

7-21-2009

## Author with Dayton Roots Writes Book Debunking Muslim Stereotypes; It's Summer Homework for All First-Year Students

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### Recommended Citation

"Author with Dayton Roots Writes Book Debunking Muslim Stereotypes; It's Summer Homework for All First-Year Students" (2009).  
*News Releases*. 9411.

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July 21, 2009  
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## NEWS RELEASE

### AUTHOR WITH DAYTON ROOTS WRITES BOOK DEBUNKING MUSLIM STEREOTYPES; IT'S SUMMER HOMEWORK FOR ALL FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

DAYTON, Ohio — The first publisher Melody Moezzi interested in *War on Error: Real Stories of American Muslims* asked her to include a terrorist among the book's profiles.

Only she didn't know any, and her aim was to *dispel* stereotypes, not reinforce them.

An Iranian-American Muslim who grew up in Centerville, Ohio, Moezzi wrote the book after 9/11 to debunk stereotypes about Muslims. The book is required reading this summer for more than 1,700 incoming University of Dayton students, who will share short essays and discuss it with professors as part of new student orientation activities on Tuesday, Aug. 25.

"My hope for anyone reading this book is that they get to meet 12 young Muslim Americans who are not all that different from them," said Moezzi in a telephone interview from her Atlanta home. "After 9/11, people were judging Muslims by the worst among us, not the best among us."

*War on Error*, Moezzi's first book, paints a diverse portrait of Islam, featuring stories of a dozen young people — all Americans, all Muslims, but all vastly different. Readers meet a rapper of Korean and Egyptian descent, a bisexual Sudanese-American and a white convert from Colorado who wears the hijab. All are horrified that after 9/11, their religion has come to represent terrorism in the eyes of many Americans.

"Melody shows the reader the many faces of Islam. It's not just the fanatic fringe that so many of us easily associate when we hear the word 'Muslim,'" said Lori Phillips-Young, coordinator of the First-Year Read Program at the University of Dayton. "I think she's done a real service for many Americans by showing us the real people behind the religion. There are converts, emerging converts, observant orthodox, unorthodox practitioners and a broad range of people who believe in the best this religion has to offer and live their lives in a way that reflects that joy and understanding."

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This summer, Moezzi became a recognizable face on national television — and received death threats — over her outspoken criticism of the Iranian government's response to the uprising after the presidential election. "They're going into the streets and murdering their own people. How does that represent Islam?" she asked. "The politicization of Iran has become a very big problem for me. Once you start beating people in the streets, politics becomes irrelevant. If you kill my brother, my sister, my cousin, suddenly I'm against you."

Humanizing a largely misunderstood religion has become Moezzi's mission.

"There's so much fear and ignorance," she said. "I want to dispel that."

A committee of University of Dayton faculty, staff and students selected *War on Error: Real Stories of American Muslims* from among 48 books nominated in a campus-wide poll. Around the country this summer, the reading list at other universities and colleges for incoming students ranges from such contemporary offerings as Van Jones' *The Green Collar Economy* at Smith College and Barack Obama's *Dreams From My Father* at Colgate University to Franz Kafka's classic, *The Metamorphosis*, at St. Michael's College.

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For assistance in scheduling media interviews, contact **Teri Rizvi** or **Cameron Fullam** at 937-229-3241.