

A SciWomen Origin Story

BURÇIN MUTLU-PAKDIL



**THE
GALAXY
SEEKER!**

*Juanele
2024*

SCI _ ALL

AAAS
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

IF/THEN
Ambassador



HELLO! MY NAME IS **BURÇIN MUTLU-PAKDIL**. MY PRONOUNS ARE SHE/HER, AND I'M KNOWN AS A GALAXY HUNTER --

-- ALTHOUGH I PERSONALLY PREFER THE TERM **GALAXY FINDER** --

-- OR **GALAXY EXPLORER!**

**BURÇIN
MUTLU-
PAKDIL**

Juanele Tamal
Art & story

I GOT INTERESTED IN SCIENCE IN MIDDLE SCHOOL. WE WERE ASSIGNED TO WRITE AN **ESSAY** ABOUT AN **IDEAL PERSON...**

WHILE DOING RESEARCH FOR THE ASSIGNMENT, I BECAME INTERESTED IN **EINSTEIN**, AND THEN IN **PHYSICS!**



WHO'S MY IDEAL PERSON?

WELL, I WANT TO BE THE **CLEVEREST** PERSON IN THE WORLD!



EINSTEIN

IT BECAME ALMOST LIKE AN **OBSESSION!** I KEPT JOURNALS ON SCIENTISTS' LIVES, AND KEPT CLIPPINGS FROM SCIENCE JOURNALS!



MY SISTER NURTURED MY INTEREST IN PHYSICS. SHE'D ALSO GIVE ME **SCIENCE MAGAZINES** FOR KIDS!



I WENT TO BEŞİKTAŞ ATATÜRK ANATOLIAN HIGH SCHOOL, AND THEN I WENT TO COLLEGE IN **ANKARA**.

WE DIDN'T HAVE THAT MANY RESOURCES, AND THERE WERE FEW OPPORTUNITIES TO STUDY **ASTRONOMY** OR **ASTROPHYSICS** IN TURKEY --



-- SO I CAME TO THE U.S. IN 2009 TO STUDY FOR MY MASTER'S DEGREE IN **TEXAS**

I'D LIKE TO WORK FOR **NASA!**



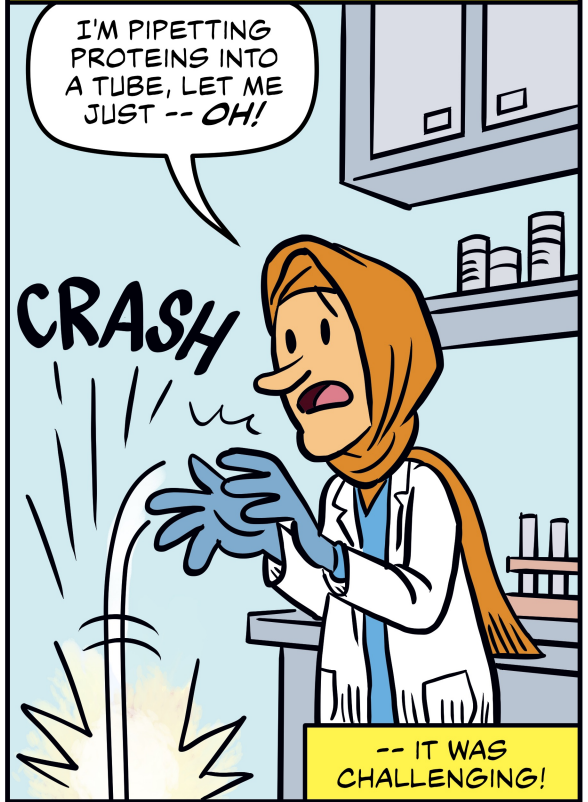
I WENT TO TEXAS TECH BECAUSE **A FRIEND** WAS THERE, BUT I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW **HOW** TO APPLY TO GRAD SCHOOL!



