2-22-2007

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02.22.2007 | Campus and Community, Culture and Society  Asra Nomani (url: http://www.asranomani.com) will discuss her book, Standing Alone in Mecca: An American Woman's Struggle for the Soul of Islam, during a free, public talk at 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 6, in the Kennedy Union ballroom. Her appearance is part of UD's Distinguished Speakers Series.

Nomani wrote her book after her pilgrimage to Mecca, during which she drew upon four Muslim matriarchs to learn more about sin, redemption, courage and self-determination. She returned to the United States "to confront the sexism and intolerance in her local mosque and to fight for the rights of modern Muslim women who are tired of standing alone against the repressive rules and regulations imposed by reactionary fundamentalists." She shows how several freedoms enjoyed centuries ago have been erased by the conservative type of Islam practiced today, giving the West a false image of Muslim women as veiled and isolated from the world.

The Washington Post called Nomani's book an "engrossing overview of Islam's internal debates as seen through the eyes of a young single mother wrestling with her faith."

Publishers Weekly wrote that Nomani "introduces readers to a new generation of Muslims, who are American and equality-minded. Through memorable personal narrative, Nomani gently instructs readers about modern Islam and her role as a woman in it."

Nomani also wrote the Islamic bill of rights for women in the mosque and the "99 Precepts for Opening Hearts, Minds and Doors in the Muslim World." Nomani says the precepts call, not for the reform of Islam, but rather the restoration of Islam.

"The men who are the leaders of my mosque are considering banishing me for attempting to claim the rights of a Muslim woman at the mosque and to stand up for a tolerant and inclusive Islam," Nomani said on her Web site. "Facing trial for disturbing the peace of these men, I have reflected on how we need to restore our Muslim world to the principles of Islam that the prophet Muhammad practiced in the 7th century. My experience teaches that Islam must redefine the way it expresses itself so that modern-day Cities of Enlightenment will shine throughout the Muslim world."

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