

The notion of the Mipster movement had been germinating for a couple of years before that notorious three-minute video that made it spring to life with a bang, leaving a flutter of controversy and passionate debate all over the internet.

In *Somewhere in America*, a group of seriously hip girls frolic around New York City clad in bright colours and stylish garments, partaking in activities like skateboarding in stilettos, running on fences and doing handstands against graffiti-covered walls, dancing to a boom box in their sunglasses and chunky jewellery, eating ice cream and taking selfies, and embodying coolness while posing on fire escapes and industrial barrels.

But what was it then that made the internet explode in its wake? Just the fact that all girls are sporting a hijab. Enter the Muslim hipsters, aka Mipsterz, who have quickly become a global network connecting Muslim women, united by the ideology that you can fuse fashion with faith and be a hipster while wearing a hijab.

To quote the opening of the Mipster manifesto, a Mipster is "someone at the forefront of the latest music, fashion, art, critical thought, food, imagination, creativity, and all forms of obscure everything," and yet "seeks inspiration from the Islamic tradition of divine scriptures, volumes of knowledge, mystical poets, bold prophets, inspirational politicians, esoteric imams, and our fellow human beings searching for transcendental states of consciousness."

Sparked by a mutual sense of confidence and empowerment, the movement grew organically and was further spurred by social media, an important component of the scene. The purpose of the video was to demonstrate the diversity of Muslim women and to break the stereotype of the hijab as a symbol of oppression that they hide behind. In fact, Mipsterz insist that the hijab should be treated like any other piece of clothing.

And Stockholm naturally has its own Mipster representatives. Imane, Setareh, and Maryam met a few months ago through a photo shoot with Detroit-based photographer Langston Hues, who was working on a recently-published book focusing on modest street fashion around the world.

"I think the acceptance towards the Muslim community is growing and people are starting to demolish the prejudice about Muslim girls not knowing much about fashion," says Imane, a 20-year-old university student who works part-time with clothing retail and shares her love for fashion and photography through her prominent blog, *Fashion with Faith*. A browse through Imane's picture collection shows a taste for minimalism: A beige hijab, black leather jacket, long white shirt, a pair of grey New Balance



MODEST STREET FASHION

Modest Street Fashion is a book of photographs that documents the emerging culture of modest street style which has erupted around the world. It is the first book to visually capture this growing international trend that has exploded from the streets of Kuala Lumpur to the alleys of New York City.

With a background in anthropology, Detroit-based photographer Langston Hues cites his travels as akin to a contemporary ethnography. He states the manifestation of modest fashion is based on women's expression of identity through their dress, saying "my book is not just about Muslim fashion, but about modest fashion trends."

In capturing these images, Hues says his book "will include faith-driven fashion designers, bloggers and a large number of their followers who dress modestly but are stylish at the same time".

Women opting to dress modestly are increasingly exploring unconventional dimensions of conservative or traditional dress, whilst still maintaining an adherence to their spiritual values. "Women who chose to cover themselves were an anomaly a few years back and, in some cases, criticized," says Hues. "Today, they are

reaching out to like-minded people and have a massive following throughout the world."

Commencing this journey from his hometown of Detroit, Hues' has photographed in excess of 400 style-conscious candidates across the United States, Europe, Australia, Asia and the Middle East, encompassing over 20 countries and 25 cities to date.

Hues maintains his objective is not to regulate what modest fashion is, but to create a book documenting the global trend it represents.

In keeping with the international pace of his journey, his highly-anticipated photo book is printed and due for release here in early 2015, and will be launched around the world in various countries that were included in his photo tour.



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