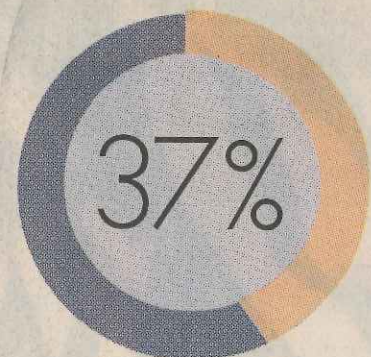




# Islamophobia in North Texas

Discrimination grows after terror attacks, Muslim people speak out



of Americans have a favorable opinion of Islam. This is the lowest rating since 2001.

Source: ABC News & Washington Post

INSIDE COVER VANESSA DAVIS  
STORY SANIKA SULE

Following the November attack in Paris and the December attack in San Bernardino, California, anti-Muslim hate crimes have tripled. Both attacks were carried out by supporters of ISIS, or Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, leading to an increased Islamophobic sentiment in the United States.

After the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in New York executed by Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda, the United States Department of Justice reported over 800 incidents of anti-Islamic actions against Muslim Americans, and those perceived to practice Islam. Shaheed Luqman, former board member of the Islamic Association of Lewisville/Flower Mound (IALFM), said he saw an anti-Islamic sentiment begin to grow following the 2001 terrorist attack.

"Primarily after 9/11, [Islamophobia] has become part of our vocabulary," Shaheed said. "To be honest, it scares

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me tremendously. I didn't think that that would be one of the things my kids would have to grow up with. It creates more of a fear for my family, for my community than anything else."

More recently, a man was killed and another suffered minor injuries on Christmas Eve after Anthony Torres allegedly opened fire on Omar's Wheels and Tires in Dallas. Staff at Omar's reported an altercation between Torres and an employee a week earlier. Witnesses said Torres was yelling "Muslim" as he was shooting, and it was later discovered on a body cam video that Torres said he is biased against Muslims. The shooting was labeled as a hate crime.

Muslim Americans have faced both violent and nonviolent discrimination. The Bureau on American Islamic Relations (BAIR), staged an armed protest outside an Irving mosque following the attacks in Paris. The group said they were speaking out

against Syrian refugees coming to the United States and "the Islamisation of America." After the massacre of Parisians earlier that month by ISIS supporters, BAIR members said they organized the protest to prevent the same thing from occurring in the United States.

Shaheed's son, junior Adam Luqman said that categorizing refugees as members of ISIS is inaccurate.

"I think it's the same thing as saying all Christians are KKK members," Adam

said. "It's not a correct interpretation of Islam, and it's not something Islamic religion allows at all."

Another occurrence of religious profiling took place in Irving when a 14 year old Muslim student, Ahmed Mohamed, brought in a homemade clock to school to show his teacher. Upon believing the clock to be a bomb, Mohamed's teacher notified the police, who arrested Mohamed. The incident sparked national outrage, leading many to take to social media sites such as Twitter where the hashtag #IStandWithAhmed trended worldwide. Shaheed said that

the actions of a few has lead to the stereotyping of an entire religion.

"We have nothing to be apologetic about," Shaheed said. "We have bad apples in every bunch. People do a lot of things in the face of religion. Why do people do things in the face of religion, hijack a faith to perpetrate their own beliefs?"

The IALFM, located near Flower Mound High School has recently made efforts to expand. The growing mosque presented plans to the Flower Mound planning and zoning committee, but Adam said they were met by dissent from a neighboring resident. She objected to the expansion of the mosque despite previous large scale expansions from their other neighbor, Flower Mound High School, which she did not disapprove of. After reworking their plans to accommodate the P&Z

"Primarily after 9/11, [Islamophobia] has become part of our vocabulary... It creates more of a fear for my family, my community, than anything else."

-Shaheed Luqman

DESIGN TARYN WELCH

of members, but our mosque is unable to hold all of them."

In addition to expanding the building, the IALFM has also made efforts to create awareness within the community. They recently held a mosque open house where people of several faiths visited the mosque to learn more about Islam. Shaheed said that all of the mosque's outreach programs

have been made in effort to build mutual respect throughout the community.

"Islamophobia is very much there," Shaheed said. "If you look at it over time, the same sort of thing has been done against [many other] ethnic and religious minorities. Right now it seems like Muslims are the ones on the radar, but I think the time shall pass."

