From wearing provocatively to wearing abaya

As a woman in the west you're told that one way to freedom is to dress provocatively and to even be a little promiscuous. It's ok, everyone does it, (you think to yourself) it's normal; it's a way to show you're a strong woman, secure and in charge. Growing up, adults will say such things as "You shouldn't hide what God gave you" or "Let the world see how pretty you are." These kinds of statements are a means to push you towards exposing yourself through decorative tight-fitting clothing. You learn that in fact, it's shameful to hide your body. Our society wants us to find recognition in our appearance, we don't want to be the anomaly, we must fit in, dress and act like everyone else, we want acceptance. Looking back I was very brainwashed by this idea that society ruled and they were who I worshipped,
I sought their approval. Even with my stubborn mentality I still wanted the world to see me like everyone else. Looking at women who covered-up, with abaya, I assumed they must be oppressed. Without exposing yourself through your clothing, how can you know if you'll be accepted? I foolishly thought.

When I began to wear hijab, at first, it was difficult. I was in a very white, Christian town. There was no other Muslim woman or hijabi for miles and miles. I was letting the world know I was Muslim and I soon dealt with a lot of adversity. **Having a stubborn personality fit well as I convinced myself that nobody was going to stop me from doing what I felt right**. **Wearing hijab was what was taking me closer to Allah(Swt) and even though I was going to face terrible name-calling and angry glares from people, I was not going to let it change the path I was on**. As mentioned it was all very ironic because hijab, covering up, became my freedom. **I no longer felt as though men looked at me as an item on a shelf**, women no longer saw me as someone they had to compete with, to consider my choice in designer-wear. I finally felt comfortable.

I believe people now saw me for who I was, no longer basing their opinions of me by my appearance. Although, hijab can be off-puttingonce people get to know me, they look past my hijab. As the years went by and I became strong in my iman [faith], my hijab became a part of me, it was an extension of me. **Allah(Swt) blesses**

us with incredible strength when we wear hijab. People cursed me in the streets but I kept on walking, my hijab became my shield.