

ISCA CONFERENCE 2006 - A CONCURRENT SESSION

VALUES: WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE?

HIJAB OR NOT HIJAB?

JOHN HARROWER and GAY HAWKES

FOR CONVERSATION

Does the wearing of religious symbols make a difference?

Why has the hijab been so confronting?

What does dress say to students, teachers, families, the nature of community?

What are the values that underlie our conversation?

What makes the difference?

SOME INPUT FROM “THE ARTIST AND THE BISHOP”

*GAY PRESENTS HER ARTWORK ON WOMEN’S HEADWEAR

*JOHN PRESENTS SOME EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE WEARING OF THE HIJAB and THE VALUES SO ASCRIBED [see below]

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES . . .

GAY HAWKES is a teacher who has taught in Australia, Canada and England, and worked in Art Therapy in aboriginal communities, as well as in prisons in Melbourne and Townsville. Gay has represented Australia as a sculptor in New Zealand, Norway and Ireland, and has her art in Canberra at Parliament House and the National Gallery, and in many other major collections. Gay delights in work with disengaged youth in schools and is a consultant with the national “Success for Boys” program.

JOHN HARROWER is the Anglican Bishop of Tasmania and began paid work weeding neighbours' gardens. He progressed to petroleum refining, researched economic issues for government, served as a university chaplain and national advisor in Argentina, has published and written literature in English and Spanish and was the vicar of a Melbourne parish before life as a bishop in beautiful Tasmania.

This the second collaboration of “the artist and the bishop” - the first being in 'Future Perfect – Authoring Tomorrow' in 2003. Gay and John enjoy the challenge and synergy they find in their work and their celebration of friendship.

HIJAB OR NOT HIJAB? - for conversation:

A Canadian Muslim woman commented that by wearing the hijab she had accepted who she was.

Comments made by non-Muslims:

Is hiding myself the way of self-acceptance?

Why does a Muslim woman care so much about what other people think that it causes her to wear the hijab?

What does she believe that people think of her if she does not wear the hijab?

“People think she is weird if she wears the hijab”.

“People do not find it acceptable” [Why?]

ISLAM ON PARADE

ABC TV, Compass – Sunday October 16 2005

<http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s1484210.htm>

Summary

Woman:

When I see women wearing the hijab, which I see quite a lot in Melbourne, I get a kind of feeling of anxiety and actually indignation.

Man:

And I look at that woman and think she doesn't look to me like she's enjoying a great deal of freedom?

Woman 2:

I've had the anxiety, are they being down trodden, is this a symbol of persecution?

Susan:

The reality is this is something that's important to me and I can't change my identity because people out there have the wrong idea. If anything I should be working to change their negative perceptions.

Geraldine Doogue:

26-year old SUSAN CARLAND has been involved in staging these events dubbed “MY DRESS, MY IMAGE, MY CHOICE” since they began four years ago.

Susan:

They've been so overwhelmingly successful. You know using clothes and food and discussion is a great way to break down barriers. Suddenly issues that might be otherwise taboo or uncomfortable its much more comfortable for people to talk about.

Geraldine Doogue:

But Susan and her fellow organizers are up against it. Since their last parade, there's been another terrorist attack overseas, and they're feeling the backlash.

Saara:

Women were bashed or abused, were taunted and teased, were spat at in the streets of Melbourne...and for me personally going daily to a grocery store and seeing a newspaper with some Imam throughout the world has said "Down with all infidels". And I'm here buying my groceries and these people are looking at me thinking that I'm supporting this statement.

Susan:

And I have had nasty comments shouted at me in shopping centers and things like that, terrorist and that sort of thing. That hurts, especially when I have my little girl with me. I feel sad when she hears that.

Channel 7 Sunrise (news archive)

Host: What's more important, a school uniform or respecting your religion. That question's being asked this week amid calls to ban Muslim girls from wearing head scarves in class.

Senator Bronwyn Bishop:

This has really been forced on us because what we're seeing in this country is a clash of cultures and the headscarf is being seen as a sort of iconic symbol of defiance.

Sallee:

Why do I wear the hijab? First and foremost it's an act of faith. Because I believe God has asked me or instructed me to dress in this manner.

FORMER MELBOURNE ARCHBISHOP WATSON IN HIS FINAL SYNOD 2005 said he was concerned that Australians were being "taught to fear difference" in the wake of terrorism threats.

"In particular, to fear migrants, or women who wear the hijab, or people of Middle Eastern appearance, as though only Anglo Celts are trustworthy and decent."

Archbishop Watson was critical of the language some politicians used, which sometimes "leads us to distrust others; sometimes, not to give them the benefit of the doubt".

EFFORTS TO BAN MUSLIM ATTIRE BLASTED

By Tim Martin

Education Reporter, THE MERCURY Tuesday August 30 2005, page 11

Moves to ban Muslim headscarves in public schools will only serve to further divide the community, said a Hobart Muslim leader.

Imam of the Hobart Mosque Sabri Samson said recent comments by Liberal backbenchers Bronwyn Bishop and Sophie Panopoulos will only make life harder for the Islamic community.

Mrs Panopoulos raised concerns that the headscarves, or hijab, worn by Muslim women obscured their faces in identification photographs.

Ms Bishop went a step further by calling for the hijab to be banned in public schools, as girls were wearing them as an act of defiance against Australian values.

Mr Samson rejected the idea that girls wore the hijab out of defiance and he called the comments very unfair.

"It is part of the religion for women to cover their heads, it is a sign of self respect, not defiance," he said.

"It is not worn because they want to look different, it is because they do not want to expose themselves."

Prime Minister John Howard stepped into the debate when he ruled out such a ban.

"I don't think it's practical to bring in such a prohibition," Mr Howard said.

Mr. Samson said it was only an issue because of the reaction to the London bombings and banning the hijab from public schools - as has been done in France - would only cause further resentment.

Education Minister Paula Wreidt said the State Government would not support a ban on headscarves in schools and that her department encouraged cultural diversity.

Tasmania's Liberal senators were cautious in responding to the remarks of their Federal colleagues. Senator Eric Abetz declined comment and Senator Paul Calvert said though he did not support a ban as advocated by Ms Bishop, it remained a matter for the State Education Department to decide. Senator Guy Barnett said he did not support a ban on headscarves at schools but he did support the deportation of extremists who supported terrorism and overtly opposed Australian values.

ALSO Appendix 3, **An Agreed Minimum Values Framework**, in Brian V Hill, "Exploring Religion in School", Openbooks, Adelaide 2004, was distributed.