

WHAT IS FREEDOM OF BELIEF?

Written by

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LIVE WHAT YOU BELIEVE Series #1

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FADE IN:

EXT. EDMONTON, CANADA - ESTABLISHING - DAY

WE DRIVE BY a synagogue, a mosque, a church.

JACQUELINE ISAAC (V.O.)  
An overwhelming majority of people  
worldwide identify with a religious  
faith.

INT. UBER - DAY

LAYLA, 16, a pensive Arab girl in an oversized sweatshirt and baggy pants, gazes out the car window at her new home.

JACQUELINE ISAAC (V.O.)  
Eighty-four percent, and this  
figure is growing.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "JACQUELINE ISAAC -- INTERNATIONAL LAWYER, ADVOCATE"

JACQUELINE ISAAC  
With so many in the world  
affiliated with a religious faith,  
it's clear that violating the free  
practice of our beliefs is  
counterproductive, even  
destructive.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "MARIYA DOSTZADAH GOODBRAKE -- DIRECTOR, GLOBAL FC"

MARIYA GOODBRAKE  
The reason we have human rights is  
to honor a person's dignity.  
Freedom of religion or belief  
ensures that people, regardless of  
what they believe or not believe,  
have equal rights and an equal  
opportunity to be heard.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

The Uber pulls up in front of a modest apartment complex. The back door opens and Layla gets out, looks around.

Her brother AMIR, 18, retrieves their belongings from the trunk with their Arab FATHER, 40, and MOTHER, 38, a hijab loosely around her shoulders.

MARIYA GOODBRAKE (V.O.)  
 But this can get complicated as our world becomes more global through migration and technology.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "ED BROWN -- SECRETARY GENERAL, STEFANUS ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL"

ED BROWN  
 What we mean by globalization is that the world is smaller and the world is larger at the same time.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "JACOB ANTON - ACTIVIST"

JACOB ANTON  
 Some of the effects of globalization can be seen as a threat. With increased global communication and interaction, what you took for granted, you can't anymore. It raises questions and increases choices.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

MIA (17, an ambiguously ethnic teenager in the latest Western fashion) walks into the complex with her brother NATE, 19. She looks with disdain at Layla and her family's meager belongings, says something derogatory to her brother.

NADA HIGUERA (V.O.)  
 Interacting with people different from us can lead us to protect ourselves.

Layla sees and looks hurt.

NADA HIGUERA (V.O.)  
 Sometimes it's fear of a loss of identity or that our community is going to change.

Nate motions to his sister to stop.

Layla watches Mia and Nate enter their apartment. They're neighbors. Layla sighs.

NADA HIGUERA (V.O.)  
It's an unsettling time...

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "NADA HIGUERA -- CONSTITUTIONAL ATTORNEY, ADVOCATE"

NADA HIGUERA  
Nationalism, sectarianism and  
violent extremism are on the rise.  
As a result, the free exercise of  
faith and conscience is threatened  
even in more established  
democracies.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

JACQUELINE ISAAC  
Given the polarizing trends of our  
world, we have to find ways to  
agree to disagree with our neighbor  
that does not act, look, or pray  
like we do. That is what freedom of  
belief seeks to do.

CUT TO:

GRAPHIC: "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Sura 2:256"

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 2  
Corinthians 3:17"

NADA HIGUERA (V.O.)  
Freedom of belief is a right we are  
all born with.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

NADA HIGUERA  
It is one of the most fundamental  
rights we have because it goes to  
the core of who we are, how we  
live, how we speak.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

ED BROWN  
Freedom of belief gives everyone  
the right to have or adopt a  
religion or belief...

CUT TO:

GRAPHIC: "FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF IS:

-- The freedom to have, choose, and change a religion or  
belief.

-- The freedom to practice a religion or belief.

-- Freedom from coercion.

-- Freedom from discrimination."

ED BROWN (V.O.)  
And to practice their belief  
peacefully as they choose, without  
any coercion or discrimination.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

ED BROWN  
It also protects the right of  
people not to practice a religion  
or belief.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

NADA HIGUERA  
Sometimes religion can be used as a  
weapon to oppress and control,  
especially women. But freedom of  
belief does not mean imposing your  
religious beliefs on others.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "HUSSEIN ABOUBAKR - EDUCATOR/ADVOCATE"

HUSSEIN ABOUBAKR  
Freedom of belief doesn't mean  
universalism or relativism. You can  
be firmly committed to your  
beliefs;  
(MORE)

HUSSEIN ABOUBAKR (CONT'D)

you just don't use coercion or violence in matters of religion. Many secularists think relativism or even banning religion is the only solution to religious conflicts. But strictly secular countries tend to have more restrictions.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

JACQUELINE ISAAC

Freedom of belief contributes to building a strong civil society...

INT. LAYLA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Layla unpacks her suitcase in her small, sparsely furnished room. She glances out the window.

LAYLA'S POV - THROUGH WINDOW

A nearby park with a basketball hoop.

LAYLA looks thoughtful.

JACQUELINE ISAAC (V.O.)

To be able to congregate with your loved ones builds strength. When you allow people to unite with one another openly, that strength resonates in every area of their lives.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

HUSSEIN ABOUBAKR

If we believe what we believe is true, we shouldn't be afraid of challenges to our faith. In an open environment, the truth of what we believe will be found out. In free societies, one's faith can become much richer.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

JACQUELINE ISAAC

We cannot ignore that in order to flourish...

INT. LAYLA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Layla places on a shelf a framed photograph of her friends from back home -- several wear hijabs.

JACQUELINE ISAAC (V.O.)  
People have to be able to address  
their deepest questions of  
existence and meaning, both  
privately and in community with  
others.

LAYLA gazes sadly at the picture, missing her friends.

NADA HIGUERA (V.O.)  
Freedom of belief encompasses  
everyday life.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

NADA HIGUERA  
It's integrated into every part of  
who we are.

INT. LAYLA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Layla kneels by her bed and prays.

NADA HIGUERA (V.O.)  
It's not just about practicing a  
religion. It's about having the  
freedom to live out our beliefs.

FADE TO BLACK.