

Muslims struggle to end racial stereotypes

■ The Muslim Student Association is hosting a series of lectures informing people about ethnic misunderstandings

By Lisa Toth
Oregon Daily Emerald

Labels such as terrorists and oppressors of women are examples of how Western culture misinterprets the Muslim people and culture.

The Muslim Student Association is hosting "Debunking the Myths," a series of talks that challenges and clarifies the issues that Muslims face on the University campus and worldwide.

Director of the Muslim Student Association, Nashran Santoso, a senior political science and international studies major, said that there is a growing distortion of the image of Muslim people and how they are portrayed by the media. He said that the intent of the discussion series is to clarify uneasy feelings of Muslims and Islam.

"Being Muslim here in America, some people give the image of the terrorists, oppressors of women and abusers," Santoso said. "By having these talks, the MSA and people can understand more about what Muslim is — in reality."

The May 25 discussion, "Young American Muslim Experiences: Life and Challenge" was centered around the narrative experience of Muslims in the community from the point of view of MSA members.

On May 30, "Image of Women in the Qur'an" was led by Professor Mahmoud Dhouadi, a visiting researcher from the University of Tunisia's department of sociology.

In his presentation, Mahmoud addressed the misunderstandings of the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book. While men of the Muslim and Arab world are portrayed as being allowed to marry more than one wife, Mahmoud contradicted this in his lecture.

"Muslim men are not encouraged to treat more than one woman equally," he said.

Nadima Adi, a senior majoring in biology and psychology, said she came to the presentation so that people would see there are more Muslim women on campus.

"I was just interested to see what [Mahmoud] would say and to get information that I hadn't heard before in my studies," she said.

The "Muslims and the Media: The True Lies" on May 31 featured Tammam Adi, Ph. D. in a discussion about the common stereotypes of Muslims and Islam.

Dhouadi examined the place of knowledge and science in the Qur'anic perspective in a panel on June 1: "Qur'an, Knowledge, and Science."

The series of talks will conclude tonight at 7 p.m. in 204 Condon Hall with "Muslim Behavior and Daily Life."

Santoso said that through the talks the different faces of Muslims are revealed, such as Hawaiian Muslims, Caucasian Muslims, African-American Muslims and Indonesian Muslims. The MSA offers Muslims a place where they can come together to share their way of life and the guidance they receive from their holy scripture.

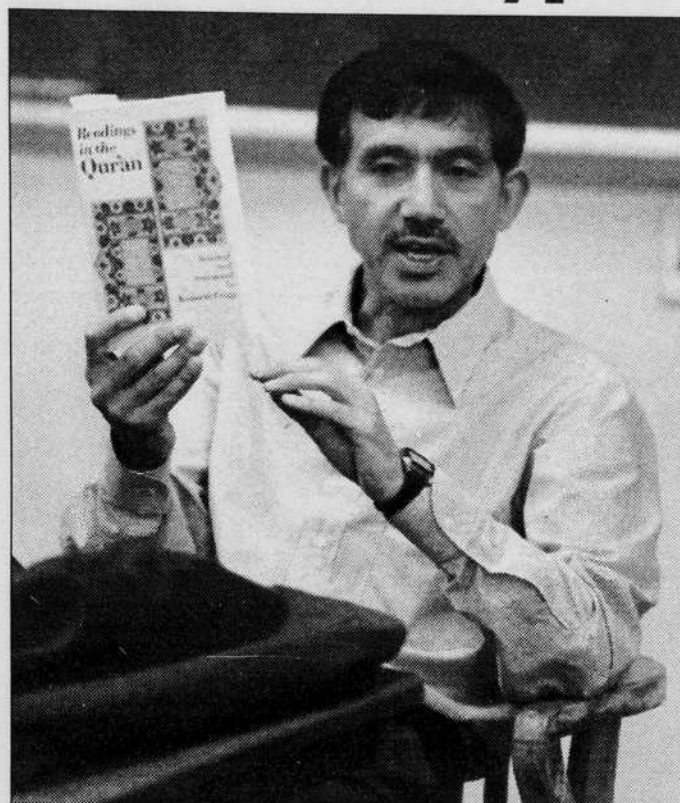
Sarah K. Samman, a senior biology major, and new member of the MSA said she frequently faces racism because she is Muslim.

