

## PROUD TO BE MUSLIM

Soha has been wearing a hijab since sixth grade. "It has made me more confident," she says.

## VOCABULARY

**hijab:** traditional covering for the hair and neck that is worn by Muslim women

**Muslim:** connected to the religion of Islam

**modesty:** way of behaving and dressing that does not draw attention

**prejudice:** unfair feeling of dislike for a person because of the group they belong to

**specific:** limited to a certain time or place



# Why I Wear a Head Scarf

Soha, 16, is one of 3.4 million Muslim people in the United States. She chooses to wear a head scarf to honor her religion. Here's what that means.

BY SOHA MANZOOR, AS TOLD TO JESSICA PRESS

**I**n many ways, I'm a typical American teenager. I play tennis for my school team. I love reading Harry Potter books and seeing Marvel movies. I wear makeup, watch Netflix, listen to music, and study—just like other girls my age.

But unlike most girls, I do it all in a **hijab**. That's another name for the head scarf I choose to wear every day. My hijab is always with

me. I wear it to school and on weekends. I wear it to Starbucks and to tennis practice. The only time I don't wear it is at home.

People frequently ask me why I wear a head scarf all year—especially considering that I live in sunny California.

The simple answer is that my hijab is just a part of who I am. The more complex answer has to do with my religion.





## Deep Connection

My family practices Islam, which is one of the world's largest religions. Another way of saying that is that we're **Muslim**. Like all religions, Islam has many beautiful traditions. These traditions are special and meaningful to me.

I love going to the mosque, which is the Muslim place of worship. I like the spicy foods we eat when we're together, like dumplings and chicken dishes. And I enjoy learning about my religion at my religious classes twice a week.

In class, we study the Koran (kuh-RAN)—the holy book for Muslims—the same way

Christian people study the Bible and Jewish people study the Torah.

My religion has taught me many valuable lessons—ones that really aren't that different from most other religions. For example, Muslims believe that all people are equal and that we should help each other however we can.

## A Proud Decision

I decided to start wearing a hijab in sixth grade. In Islam, the hijab is a way to show **modesty**. It's not mandatory—wearing a hijab is a choice any woman can make for herself. For me, it was a way to show the world that I'm Muslim and proud.

I still remember the night before I wore a hijab to school for the first time. I felt really nervous. I messaged my friends ahead of time because I didn't want them to be surprised.

Luckily, the next day at school wasn't especially difficult. People asked me why I was wearing the hijab, but I'm really glad they did—not asking questions is what leads to **prejudice**.

Many people think that

### HANGING OUT

1. Soha poses with friends on a camping trip.
2. Soha and her best friend take a break from tennis.

Islam promotes violence and that Muslims don't treat women equally. That's not true at all! I'm grateful that wearing a hijab has given me so many opportunities to educate people about my religion.

## Part of Me

I've been wearing the hijab for five years now. Putting it on each morning is a totally normal thing, like doing my hair. When I get home, I remove it. It's simply a part of who I am.

Praying is also a part of who I am. Muslims do five daily prayers at very **specific** times, which sometimes means I have to stop my tennis match to pray. I've also prayed in restaurants and on the sidewalk outside of school.

Once, my friends and I were at an arcade when I stopped to pray. A woman started making weird faces at me, but my friends defended my right to practice my religion.

None of my closest friends are Muslim, but they support me and my religion. They even sample the spicy foods! I'm fortunate to have these friends in my life.

Making friends with people who appear different is incredibly important, and so is respecting and supporting them: It makes all of us stronger. •



Action Activity

**You've just read** "Why I Wear a Head Scarf." Now it's time to do this activity.



**FAMILY FIRST** Soha lives in California with her two sisters, her dad, and her mom (not pictured).

**WHAT TO DO:** A **cause** is what makes an event happen. An **effect** is what happens as a result. In the chart below, fill in the missing causes and effects.

<p><b>CAUSE</b> Why did something happen?</p>	<p><b>EFFECT</b> What happened?</p>
<p>1. Soha wanted to show the world that she was Muslim and proud.</p>	<p><b>Hint:</b> What did Soha decide to do in sixth grade?</p>
<p>2.</p> <p><b>Hint:</b> How did Soha feel about wearing a hijab to school for the first time?</p>	<p>Soha messaged her friends ahead of time to let them know.</p>
<p>3. Each day, Soha prays at five very specific times.</p>	<p><b>Hint:</b> In what places has Soha had to stop and pray?</p>
<p>4.</p> <p><b>Hint:</b> What happened to Soha at the arcade?</p>	<p>Soha's friends told the woman to leave her alone.</p>

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