men. Obviously, 'people who are against this idea can easily rebut through the loophole that "men should be the one learning to curb their sexual thirst". And I totally agree with that, (Islam agrees with that too, which I will explain later) but have we not already realized how difficult it is for a lot of men to grasp that concept? I also can't deny that even if we are covered from head to toe, covering our face and eyes, some sick person out there is getting a damn boner from it. But the point we are trying to convey is that Islam recognizes the dangers of men (and.. people in general) towards women, and this is a way to help (even just a little bit) the women from being victims of sexual assault or objectification.

"But it's not fairrrrr Muslim men don't have to cover"

There is a command to Muslim men that they should not lustfully look at women (*other than their own wives*); and in order to prevent any possibility of temptation, they are required to cast their glances downwards. This is known as "hijab of the eyes".

(source: al-islam.org)

We totally accept these 'rules' and don't see it as 'anti-women' or 'pro-men' but as a mutual form of respect. This is also a difficult concept to grasp for people who only see gender equality as 'women can do what men can' and 'men can do what women can', because in Islam, women and men have a slight variation of 'gender roles' that compensate each other to allow equality.

# LIBERATION?

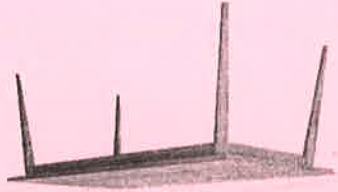
There is also a possibility that Muslim women, especially Muslim feminists, choose to wear the hijab out of liberation against the mainstream pop culture, 'westernized' standards of beauty and 'the norm'. This is something I've been meaning to explain. How is something that covers and hides the female body be 'liberating' for women?

Let's start by dismissing the popular concept of 'freedom' and 'liberation' that only limits to the open display of the female form. Equality, freedom and liberation are all relative to the differences in judgment, world views, and ideological and political contexts. There is not just one form of equality

or liberation or freedom

that everyone in the world needs to comply. It changes within each country, culture or political background. Exposure of the female body doesn't define liberation, and the covering of it doesn't deny that.

If a woman, maybe a non-Muslim woman, decides to dress modestly because she's not comfortable with showing skin, and decided to cover her hair as well (for idk maybe because she knows the sun is a death ball of death rays that damage your skin and hair), does that make her oppressed? Heck no. Then why does this 'oppression' only apply when she's a woman of faith?



And let's say, we turn the perspective around. When western consumer capitalist culture continues to exploit the female form in advertisements, media and the entertainment industry when beauty magazines alter images to invent unreal expectations of what's "beautiful"; when cosmetic surgery, eating disorders and low self esteem in women are on the rise, the real question becomes, why should we accept this exploitation of the female form? The hijab becomes liberation against all of that.



In a society that loves to look, we give them nothing to look at.



## Reclaiming the Hijab

When I watched a YouTube video by Teen Vogue featuring Muslim Women, both veiled and unveiled, living in America, one of them mentioned the reclaiming of the hijab. This, to me, is a very interesting yet important reason behind a woman's decision to veil, especially in a country where a bulk of society opposes it. There will be people, companies, politicians, that want to make it difficult for a Muslim woman to don the veil, and it is important for us to protect the hijab, and let the hijab live on past our generation and our future generations.

While the world tries to take the hijab away from us, we wear the hijab to take it back.



singapore

## 'The Tudung Issue'

\*'Tudung' is a Malay word which translates to something that veils or covers. It's a term widely used in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, referring to the hijab.



'Sunny Side Singapore' often boasts our multi-racial society. We grew up pledging; every morning in school, to live in peace and harmony, "regardless of race, language or religion." (Literally written in our national pledge.)

But are we really?

## Allowing hijab problematic for some jobs

The issue came to prominence in 2002, when four Malay-Muslim parents sent their daughters to school wearing the *tudung*. The girls were suspended for not adhering to the school uniform, and where schools previously had the leeway to permit amendments to their own uniforms on religious grounds, the issue came under the purview of the Ministry of Education, which enforced stricter regulations on uniforms in the interest of keeping government schools secular. The case sparked a flurry of discussions, arguing both for and against the acceptance of headscarves.

