

What is it like to be me?

Throughout my life I have been put in many situations where foreign people would take minutes to comprehend that I was Palestinian. What is it that is so shocking about me being a Palestinian? It is that stereotyping I hate, where they think we are not supposed to be educated or good looking. People think we haven't got the simplest appliances; they get really shocked if I speak English well or even French. They are most likely to doubt that I am either lying or that I am from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA. Believe me, it does not feel good at all being me through these moments. However, I like it, I just love to prove to the world that we are not who you think we are, we are made of thoughts and opinions much better if not as good as yours.

I know our life in Bethlehem is far from perfect, I am trapped, I feel like a mouse that just got used to the maze. Bethlehem looks like a huge prison, and it makes me furious each time I don't get a permit to cross the checkpoints. I can't visit my sister's house in Jerusalem, I can't go on a two days trip, I can't reach Haifa or Nazareth with the church youth group and I can no longer go to the old city of Jerusalem and visit my grandmother as I used to when I was little.

I know we live in a somehow terrible situation, politically, socially and economically. However, I think I have made the best out of my life. I am an honor student in Bethlehem university, I am socially active to the furthest extent, I am a member in youth groups, I take the responsibility for summer activities in the local church community center, I take courses outside the domain of my studies and I do give my big family a lot of attention.

As for me, I have big dreams, I am planning on continuing my higher studies and doing something in life because I want people to remember me when I die, I don't want to be another number that passed on this earth.

I feel proud to be Palestinian, I actually feel special, despite everything we have passed through, I still feel special, optimistic and great.

I have high expectations for my future, and I am not planning on letting my self down.

Grace Awwad