THEY DIDN'T HAVE ASTRONOMY, SO I ENROLLED IN A **BIOPHYSICS** MASTER'S --

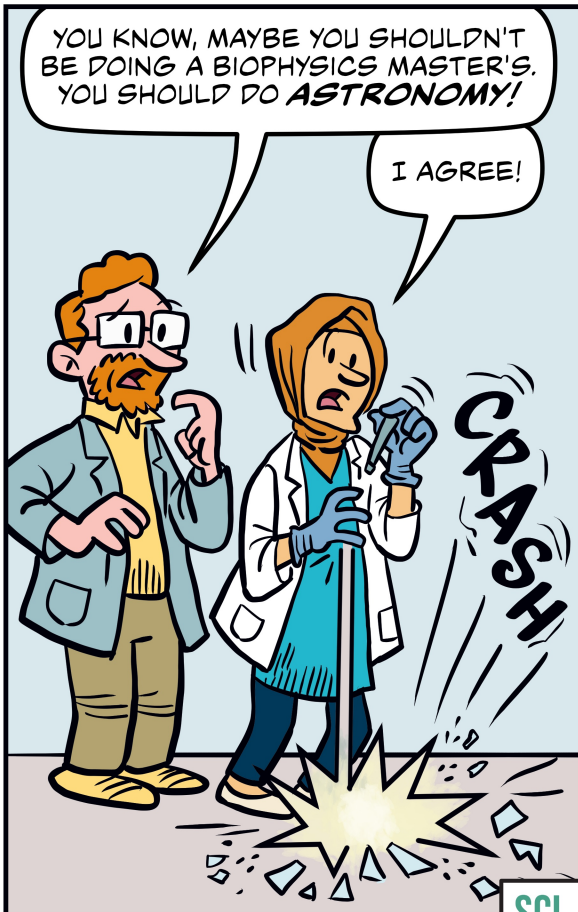
I'M PIPETTING PROTEINS INTO A TUBE, LET ME JUST -- OH!

CRASH



YOU KNOW, MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T BE DOING A BIOPHYSICS MASTER'S. YOU SHOULD DO **ASTRONOMY!**

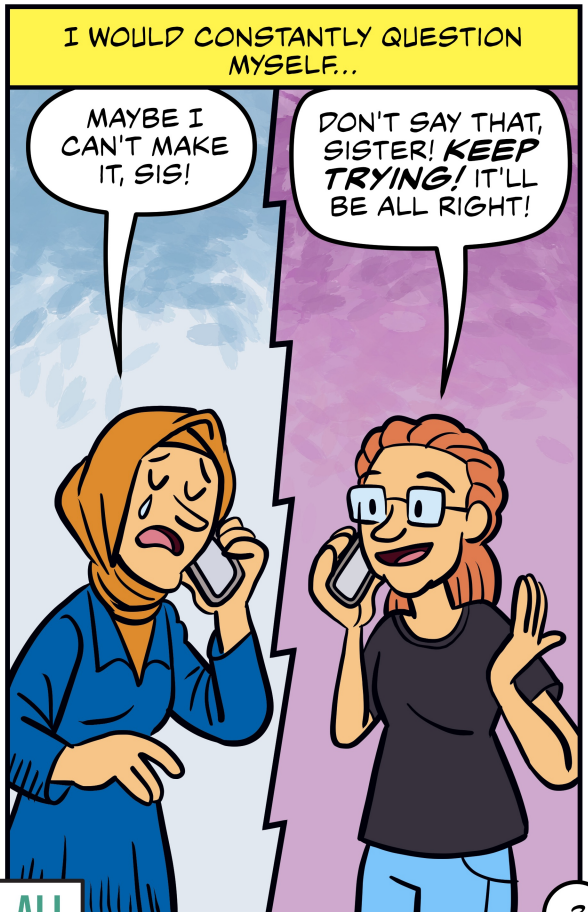
I AGREE!

