



## My Hijab Signifies My Faith. Why Do Some See It as a Threat?

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I clutched my master's diploma with pride at my graduation ceremony from Ashland University in Ohio in 2023. I had worked so hard to reach that moment – the late nights, the sacrifices, the pressure of being a first-generation student in a new country. I stood tall in my cap and gown, my beige hijab wrapped around my neck and covering my hair. The scarf was soft and simple to reflect modesty and celebration, an emblem of the loving, supportive community in which I was raised.

But a man in the crowd didn't see a scholar. He looked at me with disgust, circling his finger around his face to mimic my hijab, his eyes narrowing as he looked directly at me. His gesture said what his mouth didn't: "You don't belong here."

That moment, though fleeting, shook me. It wasn't the first – or the last – time I felt unwelcome on a college campus, but it was one of the most public.