

## Audrey, USA

### (part 1 of 2)



### This is my story

As I sit here, remembering my story, tears come to my eyes. So many minor things happened by the will of God, the Almighty, that brought me to revert to Islam. I have learned that when people say no, you say yes, when they stare you walk with pride, and when they talk about

you, you just remember God. Hopefully my story is an inspiration to those who want to convert to Islam.

### The Beginning

The first time I remember seeing a Muslim was when a Muslim family moved in across the street from my house. My mother called them “our Muslim neighbors”. They wore headscarves and back then my mom told me it was called the “Burqa”. I watched from afar their bike rides, picnics, and get-togethers, listening to them always laugh that summer, wishing it was me. Soon, I learned that one of their 2 daughters was in my grade. When school started in 4th grade we became friends and she joined my clique. We never talked about religion and I just assumed that hijab was a huge part of her religion and if she didn’t do it, she would be kicked out. I mean, why else would she wear it?? We talked about other things, like school, and friends, and what we were planning to do on the weekends.

Around that time I started thinking about religion more seriously. My mom was Catholic and father was Jewish, and they told me I could pick what religion I wanted when I grew up. At that time I assumed I would be Jewish because most of my extended family was Jewish, and I went to the Temple more than the Church. I never really thought about God that much and I wasn’t even sure if I believed in Him. My parents raised me to respect other religions and cultures, as we were white and this was the social “norm.” But it always seemed like they thought they were better than everyone else. Personally, I wished to be part of a big family who all shared the same traditions. I wished I was like my Muslim neighbors, eating cool foods, and being so close to each other. They could laugh without hurting each other’s feelings. When I went to their house they seemed to fit together like a puzzle piece. The mother always

was gentle and kind, the father silly but firm. All of their 4 kids had different, beautiful personalities that I envied very much.

I hated being “western.” I looked at people and scolded them for being so small-minded but in essence, I was the same way myself. Sometimes I questioned whether I was really just 9 years old at the time. Did I have some kind of mental disease? Kids my age thought about playdates and barbies, and they were all just trying to grow up. I was already an old lady. People told me that I was different, but I didn’t know what they meant.

## The Middle

Fourth and Fifth grade flew by like a breeze. I excelled at school and had a few close friends. I didn’t think about religion, rather I was beginning to explore philosophy. I began to become a person I wasn’t, excited about Christmas and my birthday so I could get presents, and getting into fights with my friends because I didn’t like who they were friends with. I ate whatever I wanted and my parents honestly didn’t care what I did as long as I kept being their perfect little only child on the outside. On the inside, though, I was lost. But I just didn’t know what to find. I couldn’t picture my future.

Sixth grade started and I made some new friends in middle school. Since only a couple of people I knew came from my old school, I became close with them. One of those girls was the girl who lived across the street, Husna (name has been changed). I started to go to her house more often and realized how strong she was in her faith. I began to be drawn towards her family and talked to her every day after school. It seemed as if a magnet was holding us together. She was from Pakistan and I was extremely interested in her culture, which was so different from mine. When I watched her pray *Maghrib* [sunset prayer] one day, I knew in my heart, I would someday be Muslim.

At this point I was beginning to draw away from my other friends and stopped wearing short shorts. I didn’t realize it but my mind was always on God and I was always bargaining with Him. *If I make my bed everyday, can You make mom be nicer to me? If I finish my homework, will You make my piano playing better? If I get 100% on this quiz, can You make me get a good grade on my reading assessment?*

## (part 2 of 2)

One day, I got a book from the library called ‘The Faith Club’ by Ranya Idliby, Suzanne Oliver, and Priscilla Warner. It was about three people; a Jew, a Christian, and a Muslim - who all got together and talked about religion. Because of this, Husna read it too and we started our own Faith Club. It was really fun and I got to hear a lot of Husna’s views on things related to her headscarf, 9-11, and God Himself. I made it clear in the beginning that I was fine with my religion. I said I didn’t want to change.

After a couple of months of doing the Faith Club, we slacked off a little bit. This meant that I wasn't thinking about God as much as I used to. But sure enough, a few weeks later, I stared at myself in the mirror. I looked deep into my eyes and questioned myself as to why I didn't have that many friends, why I didn't put on makeup all of time like others, and why I cared about religion so much. *God, show me to the right path... I don't know what to do*, I prayed. *I want to have a religion. I want to truly believe in You.* The same day, Husna sent me an email inviting me to Islam. I replied to her saying that I am fine with what I am but I am fascinated by your religion. Little did I know what would happen next.

I started checking out many books on Islam at the library and stopped reading junky, inappropriate books. I stared for hours on the computer, learning about Islam. I watched lectures on Youtube, and I wanted to be the sister the speaker was talking about. I began to look past what people see and found what I felt. I began to realize that there was One God, that there only can be One God. It made perfect sense to me that Jesus, peace be upon him, was a Prophet, one of the most important ones in fact. Why would God send down Himself to Earth to be killed? Prophet Muhammed, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, was a great inspiration for me because he was a convert himself along with his followers. He practiced the religion perfectly, like I wanted to do someday. Even Moses, may God praise him, I related with, because I was running away from people who demanded my service, and I was beginning to become my own person.

I began to find my identity, believing in all of these things. I no longer was outspoken, weird, and filled with acne, but a strong, independent person like I had always wanted to be. At 12 years old I had finally found myself. *Alhamduillah*, all praise and thanks to Allah! I didn't have that many friends but still had Husna to talk to. I began to find other Muslims who I could communicate with. It was so much fun talking to them and I realized that I wanted to convert. Not in a few years, not in a month, but now.

All the converts who I had talked to had waited for years to say their Testimony of Faith. But for me, it was different. There was no point in waiting. I had already told my parents that I was interested in Islam.

Every time I was alone at the home I would strut around with a scarf on my head. I would listen to the Arabic Quran recitation and read the English translation. Finally, it was spring break. Everyone I had talked to wanted me to convert. I wanted to convert. I asked God: *"Allah, God, send me a sign. Send me a sign that I should convert!"* The sign came. It was myself. It was how much I had learned and how well everything was going for me, and how much I loved Allah and Islam. It was all of my Muslim and non-Muslim friends, the books I had read, and the Quran. Everything had always been there, all of the signs, but I didn't realize it until that moment, where I fell onto my bed and cried. I sobbed and screamed and realized that I didn't care what other people thought, and I didn't care what my friends thought, but I cared

what Allah thought. I knew that He wanted me to convert and that is what I did.

## **The End**

Life went on. I still went to school and I did most things the same, except I knew I was Muslim. From the time of my conversion, I prayed 5 times a day, some days not wanting to and some day yearning to. I wavered in my faith, sometimes thinking that I shouldn't have converted while sometimes thinking it was the best decision of my life. At first I didn't tell my friends, and my parents, and I was grateful for that since it gave me a chance to start going to the Mosque and getting closer to Allah before having the strength to tell them.

My life has a purpose now, and I since I am still 12 years old. I am at peace with myself, having faith in Allah, and know that whenever I lose something it will benefit me in some way or another. I am liberated and free. I am no longer a simple 'Westerner'. I have stopped thinking about what people say and have began listening to my heart.