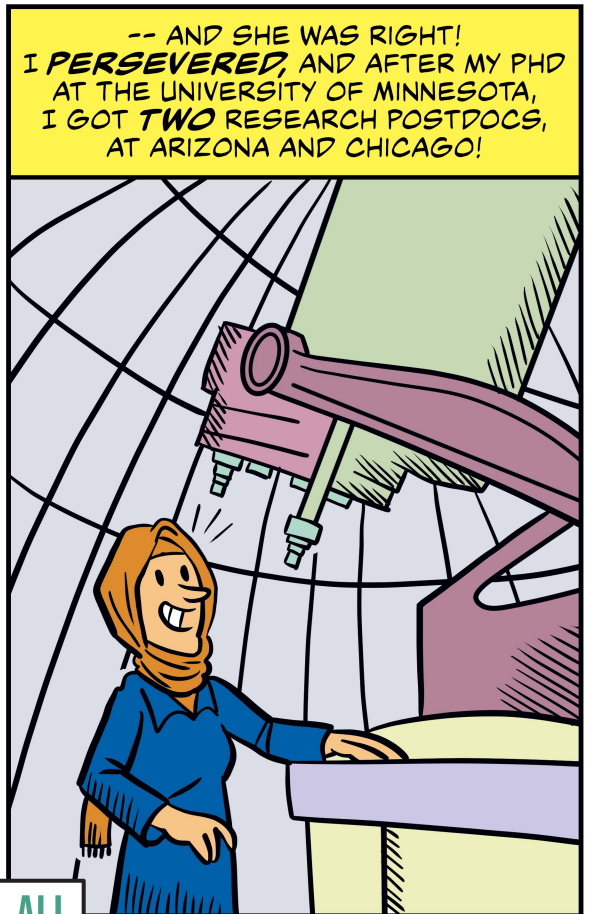
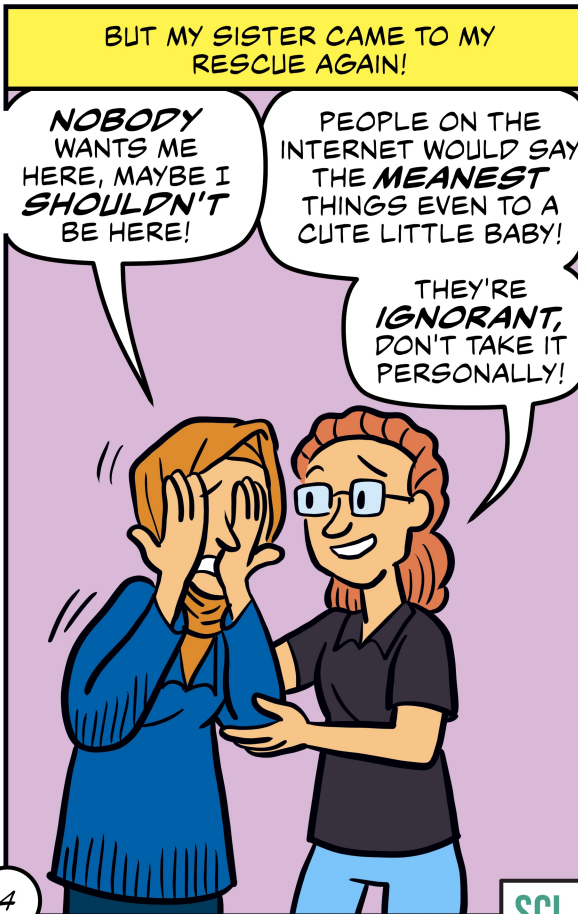
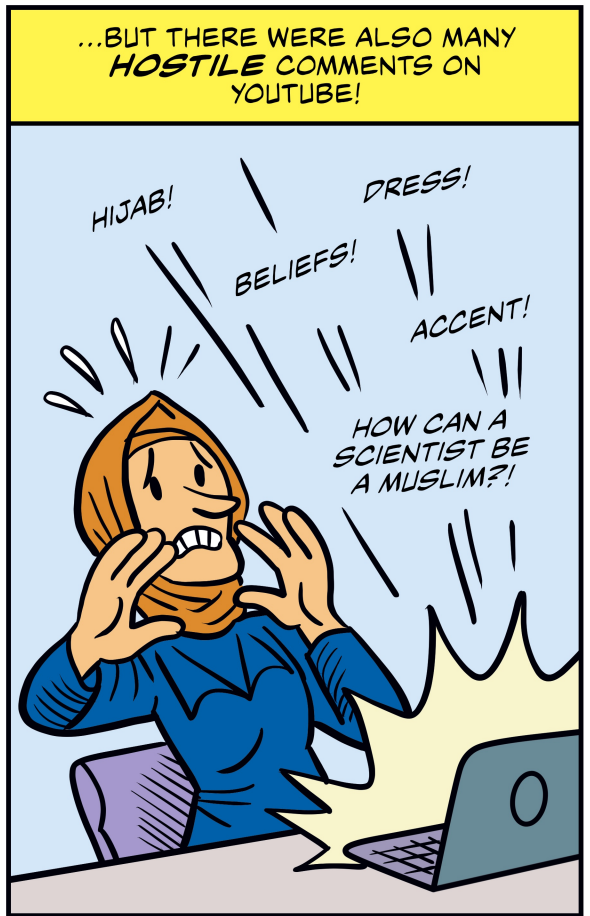
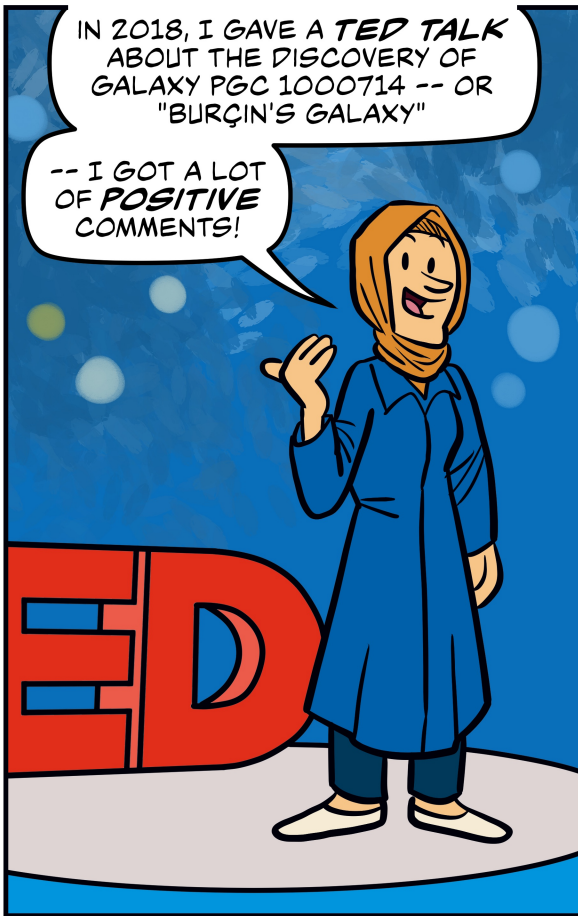


