



# Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women

*Marnia Lazreg*

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Across much of the world today, Muslim women of all ages are increasingly choosing to wear the veil. Is this trend a sign of rising piety or a way of asserting Muslim pride? And does the veil really provide women freedom from sexual harassment? Written in the form of letters addressing all those interested in this issue, *Questioning the Veil* examines the inconsistent and inadequate reasons given for the veil, and points to the dangers and limitations of this highly questionable cultural practice. Marnia Lazreg, a preeminent authority in Middle East women's studies, combines her own experiences growing up in a Muslim family in Algeria with interviews and the real-life stories of other Muslim women to produce this nuanced argument for doing away with the veil.

An incisive mix of the personal and political, supported by meticulous research, *Questioning the Veil* will compel all readers to reconsider their views of this controversial and sensitive topic.

Lazreg stresses that the veil is not included in the five pillars of Islam, asks whether piety sufficiently justifies veiling, explores the adverse psychological effects of the practice on the wearer and those around her, and pays special attention to the negative impact of veiling for young girls. Lazreg's provocative findings indicate that far from being spontaneous, the trend toward wearing the veil has been driven by an organized and growing campaign that includes literature, DVDs, YouTube videos, and courses designed by some Muslim men to teach women about their presumed rights under the veil.

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