I grew up in a family of immigrants who felt it their social responsibility and civic duty to be involved in the community and to help those who did not have the resources to support themselves. In high school, I was inspired by the pioneering efforts of my mother, who helped found the Houston Islamic Social Services Association (Hissa) that helped women in dire circumstances leave their abusive relationships by providing them with resources such as lawyers, living arrangements, and financial support.

Being a minority heightened in significance due to the events of 9/11. After hearing the shocking news that the atrocities of 9/11 were committed by Muslims, my initial reaction was to ascertain how to serve my country and to demonstrate to other Americans that the terrorists of 9/11 were not an accurate reflection of Muslims in America and around the world. Though Muslims in America tried their best to denounce the terrorist acts, there was still severe backlash against the Muslim community and many claims of civil rights abuses. The backlash hit close to home when there was an attempted attack on the mosque my uncle attends on a regular basis in New Orleans.
In the following weeks, a female friend wearing a headscarf was fondled by an airport security guard, another friend’s father was abruptly arrested and bail posted for $1 million, and I myself was publicly harassed when religious and racial slurs were called out at me. I felt outraged at reports of the human rights abuses of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and the cruelty that people felt justified in directing towards Muslims because of their religion. I realized that being a Muslim American woman with a passion for design, coupled with a personal background of serving my community, could prove crucial in creating a link between the much, misunderstood Muslim American community and American society.

Through my work I create an awareness of the Muslim community and explore the misrepresentation of them in American Society after 9/11 by helping to enlighten people more about Islam. I also explore the War on Terror, because I think that the media has abused it to increase more negative stereotypes of Muslims. Many of the hate crimes and injustices that have been conducted against Muslims [or even those who simply fit a stereotypical image of one] have been pushed into the background. The way Muslims have been treated is a result of a fear of the unknown. If people knew more about Muslims then this wouldn’t exist. There is just a severe lack of communication. My work is located in the public realm so that it can directly confront my audience—not always offering them solutions, but enlightening them on different issues. The work that I create should be tools for disrupting expectations or conventional thinking about Muslims in America. My work helps to create dialogue between people so they can view each other’s point of views on different topics. As a designer, I can communicate this information better than most people.