I WOULD CONSTANTLY QUESTION MYSELF...

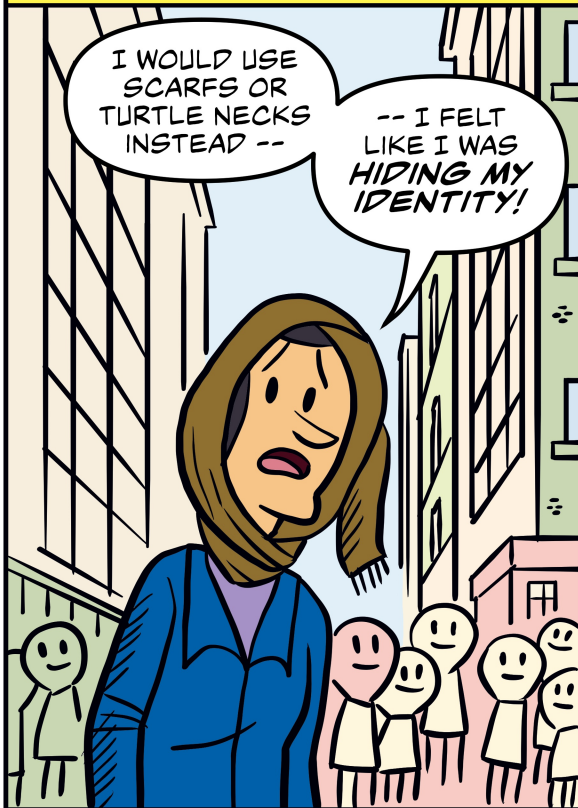
MAYBE I CAN'T MAKE IT, SIS!

DON'T SAY THAT, SISTER! **KEEP TRYING!** IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT!





