

Reasonable Accommodation

It was a **lazy** Saturday morning. I got up, as usual around 9 a.m., **fed** my cat and walked over to the kitchen table. Then I poured myself a cup of coffee and put some bread in the toaster.

While waiting for the bread to toast, I walked over to my front door, opened it and picked up the newspaper off the ground. That's when I saw it.

"Do we accept this?" was the headline, underneath that was my picture. The caption read, "Ms. Duchesne, 26, is a teacher at a local school. This is what she wears to go to work."

I couldn't believe it! What was wrong with the way I dressed? I know that some people don't **share** my culture but that doesn't make it wrong. I was so angry and confused. I decided to call my best friend, Shane.

"Shane, it's me."

"What's up, Karine?"

"Did you see the paper this morning?"

"No, I don't read the newspaper. I generally stick to the TV news or the Internet."

"Well, please, go on the Internet and look at the top story for the Saturday Planet."

"Yeah, O.K., no problem ... but why?"

"Just go and see. I'll call you back, O.K.?"

"O.K. Bye. Thanks!"

I hung up the phone, but I was still shaking. Did people really hate me because of the way I dressed? Since moving here, I sometimes found that people looked at me strangely.

Usually, the only way that people treated me badly was by staring at me too long, or sometimes, ignoring me and sometimes even changing their seat on the bus so that they did not have to sit next to me.

Once, a woman refused to serve me in a store. She didn't say why. She just ignored me. I left the store, discouraged. When I turned back, I saw that she was helping someone else. I was so angry and ashamed. In another store, the woman helped me but she was looking at the floor; she did not look into my eyes.

The phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Karine, it's Shane. Man, that's terrible! I can't believe that they put your picture in the paper like that!"

"I know. I feel so angry and ashamed!"

"But you know, these days the media show a lot of stories about people who are different. They love to **scare** people. When they show someone who is so different from a "normal, average" person, it makes people scared and emotional."

"I know, Shane, but that is not right. They encourage prejudice and racism."

"I know, Karine, but what can you do?"

"Good question. I don't know. But I am going to try something!"

I hung up the phone and thought about it. What could I do? I could call or write to the newspaper, but there was no guarantee that they would talk to me.

I picked up the paper again and looked at my picture in it. It was a picture of me outside the school talking to my students. I was wearing a knee-length skirt and a nice, white blouse and my hair was long and loose. In Québec this would be normal. In **Tehran**, this kind of clothing is considered scandalous.

I wish people would be more tolerant.



Words

lazy = not energetic

fed = past tense of "feed," meaning "to give food"

share = to have something in common with other people

scare = to frighten

Tehran = the capital city of Iran