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*“The force of Islamic terrorism includes religious and gender apartheid.”* Phyllis Chesler

young men in an increasingly secular world. This explains why a divide often opens between brothers and sisters in the same European Muslim family; the sisters want liberty, but the brothers enforce the old rules. They have to, or the whole gratifying system breaks down.”

## Veil Women “For Their Own Good”

Saudi Arabia’s religious police stopped girls from fleeing a burning school because they were not wearing the veil required by Islamic law. Fifteen girls died. Dozens more were badly injured. The school was locked at the time of the fire – a usual practice to ensure full segregation of the sexes.

Why the headscarves and face veils? Because the hair of women is erotic and excites men, it must be covered. Last year a senior Muslim cleric in Australia alluded in a sermon to unveiled women as “uncovered meat.”

Where Islam is strong, women not only wear the headscarf, but also the *chadari*, a shroud-like garment that makes women look like ghosts.

To be sure, some defend the veil saying it has other meanings – opposing secularism, opposing the West, a sign of Muslim piety and modesty. But many more look upon *unveiled* women as “uncovered meat.”

### The French Ban the Veil

In 2004 the French government banned the face veil in public schools and government buildings. One French official noted:

“The veil is best understood as an intra-Muslim show of strength, a way to intimidate their own women, a way to intimidate the infidels, a way to make themselves more visible, a way to make sure no one strays from their world vision.”



British medical doctor and political commentator, **Dr. Theodore Dalrymple**, has written:

Islam is as vulnerable in Europe to the forces of secularization as Christianity has proved to be....Were it not for **the abuse of women**, Islam would go the way of the Church of England.... Religious sanction for the oppression of women...is the main attraction of Islam to

### Gender Apartheid

The brutal oppression of women – including genital mutilation, child marriages, stonings, and honor killings – is common in many Muslim countries and immigrant Muslim communities. Hundreds of millions of women around the world live in forced marriages, and, according to the UN, six thousand girls are sexually mutilated every day.

**Phyllis Chesler**, an American Jew who married a Muslim, moved to Iran, and then fled back to the US, has written that Westerners must understand that **“the force of Islamic terrorism... includes religious and gender apartheid.”**

The face veil presents a dilemma to the West. Should it be allowed because people should be free to dress as they choose?

Or does the veil obliterate a woman’s public identity and thus violate both her rights and responsibilities as a citizen?

Should Western societies allow separatist religious practices – like veiling women – to flourish under the banner of multiculturalism?

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What if such practices are enforced with violence by a religion which does separate mosque and state and which does not accord men and women equal legal status.

### **Religious Freedom**

Egyptian American Nonie Darwish was raised as a Muslim. Her father trained Palestinians to kill Israelis. Darwish eventually left Islam and Egypt. Now a Christian and US citizen she says of her adopted country: "This graceful country allowed me to practice any religion and gave me human rights I could only have dreamed of under Islam."

Nowhere in the Muslim world do Christians enjoy even a modicum of the religious freedom that Muslims enjoy in the West. In fact, the religious cleansing of Christians from the Muslim world, fueled by billions of Wahhabi petrodollars, is proceeding at a break-neck pace.

*CrossAlone Lutheran Churches are centrist Lutherans affiliated with Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC).*

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**Aayan Hirsi Ali**, the Dutch Somali woman who made a 10 minute film with the director Theo van Gogh about the Muslim oppression of women – which resulted in van Gogh's murder by an Islamic terrorist – says the controversy of the veil goes to the very heart of the matter of freedom for Muslim women. Not just freedom for its own sake, but freedom *from* a life of repression, subordination, and violence.

### **Radicalized Muslim Women**

Aayan Hirsi Ali warns that some educated and wealthy Muslim women wear the veil as a sign of their solidarity with radical Islam. They enjoy all Western freedoms but flaunt the veil to show their loyalty to radical Islam.

These women see themselves as followers of Mohammed, and like their male counterparts, they are "high" on religion. Both groups have succumbed to the totalitarian seduction of radical Islam.

### **A Voice and a Choice**

The existence of this noisy female minority hides the fact that there are thousands of poorer women in Europe and across the Muslim world who have no voice and no choice. They are brutally punished and threatened for daring to even want a different life. Among these women, Aayan Hirsi Ali identifies three groups:

1) First, there are the young women who take great risks to shape their individual futures. Aayan Hirsi Ali herself is an example of this group. She abandoned her family to avoid an arranged marriage to a distant cousin and fled Somalia for Holland.

Every Muslim girl knows a story about another girl who wanted to live a different, Western lifestyle and had to pay a very high price to do so, or who died trying to be free.

2) Second, there are girls

who grow up knowing that non-conformity with the social and religious rules of their community can be disastrous for themselves so they cleverly forge a way to lead a double life.

When with their families and communities they put on their headscarves and at home obey every whim of their parents and menfolk. They gain respect with this strategy and, more importantly, they receive less pressure and gain more freedom to pursue their own way. Why would fathers and brothers have to watch a girl who has proven herself faithful to the rules of Islam?

Outside the home, however, they lead the life of an average Western woman. They have a job, dress fashionably, have a boyfriend, drink alcohol, attend parties, and even manage to travel away from home.

3) The third group are the utterly vulnerable. Some of these girls are imported as brides or maids from the country of origin of the immigrants with whom they come to live. These girls are removed from school once they reach puberty and are locked up at home. Their families get away with this modern slavery because the authorities rarely take notice of these young women.

### **Our Lutheran Stance**

In daily life we are guided by Paul in Romans 13:10: "Love does no harm to the neighbor..."

We are alert to "harm," that is, the constricted lives of women under Islam. We do not accept Islamic repression of women as a respectable alternative way of life.

We differentiate between Muslims as individuals, whom we are called to love and help, and political Islam as a religious-political system obsessed with controlling women.