

Behind the Veil

Visual: 2 woman on camera, one adjusting wrap of other.

There we go.

Visual: Sara Yasin on camera.

Behind the Veil is in its third year, and it came from my vision for LeaderShape – which was something I did through CSLEPS – a camp dedicated to learning how to lead with integrity. As part of it, you create a vision and talk about how you would actualize that. So my broad vision was helping people understand Muslim women better. Part of that was trying to help people speak about the veil more openly. So, one thing I noticed was a lot of females asked me, “I would really like to know what it’s like to wear one, but there really isn’t an opportunity to do it.” So, that kind of got my gears turning, and I talked to Shannon over at the Women’s Center and we came up with Behind the Veil as an idea.

Visuals: Classroom, various students.

Women who are non-Muslim will wear the veil for a day, keeping to the basic tenets of wearing the scarf, covering their hair and covering their arms and their legs, and hopefully not drinking alcohol or eating pork. The women who are Muslim that participate are either women who have worn the veil, those who don’t wear the veil or those who used to wear it and took it off. We basically get them to talk about their experiences, just to show that there are lots of different perspectives and relationships with the veil. We’re going to have more than just the experiences of the participants and the young women that will be on our panel, but also we’ll be able to bring in a scholar to talk about how this relates on an academic level and on a scholarly level. That will be really interesting because it will draw upon culture, it will draw upon foreign policy and it will draw upon current events, and I feel like that’s definitely significant because we will be able to draw in more of the political aspect, which I feel has been really important in recent times, especially because people have more and more questions about Muslim women and their role in society and political Islam.

Visual: Juwareyah Hassell on camera

It gives them an opportunity to get in our shoes to see how we see the world and see how the world views us.

Visual: Tara Ilsley on camera.

I’ve met people I wouldn’t have met before. I talked with other Muslim women and have even had people come up to me, for example, I was at a restaurant and the man who owned the restaurant was a Palestine, and he was like, “Oh my gosh, why are you doing this?” So, I think I have connected with people I wouldn’t have otherwise connected with, because they asked me – as a white, Western woman – “Why are you covered?” So that opens up a whole new sphere of conversation, so I think I’ve met different people today that I wouldn’t have met on an ordinary day, so I think events like this – getting students out of their comfort zone – only furthers diversity.