

Identity, Empowerment and Change, Handout 11

Muslim by Name and Nature

I'm female, 15, Black (Nigerian) and Muslim by name *and* nature.

I had to say both because it's what I am, and it really gets on my nerves when you ask some people about religion and they say 'I'm Muslim, but I don't pray or fast or read Quran....' And yet, these are the same people who take a week off school for Eid. I know myself that I'm not the perfect example of a Muslim, especially when it comes to my dress sense, but I'm taking it step by step to become a better Muslim and I pray that Allah continues to make it easier for me. I pray and wake up early for Fajr (morning prayer), I fast in Ramadan, go to the Mosque when I can and I've been learning the Quran from early days.

I go out, party and have fun with my friends, but I know my limits. It doesn't make me feel left out knowing that I can't enjoy some of the things others are into, because I understand exactly why Allah has prohibited some things.

When I first started wearing my headscarf, my perspective on life was slightly clearer. I became more confident in Islam and I was more aware of how simple temptations could really mess up someone's life. The Hijab had an opposite and sometimes funnier effect on me than I was expecting. People complimented me a lot and it was really strange getting more attention from random boys greeting me on the road. Truly quite confusing (and tempting). I've been able to joke about my religion with people because I've got a really calm but good understanding of Islam.

I've dressed up as my friend's mum in a Niqqab to try and get her phone back from school, I've made up funny songs with my friends and a little film with my sister about a Quran teacher who wants to be a model.

What it means to me to be Muslim is recognizing my purpose in this life, which is to submit myself to God alone. I believe that I have a strong relationship with Allah, which is most important to me. I understand that this life is the test for eternal happiness with Allah, not for fun and games. I try to confidently ask myself before I do anything whether it's something that will please God and get me to Al-Jannah (heaven) in the end. I think this is the reason why I don't get jealous or intimidated by other people because I know that I have the best gift of all - Islam - and absolutely nothing compares.

My religion has definitely helped me through the little I've gone through and I have faith that it will continue to help me deal with everything in my future – INSHALLAH!

© *Fauzia Amao, 2008*

Written especially for this publication. Published in this form by the UK Race & Europe Network (UKREN), 2009. Further information at www.youngmuslimcitizens.org.uk