



HURON VALLEY GREENS

a local chapter of the Green Party of Michigan

548 S. Main St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104

<http://www.hvgreens.org> ph. (734) 663-3555

RESOLUTION ON THE HIJAB AND SOLIDARITY WITH MUSLIMS

Adopted by consensus at the regular business meeting of the Huron Valley Greens on September 24, 2007, and amended on October 3, 2007, by direction of the local Coordinating Committee.

WHEREAS on September 8, 2007, a person identifying her/himself as Ann Arbor City Council member Joan Lowenstein posted comments on a popular local blog, Arborupdate. This person characterized the hijab—the traditional Muslim headscarf—worn in solidarity with Muslims by a non-Muslim "as a Halloween costume since she is not a Muslim" and later declared "If I were a Muslim woman who wore the hijab out of respect for the religion and a sense of spirituality [*sic*], I would be offended by a non-Muslim who used it as a daily costume for purely political reasons"; and,

WHEREAS in 1993, after windows in Jewish homes displaying menorahs were broken, thousands of Christian residents of Billings, Montana, placed paper menorahs in the windows of their homes in solidarity with Jews and those menorahs were not Halloween decorations; and,

WHEREAS in October 2001—in the wake of 9/11 and after the US government summarily rounded up thousands of Muslims and Arabs and many Arabs and Muslims were the targets of hate crimes—students, including at Wayne State University and the University of Michigan, and others donned the hijab as part of a worldwide "Scarves for Solidarity" event; and,

WHEREAS, in 2004, after the French government banned the wearing of hijabs and other religious articles in public schools, which law Human Rights Watch criticized as falling "disproportionately on Muslim girls, and thus violat[ing] antidiscrimination provisions of international human rights law," the Assembly for the Protection of Hijab proclaimed September 5th as International Hijab Solidarity Day; and,

WHEREAS, in November 2006, scores of people in Fremont, California wore hijabs and turbans in solidarity with Muslim women and Sikh men about three weeks after a stranger walked up to Alia Ansari and shot her in the head, while she was walking with her three-year-old daughter in Fremont, for no apparent reason other than the fact that she was wearing hijab; and,

WHEREAS, in 2006, the Council on American-Islamic Relations received 143 complaints of civil rights violations against Muslims and triggered by the wearing of hijab; and,

WHEREAS, according to a 2007 Pew Research Center poll, just over half of all American Muslims are very or somewhat worried that Muslim women who wear the hijab will be treated poorly because it identifies them as Muslim; and,

WHEREAS, the offensive comments attributed to Council member Lowenstein demeaned and trivialized an act of solidarity in the context of a racist climate of fear against Arabs and Muslims created as part of President Bush's "War on Terror"; and,

WHEREAS, whether it is worn as an expression of cultural self-determination, political solidarity, or religious devotion the hijab is never a "Halloween costume"; and,

WHEREAS, characterizing the hijab as a "Halloween costume" is evidence of, at worst, bigotry and intolerance and, at best, insensitivity and ignorance.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Huron Valley Greens call upon Ann Arbor City Council member Lowenstein to state publicly whether she was the author of the remarks attributed to her on Arborupdate; and,

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Huron Valley Greens urge other concerned individuals and organizations to join us in this call and to consider filing a formal complaint with the Ann Arbor Human Rights Commission, whose duties include: "Investigate, study, hold hearings and make recommendations to city council regarding complaints from any class or group protected under the human rights ordinance."

Drafted and submitted by Michelle J. Kinnucan.