

Transcript for Muslims Are People's Neighbors--a Welcome Project story

I think everyone has a responsibility to educate themselves. When people hear about things happening to Muslims here, they don't necessarily care, you know? Like for example, I have friends who, I'm probably the only Muslim they know, you know? And so when something happens and I tell them, they're like, "What? This happened?" I'll never forget the first time I went shopping with a friend after I put the scarf on and there was this guy at the mall who was just like, staring me down, like, I'm walking and he just stood in the middle of the mall and just like, glared at me. To the point that his friends came and like, grabbed him and I just kind of like smiled and waved at him and was like, "Hi." And my friend was shocked, like, shocked. She didn't even know what to do. And she was so angry, and I was like, "It's not a big deal. Let's just keep going." And like for the next two hours she just kept going back to it, and I was like past it already, like I was just kind of like, "Whatever, it happens," and she's just... "I can't believe he did that. I can't...Do you always get that?" And I was like, "Yeah, of course." And she's just like, "Oh my God." It definitely makes me very conscious of everything around me, and I'm one of those people who typically just kind of like walks without realizing where I'm going, so it's annoying that I always have to like, be aware of anyone who might do or say something.

There are two billion Muslims in the world, like, that's two-sevenths of the world population. And then to go and blame two billion people for the actions of a supposed few... because of course now we're getting it with the Boston bombings—when were the bombings? Like three weeks ago? I don't even know how many stories I've heard of women or men getting beat up, getting assaulted. The day after the Boston bombings, people compiled, some website compiled all the Tweets that people Tweeted after the bombings and the stuff that they were saying about Muslims and Arabs, I mean, it was absolutely ridiculous. I mean, really. And just the fact that, you know, after they found out that the suspects were Chechen, right? There was like a lull on the internet for awhile because everyone had to go online and learn where Chechnya was. Is it a Muslim country? Is it this? You know, it just shows you, you know, for the most part the people who say anything like that...complete ignorance. Ok? People who do anything, it's out of complete ignorance, and the only way to combat ignorance is with, you know, knowledge and education.

In Valpo...I didn't have any problems. I was very lucky. But I know for a fact, you know, I had family overseas who were like, they're like, "Be careful. Don't let anyone do anything stupid." You know? Because people in other countries, because they get worried, you know? If I'm going out alone, or my brother or my sister, my mom and dad. People are sometimes, they just do things they wouldn't normally do, and you know, a lot of times, Muslims are the ones who have to deal with that, you know? And I'd say that about, you know, I think that's any—most minority races when something like that happens—but for right now, the popular thing is to, you know, attack Muslims, and...you just got to be careful.

There's absolutely no reason for you or for anyone to be unaware of, you know, what's happening to your neighbor. Like, Muslims are people's neighbors in this country and every country everywhere around the world; they're a huge presence, and I think everyone just, you know, you really, you need to know. And if you don't know, the blame is ultimately upon yourself.

Transcript for Almost like a War Cry--a Welcome Project story

Yeah, I'm actually from a pretty small town of about 10,000 people called Little Chute, Wisconsin. Economically speaking, it was a lot of paper mills, and that's kind of where everyone worked growing up. I guess, racially, it's predominantly white, probably almost 99%.

Our team was primarily law students, and the team that I think we were playing against was primarily Saudi Arabian students. When they would score a goal, they would do this--I'm not even going to try to describe it other than [laughs] to maybe do it--but it's just like, uh, uh, I don't know how to do it [laughs]. Just like a "ya-ya-ya-ya-ya-yah," type thing, which is a terrible impression. Doing it together, having eleven guys do that after a goal was actually kind of a chilling thing; it was almost like a war cry, or something. And I thought that was a really interesting--I mean on one level it was a little bit intimidating or something, but on another level it was just kind of curious because it's not the type of thing--you know, I've never grown up on Sue Street in Little Chute, Wisconsin, and had any winning team make this sound where I'm from. You know, it's just not something that culturally you hear a lot of.

Other related stories from the Welcome Project

Muslims Are People's Neighbors

- "I've Prayed in Some Really Weird Places"--A Syrian-American student discusses her Muslim prayer customs and finding places on campus and in the community to worship.
- "You've Never Lived in Those Shoes"--An African-American student discusses being from Gary, and the assumptions and implications that she faces when revealing her hometown to others.

Almost Like a War Cry

- "Everyone Instantly Went Silent"--A white American, engineering student demonstrates miscommunication between a Chinese student and his peers.
- "Act of Hospitality"--Saudi student shares a custom from his culture and discusses the responsibilities of both host and guest in creating positive cultural exchanges.