Grievances stem from the less than satisfactory resolution to the case of the school girls in 2002, as well as perceived marginalisation of the Muslim community such as curbs on madrasah education and the exclusion of Muslims from 'sensitive' military positions.



: Yaacob

muzlimbuzz.sg

Fighting for the Muslim women's right to wear the veil is extremely important but not just in western countries. In my home country, Singapore, even with our fairly large Muslim population, there are companies who refuse to hire women in hijab, or Muslims in general, and students in public schools are forbidden to wear the hijab to school, nor are they granted an alternate uniform that's more modest than the standard short sleeve button down and knee length skirt.

On the surface, this may not be a problem to a lot of Singaporeans. Obviously, if a company wouldn't hire you, then find somewhere else to work. Or, if your child wants to wear the hijab to school then send her to an Islamic school. But this feeds to the issue of internal racial intolerance within Singapore's community. This diverts attention away from the root of the problem and allow a growing number of companies an excuse not to hire or accommodate to Muslim employees either because they find it difficult to cater halal food (despite the numerous halal eateries in Singapore that serve almost every cuisine in the world), or they see the hijab as an unprofessional image, disregarding the Muslim woman's capabilities, talent or educational level. Furthermore, Islamic schools are **expensive**, compared to the extremely affordable public school fees, and secluding religious schools' students from regular public schools' students only feed to the social segregation that already exists.

**Side Note:** I'm not going to go much into it in this zine, maybe on another zine, but if you're interested in this issue, I suggest *google-ing* a speech written by **Dr Chee Soon Juan** regarding the Tudung Issue. He brought up a relevant and truthful viewpoint *against* the banning of the hijab in public primary and secondary schools. Unfortunately, he was fined \$3,000 for speaking up about it.

The speech was written in 2002. It's been more than a decade since, and we still haven't resolved the Tudung Issue.

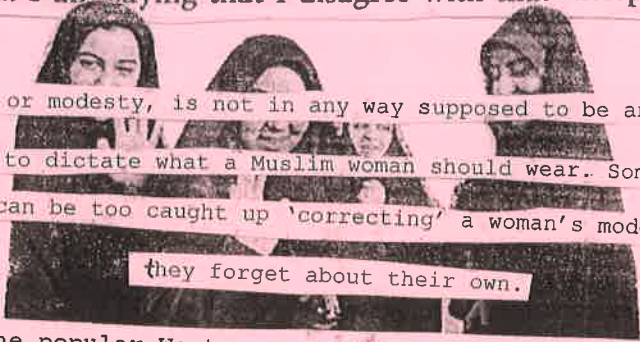
The issue here is not exactly about the hijab. In fact it's never *been* about the hijab. The problem is the lack of education and understanding towards other cultures and other religions. The problem is making Muslims seem like a 'burden' or a threat to the sanctity of Singapore's 'harmony'. The problem is expecting us to conform to things we are uncomfortable with because if we don't, we'll get suspended from schools or even lose our jobs.

Singaporeans might argue that Muslim women in other non-Islamic countries face this issue (and even worse) but what we need to realise is that we cannot keep preaching about our racial and religious unity if our politicians and even ourselves don't actually live up to it. We cannot simply say "Oh they had it worse, in other places so we are fine", because as a tootally racially harmonious country, we should've been more accepting and progress more as a society than those other places.

"What about the Taliban?? And that other horrible thing in that Islamic country that I assume applies to every Muslim in the world????"

I am

not attempting to argue that the veil is never oppressive for Muslim women. Clearly some women experience covering as oppressive. My point is that the 'veil is oppressive' notion has become a paradigm in which the 'meaning' of the veil as oppressive assumes the status of a truth claim. I am saying that I disagree with that interpretation.



