

Fashion 'do'

Diana West patently perceives the hijab as a sign of repression ("French fashion?" Op-Ed, Friday). She has her reasons, and as far as some of them are concerned, she is right. Could anyone deny that some Muslim women are coerced to wear head scarves either by peer pressure or simply by the rules or the regulations of the places where they live? This is a sad reality.

Nevertheless, the coin has two sides. Part of the aforementioned reality comprises hundreds of thousands of women who are forced to take off their hijabs against their free will. Miss West is cognizant of this fact as well. She raves and roots about the hijab bans in Turkey and Tunisia. What she misses, however, are the underlying factors that inspire girls to cover their hair despite the proverbial difficulties they would face for making such decisions. In Turkey, for instance, where I personally paid quite a high price as the first parliamen-

tarian with hijab, a majority of the women and girls who demand their freedom to wear scarves come — economically and educationally — from middle- or lower-class families. Unlike the daughters, mothers of these young women and girls are mostly homemakers who had neither the opportunity to pursue careers nor the passion to become "too religious."

Their daughters, on the other hand, strive to "define" themselves with their adherence to learning as much as their adherence to Islam. They do not want to be "uneducated." Like their moms or to be educated, but merely to stay as "wife persons."

They want it all; they want both worlds, and they want them now. As much as it might sound ironic to some, including Miss West, according to renowned sociologist Nilufer Gole, these girls turn to Islam as an act of "liberation" and "emancipation."

Miss West argues that "things get intellectually

gooey" in a historical context. I fervently disagree. On the contrary, things are in fact very clear vis-a-vis historical vicissitudes. Islamic history is replete with epithomes of tolerance toward non-Muslims. Yet one thing on which I agree with Miss West is the thesis she puts forward — but with a spin. Yes, the head scarf is a feature of Islam, however, to the chagrin of Miss West, Christianity has a history of repressing Muslims. Hence — with the same token — is the undertaking of Christian France of barring hijab a symbol of religious repression?

I thank Miss West for posing her thesis, albeit inadvertently aberrantly, which gave me a new perspective as to why some — relentlessly — fight against Muslims. There is a deep enmity, which stems from the history of centuries, sporadically meeting upon the surface. What do you say, shall we hover upon the Crusades?

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