

meant for mass consumption or critique. I still wasn't convinced and replied, "Yeah, but women are like second class citizens in your faith?" The very patient Muslim lady explained that, during a time when the Western world treated women like property, Islam taught that men and women were equal in the eyes of God. Islam made the woman's consent to marriage mandatory and gave women the opportunity to inherit, own property, run businesses and participate in government. She listed right after right that women in Islam held nearly 1,250 years before women's lib was ever thought of in the West. Surprisingly, Islam turned out to be the religion that appealed to my feminist ideals. Getting married

It might shock you to know that I had an arranged marriage. That doesn't mean I was forced to marry my father's first choice suitor, like Jasmine from "Aladdin." Dad didn't even have a say. When I converted, it wasn't a good time to be a Muslim. Feeling isolated, alienated and rejected by my own society pushed me to want to start a family of my own. Even before converting, I had always wanted a serious relationship but found few men looking for the same. As a new Muslim, I knew there was a better way to look for love and a lifelong partnership. I decided that if I wanted a serious relationship, it was time to get serious about finding one. I wanted an arranged marriage. I made a list of "30 Rock"-style deal breakers. I searched. I interviewed. I interrogated friends and families of prospects. I decided I wanted to marry another convert, someone who had been where I was and wanted to go where I wanted to go. Thanks to parents of friends, I found my now-husband, a convert to Islam, in Mobile, Alabama, two hours from my New Orleans home. Twelve years later, we are living happily ever after. Not every Muslim finds a mate in this manner, and I didn't always see this for my life. But I am glad Islam afforded me this option. Living in a post-9/11 world I never had to give up my personality, American identity or culture to be a Muslim. I have, at times, had to give up on being treated with dignity. I have been spat on, had eggs thrown at me and been cursed at from passing cars. And I have felt terror when the mosque I attended in Savannah, Georgia, was first shot at, then burned down. In August 2012, I moved back home to New Orleans, where being different is the norm. I finally felt safe -- for a while. But now, with the continuous news coverage of the un-Islamic group known as ISIS, I have been subjected to much of the same treatment I received in other cities. And I now feel less safe than I ever have. It enrages me to know there are some who call themselves Muslims and who distort and misappropriate Islam for political gains. It weighs on me knowing that millions of my countrymen see only these images as a representative of my religion. It is unbearable to know that I am passionately hated for my beliefs, when those hating me don't even know what my beliefs are. In my journey to Islam, I came to learn that Muslims come in all shapes, sizes, attitudes, ethnicities, cultures and nationalities. I came to know that Islam teaches disagreement and that shouldn't lead to disrespect, as most Muslims want peace. Most of all, I have faith that my fellow Americans can rise above fear and hatred and come to learn the same. Have a question for Corbin? We'll open comments at 1 p.m. ET, and she'll be here to answer your questions. The opinions expressed in this story are solely those of Theresa Corbin. Loading weather data ...