



Video Story Transcript

JUST NOT MUSLIM ENOUGH

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Link to YouTube Video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SglUY-vjm_I

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

For many years, I was the only Muslim boy in my class. That meant I was the only boy who was studying the holy book, the Koran, after school and fasting every day for the month of Ramadan and learning how to pray five times a day as Muslim kids do. So, naturally, I felt a little different from my classmates who are Jewish and Christian but sometimes I realize, on occasion, I would feel different from other Muslims. Now, when I sat in Sunday school, I learned that there are over 40 countries around the world with a Muslim majority and then all these Muslims were very, very different from each other. The Muslim world was very diverse. There are African Muslims and Arab Muslims and East Asian Muslims and European Muslims, even Muslims Latin America and Muslims from South Asia like the country of Bangladesh where my family was from.

But I didn't realize all this diversity when I was a young boy. I just thought that all Muslims were like me, short, skinny and brown. So, on Eid... Eid is a very major holiday for Muslims, and there are two Eids and they were very important, high holidays like Christmas and Easter for Christians or Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur for Jews. So, on Eid, my father and I would drive in his big Oldsmobile from Northbrook, the suburb of Chicago where I was growing up, all the way to downtown Chicago to McCormick Place, a very large convention center. And we were going there to congregate with other Muslims from around the Chicagoland area to pray together.

But one year, we learned that there was actually a mosque in Northbrook, just two miles away from my house. We no longer had to drive 20 miles to downtown Chicago to pray. And the reason why we didn't realize that there was a mosque there was because it looked a lot like a municipal building, like a library or the city hall. But when they built the dome and the minaret, that tower where the call to prayer is given, it started

to look like a mosque. So, one day when I was in fifth grade, that Friday for our prayer, my father and I went to go pray with the other Muslims. When I entered the building, I looked inside and I saw that everybody in the building was Caucasian. There were white. I said to my father, "I think we're in the wrong building."

He said, "Why do you think that?"

"Because everybody here is white."

My father said, "Don't be silly! There are Muslims like us. They just happen to be Caucasian because they came from Bosnia, from the former Yugoslavia. They were fleeing Communism and they came to America to study and practice Islam so they could have freedom of worship like the Pilgrims had."

And I... that was very surprising to me. And I sat down with my father on the floor on our prayer rug and I listened to the sermon. And for a long time, I didn't understand what was going on because the sermon was in Bosnian and I don't speak any Bosnian. But later, when the sermon went to English and then to Arabic, I could follow along.

And that opened up my mind to how diverse the Muslim world was. But you know, even in my own family, there's different ways of being Muslim and sometimes I feel a little out of place. Like, for example, I grew up in Chicago as a Muslim in the 70s and 80s. But my cousins from Bangladesh came to America in the 90s and they grew up going to Muslim parochial day school. Now, most of what I learned about my religion as a kid, I learned from books and my mother. But my cousin Nadia goes to a Muslim parochial day school and learned how to read the Koran and study Arabic and Islamic history along with gym and geography. So, you can say that she's more formally practicing than I am. I think sometimes my behavior shocks her.

For example, at a family function once, she was sitting in the kitchen eating a halal shish kebab. Now, Nadia's family follows strict Islamic dietary guidelines, which means she only eats halal meat. That's meat that's been slaughtered by a Muslim butcher in a prescribed manner. Now, I grew up eating fast food. So, at that function while she ate her shish kebab, I was eating a Whopper Jr. with cheese. And as I placed that Whopper Jr. with cheese into my mouth, I saw my cousin Nadia's eyes grow wide, as big as saucers. And she looked at me and then the burger and then at me and then the burger and I wondered what she was picturing in her mind. Was she picturing me roasting in hell like her halal shish kebab? To my cousin Nadia, I just wasn't Muslim enough.