

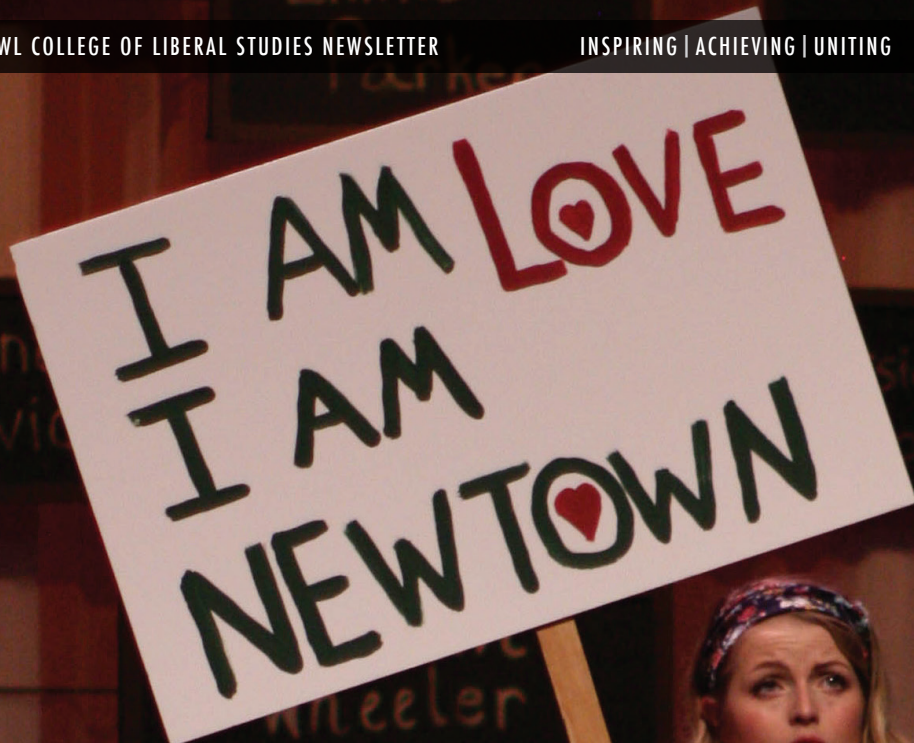


# C▲PSTONE

UWL COLLEGE OF LIBERAL STUDIES NEWSLETTER

INSPIRING | ACHIEVING | UNITING

SPRING 2017



## A Spotlight on Newtown

Play honors voices from  
a mass tragedy, inspires  
local conversations

PAGE 5 »



# Addressing Is

Work group  
brings speaker,  
comedian to take  
on issue from  
multiple angles

**T**wo events on campus in 2016 focused on the rise of Islamophobia in the U.S., attracting about 1,000 people.

Corey Saylor, director of the Department to Monitor and Combat Islamophobia with the Council on American-Islamic Relations in Washington D.C., discussed the impact of religious bigotry and racism on the lives of Muslims in the U.S. on UWL's campus last April.



*Corey Saylor*



*Azhar Usman*

Then, in November, Azhar Usman — a nationally-acclaimed American Muslim comedian — presented “ULTRA-AMERICAN: A Patriot Act.” Through humor, he challenged the audience to re-think their assumptions about religion, race and culture in America.

While Islamophobia in the U.S. isn't new, the anti-Muslim rhetoric during the U.S. presidential election, as well as the recent anti-refugee/immigrant ban, has exacerbated the discrimination that Muslims face and alienated Muslims around the world, says Mahruq Khan, UWL associate professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

The demonization of Muslims is nothing new, says Khan. Hollywood, mainstream news outlets, and Orientalist literature, at large, have historically perpetuated notions of Muslim men as barbaric, terrorists, and criminals, says Khan. Muslim women are characterized as oppressed, yet exotic victims of unbridled patriarchy.

Immediately following 9-11, anti-Muslim fervor led to the FBI profiling

**“We hope that further education and discussion on this topic will lead to greater understanding of Muslims at UWL, in the U.S., and around the world.”**

**MAHRUQ KHAN**

of innocent Muslims, vandalized mosques and homes, hate crimes, indefinite detentions of Muslim men, anti-Muslim legislation, employment discrimination, xenophobic rhetoric, and more, says Khan.

Today hate crimes against Muslims have spiked to a level five times higher than the time immediately following Sept. 11, 2001, according to the FBI.

Although some of the experiences of Muslim populations are touched on in UWL courses, overall there is

# Islamophobia

a dearth of formal academic course offerings on Islam or Muslims on campus, says Khan.

Khan, who is also part of the Anti-Islamophobia work group on campus, says addressing Islamophobia requires a multi-pronged, ongoing effort. Saylor's event provided the audience with a basic overview of how the demonization of Muslims is systemic

in the U.S. The comedy show aimed to help humanize Muslim Americans to the La Crosse community, knowing that comedy can help shatter many barriers between groups in ways that formal lectures often cannot, explains Khan.

Organizers feel they succeeded in providing a current snapshot of U.S.-based Islamophobia, as well as one

Muslim's personal struggles navigating life as an American, she says.

Organizers will continue to organize events to combat Islamophobia from multiple angles.

"We hope that further education and discussion on this topic will lead to greater understanding of Muslims at UWL, in the U.S., and around the world," says Khan.

## ORGANIZERS

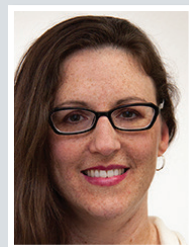
An anti-Islamophobia working group made up of UWL faculty, staff and students organized both Saylor's talk and Usman's comedy show with the support/sponsorship of many offices, departments, and organizations on campus. In addition to Mahruq Khan, other CLS faculty members in the work group include Heidi Morrison, History; and Audrey Elegbede, Ethnic and Racial Studies. The group also constructed the "Statement of Solidarity with Muslims" and worked to have it endorsed by all four UWL governance groups.



*Mahruq Khan, UWL  
associate professor,  
Department of  
Women's, Gender,  
and Sexuality  
Studies*



*Heidi Morrison, UWL  
associate professor,  
Department of  
History*



*Audrey Elegbede,  
UWL senior lecturer,  
Department of  
Ethnic and Racial  
Studies*