## Students discuss Muslim prejudice in society, media

COMPILED RACHEL RAMIREZ

With growing conversations about ISIS, Syrian refugees and the Middle East in today's culture, Islam seems to continue to be a big point of interest in society. The Marquee gathered a group of students in grades 10, 11, and 12 to discuss the Islamic faith and the perception of Muslims in media and Western culture. These are some of their responses.

"I think another thing is that Americans don't always realize just because you're from Syria doesn't mean you're Islamic. There are Jewish people there, Christian people there, and they're people just trying to get away from all of that."

-Nico McElhone, 10

"[ISIS is] using [Islam] more as a cover up for the atrocious acts that they're doing. I don't think Americans realize how much just ordinary Muslims want ISIS to be destroyed as much as we do."

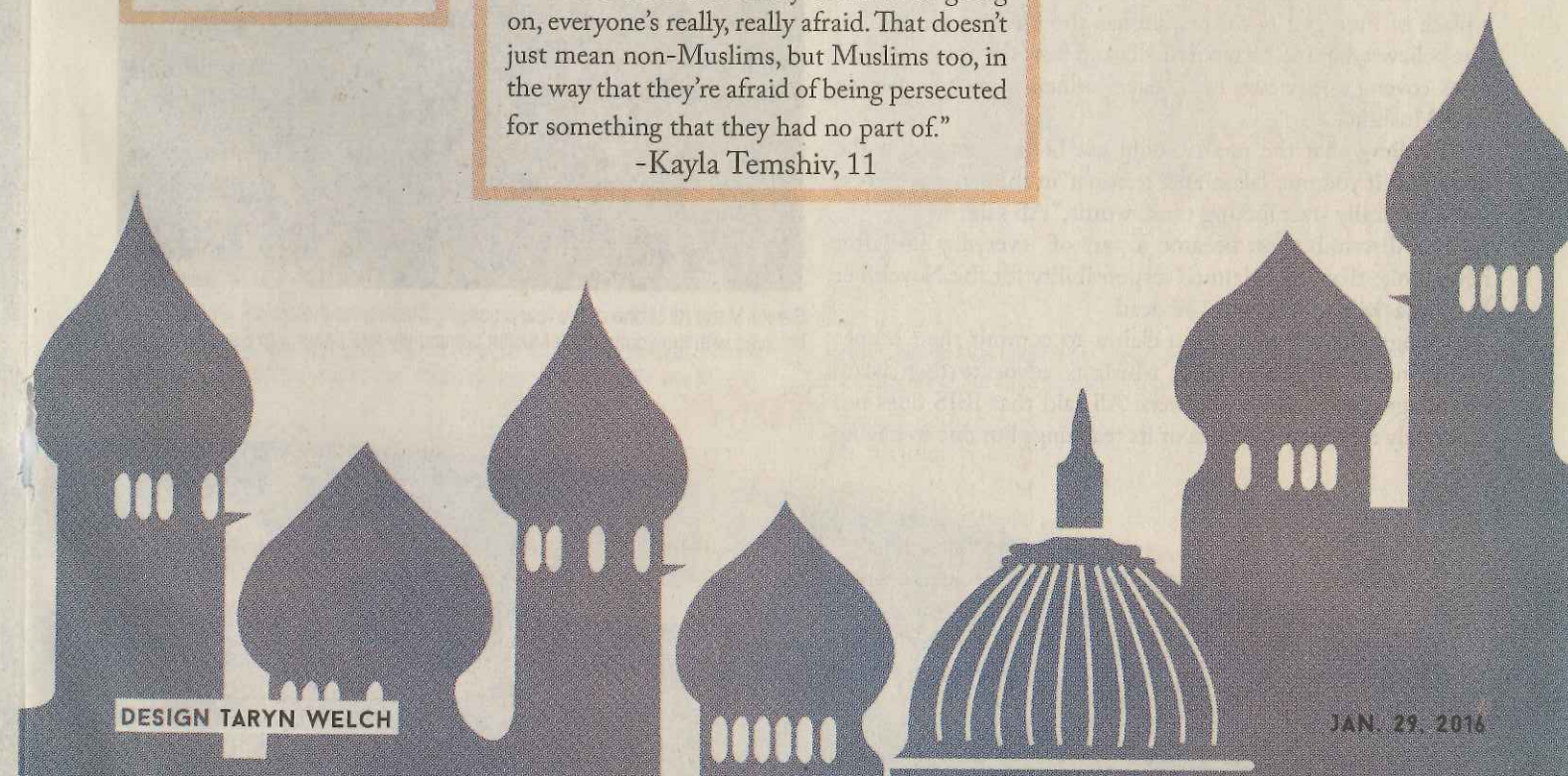
-Aaditya Murthy, 12

"We live in a time right now with, because all of the terrorist activity that's been going on, everyone's really, really afraid. That doesn't just mean non-Muslims, but Muslims too, in the way that they're afraid of being persecuted for something that they had no part of."

-Kayla Temshiv, 11

"Western countries saying 'We don't want to deal with that, and we don't want Islamic people here,' it makes [refugees] more likely to go to these terrorist organizations as a means of survival. ISIS is very crafty in this way to get us to turn against [Muslims]."

-Carolyn Minton, 11



DESIGN TARYN WELCH

JAN. 29, 2016



# Beyond the prejudice

## Senior offers insight on being a Muslim student

STORY DARCI WALTON

American pride and high spirits filled the halls of Lamar Middle School as senior Maha Ali walked into her seventh grade Texas History class on May 2, 2011. Earlier that morning, news broke that al-Qaeda founder and leader Osama bin Laden had been killed by Navy SEALs after a decade long manhunt for the alleged mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks. As she sat at her desk a voice from the back of the room broke the silence.

"Hey Maha, I heard your leader died."

At first, Ali was confused. She didn't understand what the boy meant by her "leader." As she sat and thought it over she realized that just because she was Muslim he assumed that she supported bin Laden and his actions. Ali's mind went to chaos. She didn't know whether to be enraged or sad at his ignorance, to yell at the boy or stay silent. She had never been faced with problem before. Usually everyone was nice and respectful to her and her religion.

Ultimately her rage outweighed all of her other emotions and Ali exploded into a fit of screams.

