

Alaya's Story

Alaya is a Muslim and identifies as a gay cisgender woman.

I'm a 28 year old with a Bangladeshi background. I grew up in a strict Muslim household in Bradford. We'd pray most of our salah together as a family, including the dreaded (now, beloved) Fajr prayer. Looking back, I now appreciate the commitment that Mum and Dad had to Islam and it has become something that I try to learn from and replicate in my life.



“My environment was quite a homophobic one, which Alhamdulillah, by some miracle, wasn't damaging long-term because I didn't give my sexuality the time of day growing up. I finally addressed it when I became friends with a group of people that I felt safe to divulge this part of me to.”

I couldn't reconcile being gay with being a Muslim – I banished myself from the ummah for longer than I'm proud to admit, but Alhamdulillah, came hurtling back as soon as I had some breathing space and time to reflect. The verse that is most often [mis]quoted needed re-examining and with the help of another organisation I was able to do that and find peace and acceptance within myself.

I view my sexuality as more of a private thing. Those that are most important to me – friends, family, close colleagues – all know that I am a gay Muslim.

“I worried for months/years before I told any of my Muslim friends that I was gay. I felt a little silly when they responded with varying degrees of “yeah, we knew, we were wondering when you were going to tell us”. Alhamdulillah, super blessed!”

It wasn't a choice to come out to my family, but they “found” out anyway. There was a confrontation but because the love between us all is so strong, we're still able to play significant parts in one another's lives. Seriously, Alhamdulillah!

The difficulties have mainly been around the reconciliation of my faith and sexuality. I found myself on a path quite different to the one I'd been travelling and to the one I'm on now. I questioned my place in the world, I lost sight of my values and hurt people that I cared about. However!! As I mentioned above, after a lot of reading, reflecting and healthy debate, I've found peace within myself and that has been key to the rest of my story.

I surround myself with people that I love, that I know love me. It helps to have a group of LGBTQIA Muslim friends too.

I used to remind myself that although being gay is quite a significant part of me, it doesn't define me. That there's more to me than who I'm attracted to, like my love for [some] people, my loyalty, my s**t hot personality (!)

“Things are changing for LGBTQI+ Muslims, especially with organisations such as Hidayah coming into existence. One of the most important things in life is the connections that we make with people. Organisations like Hidayah have already played an important role in connecting LGBTQIA Muslims through various events, their website and social media outlets. The connections made pave the way for accessing understanding, acceptance, friendship and love. Organisations like Hidayah also provide spaces for LGBTQIA Muslims to feel safe in being themselves. The hope that this brings can't be understated.”

It is okay to have differing opinions on what people think that their faith deems halal or haram. Everyone has a right to an opinion. I hope that my story illustrates that people are able to live side by side and actually still love one another despite the differences.

Peace... “Ya filthy animals” xx