

Headscarves movement means well but it is 'cheap tokenism'

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OPINION: I don't normally do this but I couldn't help myself after seeing this ['movement' online where non-Muslim women are being encouraged to wear hijab/scarves](#) to show 'solidarity' with Muslim women.

As a Muslim woman myself, I think this is nothing but cheap tokenism. It's a gimmick and pretty distasteful. All Muslims in New Zealand appreciate the sentiment, and the aroha we have received has been phenomenal since the terrorist attack last week, but support does not have to look like this.

"Kiwis are encouraged to get together with friends and workmates, takes photos at work, school or play, and share it on social media with the hashtag #headscarfforharmony," a [Stuff article said](#). Hijabs are not pieces of clothing to be worn as a costume or as a way to look cool or 'woke' in front of friends.



KIRK HARGREAVES/CCC

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern visiting a Christchurch mosque. "If people are genuinely interested in Islam and Muslim women, they should come and talk to us or go to the mosque, where they can wear a hijab out of respect."

You can't help a Muslim woman with a photo, when you then have the privilege to take the hijab off at the end of the day. Most people will remove their scarves when Friday ends whilst my mother and sisters continue to be abused - as it's their religious outfit and not a costume.

READ MORE:

- * [My issue with Kiwis being encouraged to wear headscarves in solidarity](#)
- * [A guide to how to help those affected by the Christchurch terror attacks](#)
- * [Headscarf a simple show of respect for Muslim community, event organisers say](#)

If people are genuinely interested in Islam and Muslim women, they should come and talk to us or go to the mosque, where they can wear a hijab out of respect.

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Many people have also talked about men wearing scarves and others about whether people can still go to the pub for a drink with their hijab on. It is a mockery and doesn't shine light on the violence, vitriol and abuse Muslim women go through on a daily basis.

I understand that [some Muslim groups have endorsed this](#) but Muslims are not a homogenous group of people as there are almost 1.9 billion of us across the world.

Older Muslim women that I have personally spoken to about this support the idea as they wish to pacify non-Muslim Kiwis and make them feel good about themselves, but this makes me incredibly sad.

Someone said: "It's ok, let them help how they want, they want to make us feel like we are one of them". Why 'them'? We shouldn't have to be 'them'. Some Muslims have been in NZ longer than some Pākehā but yet they're still not Kiwi enough.

Muslims here have been so deprived of support that they are willing to accept any and every kind, whether it is racist, culturally appropriating or just misplaced and misinformed.

This also stinks of white saviour mentality, where Muslim women need to be rescued by (largely) white folk. This type of ideology plays a part in the pyramid of white supremacy and must be acknowledged so people can stop virtue signalling and understand the impact of their actions.

Muslims do not have monopoly of the hijab and if anyone is genuinely interested in Islam or Muslim women, come and learn a little more about the faith and about what we need as a people. If people wish to wear a hijab every day, then by all means, they should. If not, then there are other ways to show aroha.

The attack in Christchurch was not just about Muslims, it was against any person of colour in a 'white' country so this focus on hijabs is derailing the examination of white supremacy, systematic racism, Orientalism and bigotry. We don't want to be turned into a caricature.

Please do not support something as stupid as this and next time, hear the voices of young Muslim women, feminist Muslim women, rainbow Muslim people, young Muslim men, disabled Muslim people. Find out what are they saying and how they are feeling.

Ngā mihi maioha.

The author of this piece asked to remain anonymous.

Stuff Nation