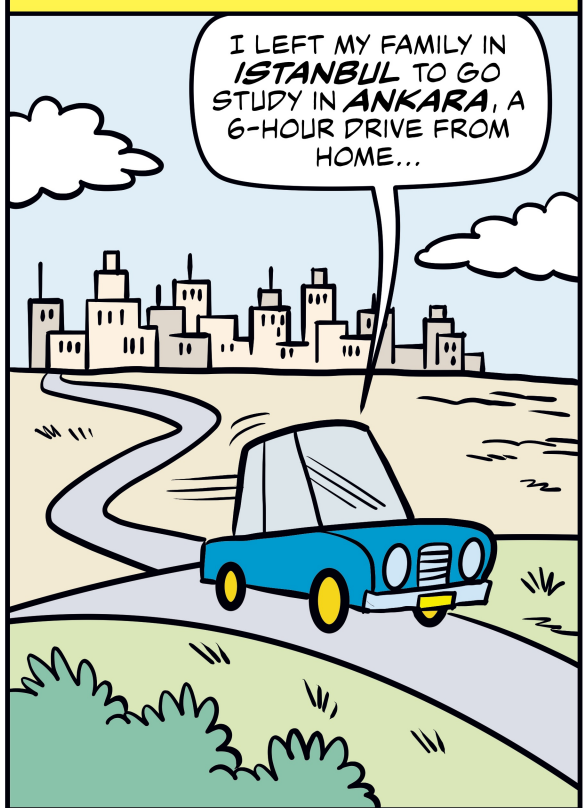
BACK WHEN I WAS STILL STUDYING IN TURKEY, THERE WAS A **HIJAB BAN**. IT WAS A HUGE CHALLENGE TO ME!



I WOULD USE SCARFS OR TURTLE NECKS INSTEAD --

-- I FELT LIKE I WAS HIDING MY IDENTITY!

AS A **FIRST GEN**, MY FAMILY AND I FACED SOME **DIFFICULTIES** WHEN I STARTED COLLEGE...



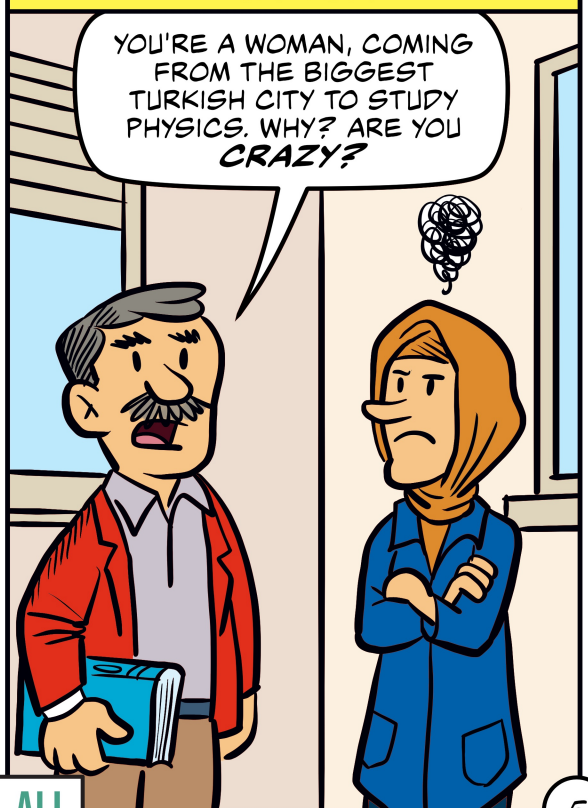
I LEFT MY FAMILY IN **ISTANBUL** TO GO STUDY IN **ANKARA**, A 6-HOUR DRIVE FROM HOME...

NEIGHBORS WOULD **CRITICIZE** MY PARENTS FOR THAT!



HOW COULD YOU LET A GIRL GO TO ANOTHER CITY ALONE? AND TO GET AN EDUCATION? ARE YOU **CRAZY?**

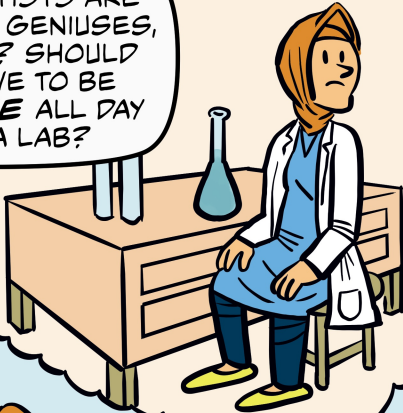
EVEN PROFESSORS WOULD **QUESTION** MY PRESENCE IN CLASS!



YOU'RE A WOMAN, COMING FROM THE BIGGEST TURKISH CITY TO STUDY PHYSICS. WHY? ARE YOU **CRAZY?**

PEOPLE HAVE A LOT OF **STEREOTYPES** ABOUT WHAT IT IS BEING A SCIENTIST. I HAD THEM TOO!

SCIENTISTS ARE LONELY GENIUSES, RIGHT? SHOULD I HAVE TO BE **ALONE** ALL DAY IN A LAB?



