



Faith and Prejudice: Being Muslim in America

By Lindsay Watts

USC sophomore Zeyad Ali is no stranger to discrimination. He says his Saudi Arabian background and Muslim name caused him to be stopped at Boston airport when he was 15. Ali recounts being strip-searched and asked if he had plans to be a suicide bomber.

“It was very humiliating, being groped down and, you know, being called pretty much a terrorist,” says Ali, the president of the USC Muslim Student Association.

Since 9/11, the Muslim faith has come under scrutiny, and many Muslims have felt the backlash for actions of extremists. The Muslims seen in the media are usually these extremists and often the voices of moderate Muslims are absent. The media also tends to leave out any type of explanation as to what Islam is about and what the majority of its 1.4 billion followers believe.

“It doesn’t help much when politicians keep repeating words like Islamic fascists or some think tank saying that Muslims are bent on attacking the western civilization,” says Ali.

The majority of Muslims don’t share the ideologies of extremists; most followers of Islam are advocates for peaceful living and believe killing is against the teachings of the Koran. Ali says regardless of stigma or stereotypes, he is proud of his religion and stresses that the best way to become educated about Islam is by approaching and asking questions of Muslim people.