



Lesson Plan: You Just Don't Fit Our Image

Handouts:

Sarkozy: France 'Cannot Accept' Burqas

Monday , June 22, 2009

Associated Press

President Nicolas Sarkozy said the Muslim burqa would not be welcome in France, calling the full-body religious gown a sign of the "debasement" of women.

In the first presidential address to parliament in 136 years, Sarkozy faced critics who fear the burqa issue could stigmatize France's Muslims and said he supported banning the garment from being worn in public.

"In our country, we cannot accept that women be prisoners behind a screen, cut off from all social life, deprived of all identity," Sarkozy said to extended applause at the Chateau of Versailles, southwest of Paris.

"The burqa is not a religious sign, it's a sign of subservience, a sign of debasement — I want to say it solemnly," he said. "It will not be welcome on the territory of the French Republic."

Dozens of legislators have called for creating a commission to study a possible ban in France, where there is a small but growing trend of wearing the full-body garment despite a 2004 law forbidding it from being worn in public schools.

France has Western Europe's largest Muslim population, an estimated 5 million people, and the 2004 law sparked fierce debate both at home and abroad.

Even the French government has been divided over the issue, with Immigration Minister Eric Besson saying a full ban would only "create tensions," while junior minister for human rights Rama Yade said she was open to a ban if it was aimed at protecting women forced to wear the burqa.



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The terms "burqa" and "niqab" often are used interchangeably in France. The former refers to a full-body covering worn largely in Afghanistan with only a mesh screen over the eyes, whereas the latter is a full-body veil, often in black, with slits for the eyes.

A leading French Muslim group, the French Council for the Muslim Religion, has warned against studying the burqa, saying it would "stigmatize" Muslims.

Sarkozy was due to host a state dinner Monday with Sheik Hamad Bin Jassem Al Thani of Qatar, where women wear Islamic head coverings in public — whether while shopping or driving cars.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1530720/What-the-Koran-says.html>



What the Koran says

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Islamic rulings on dress are primarily drawn from the Koran, which tells followers to ensure that women are clothed modestly in public.

One verse states: "O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the believing women to draw their outer garments around them when they go out or are among men."

However, the issue is complicated by the fact that Muslims are given further guidance on religious law by three other sources.

Partly as a result there are a variety of recommendations to followers, each dependent upon a different scholarly interpretation.

According to mainstream tradition, the only parts of a woman's body that should be visible to strangers are her hands, feet and face. The strictest Muslims believe, however, that women should wear the burka, a shroud that covers the whole body with just a slit for the eyes.

In some Muslim communities, notably Saudi Arabia, women also wear gloves so that none of their flesh is visible.

Only slightly more revealing, the jilbab is a loose dress-like outer garment that does not show the shape of the wearer's other clothes or the shape of her body.

Some Islamic authorities consider it more modest than the shalwar kameez, a tunic and trousers.

A hijab, or scarf around the head and shoulders, is worn with both but many believe it sufficient if a woman's clothes are not clinging or provocative.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1530720/What-the-Koran-says.html>



Amin vs. Abercrombie and Fitch Fact Sheet

Ada Amin is a 17-year-old girl who lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Ada was raised to wear a hijab, or head scarf covering her hair and part of her face when in public. Her father and local mosque believe that part of practicing the Islamic faith is to have females dress modestly and the tradition is to cover most of a female's body to strangers to help protect them.

In order to make some money for college and an Ipod, Ada decided to get a job. The only store that she was interested that was hiring was the local clothing store Abercrombie & Fitch, in a mall about 15-minutes from her house.

About a week after turning in her application to Abercrombie, she received an interview with the general manager. The general manager seemed a little uncomfortable with Ada during the interview. He asked her the usual questions such as how many hours could she work, what were her grades like, why she wanted to work there, etc. After about 20 minutes, the general manager thanked Ada and told her he would call her after interviewing more applicants. A few days later, the general manager called Ada to let her know the position had already been filled. When she asked why she did not receive the job, the general manager responded that Ada just did not "fit the store image" because she wore a head scarf.

Feeling that her rights were violated, Ada decided to sue Abercrombie and Fitch because she felt she was being discriminated against because of her religious beliefs.

Was it legal for Abercrombie to not hire Ada because she wore a hijab (head scarf) as part of her religion?



The Law

Civil Rights Act of 1965 Title VII Section 703 (a) It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer—

to fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin

(<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=97&page=transcript>)

The following information comes from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (created from the Civil Rights Act of 1965) and states the following:

Under [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA), and the [Age Discrimination in Employment Act](#) (ADEA), it is illegal to discriminate in any aspect of employment, including:

- hiring and firing;
- compensation, assignment, or classification of employees;
- transfer, promotion, layoff, or recall;
- job advertisements;
- recruitment;
- testing;
- use of company facilities;
- training and apprenticeship programs;
- fringe benefits;
- pay, retirement plans, and disability leave; or
- other terms and conditions of employment.

Discriminatory practices under these laws also include:

- harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or age;
- retaliation against an individual for filing a charge of discrimination, participating in an investigation, or opposing discriminatory practices;
- employment decisions based on stereotypes or assumptions about the abilities, traits, or performance of individuals of a certain sex, race, age, religion, or ethnic group, or individuals with disabilities;



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- and denying employment opportunities to a person because of marriage to, or association with, an individual of a particular race, religion, national origin, or an individual with a disability.

Title VII also prohibits discrimination because of participation in schools or places of worship associated with a particular racial, ethnic, or religious group.

Employers are required to post notices to all employees advising them of their rights under the laws EEOC enforces and their right to be free from retaliation. Such notices must be accessible, as needed, to persons with visual or other disabilities that affect reading.

Religious Accommodation:

An employer is required to reasonably accommodate the religious belief of an employee or prospective employee, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship.