

Panelists shed light on Islam

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

For city resident Nicole Moussa, adopting the Muslim faith three years ago felt like coming home.

The 36 year-old Virginia native says she grew up in the Christian tradition, but its teachings never felt like a good fit for her. When she began learning about Islam, things fell into place, Moussa said. As a Muslim, Moussa, a homemaker, says she feels more at peace than ever before.

"It's has been more blessed," she said of her life as a Muslim woman. "It's more straight and narrow, as far as not having too many questions. I feel comfortable raising (my son) Islamically."

But Moussa says the people she encounters and even some of those close to her, don't always embrace her choice. She says people often stare at her when she enters a store in her traditional Muslim clothing.

"My mom freaks out about it because of all the stereotypes about Islam," said Moussa. "...I think people still group us and the terrorists together as one and that's not true. They're not practicing the same thing I practice."

In the decade since the horrific September 11 attacks, many Muslims in the area and across the nation have reported that they found themselves the subjects of added public scrutiny. Three local Muslims spoke about their faith and their experiences as members of a minority religion in America Tuesday night, during a panel discussion sponsored by the City of Winston-Salem Human Relations Commission.

"I Have a Question about Islam," as the program was dubbed, is the first in a series of forums designed to explore a variety of faiths and foster understanding across religious lines for local residents, said Human Relations Director Wanda Allen-Abraham.

Congressional hearings last week on the radicalization of Muslim Americans and other widely covered events in recent months prompted members of the Commission's Interfaith Committee to stage the forum.

For two hours, audience members peppered panelists Imam Khalid Griggs, Dr. Hamdy Radwan and Mustafa Abdullah about virtually every aspect of their beliefs and practices, and the many rumors that surround them.

Abdullah, who founded the Muslim Student Association at Wake Forest during his



Nicole Moussa holds her son.

time as a student there, says one of the biggest misconceptions about the Islamic faith is that "being Arab is synonymous with being Muslim, that being of another religious tradition is synonymous with a different nationality."

Despite the fact that Indonesia is home to the world's largest Muslim population, Americans still associate the faith with the Middle East and the turmoil that exists there, he said.

Griggs, who has led the Community Mosque on Woughtown Street for more than three decades, says the public holds the whole community accountable for the actions of a very select few.

"Anytime a misguided Muslim individual does something, the entire religion of Islam gets indicted," declared Griggs, who pointed out that the religions of non-Muslims who commit crimes are rarely mentioned.

Questions were raised about Islamic terminology, including jihad. Radwan, the outreach director for the Muslim American Society of Raleigh and a Winston-Salem State University professor, said the meaning of "jihad" has been bastardized by the media. In layman's terms, the word essentially means to struggle against something, and often refers to internal conflict he said.

"The word jihad is a wide word," said the Egyptian-born educator. "The major struggle is to hold yourself right, to follow the right path."

The audience posed many questions about



Panelists Imam Khalid Griggs, Mustafa Abdullah and Dr. Hamry Radwan.

the teachings of the faith with regard to women: whether it is acceptable to intermarry with women of another faith; why Muslim men are allowed to have multiple wives; and why the women are expected to wear certain clothing.

Abdullah, the associate organizer for CHANGE (Communities Helping All Neighbors Gain Empowerment), said the Prophet Muhammad embraced equality between the sexes.

"He specifically said, 'You have rights over your women and they have rights over you,'" Abdullah stated. "This is incredibly socially progressive, as they say, for that time. It's quite remarkable, when you think about it, in a male-dominated society."

Panelists also heard a variety of questions related to high profile news stories and reports of Muslim parents killing or threatening to kill their children who refuse to practice the religion. All three panelists stressed that everyone must come to the faith on their own volition.

"There is nothing in the Quran that would justify taking a child's life," Griggs said. "It's just simply murder, and the Quran nor the prophetic teachings of Muhammad do not sanction this."

Moussa said she hoped the forum would help to dispel the growing arsenal of myths that are hurled against the Muslim community, and demonstrate to Christians the many commonalities that the two faiths share.

"There's not really a huge difference in Islam and Christianity," she commented. "It's all the same God."

"I Have a Question About Islam" will air on WSTV-13 today (Thursday, March 17) at 9 p.m. and Sunday, March 20 at 4 p.m. For more information, call City Link, at 727-8000.