"I started shouting 'that's not okay to say to people' and 'you can't say that kind of stuff,'" Ali said.

According to Ali, the comment wouldn't have made such an impact on her if it was said to her in a private conversation.

"I think what was worse was that it wasn't just personally me, but my friends would hear it too," Ali said.

Ali said she understands that the boy's statement came from a place of hate and not everyone has the same views as him. She believes that mainstream media and how they present their news coverage to viewers can have influence on how people view Muslims.

"I believe that the media could use better rhetoric in the sense that if you put 'Islam' and 'terrorist' in the same sentence, you'll naturally start linking those words," Ali said.

This discrimination became a part of everyday life after news broke that ISIS claimed responsibility for the November Paris attacks that left over 130 dead.

Though the terrorist group claims to commit their crimes in the name of Islam, most Muslims advocate that Islam encourages peace to its followers. Ali said that ISIS does not accurately represent the faith or its teachings but due to having



PHOTO VANESSA DAVIS

Senior Maha Ali is one of the few practicing Muslims at the school. She is involved with the youth of the Muslim community and helps with Sunday School.

"Islamic" in their title the two, terrorism and Islam, are linked once again.

"After the Paris attacks there was a new wave of Islamophobia and it got a lot stronger," Ali said. "After [the attacks] you could tell there was a lot more fear and lot more hate towards Muslims."

Regardless of Islamophobia's presence Ali said that Flower Mound has a strong community for Muslims. She is heavily involved herself beyond just attending the mosque. Ali volunteers with children, puts on youth events and is a Sunday School teacher's aide.

Despite being active in the community and faith, Ali said that at first glance she doesn't obviously appear as a Muslim woman is stereotypically portrayed. This could be due to the absence of a hijab or any other form of headscarf.

"The faith asks us to be modest in our apparel," Ali said. "It is up to the woman to decide how she takes on that modesty and when she does want to wear the headscarf. It is not forced upon us like a lot of people think."

According to a 2007 study from Pew Research Center, 51 percent of American Muslim women wear a form of headscarf some or all of the time since it is not mandated by the faith.

"It's like some people wear jeans and some people wear trousers," Ali said. "Some women wear headscarves and some women don't."

