

MAKING HISTORY

BY: JOY THOMPSON

Walking into LHS, majority of what you see is camouflage and boots, although; when the halls clear there is someone there you may not see at first glance. Standing 4'11, there is Sarah Aydah in her hijab and dress with her big smile brightening up the halls.

Without knowing her backstory you would think that Sarah had been here all of her life, which is not the case. Despite her past at LHS, Sarah has not let it faze her in spirit or in getting her education. But first, get to know her story.

Growing up in a place where you are the minority is not easy. For a while Sarah did not have anyone her age or in the same environment as her to relate to until her sister began high school.

The Aydahs moved to the U.S. when Sarah was about 3 years old, therefore; all she knew was America and was not very informed about her culture until the 6th grade. During that time her family returned to Yemen for a year, and she realized some things about herself. She attended school while there and realized that her Arabic was not as good as the kids who regularly lived in Yemen, and she also had different viewpoints about the Middle East. Immersing herself into her culture allowed her to be comfortable and proud of who she is,

“When I went back to Yemen it changed my life completely. I learned who I was and what a Muslim actually is, and I felt at home and loved and safe there.”

Many people in the world categorize Muslims in a biased perspective, although Sarah never fell victim to it until she began school here at Lafayette. On her first day, in fact, she had her first “racist” comments said to her.

“Three guys asked me ‘hey have you ever been to a ‘bomb’ fire?’ and I looked at them with tears in my eyes and said nothing. I turned away to wipe my tears away before anyone noticed. I went home and when my parents asked how my day was I told them it was great but went upstairs and cried and prayed we would move back to Water Valley,” said Aydah

In light of this event Sarah slowly learned to adjust to life at Lafayette. With the help of her friends, Georgia Lund and Roxana Leyva, Sarah realized that if she allowed people’s opinions of her affect her, she would not be able to grow and that is exactly what she has done.

“I’ve always just ignored what people say to me or think about me, it has no effect on me because at the end of the day only God can judge me and if being a Muslim is what makes me happy that’s all that matters,” said Sarah.

Sarah’s friends were some of the few people to look at her and not only see her hijab but to see the person she



is under it.

“When we first met in 9th grade her hijab made her stand out a lot. It itself made it easy to pinpoint her in a crowd,” said Georgia, one of her first friends after relocating.

In situations where there is someone new that is not easily adjusting or being accepted into a new environment, it is rare for people to be willing to step out of their comfort zone and get to know that person, yet Georgia and Roxanna did just that.

“I feel like some people overreact and only see the hijab without getting to know the person underneath it. With this in mind I started to talk too and get to know her better. I’m so glad I did that, because after that it didn’t matter what she was wearing,” said Georgia.

Taking this in mind Georgia took the initiative in making a friendship that has lasted throughout highschool.

Throughout the years Sarah has cleared a path for her siblings to follow. Since Sarah has been here the students of this school have learned how to react when they see someone with a hijab. Jaziah is in the 10th grade this year and has noticed the trail her sister has made.

“For sure it’s been easier, I don’t have to get looked at and questioned why I wear it. Also because I’m not the first I don’t feel like all eyes are on me anymore because of her. She’s been through it and I think that made it a lot easier for me and the future hijabis.” Jaziah is hoping to follow in her sister’s footsteps.

Since arriving at Lafayette, Sarah has grown and become a valued

student at Lafayette. Dr. Kitchens arrived at Lafayette at the same time as Sarah, also coming from Water Valley.

“This is a very special time for Sarah and her family. For me, it is a reminder of how small the world really is and what a pleasure it is to get to enjoy the experiences that come with a diverse school and community.”

Sarah’s journey is one to be remembered, she has overcome adversities as well as made a mark on this school. It is important that we know the monumental event happening this year, although; it is more important that Sarah does as well.

“It means I’m beginning a new start. A role model or example to all the other hijabis who are scared to go to public school. Kinda like a small voice or a bunch of confidence to prove that we can graduate and we too deserve great things.”

That is exactly what Sarah is, she is that small voice and that bunch of confidence that will encourage girls all over the world. When Sarah discovered that she would be the first hijabi to graduate last year she was so excited that she went home and told her parents and her father reminded her, “Just know you wear the hijab because it’s a part of you and your religion not so you can be the first hijabi.”

So, May 22nd when the name “Sarah Ibrahim Aydah” is called not only should her mother, father and five siblings be cheering for her but we all should.



How would you describe the women in your culture?

“ Women in my culture, and in many other Middle Eastern countries, are probably the most generous and caring people you will ever meet. They have a way of never letting anyone down and always keeping their guests and family members a top priority.

Not only are they the most valuable person in the household, but they truly complete our families. They are like the glue that bonds us all in the house. Even though they are mostly yelling at us (particularly to do non-ending chores), the love they have for everyone is truly unique.

Women in my culture are fun, filled with spirit, and most of all style. Fashion is such a big deal to us because it's how we all connect. From glitter to gold, to diamonds to studs, nothing can beat our taste or sense of style when it comes to fashion.

Nonetheless, the media might project us as oppressed but take it from me, they are far from that, they are awesome and absolutley perfect just the way they are.”

MAKING HISTORY 17