

# Leap of Faith

By Ashton Johnson  
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Junior Yusriza Aisya

Junior Yusriza Aisya reflects on her personal experience with Muslim prejudice during her time in the US.

Living in a foreign country can be very scary, especially without your friends and family. Junior Yusriza Aisya is a foreign exchange student from Indonesia. Aisya admits that although she is proud to be a Muslim, it has proven to be especially difficult during her time in the US.

"Everyday life is not very helpful because we have to pray at certain times. Pork is not allowed, we have to eat certain Halal foodsm," Aisya said.

The busy American lifestyle, and fast changing seasons make praying five times a day very challenging for Aisya. There is a larger issue faced by the Muslim community however; Aisya describes this issue as "Muslim fear."

"Some people think Muslim culture teaches terrorism but it does not. It is like any other religion. There are a lot of similarities. It is about trust in a higher being. I know that here at school I can easily be a Muslim, but on the street they talk to me like I would never understand what they are talking about. People see me as different," Aisya said.

There are a lot of preconceived ideas about the Muslim community that Aisya says are false stereotypes. Back in her home country of Indonesia, there are many different types of religions, all of which are respected by the others. This causes little to no conflict. Aisya said it makes her sad that this may be the last time she and other Muslims like her will be able to visit the U.S.

"It makes sad to be here and see the change in power in your country. We [Muslims] will be with you and we believe in respecting you. We hope you do the same," Aisya said.

When asked if she had any advice for Muslims in the U.S. facing any prejudice due to their religion, Aisya simply responded,

"Be confident, and breathe. Sometimes I feel really uncomfortable and really down. If people drag you down, be sure to pull yourself up."

## CATCHING UP WITH ANTONIA

BY Jackie Carmenate  
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Last fall we had several exchange students attended our school. They all finished the school year strongly and packed up to go back home. So were catching up with how life has been since the exchange program. Antonia Nettlesheim (junior last year) willingly answered some questions for us. here they are.

**Q:How has Hoover affected you since you left?**

*A: well I learned a lot of things at Hoover and made good friends. It had a huge impact on my English skills and it taught me a lot of things about my home school and different schools and different cultures. I'm really grateful that Hoover students and teachers were so welcoming and gave me the chance to have such a good experience in the U.S.*

**Q: What have you decided to do now that you're back home?**

*A: Now that I am back in Germany I decided to get Abitur (which is a high kind of graduation, you can apply to college with.) So I am currently in 11th grade again since the grades and credits I earned in the US don't count in Germany. I will attend two more years (11th and 12th grade) and I am hoping I'll get my graduation, since it is way different in Germany and kind of hard to get.*

**Q: What school are you attending now if any?**

*A: I am attempting a high level high school (called a gymnasium in Germany) named Leibniz Oberschule, which is the same school I attend before my year abroad. I go there since 7th grade. I had to apply to it and get accepted since the school system in Germany doesn't work like the one in the US and there are different levels of high schools you only can get into with certain grades.*

**Q:How has life been since you've left America?**

*A: Although I miss many people and things from the US, I am also really happy to be back home and to go to my school again. I was really surprised but not many things had changed in a year so it was easy to just continue the life I had left when I went to the US. I can tell the year taught me a lot though that it really made me grow and become much more independent and mature.*

**Q:What are some future plans you have in mind?**

*A: After my graduation I am planning to go to college. Also I want to study abroad one semester or maybe a year of college. I am thinking about going to France to improve my French or to study in England or New Zealand just because I think their cultures are very interesting.*

**Q:Do you have any advice for other exchange students?**

*A: My advice for other exchange students would probably be the basic stuff...like being open minded and outgoing it really helps a lot! Get involved in as many school activities, but also in activities and clubs outside from school. It helps to meet people and always teaches you a lot.*