

# Aled

**Aled Abdulhamid, 50, Mom, Ethiopian**

“I was wearing the hijab as a student because I went to Islamic school when I was [a kid]. So it was printed in our minds, but it was never forced. But at the same time, they were teaching us [about it]. Eventually, my sister went ahead and wore the hijab first. Everybody was like, ‘That's a big decision, that's a big decision, you're young.’ [But I was inspired.] I wanted to do it. And then I followed right after — I am one year younger, and I was around 16, 17 when I first started wearing it. But we [already had] the background about the hijab from school. So we did it, we both did it.

And then that's the time when we came here. If you're not really strong about religion, and you're just trying to fit in with American life, [it can be hard]. And [it did become challenging] for both of us, because we couldn't find a job. We also could not find outfits, you know, long skirts, or baggy pants, or clothing that wasn't too tight. When we'd go to weddings, events, we couldn't find anything. Our environment was not supporting us; we couldn't find anything to wear. So slowly, slowly, [my sister] was the first to drop it. And then I followed. It wasn't until I moved to Santa Clarita in 2012 where I started to wear the hijab again.

[Part of the reason I began to wear it again] was because of my nieces. They live in Michigan, and seeing them [inspired me]. I was like, ‘You know what, they're younger than me. Look how determined they are to wear it.’ And I said, ‘You know what, I should try it.’ So then I started putting it on in Ramadan. [Even with headlines and tension] I told myself that if Allah does not mean it to happen, nothing will happen to me. And then I just started wearing it [proudly]. I never took it off since. For me, as a Muslim, this is my identity. You know, it's mentioned in the Quran. Scholars say that we need to cover, so because of that I am doing it. Wearing hijab is not being submissive. You're here because you are trying to please your Creator.

The best thing about wearing the hijab is that you look prettier, I think. I don't experience anything worse because of it. Of course, people may discriminate against you internally if they see you wearing the hijab, but other than that, I haven't experienced anything bad. But the advantage is, I feel pretty with the hijab on; I feel modest. And then I always remember, when you wear the hijab, [you have a responsibility]. Sometimes when you're mad and you want to act out, you remind yourself that this is not who you are. I'm wearing the hijab and I'm representing it, so I should be mindful and not do anything out of character. That is what makes me more modest [and humble].”