

*I have been called a terrorist...*

Samena Premjee, 15, California

Being a Muslim today is a constant struggle for many. Being asked to choose between being American and being Muslim is an insult and is not fair. The very foundation that this country was built on is the very same basic principles and foundation that being Muslim has guaranteed for thousands of years. This country grants freedom of speech, no oppression, and no racism and equal rights for everyone. Islam grants all of these rights, and Islam was actually one of the first religions to grant them.

One of the hardest things to deal with is being called names, such as terrorist, towel-head, or even rag-head; it doesn't make life easier for us. I for one have been called a terrorist. This incident occurred back when I was in seventh grade. We had an earthquake drill, so we were all lined up outside. My friend and I were having a conversation about a television series that we both enjoyed, when all of a sudden a boy came up to me and with a straight face asked me, "Are you a terrorist?" I replied, "No." Then he said again with a straight face, "Your mom is a terrorist." At that point I lost it. I told him to go away and to leave me alone. I was so upset over the whole incident. I went home and I told my parents. They straightaway emailed the principal and vice-principal. The vice principal called me to his office and asked me to explain what happened. After I explained everything, he told me that immediate action would be taken against this boy. The boy was suspended for three days and I received an apology letter from him as well.

I know that this may not seem like a big deal now, but at the time I felt so upset and I didn't know how I was supposed to deal with my frustration. This was actually the first time I had really been exposed to Islamophobia. When people call Muslims names, they don't think about how much it hurts. They have to realize that Muslims are not terrorists. These terrorists who call themselves Muslims have hijacked a beautiful, peaceful religion and taken cover underneath it. Islam does not teach violence. Islam comes from the root word for peace, so how can it be a religion of violence? The terrorists claim that this is jihad. No, this is not what jihad is. Jihad is a personal struggle that one has to overcome using patience and peace, not violence. I really wish people would educate themselves before persecuting innocent victims.