

Muslims in America in Context: A Roundtable Discussion with Dr. Andrea Stanton at NDU

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Feb. 6th, 2015

The Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU) Faculty of Law and Political Science (FLPS), in collaboration with the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at NDU, welcomed Dr. Andrea Stanton from the University of Denver, Colorado, U.S.A., for the purpose of holding a roundtable discussion titled, “*Muslim, Arab, American: An American Immigrant Community in Context.*”



(from left) Dr. G. Hourani with Dr. A. Stanton at NDU (Feb. 2015)

Dr. Stanton discussed what local histories add to the story of the 20th century Arab/Muslim/American communities in the U.S., particularly taking the city of Cedar Rapids in Iowa as a case study. Using the local press as a key source, Dr. Stanton tried to shed light on the ways in which this particular Muslims community — a primarily Levantine community that had begun immigrating to the U.S. in the late 1800s — was perceived within the broader Iowan community. Reviewing the daily newspapers published in Cedar Rapids from the 1920s through the 1970s, Dr. Stanton noted in covering this community, as individuals and as part of a shared faith community, local journalists were challenged in developing an appropriate terminology for the mosque and the Muslim community associated with it. The coverage, according to Stanton, indicated (a) the increasingly important role played by the mosque or temple, as it was known

for decades in the community's religious and social life; and (b) that the coverage focused broadly on social and religious activities, notably weddings, deaths and burials, religious activities, and community fundraisers. Dr. Stanton argues that the narrative framing of Cedar Rapids Muslim community in the local newspapers demonstrated the need for a more nuanced approach to studies of religious and ethnic minorities in the mid-twentieth century, including sensitivity to the local context. Dr. Stanton stated that three labels were assigned to this community by the non-Muslim, non-Arab majority population: Muslim, Arab, and American, and argues that 'Muslim' dominated local press coverage, but that 'Arab' was used to indicate heritage rather than foreignness. She concluded that the coverage concentrated on the degree of congregationalization of the community than anything else.



(from left) Dr. Hourani, Dr. Stanton, Dr. Doumit Salameh, Ms. Honorée Eid, Ms. Dalia Atallah, and Ms. Jasmin Lilian Diab (Feb. 2015)

Dr. Stanton is an Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Denver, Colorado. She focuses on twentieth and twenty-first century Islam in the Middle East. She obtained her M.A. and PhD from Columbia University, and her B.A. from Williams College, U.S.A. Her research focuses on “*Media and Religious Identity*”, and investigates the sometimes conflictual, sometimes cooperative relationships between new technologies and claims to religious authority. The University of Texas Press published her first book, *This is Jerusalem Calling: State Radio in Mandate Palestine*, in 2013.

Her teaching interests include Quranic studies, contemporary fundamentalisms, globalization and its impact on religious identity and practice, gender and Muslim practice, and embodied practice and notions of piety, as well as the Internet and social media's evolving impact in these areas.

NDU and Lebanese University (LU) professors, staff, and students attended the roundtable discussion.