For Ali, she is unsure if she will ever wear the headscarf.

The scarf would symbolize her strength of faith but she knows that if she does wear it she could face public scrutiny and hateful comments.

"It's like a wearing your heart on your sleeve kind of thing," Ali said. "It's scary to take that step and it takes a lot of bravery to wear it."

Growing up as a Muslim in Flower Mound Ali says she has not received near the amount of persecution as those that live in other parts of the world.

The incident in Texas History was the only time hatred has been blatantly directed at Ali.

At school she is not faced with igno-

rant and Islamophobic comments on a daily basis.

In a predominantly white and Christian community such as Flower Mound, knowledge about Islam might be sparse.

Ali says that she and other members of her faith are always open to answering questions and informing citizens.

"There are mosques and people that are willing to talk to you about it," Ali said. "Do your own research besides just googling it. Go to your local Muslim community and they'd be more than willing to talk."



Saif, Yusuf, Zeenat, Adeeb, and Maha Ali pose for a family portrait. The Ali family are active members of the Masjid al-Noor Mosque in Flower Mound.



PHOTOS SUBMITTED

Mother Zeenat Ali is holding her young daughter, Maha, in her lap. Maha is the youngest of the three siblings of the Ali family.



# Between two cultures

## Muslim administrator remembers Islamophobia after 9/11

STORY MICHELLE MULLINGS

Growing up in Flower Mound, Assistant Principal Dr. Erum Shahzad was a brown girl in a white town. While she didn't see herself as being different, when she moved to Marcus her junior year she was given one nickname by her classmates. Camel jockey. Having lived in America since

she was a baby, Shahzad said she didn't even understand what the term meant until a friend explained that it was a racial slur for Middle Eastern people just like her.

"I really thought I was white," Shahzad said. "I grew up in the United States. I didn't think I had an

accent. I mean, other than having to wear the scarf, there wasn't anything else that I thought would make me look different."

Instances of prejudice were rare in her early years. Even when she heard harsh comments being tossed around, Shahzad usually found herself blissfully unaware of what they meant. It wasn't until the infamous date of Sept. 11, 2001 that everything changed.

"There are times where we talk about, would we be treated differently if we just paid our \$75 to just get our names changed?"

-Dr. Erum Shahzad

Like many Americans, the memory

of the day is one Shahzad says she'll never forget. She was driving to work when she heard the breaking news on the radio. A plane had collided into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York. Someone must have missed their landing, Shahzad thought. It couldn't have been

intentional. But by the time she arrived at the school and turned on the news, a second plane had crashed through the South Tower. Shahzad and her students tried to comprehend the situation.

Soon after the attacks, out of fear for her safety, Shahzad's neighbors stuck a American flag in the front yard of

her family's home.

Her neighbors explained that they were just trying to protect her. She was stunned. Until her community showed this kind of support, the reality hadn't yet sunk in. When she found out the attacks were done by Muslim extremists, Shahzad was horrified. She was Muslim. Her family was Muslim. And everyone knew that.

"It was a fear of how we would be viewed and how our lives would

be," Shahzad said. "And you know, unfortunately some of that came true."

Less than two months after the attacks, Shahzad learned the devastating news that her mother was put on life support. She immediately bought a plane ticket to Arizona to say her goodbyes. But after she arrived at the airport, Shahzad learned that the once simple act of catching a flight would be impossible. She underwent countless security checks and body screenings. Attempts to explain the reason behind her urgency were useless.

"The reality of it was no matter what I said, there was just no getting a flight out," Shahzad said.

As she missed flight after flight, Shahzad eventually gave up and made the 15 hour drive to the Arizona hospital.

Even her own name became weighted with stigma. In 2010, a Muslim terrorist by the name of Faisal Shahzad attempted to set off a car bomb in Times Square. The car was parked on a crowded corner only four and a half miles from Ground Zero.

Before Sept. 11, she said she never questioned whether it was the name on her resume—not her credentials—that prevented her from getting a job.

Every time Shahzad learns of a mass killing she cringes, hoping the suspect doesn't share a name like hers. She has often discussed with her family if they should change their identity to prevent discrimination.

"There are times where we talk about, would we be treated differently if we just paid our \$75 to just get our names changed?" Shahzad said.