BUT I LIKE BEING **SOCIAL!**

BUT THE TRUTH IS, SCIENCE SHOULDN'T BE A PRIVILEGE. IT'S FOR **EVERYONE!**

IT'S A VERY **COLLABORATIVE** JOB. YOU GO TO CONFERENCES, AND MEET **AMAZING** PEOPLE!



SCIENCE AND RELIGION ARE VERY INTERCONNECTED. I WASN'T FORCED TO WEAR A HIJAB LIKE SOME. BUT I WAS FORCED **NOT** TO WEAR IT!

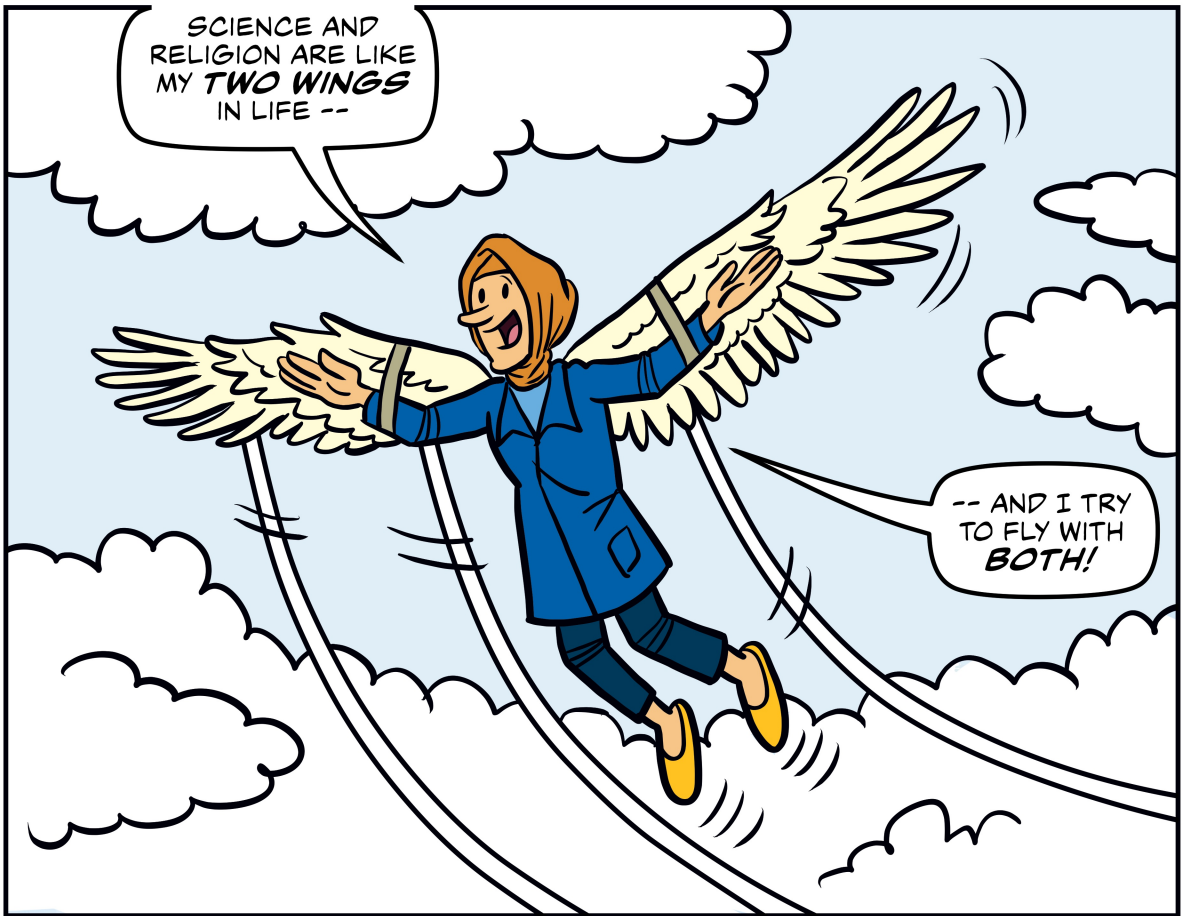


MY RELIGION IS **MY WAY** OF LOOKING AT LIFE AND EXPRESSING MYSELF!