Allergies

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need to remove the animal(s) from the home or at least keep them outside the house in a safe backyard or other area such as a pet run. Animal dander accumulates over time and especially in dust, and may take a month or more to completely disappear once the animal is removed and the house cleaned. If you do keep the animal(s) in your home, wash clothes and bedding frequently, bathe the animal often, and use air cleaner to diminish the animal dander. You can also ask your veterinarian about how to reduce the amount of dander in your home and about certain breeds of dogs and cats that do not shed and are good for people with allergies.

Dust

In order to reduce the amount of dust in your home, washing curtains, pillows, blankets and dusting furniture regularly are essential. You should also wash toys as often as possible. It can also help to cover mattresses and pillows with protective plastic covers.

What medicines I can take to help to alleviate my symptoms?

Antihistamines help diminish sneezing, mucus and swelling caused by allergies, and they are more helpful if you take them before you are exposed to the allergens. Antihistamines can cause drowsiness and dryness in the mouth, and some of these require a prescription. Decongestants, which can help with nasal congestion, can be bought without a medical prescription. However, decongestants can raise your blood pressure, so it is a good idea to speak to your doctor before using them, especially if you suffer from high blood pressure. Nasal steroids reduce the reaction your airways and nasal passages to the inhaled allergens; most of these are prescription. They alleviate the swelling in your nose and can help you feel less pressure and congestion. Eye drops can also be helpful for red, watery and irritated eyes; most of these can be purchased without a prescription.

Your doctor can test you with tiny amounts of allergens on the skin, to see to which allergens you react to. Once your doctor knows what you are allergic to, you and your doctor can decide the best course of treatment.

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Gore

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worked hard, and in order to keep my body fit and in that mode, I had to use it or either lose it."

All the hard work is paying off. Gore says his mobility is excellent compared to many in his peer group.

"It kept me loose. It kept my bones in good shape," he stated.

Gore grew up in a musical household. He and his brothers and sisters made up a well-respected gospel group before they were barely teenagers. By the 1960s, Gore was a much in-demand drummer. As the leader of Gore and The Upsetters, he toured the Southeast, playing for some of the nation's brightest R&B acts, from Willie John to Chuck Jackson, at the request of Universal Attractions booking agency.

"When they had artists coming this way, they would call me and we'd practice their music and we could be their band wherever they went down south," said Gore, who retired from Stroh Brewery in 1999. "It was real entertainment, a real experience."

Gore and his band mates became local celebrities, their faces gracing advertisements for concerts alongside big names such as James Brown and Dionne Warwick. When they weren't touring, Gore and The Upsetters played gigs in town at the Peacock Lounge, a massive nightclub that Gore owned on Liberty Street.

After more than a decade, the demands of life on the road and the responsibility of caring for his family forced the father of four to slow down. He relinquished control of the Peacock Lounge and Gore's Supermarket, which he also owned at the time.

These days, Gore's musical talents are only on display at Kimberley Park Holiness Church, where he has belonged all of his life. Exercise has become his passion and hobby, just like working on his beloved '59 Jaguar.

"It's just something that I'm molded into doing," he said. "I feel better when I



Clarence Gore works out several times a week.

work out, and I get around better when I work out."

Gore's wife, Fannetta, and his friend, Larry Smith, often accompany him when he hits the track.

Smith, who pastors Mars Hill Baptist Church, grew up in the same church as Gore, and the two men often "talk shop" as they walk.

"A lot of times, we just (are) walking and talking about the Lord," commented the pastor, who also works out at the Winston Lake Y. "We just have a good time. We just enjoy each other—that's my partner."

Though Gore is more than a decade his senior, Smith says he admires Gore's physical fortitude.

"I just pray that the Lord lets me live to get his age

and be in the same health he's in," Smith declared. "That's a blessing right there."

Minister Carl Dunlap has attended Kimberley Park Holiness with Gore for more than three decades. Dunlap, a city native, says Gore, a deacon, member of the Male Chorus and superintendent of Sunday School, is every bit as dedicated to his spiritual well-being as his physical.

"He's a good man, a family man, he's a granddad and all of that stuff," Dunlap said. "I enjoy... the fellowship that we have toward one another. By us being fellow Christians, we've got a lot in common."


Gore shows no signs of letting up anytime soon. Physical fitness is one of the best gigs that he has ever played.

"It is just something that I like to do," he said matter-of-factly.



Dunlap

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