Samman said she was stopped in the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport by customs officials and discriminated against because she was from the Middle East.

"They actually asked me if I had family in the Middle East and why I stayed in touch with them," Samman said.

Samman and MSA member Redha Mohammad, an environmental sciences and geology major, said they have enjoyed participating in other events the MSA has hosted this year. The association presented an informational lecture at Sheldon High School in April where they presented pictures of mosques, places where Muslims pray, as well as clarifying issues about the Islamic culture.

For more information about "Debunking the Myths" contact the Muslim Student Association at 346-3798.



Kevin Calame Emerald
Mahmoud Dhouadi, a Fulbright scholar from the University of Tunisia, speaks.

Elian's asylum hearing rejected

■ An appeals court ruled only Elian Gonzalez's father could apply for asylum for his 6-year-old son

ATLANTA — A federal appeals court sided with the government Thursday and denied an asylum hearing for Elian Gonzalez — a ruling that could send the 6-year-old shipwreck survivor back to Cuba with his father within weeks.

The unanimous ruling from a three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals blocked Elian from leaving the country immediately and gave his Miami relatives two weeks to appeal — either to the full appeals court or the Supreme Court. Family lawyer Kendall Coffey said he hadn't decided on a course of action.

However, Elian's father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, pleaded with the Miami family to end the court battle so father and son could "finally go back home together." The father came to the United States to reclaim his son in April.

"Make no mistake about what happened today," said the father's lawyer, Gregory Craig. "This case has been decided, and in our view there is no longer any doubt about the ultimate outcome."

The appeals court ruled that the Immigration and Naturalization Service acted within reason when it decided only Elian's father could apply for asylum for him, not the Miami relatives.

The court said because no federal law addresses whether a child as young as Elian can seek asylum against the wishes of his parents, the INS was required to come up with a policy dealing with "the extraordinary circumstances" of the

case.

The judges acknowledged Cuba violates human rights and the rule of law. But they said the INS, not the courts, should determine immigration policy.

The judges also denied a request by Elian's father to replace Elian's great-uncle Lazaro Gonzalez as the boy's representative in the court proceedings, a move that would have allowed the father to drop the asylum request and take his son back to Cuba.

President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno praised the ruling.

"We have said all along that Elian belongs with his father," Reno said in Washington. In Berlin, the president said the case spoke to "the importance of family and the bond between a father and son."

Outside the Miami relatives' former home in Little Havana, where Elian lived for more than four months until he was taken by armed federal agents and reunited with his father, protesters yelled and wept over the ruling.

About 100 people gathered and vowed to continue their fight to keep the boy in the United States. A small number promised violence if Elian is returned to Cuba.

Sandra Linar, a 40-year-old homemaker, held a sign with a photo of Elian and his mother. "It is not over yet," Linar said. "God is with us."

The relatives held out some hope that Elian's father still would be prevented from taking Elian back to Cuba.

"I hope the laws of this country favor him and give him the opportunity to seek asylum," said Marisleyis Gonzalez, the cousin who cast herself as a mother figure

to Elian after his own mother died in the Thanksgiving Day boat wreck.

She also said she hopes the courts will force Elian's father to allow her family to visit the boy, whom they have not seen since the raid on April 22. Elian and his father essentially have been in seclusion in Washington and Maryland since then, barred from leaving the country until the court fight is over.

In a statement read on Cuban television, the communist government expressed its displeasure with yet another delay in Elian's return, calling the 14-day waiting period for the appeal "another concession to the 'mafia'" — the term it commonly uses for the exile community in Miami.

While campaigning in Atlanta, Vice President Al Gore said the case would have been best handled in a family court. Gore supports legislation to grant permanent resident status to Elian, his father and other relatives, a position at odds with that of the Clinton administration.

Texas Gov. George W. Bush supports similar legislation, and while campaigning in Nevada, he called on his Democratic presidential rival to urge Clinton to get the case heard in family court.

However, that option has already been rejected. Elian's great-uncle Lazaro Gonzalez tried to win custody in a Florida family court, and a judge dismissed the case, saying even if Elian were given permanent resident status, Lazaro could not qualify for custody of him under state law. She also said she could not overrule the INS.

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