

Titin

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“*Alhamdulillah* (thank Allah), I was born into a religious family. My mom used to tell me that I would have to wear the hijab because my grandpa owned the *masjid* (mosque). Around 13, 14 I had to start covering my hair. I didn’t know if wearing the hijab was mandatory at the time, but I knew that it was a [familial expectation] of me. When I finished high school, I got married, [had kids] and continued to wear the hijab. It wasn’t until I came to the U.S. in 2010, where my friend told me that if I wear the hijab in America, I'm not going to find a job. So I took it off. I was new here — I just believed whatever people would say.

I took off my hijab for two or three months, but I still couldn't find a job. It was hard to deal with limited English and no English education. Then I just prayed to Allah, [saying] that I'm lonely right now in America, that I [can't get around] if my friend doesn't pick me up and take me somewhere. [I had to remind myself] that Allah owns everything. Allah owns Indonesia, Allah [owns America]. Allah will give you what others can't. [I decided], 'If this is what you want, Allah, I will put my hijab on. I will pray on time. I will fast, but help me.' I believe God changed my life, not people. God will give me whatever I ask for if I follow his teaching. I started learning more about Islam and decided that I'm not going to take off the hijab anymore. This is mandatory.

Everybody I work with is nice. No one bothers me, except for a [couple of times]. One time, I went to work for a producer in Hollywood. He looked at me. ‘You wear a hijab?’ When I responded yes, he wanted to send me home, but then realized that he’d have to pay my agency regardless. ‘Okay, I’ll keep you for one night.’

I would read the Quran in front of him, so one time he asked me why I read the Qur’an, and I responded with, ‘The book says ABC.’ He then responded, ‘I don’t believe in God.’ I said, ‘No problem, sir. You don't believe in God, this is your business. My business is I believe in him.’ I knew he still liked me very much to be a caregiver for his sister. Then one day, we were having dinner and [saw] the sunset, the sky [was beautiful]. It was yellow and orange and became so colorful. So he called us over, ‘Come, you guys, look at this sky.’ I just keep smiling. He asked me why I kept smiling, and I just asked, ‘How many pilots do you think spray painted the sky? That's God who did that’

The hijab is [my source] of identification. I am Muslim. People actually respect me more. I can also show people [in America] that Muslim people are nice. When I do nice things, they're gonna look at me. For me, the best part is that I can show *dawa*, where you teach people [through your actions]. That's the best part for me as a Muslim wearing the hijab in America.”