THERE ARE SO MANY RELIGIOUS SCIENTISTS. HAVING **CRITICAL THINKING** DOES NOT MEAN YOU CAN'T HAVE A **FAITH** --

-- AND THE OPPOSITE IS ALSO TRUE: HAVING A FAITH DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN'T **QUESTION** THINGS AND **LEARN** MORE ABOUT THE UNIVERSE!





MY FAMILY HAS BEEN MY **BIGGEST** SUPPORT. MY FATHER COULDN'T ACHIEVE HIS GOALS IN SCHOOL DUE TO A **LACK** OF RESOURCES...

IF I HAD A CHANCE, I'D BECOME PRESIDENT!



...MOM GREW UP IN A SMALL TOWN, THERE WAS **NO** ENCOURAGEMENT OF GIVING EDUCATION TO GIRLS!

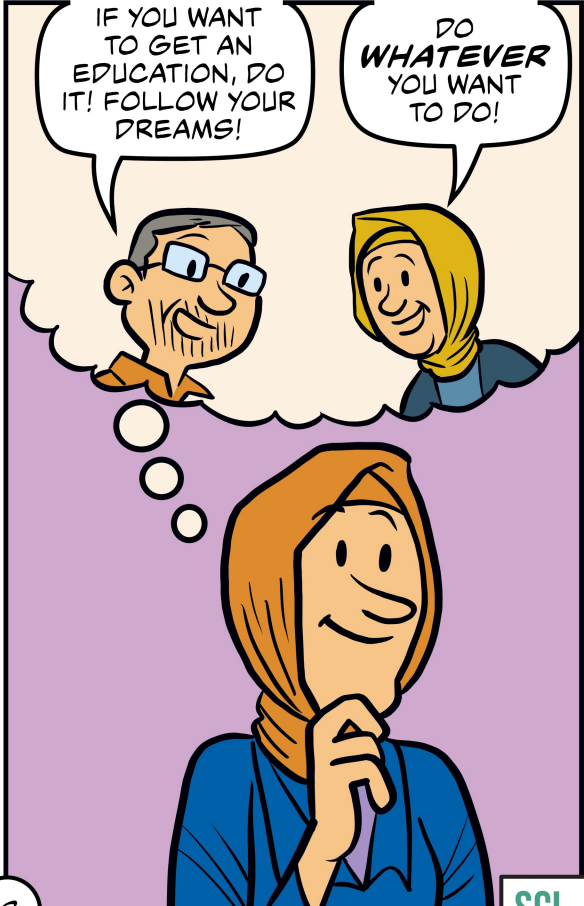
BUT IT WILL BE DIFFERENT FOR YOU!

WE'LL SUPPORT YOU!



IF YOU WANT TO GET AN EDUCATION, DO IT! FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS!

DO **WHATEVER** YOU WANT TO DO!



DURING HARD TIMES IN SCHOOL, MY FAMILY SUPPORTED ME. I'M REALLY **GRATEFUL** FOR THAT!





OUTSIDE OF BEING A SCIENTIST, I'M A MUSLIM, A FEMINIST, AN IMMIGRANT, AND A WOMAN!

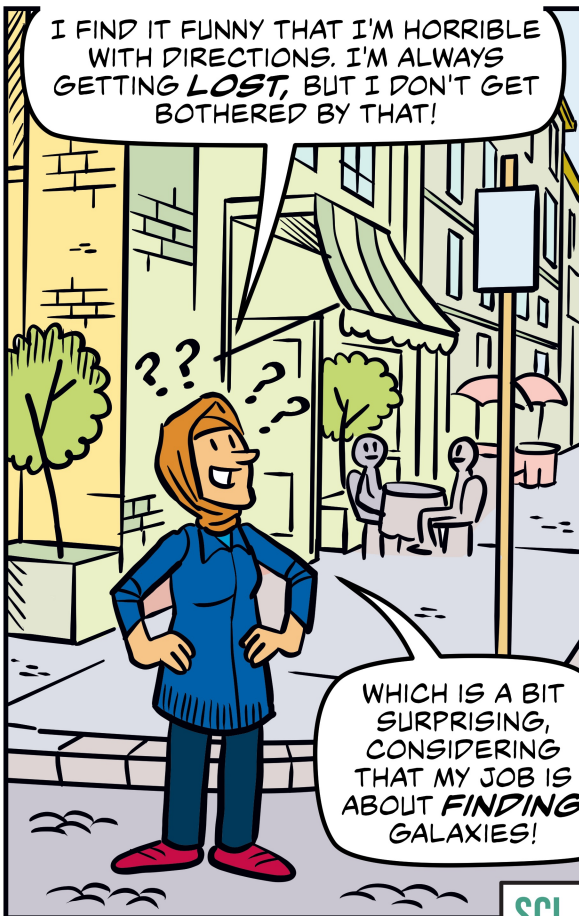
KNOWING THAT **DIVERSITY** IS OUT THERE HELPED ME KNOW THAT I'M ONE OF MANY. I'M **NOT** ALONE!



