I go to the mall. I go to school. I eat at restaurants. I’m a normal teenage girl, but there are some obvious differences. I don’t pull on tight revealing clothes or walk through the streets showing off with haughtiness. I don’t have to place my hair in the flawless curls or the perfect falls, twists and turns while smearing fake blues and greens onto my face just to be “presentable.” No, while other girls think of this as the path to the future and the best way to have a fun life, I have a different path to look to and follow. I wear a hijab; I cover my beauty by dressing modestly in order to be respected and to preserve my dignity. This is what Islam teaches.

I am very proud to wear hijab. I join all the other women and girls who fear Allah and put up with the jokes and tricks. I started wearing hijab in the end of sixth grade when I was eleven and a half. My inspiration was the “speech” my Sunday school teacher gave when she was teaching us the virtues of hijab. When I heard this, I felt as if it was calling to me so I set myself up to wear it the very next day to school. My mother, also, decided to wear hijab all the time, and we helped each other out.

When I got to school, I could feel all the eyes following me and asking all the questions. It was just about six months after September 11th, and I knew that the people were still full of caution. While I was walking down the hall to my class and to my locker, my teachers went to each other and started pointing and talking about me. Then they finally called me and asked me what I was wearing. I explained to them that it was part of my religion, and I would be wearing it from now on. That started the wave of questions; that wave was a big one. My friends started asking me what it was and why I wore it. I said the same thing over and over to them until they understood it. I realized I needed to learn more about the reason I wore it, so I read some books about Islam and women. Lots of people were asking me if my parents forced me to wear; they said they felt sorry for me. I made it clear that it was not a form of oppression, but a protection that I had chosen myself. So sixth grade year ended without many events, and the summer flew by.

During the summer, though, I went to many places and had the same response from the public. While some people stared at me, most people just went on with their business. I felt really happy and as if, maybe, everyone had started to understand.

My seventh grade year was very different however. The teachers didn’t ask a single question and were very supportive in making sure no one said anything to me. Even though some people still mocked me by putting T-shirts over their heads when I was around or pulled the back of my hijab, most people stopped making fun, became my friend or just didn’t notice me. While most of the “popular” girls didn’t care about me, almost everyone knew who I was. Then one boy started saying, “hey Osama bin Laden’s daughter”, whenever he saw me. I felt pretty offended at first, but then I played along and soon they forgot. I knew if I made a fuss of it, they would just say it even more.

The year went on, and I was still the only person in the middle school of 1,800 students who wore hijab. Some people started complaining that it wasn’t fair that I was allowed to wear my hijab, while no one else could wear hats or bandannas. Luckily everyone already knew the answer, and the issue didn’t go far.

Soon my friends and everyone else became less careful, and I was always asked for help with homework and stuff. When the year wound down and final exam grades were given out, I got an A+. My friends started another joke, they said I had hidden the answers under my hijab, and I read them out during the test! I laughed heartily at this joke, and I knew they meant no harm. At the end of the year, I realized that it was the best year ever. I had made a whole list of comebacks and tactics if I was attacked or beat up, and I didn’t have to use any of them.

That summer we moved to Northern Virginia, and I started attending an Islamic school. I had mixed feelings about leaving. I was very happy to move to a new area and to go to an Islamic school where I would be just like everyone else. I was, also, sad because I wouldn’t have as much of a chance to explain why I wore hijab and convince people of the truth. Alhamdulillah, my experience with hijab has been very good. I have less fear of people and more fear of Allah. May Allah increase my faith and accept my efforts. Ameen.

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