Fellow Assistant Principal Amy Boughton says that while most people can conceal their struggles at school and work, a situation such as the one Shahzad faces can't be easily avoided.

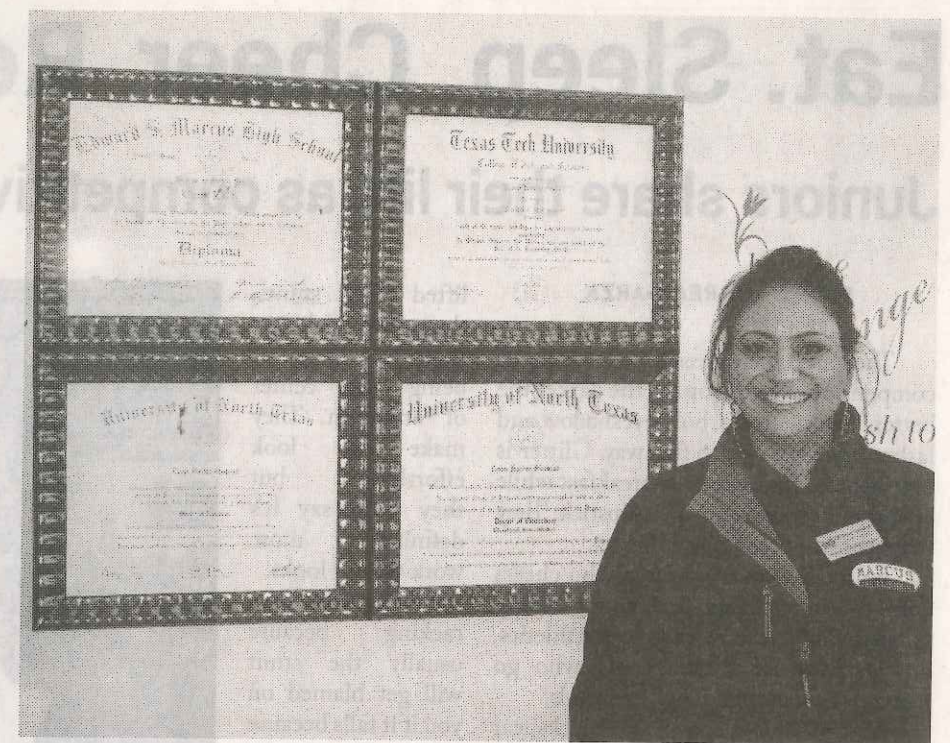
"That just breaks my heart honestly," Boughton said. "When your religion, and your last name and your identity is all wrapped up in outward appearance you can't be in society and hide it."

Shahzad tries to juggle her modern American upbringing with her traditional Pakistani background, and she has struggled to find a balance.

"Because I don't fit in their world," Shahzad said. "They say I'm very Americanized, and then here, regardless of



Dr. Shahzad works in the Freshman Center as an Assistant Principal. She was a biology teacher before entering administration.



Assistant Principal Dr. Erum Shahzad proudly stands next to her four diplomas. In 2012, she achieved her Doctor of Education, Superintendency and Educational System Administration from UNT.

how Americanized I may be, I still look brown."

According to Shahzad and Boughton, ignorance is the root of discrimination. Boughton says she's disappointed with the amount of negative bias most media sources have on Muslims and worries people won't examine all sides of the issue.

"If most Americans aren't all that educated, which is what's happening now, the media is everything," Boughton said. "That becomes the hub of all information."

And according to Shahzad, intolerance and ignorance thrive

where education is lacking. In the case of Muslim extremists, she says it's been rampant because they have been brainwashed their whole lives about how the Qur'an should be interpreted.

"They're not going to be able to get out of this vicious cycle because no one's there to teach them," Shahzad said.

She is concerned about anti-Muslim violence, even when she goes to worship.

"There are times where I've gone to the mosque and gone, 'I don't know if this is a good place to be right now,'" Shahzad said.

And even if she is Muslim, Shahzad knows that because she is American she is still a target for terrorism. Of the thousands of innocents who died on 9/11, dozens were Muslim. Because for these extremist it's not about faith, Shahzad said, it's about proving a point.

"And the reality is, terrorists kill everyone," Shahzad said. "They kill the innocent and I am one of the innocent."