The veil, or modesty, is not in any way supposed to be an excuse for men to dictate what a Muslim woman should wear. Sometimes Muslim men can be too caught up 'correcting' a woman's modesty that they forget about their own.

Challenging the popular Western stereotype that the veil is a symbol of Muslim women's oppression becomes difficult when people are only looking at the political issues of Islamic countries: The Iran's imposition of the chador after Khomeini's revolution in 1979; the Taliban's imposition of the burqa after their accession to power in 1997; and the violence perpetrated by radical groups in Egypt, Israel, Algeria and the like.

Before even looking at the big picture, the media and mainstream society saw how women are denied education, confined in a home, and barred from any role in public life, and decide to put the blame on Islam, making the veil as a symbol of the unfairness against women. But these -real-oppressive practices against women are a reflection of neither Islam nor the veil but of extremism and gender unfairness in a political context.

There are people who've expressed that Islam treats women badly. But to that I would argue, so do the west, so do developing countries, so do countries around the damn world with male-biased politics and cultural practice. The mistreatment of women literally exists across the globe, across cultures and across religions, whether by domestic abuse, unequal salaries or denying women healthcare, divorce rights and education. It is unfair, in fact incorrect, to say that Islam treats women badly, because Islam doesn't treat women badly, misogyny does.

# MiSTREATMENT

TOWARDS MUSLIM WOMEN HAVE

# NEOTHING

TO DO

# WITH ISLAM BUT

# EVERYTHING

TO DO WITH THE

# PATRIARCHY

One is not better than the other:

Challenging the East vs West mentality

Which vision for women do you want? One where women are empowered or suppressed? East VS West. Choose correctly.



Firstly, why is society obsessed with pitting women against each other? Instead of debating about what the players are wearing I just want to commend them for being athletes. After hours upon hours of training they went through, this is the only thing that matters?



Secondly, as long as both women are comfortable with what they are wearing, why does it even matter which is 'better'? Even if this zine focuses on the right to veil and modesty, I don't insist that veiling and modesty is better than one's free will to expose their bodies. The hijab isn't something that makes you better than the next woman, nor does exposing your body. "Women should be allowed to wear whatever they please" is still a valid right whether it is by veiling or by wearing a bikini. This is not a war between Muslim and western women but a fight against the stigma of the hijab and

an urge to bridge the gap between differences in women to strengthen our sisterhood and fight against real world issues pertaining real suffering women around the world.

What needs to be done, then, is to accept disagreement and work together on issues that coincide. There will be issues on which all women can cooperate: education rights, spousal abuse, women's healthcare and so on.



STOP  
PITTING  
WOMEN  
AGAINST  
EACH  
OTHER

THIS IS NOT  
A WAR  
BETWEEN  
MUSLIMS &  
WESTERN  
WOMEN!

It's just a piece of cloth around our head, get over it!!



Critics of the Western discourse of the veil point out that the Western focus on the veil has been obsessive.<sup>45</sup> Many of those Muslim women who do not cover feel annoyed that Muslim women are reduced to their headcovers, as if there is nothing else about their identity worthy of mention. Many of those who do cover are disappointed that their own positive experience of covering is denied; and, like those who do not cover, annoyed that other aspects of their identity are ignored.



The hijab has drastically grown in popularity over the years it makes me wonder why it's not yet a thing of the norm. We have women in hijab excelling in fields like fashion (modest and Islamic fashion became a multi million dollar worldwide industry), TV shows (winner of *The Great British Bake Off*, Nadya Hussein), music (Malaysian-born but US based singer Yuna is managed by Usher and was given a shout out by Rihanna), heck we even have women in hijab competing in the Olympics (Ibtihaj Muhammad, Woroud Sawalha) or flying airplanes as pilots (all-female flight crew of Royal Brunei Airlines) but the focus is never towards the achievements of these women rather shifted to their hijab and their religious beliefs. Or rather, despite all these evidences of a well and accomplished life even within the so-called 'limitations' of the hijab, there are people who still choose to believe that the hijab is oppressive to Muslim women.



