

# A national Hijab Day?

## Mac professor wants one on Canadian campuses

The McMaster professor who initiated Hijab Day to support Muslim women is trying to create a national event across Canadian universities.

In April, Muriel Walker grabbed headlines when she created the event to draw attention to discrimination against Muslim women. A week later her office door was vandalized, plastered with Islamophobic and sexist graffiti.

Now, with the help of a students' association at McMaster, she is about to launch officially the idea of "Wear my Hijab day" on every Canadian campus at once. She has created a website, [hijabday.net](http://hijabday.net), and hopes to soon pick a date for the event.

This week Walker, a professor of post-colonial French literature, is in Paris with three students speaking at the fifth international conference on New Directions in the Humanities. The hijab is a flashpoint in France. The Hamilton delegation is speaking about the McMaster experience and the reaction.

The McMaster local of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and a Toronto lawyer and special adviser to the federal minister of multiculturalism, Mark Persaud, are among the supporters of the McMaster delegation in France.

"The students asked McMaster for funding but they were told that the university doesn't endorse this kind of students' initiative, so I took it upon myself to find other sponsors," said Walker.

Persaud was born in Guyana and arrived in Canada in 1983. A formerly homeless person in Toronto, he is the president and CEO of the Canadian International Peace Project, a non-partisan organization.

Persaud believes critical issues affect many of Canada's ethnocultural communities.

"It's a much more serious issue in Europe and France, but in Canada it's largely an issue of ignorance and we have to spend time educating people.

"What professor Walker is doing is highlighting the issue of intolerance against Muslim women wearing hijab and that is important."

Student Vicky Mak is presenting the perspective of Asian women on the issue and the group will be doing workshops with Muslim youths in France.

The delegation from McMaster will also tour in the suburbs of Paris to meet young Muslims to compare their experiences.

Born in France, Walker is also planning to stage a hijab day to protest the French government's ban on the garment in schools.

She expects some resistance.

"I know there will be some intense moments this summer because the French are more vocal and more aggressive than Canadians," she said.

**Source: BY MOHSIN ABBAS, The Hamilton Spectator, July 21, 2007**