

STREET HARASSMENT

Santa Teresa de Jesús.



Age: 21

Age of first catcall: 10

or 11

Major:

History/Journalism

Length of commute:

40 – 45 min

Shahnoza Holboeva has a round face with straight eyebrows. She loves to wear dark colors and has a black hijab wrapped around her face. She said being covered hasn't stopped the street harassment, but it has changed the kinds of catcalls she gets.

Holboeva started to wear a cover two years ago to be closer to God. She started off by wearing niqab, a covering that only reveals the eyes, but her parents encouraged her to make the change to hijab, fearful of violence toward their daughter.

Holboeva said she did get racist comments, but didn't want to make the change. Eventually, she did, in order to make her parents feel more secure.

Holboeva said before that she had 'typical' catcalling experiences. "People would be like, 'Hey mama' or 'Hey you should smile.' But once I started wearing the scarf it started to quiet down for a while, but there still are men who have no limits," Holboeva said, her words just a whisper.

Holboeva said that when she walks, men will ask her what's underneath her scarf, which to Holboeva is infuriating. Hijab isn't used to cover, but is religious and spiritual. When men sexualize it, it not only makes her self-conscious, but angry.

"I was very angry, but I didn't say anything because, you know, there was a lot of them so I passed by very quickly. It was very uncomfortable for me," said Holboeva. "I am really tiny so I try not to get in trouble. So whenever that happens, I kind of just start walking really fast and I even avoid eye contact. So it doesn't go any further." When she is catcalled, she becomes more aware of how she is walking and tries to minimize the amount her body sways. She looks down and she keeps walking.

"You feel weak in that moment because this whole catcalling thing is because men want to show this power over you and they show that. Even though it's not true that they are superior to us in that moment you feel lower or weaker. So that moment is so scary."

Source: <https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/2017/02/seven-stories-street-harassment/>

Catcall: a loud shout or whistle (= high sound)

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Read and answer the following questions:

a. What does she look like?

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b. When did she start wearing a cover?

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c. Did she want to make the change? (from niqab to hijab- see pictures below)

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d. Did street harassment stop when she started wearing a hijab?

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e. How did she feel when men sexualized her hijab?

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