

The ban the burqa debate essay sample

Law



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In France, the burqa or niqab was banned from being worn in public in 2010. President Nicolas Sarkozy explained his support for the law, stating, “ The burqa is not a religious sign, it is a sign of the subjugation, of the submission of women. I want to say solemnly that it will not be welcome on our territory.” Since this law came into the public eye, much debate has occurred as to whether the burqa should indeed remain outlawed. The central question in this debate is what the burqa actually represents as part of the Muslim tradition.

Mona Eltahawy, a Muslim woman and declared feminist, agrees with Sarkozy, explaining that as a Muslim woman, she feels the burqa does nothing other than subjugate women in society and erases their individuality.

Ronald Sokol approaches the issue by criticizing the legality and morality of this law by citing a right to privacy law. He also rebukes France for stepping away from its roots in self expression by taking away the choice to wear the burqa.

Mona Eltahawy’s main argument stems from the claim that the burqa is a device meant solely to subjugate women, and she declares her support for President Sarkozy’s claim that, “ The burqa is not a religious sign”. This is an important claim as the separation of church and state has been law since 1905 in France. Whether or not something is considered a religious symbol is generally described by whether a “ reasonable observer” can define it as such. It would seem likely that an informed individual would see a connection between the burqa and the Muslim religion as that is the institution that created the tradition of wearing the burqa. It seems questionable that

although Eltahawy was subject to wearing a burqa solely because she was of the Muslim faith, that she feels it does not pertain to the Muslim religion as a symbol or tradition.

Eltahawy explains that she feels the burqa eliminates all individuality in women. This seems an odd statement given the context of France, where only a few thousand people in the entire country wear the burqa. Given that the vast majority of the population does not wear the burqa, would it not make sense that this gown would provide a source of individuality? Whereas the opposite of individuality is commonality, the claim that the burqa would impose commonality on the wearer seems confusing and likely incorrect.

At one point in her essay, Mona Eltahawy make the bold claim, “ The best way to debunk the burqa as an expression of Muslim faith is to listen to Muslims who oppose it.” This is a troubling suggestion of approach to the topic, because Eltahawy herself is among the group she suggests listening to. Her statement could be interpreted as something similar to “ Trust me on this one, I know what I’m talking about,” which is not a very compelling avenue of approach when discussing this topic.

In his essay, Ronald Sokol makes a critical error when analyzing the reasons for the French law being made and in describing why he feels they are wrong. He claims that the law was, “ grounded in speculation about what a woman hidden in a burqa must feel.” And then he immediately states he feels the law certainly will not change how these women feel. Even if what he claims might be true, he contradicts himself by assuming he knows how

the women will feel after criticizing the government for doing the exact same thing.