Lesson 3: Ibtihaj Muhammad

Ibtihaj Muhammad became a successful fencer while observing her Muslim culture as an athlete. She practiced for six years to become the best fencer she could be. In 2016, Ibtihaj went with the United States Olympic Team to the summer Olympics in Brazil. Ibtihaj had to overcome bias from other athletes and coaches who didn’t think she could win because she was an African American woman. Guess what? Ibtihaj did her very best, and won a bronze medal for fencing at the Olympics! Ibtihaj works very hard to blaze a trail for women’s equality today. Ibtihaj and her sisters created a clothing line that allows Muslim American women to wear modern fashion while still honoring their Muslim culture. Ibtihaj used her character and skill to honor their Muslim culture. She is an example of celebrating differences because she shows how important honoring our culture makes us who we are. She is an example of how our culture makes us who we are. Ibtihaj showed the world how important honoring our culture is around the world.
Imagine: One day, a young girl and her mom are driving in the car on a summer day. The windows are down, and the girl is enjoying the warm, summer breeze. The car comes to a stop light. The girl’s mom notices a sport going on at the local high school. The students are covered in clothes from head to toe. They are wearing helmets that cover their faces, like a mask. They look like they are carefully battling with something that looks like a small sword. The girl’s mom says, “I don’t know what it is, but when you get to high school, you are trying that sport.” As the stop light turns green, the girl and her mom continue to drive down the road. What sport do you think the young girl and her mom saw?

Ibtihaj (Ib-Tee-Haaj) Muhammad (Mu-hom-mad) was born in New Jersey. She lived with her mom, dad and 5 siblings! Ibtihaj’s dad is Muslim, which means his religion is Islam. Because Ibtihaj’s dad is Muslim, Ibtihaj and her siblings are Muslim, too. Ever since she was a little girl, she has worn a hijab.

Growing up, Ibtihaj loved sports, like basketball and volleyball. Because she follows Muslim culture, her mom had to alter, or change, the sports uniforms to include a hijab and covering so Ibtihaj could play sports AND honor her culture. Remember the story from the beginning of the bio? That young girl was Ibtihaj! When Ibtihaj got to high school, she learned that the sport she saw with her mom was called fencing.

Ibtihaj loved fencing, because it was a fun, and she was able to honor her Muslim culture while competing. Ibtihaj practiced her skills in fencing for many years. When she went to college, she achieved her goals when she became a part of her college’s fencing team. After college, she became a member of the United States...