

# Dalia Mogahed: “They don’t need you to save them from Islam. They need your respect.” (Part Two)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Mogahed did not become a chemical engineer, nor go into business, for both of which she trained, and either of which might have been taxing. Instead, she went into the business of being a Muslim. First, she polled Muslims for Gallup. Now she polls Muslims for her Muslim advocacy group (what she calls her “think tank”) and writes about Islam and Muslims, endlessly. Islam is her business. It’s what she thinks about, writes about, speaks about, defends and promotes.

*My choices may not be her choices,*

Mogahed is referring to the woman guilty of “micro-aggression” by taking hostile notice of her hijab.

*which doesn’t threaten me at all. If she really cares about freedom for women, listening [sic] rather than demeaning women who don’t look like her would be a great start to real progress.*

*Now I don’t mean to imply that Muslim women don’t face any gender-based challenges. Roughly half of Muslim American women say they’ve also experienced gender discrimination in the past year. But that’s no different from Christian, Jewish and non-affiliated American women. Where Muslim Americans are unique is that three-quarters say they have experienced racial discrimination in the past year, and 69 percent report*

*encountering religious discrimination during that time, as well.*

*So, what actually subjugates Muslim women? It's not Islam or hijab, but instead racism and Islamophobia – assaults justified in part by a supposed desire to save them. Frustratingly, our study found that liberals, who tend to be overall friendlier to marginalized groups, are nearly as guilty of this type of patronizing prejudice as others.*

Those who subjugate Muslim women are Muslim men. Period. After all, it bears repeating, they are only following the dictates of the Qur'an, and the example of Muhammad in the Hadith, when they treat women as they do. One more time: according to Qur'an 4:34, the Muslim husband may "beat" his disobedient wife. Is that famous Qur'anic verse unknown to Dalia Mogahed? What does she think of polygyny as practiced in Muslim lands? Doesn't that devalue women? What does she think of the husband in those countries who can divorce his wife merely by uttering the triple-talaq? What does she think of Muslim daughters inheriting only half that of sons, or of Muslim women whose testimony as a witness is, in Muslim societies, worth half that of a man? What does she think of Muhammad's consummating his marriage to Aisha when she was nine years old? And what of the Muslims who emulate the example of Muhammad, such as Ayatollah Khomeini, who married his wife when she was ten years old? Does she find anything worrying about these practices? What does she think of Muhammad's claim that "women are deficient in intelligence"? Or would she prefer to deny that famous claim?

*"I am here to say that we are not in need of "saving." According to a study by The Institute for Social Policy and Understanding [despite its misleading name, it is a Muslim advocacy group], for which I direct research, Muslim American women are among the most educated faith groups in the country, and outpace their male counterparts in higher*

*education.*

“Among the most educated faith groups”? How many “faith groups” are there? If Muslim Americans were more educated than Christians or Jews, Mogahed would have said so. Since she did not, they clearly are not.

*The majority polled also see Islam as a source of pride and happiness. The more than 40 percent of American women of the Islamic faith who say they wear hijab tell researchers they do so either as an act of piety (54 percent), to be identified as a Muslim (21 percent) or for modesty (12 percent). Only 1 percent said they wear hijab because a family member requires it.*

I am not sure what faith to put into the “research” directed by Dalia Mogahed herself, but she fails to understand what even her own “facts” – assuming we accept them – tell us. 60 percent of American Muslim women apparently reject wearing the hijab. She did not ask them the obvious question: had you been pressured to wear it, and then refused to do so, or was there no such pressure? And why did you choose not to wear it? Perhaps she didn’t want to find out, much less report, the answers such a question might have elicited. Of the rest, she says, only 1 percent of Muslim girls and women “wear hijabs because a family member requires it.”

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