Royal Brunei Airlines' first all-female flight crew.

Side note: Generally I realize successful women are never fully recognized for their achievements, but are always dumbed down to her appearance, way of dressing, figure and face. This applies to all women across the world but is especially difficult for Muslim women due to the negative impression of the hijab. Suddenly it's a surprise to ignorant society that women in hijab can actually?? Do cool things?? And be really good at it in fact??



Work of Diana Nurliana that graced the runway of Jakarta Fashion Week. Diana expressed that the niqab she wears does not limit her creative talent.

Muslim women around the world are being athletes, artists, designers, businesswomen, engineers, educators, doctors, scientists... The veil is essentially just a piece of cloth wrapped around our head, and modesty is just a lifestyle and way of dressing adopted through it. The hijab and Islam is not a limitation to our talents, hard work and dreams. We are fully capable of achieving big things. We just happen to believe in something bigger than ourselves.

# e n D NOTE

There are various issues within the Muslim community and also against it that I didn't get to feature: The Male Guidance Law in Saudi Arabia; the burning of mosques and mass killing of Muslims in Burma; the continuous war on Syria, Palestine, around and in between; these issues are rising every day and Islamophobia is at an all-time high. (And it will be even higher if Trump gets elected as the US president, or if ISIS does some stupid shit again.)

These issues make living as a Muslim and especially a Muslim woman (our religious dressing makes us a very obvious and easy target for racial and religious harassment) increasingly difficult. To which the world may ask: Why do Muslims still practice their religion; Still wear the hijab; and some still refuse to condone to modernization and westernization (people who differ from 'modern Muslims'); if it imposes a danger towards them?

Islam is actually simple. It's just that everyone is making it really hard and difficult. Personally I think of it this way: Practicing Muslims fully accept that life is just temporary (even more temporary now with the war against Islam), and our doings in this world are preparation for the next, or in layman's term, the afterlife. All these tragedies, hardships and worldly desires... We just try not to let it get in the way between us and our beliefs, because to us that is the most important.

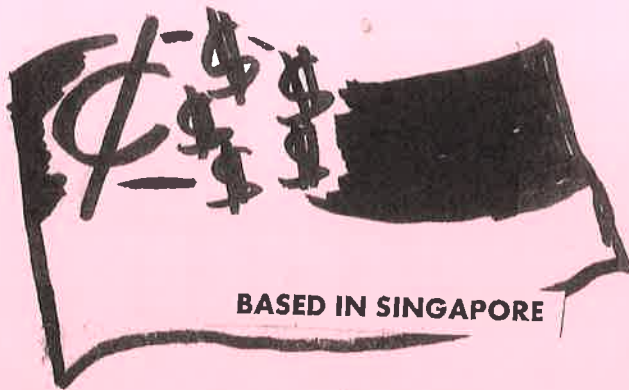
I really hope this zine, no matter how badly written (I'm not a writer of sorts, I have bad grammar, weak vocabulary and even worse spelling) or how many issues I didn't get to cover, has shown a new perspective of the hijab, and maybe even Islam. And if you, the reader, are also a Muslim, I hope this zine gives you comfort in knowing you're not alone in bearing the weight of Islamophobia on your shoulders. We've all been there; trying to defend ourselves but ending up screaming into the void.

I honestly have only started wearing the hijab for merely 3 months when I started writing this zine but I felt the need to address the negative misconception of the hijab because it became something that was really important to me and my identity. I had my doubts about wearing the hijab at first, because I was afraid of facing the social stigma against it within my country and overseas, but realize after that the hijab shouldn't stop me from doing what I want or love. It didn't stop me from being myself, creating my art or listening to my favourite bands. It shouldn't stop me from my future endeavours, travelling the world and seeking lifelong learning.

And if someone has a problem with that, just remember, people have a problem with literally everything.

May peace be upon you always,

-loathe.child



BASED IN SINGAPORE

THANK  
YOU

Say Hello on Instagram and tag me if this zine gets to you

@loathe.child

SEP 2016