Local Muslims Hope Islamophobia Will Be Not Be Ignored In 2017

JORGE AVELLAN DECEMBER 30, 2016



Islamophobia continues to affect many communities around the country, including right here in Washtenaw County. Earlier this year, anti-Islam messages were written at the University of Michigan's Diag. As the New Year approaches, local Muslims hope for a better future in 2017.

Mosab Ameur is an international Muslim student from Morocco, who is currently living in Washtenaw County. He says anti-Muslim comments made by politicians, such as Donald Trump, add to the Islamophobia.

> "But what puts basically the fear in me is his followers. That's the problem because his followers are people who deal with them in camps, in church, in busses, in the street, in restaurants, and so forth."

While Mosab does fear for his life sometimes, he said Islamophobia needs to be addressed and not ignored, especially when it hits close to home, just like when a threatening letter was sent to an Islamic center in Ann Arbor earlier this year.

> "We would love to meet this person who put this note, have a cup of tea, and discuss."

Evelyn Alsutany is the organizer of the Islamophobia Working Group in Ann Arbor. One of their goals is to create a safe and inclusive environment for Muslims. She says you can help eliminate stereotypes by challenging how Muslims are negatively portrayed in movies and television.

> "Anything small to big. Small can simply be talking to people at the dinner table--people that you share meals with--about Muslims, about what you yourself have learned about your own self-reflections. And further along the spectrum would be attending meetings that people are organizing."

University of Michigan Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Culture Samer Ali says non-Muslims aren't the only ones who needs to make changes.

> "I think it's really important for Muslims to branch out and get to know non-Muslims--people you work with, people you go to school with, people that you live next door to."

Ali added that some Muslims are already reaching out to the community, but more need to do it. About 4,500 Muslims live in Washtenaw County.

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