

Amirah, Ex-Christian, USA

Description: How the daughter of Baptize Minister embraced Islam.

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I was born in Arkansas, USA to Christian parents, who were also born in Arkansas. In fact as far back as I can trace all of my family has come from the Southern states here in the United States. I was raised here all my life on a farm, where you get up in the morning, milk cows, feed the chickens and do the rest of the chores. My father was a Baptist minister, which is just a sect of Christianity, such as Catholics, Methodist, etc.

These are all "Christian" religions, but with different doctrines. It could be best explained to a Muslim as the differences between the Sunni and the Shiite. I am Sunni by the way. The town that I lived in was completely white raced and all Christians. In fact this was the scenario in a 300 mile radius of me. So I had never been exposed to any other cultures or religions. But I had always been taught that we were all created equal in the eyes of God, and that there was no difference in race, color, culture or religious practices. Later I discovered that this was easy for them to preach and teach as long as they stayed closed minded and these other people did not invade their world.

The first time I saw a Muslim was while I was in college at the University of Arkansas. I will admit at first I stared at the women in their "different clothing" and the men with the towels wrapped around their heads and wearing "night gowns". Nonetheless, when I felt comfortable enough to ask about Islam, it started a 'chain reaction', a non-ending quest to seek knowledge that will not be quenched. *Alhamdulillah* (all praise is due to Allah)!

I met a woman from Palestine, who I will never forget. She would talk to me about her country and culture. I was especially fascinated by what she would tell me about Islam. It was amazing; I had never seen a person with such a sense of inner peace! Even though I had never voiced this to anyone, I had always questioned in my mind the concept of what Christians called the "Trinity" and why we had to pray to Jesus, may God praise him, and not to God directly, and why so much emphasis was put on "Christ" and not God.

My friend did everything she could do to convince me that Islam was the only religion that would take me to heaven, and that it was not just another religion; it was a way of life. My friend graduated six months later and returned to Palestine. She was killed two weeks later outside of her home. I was devastated; it was like a part of me had died with her. We knew that when she returned home our chances of ever seeing each other again in this life was very unlikely, but she told me that what was most important to her was that she wanted to see me in the Hereafter in "Paradise".

During this time I had met and made friends with a lot of people from the Middle

East. They also helped me deal with the loss of my friend. This was also when I came to love the Arabic language. It was beautiful.

I would listen to tapes of the Qur'an for hours, even though I didn't have any idea what was being said. Even today, I love to have someone read to me from the Qur'an, and I still can't understand what is being said, but it still touches my heart and soul. I didn't have time to really learn any Arabic in college, I was lucky to remember my homework assignment. But I am trying very hard now to learn how to speak and read it, *Insha'Allah* (by the will of Allah). And for those who have ever listened to me speak Arabic or type in "Arabic English", they can tell you I have along way to go. And I thank them for their patience and tutoring.

After I left college and returned to my community, I didn't have the honor to be around Muslims any longer. But the thirst for acquiring knowledge had never left nor had my love and desire for the Arabic language. Which I might add infuriated my parents and other friends. This confused me, because I had always been taught that we were all equal in God's eyes. I guess there were a few exceptions to this concept for my friends and family.

Then in the spring of 1995, God brought someone into my life. This person was such a wonderful example of what a Muslim should be and what Islam was about that once again, I began to ask questions. I was even taken to my first mosque. That will be a memory that shall forever be etched into my memory.

For 8 months I studied everything he could possibly find me and read and listened to tapes continuously. Then on February 15th, 1996, I officially embraced Islam. ALHAMDULILLAH!!!!!!! [All praises and thanks are due to God].

Our engagement was broken because his parents were against the idea of him marrying an American. Even though we are no longer engaged, I respect and admire him greatly. And I would never give up my Islam.

Since February 15th my life has taken many turns. When I became engaged to an "Arabian" or "foreigner", my family was in shock, they rarely spoke to me. I also lost most of my American friends. But when I embraced Islam, my family first tried to have me committed to a mental hospital, when that didn't work, they completely disowned me. They called me up every so often to express their desires that I rot in Hell. I also received calls from my so-called friends who would state the same. Yes this hurt, even though my family and I had many differences, I still loved them deeply.

Alhamdulillah wa "Subhanaallah" my Eeman (faith in Islam) was strong.

The last time I spoke to my family was two days after the bombing in Saudi Arabia. My uncle and cousin were killed in the bombing...my family called again to tell me of the news and to "assure" me that my family members that were killed in the bombing loved me. BUT their blood was on my head and all my terrorist friends. I cried for days, but once again, my Eeman stood strong and I continued.

The next turn in my life was when I returned home one afternoon four days after the

bombing to find that someone had shot at windows of my home, and spray painted "TERRORIST LOVER" down the side of one of my vehicles. The police were no help to me at all. That same night while chatting in the "Muslim Chat" I heard gunshots outside. They had returned, and finished almost all the remaining windows that were left in my home, and killed my pets that were outside.

Upon the arrival of the police I was told that unless I could give positive identifications of these people and the vehicles they were driving, it would otherwise be almost impossible for them to be found. I begged them to check my vehicles for any damage; I wanted to go to a motel so I would feel safer. I was told absolutely not, they were concerned that my "TERRORIST" friends could have planted a bomb in one of them as a trap for the police. I crumbled to the ground on my knees crying out for God's mercy and guidance.

Allah's answered me very faithfully. I was attacked one night in a parking lot by an unknown man that proceeded to beat me, stab me, break my wrist and fracture some ribs. This person has been caught, and is awaiting trial, but at this time he is only doing public service work for this town. Last week when I went to pick up my clothing at the dry cleaners I was informed they had been lost; the lost articles included all my hijabs, jilbabs, abayahs and khimars. How convenient for them to have lost these items!

The town I live in is very small and there are no other Muslims or Arabs even close. The closest mosque is 120 miles away. Even though I am alone as to the fact that I do not have any other Muslims to visit with and learn from, Alhamdulillah, God is always there!!

What little knowledge I have about Islam has been gained through reading everything I can find on the internet, and through my true friends and family on the Internet. I will never give up...but I would like to thank a very special Palestinian brother for his love, support, friendship and prayers during these past few weeks. You know who you are. God bless you richly. To my other Muslim brothers and sisters on the Internet, I love you and I thank you.

I am not writing this story in hopes of gaining pity. I do ask that everyone continue to pray for me, or anyone that is reading this to be assured that God will never let you down.

I love you all.

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