

# Clothing Is Just the Material on Your Back

Blanca Gomez

I was fifteen that summer. I got all dressed up for church. I wore the nicest dress ever. Actually I think it was the only dress I had. It was a sleeveless blue one, and I was careful to wrap a crocheted shawl around my arms.

But when we got to church, our pastor told my mom that I had to cover my arms while we were in the house of the Lord. He told me I

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had to leave. Soon, other church members gathered around and criticized my dress. They said I should walk “like a lady” and never show my natural skin to others. They used

strong words. I realized that they were trying to make me feel like I was nobody. They wanted me to feel ashamed. I wondered, “Could this be God’s world?”

I was always told it should not matter what people wear. All that matters is what is in your heart. In fact, I believe it was my mother who taught me that, but it seems she lost her way from that idea. I am trying to hold on to that idea as I raise my own kids.

I have a 16-year-old son who is a good student; he is a quarterback for his high school team. Overall he is a good child who obeys my rules, is

not associated with gangs, and has never been in trouble with the law. However, people assume that he is a bad boy and that he will amount to nothing in our society. Why? Because he likes to wear his tight jeans with a silver belt and a tight shirt and a little of his boxers showing. How cruel is the world for judging our children just by what they wear!

I have a 19-year-old daughter who likes to dress up as a pretty girl with the tight jeans and a tight t-shirt, always looking sexy. She can be very provocative, but she is a nice girl who is going to college. She studies hard, loves life, and wants to have fun. Her clothes do not define her.

It would be helpful if people would stop judging us by what we wear. I know from experience that it hurts to be judged by your community for superficial reasons. It felt traumatic for me that day when I was 15 and I got kicked out of church for showing my arms.

In my personal opinion I don’t care what I wear. I am a phenomenal woman of strength. I have fallen down many times, but I always choose to stand back up with my head held high. What does it mean to walk “like a lady”? I walk as I was meant to walk – with courage and with respect for others. I am a caring person. The clothes I wear are just clothes. That is the example that I want my children to follow.



*Blanca Gomez (left) with her daughter and husband.*

## What do you think?

**Is it okay to judge people based on what they wear? Explain.**

**Write about a time that you were unfairly judged.**

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*Blanca Gomez lives in Roslindale, MA. She served on the editorial board of this issue of The Change Agent.*