BUT I DON'T WANT TO JUST BLEND IN. I BELIEVE BEING "NORMAL" IS SIMPLY **BEING YOURSELF!**

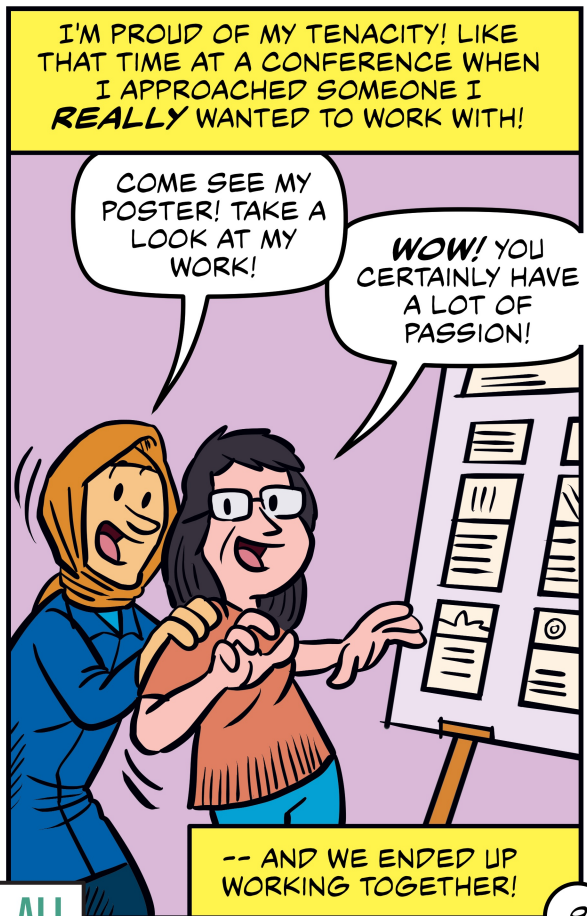
I LOVE DIFFERENT **COLORS** IN MY OFFICE. I WANT TO MAKE IT A **WELCOMING SPACE** --

-- PARTICULARLY FOR MARGINALIZED STUDENTS!



I FIND IT FUNNY THAT I'M HORRIBLE WITH DIRECTIONS. I'M ALWAYS GETTING **LOST**, BUT I DON'T GET BOTHERED BY THAT!

WHICH IS A BIT SURPRISING, CONSIDERING THAT MY JOB IS ABOUT **FINDING GALAXIES!**



I'M PROUD OF MY TENACITY! LIKE THAT TIME AT A CONFERENCE WHEN I APPROACHED SOMEONE I **REALLY** WANTED TO WORK WITH!

COME SEE MY POSTER! TAKE A LOOK AT MY WORK!

WOW! YOU CERTAINLY HAVE A LOT OF PASSION!

-- AND WE ENDED UP WORKING TOGETHER!

IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO FIND **LIKE-MINDED** PEOPLE, AND KNOW THAT YOU'RE NOT ALONE!

IF YOU FEEL OUT OF PLACE IN ACADEMIA, USUALLY THE PROBLEM IS **NOT** YOU, IT'S THE **STRUCTURE** AROUND YOU!



IN COLLEGE, I'D WISH I HAD FRIENDS LIKE THAT. SINCE THEN, I'VE BUILT A **COMMUNITY!**

WE CAN DO THIS!

MANY **AMAZING** COLLEAGUES, MENTORS, AND MY FAMILY, ALL OF THEM HAVE HELPED ME MAKE IT HERE!



IF YOU'RE A LITTLE GIRL OUT THERE, KNOW THAT YOUR **OWN IDENTITY** IS NOT AN OBSTACLE --

FIND YOUR PEOPLE, THE ONES THAT WILL **SUPPORT** YOU!

I'M HAPPY WHERE I AM, BUT I'M NOT DONE, I'VE **JUST STARTED!**

