

# Asiyah

**Asiyah Ardekani, 19, Student, Persian/Somali/Yemeni/Kenyan-American**

“I grew up in a very religious household. My mom used to wear the niqab. Around 12 years old, my mom started insisting to have me put it on. So, I would, and like two days later, I'd take it off. Put it on to take it off. I didn't have a good relationship with it, because I felt that I wasn't pretty with it on.

However, I believe when I was around 13 or 14, that's when I actually began listening to the news. And that's when I heard about terrorism, ISIS, and all of that stuff. And I started to feel unsafe wearing the hijab. I didn't want to wear it, because I thought people would associate me with ISIS. I took off my hijab for a good year, I wasn't required to wear it yet, so it didn't really matter in the sense, but I didn't want to wear it. Then I put it back on because I was like, ‘Okay, it's that time I have been required to put it on now, whether I like it or not.’ I still didn't like it that much. I didn't even want to post on Instagram. So on my Instagram account, every time I would post a picture of myself, I would only capture from my feet to my neck so that you wouldn't know that I'm Muslim.

Then on my 15th birthday, I went out with my friends, and when we were taking pictures together, I actually took the hijab off again. However, the second I took it off, I didn't feel like ‘Oh, I'm finally liberated and I can finally show off my hair.’ I initially thought I would feel happy because as I was taking those pictures, I was like okay, I'm gonna look so good. But as I was walking around, I didn't feel like that. I felt almost naked in the sense, I don't feel any sort of happiness. And I still didn't feel happy wearing it, and I didn't feel happy taking it off. So I just kept it on for the sake of, ‘Okay, this is what God told me to do. I'm just going to listen.’

Even though my heart did not feel connected, my brain understood that this is the truth. So that was a part of my reason, but that feeling still continued for two more years. It wasn't until just last year, when I turned 18, that I started actually liking wearing hijab. I didn't feel I still didn't feel as pretty as I did when I didn't wasn't wearing it, but I still continue to put it on.

Ultimately, I realized that my connection to Allah was so weak, and that's why I kept taking it off. However, even though it was so weak, a part of my heart knew that he still loved me, and I still loved him, which is why I kept putting it back on.

[As I continue to wear the hijab,] I'm doing this for the sake of my religion, which is why I put the hijab on in the first place. As a 19 year old hijabi, it eventually became that I wear the hijab because it makes me feel happy. It makes me feel connected. Everytime I put this on I remember that I'm doing this for the Creator, not a creation.”