Danyale Green

[uf3700eu@Metrostate.edu](mailto:uf3700eu@Metrostate.edu)

School Of Urban Education Event: Solidarity with Muslim Communities

Despite the “melting pot” ideology this country bloomed of, The United States has long been the home of toxic race relations that foster negative sentiments such as xenophobia. Luckily, here at Metro State, we’re known for our diverse student population and dedication to improving race relations within the university. Most recently, the university’s School of Urban Education sponsored and organized the “Solidarity with Muslim Communities” forum, a public event featuring student leaders and faculty speakers to stand in solidarity with victims of islamophobia.

One such student leader, Francis Kuteesa, who serves on the university’s Student Senate, delivered a speech encouraging all Metro State students to “pursue the ideal of building an environment where people of different races, genders, political/religious affiliations, and sexual orientations can speak freely and live together as family.”

Kuteesa also spoke very highly of the forum’s purpose and execution. Fortunately, the Metropolitan was able to catch up with the event’s co-organizer Rene Antrop-Gonzalez, dean and professor of the School of Urban Education, for a Q&A:

Q: When & Where were this event held?

A: This event was held on January 29 from 6-8 PM in the Founders Hall auditorium.

Q: Why was it important for the department to do this event?

A: This School of Urban Education-sponsored event was important, because we feel it is our moral obligation as teachers, teacher educators, and activists to stand in solidarity with marginalized communities. Select media outlets have served as a platform for political rhetoric that has worked to demonize Muslims under the auspices of hyper-surveillance and xenophobia.

Q: How do you feel Muslim students were affected by this event?

A: There was a great spirit of excitement and support that this Solidarity Forum was held on our campus. In essence, we wanted to send a clear message that we are committed to maintaining safe spaces for Muslim students.

Q: I understand the event included a host of distinguished panelists. Could you give some details about a few of your panelist and how you think they impacted the event and/or its cause?

A: This event was made possible by a passionate team of School of Urban Education staff and faculty members across racial/ethnic, gender, and linguistic groups. We felt it was extremely important to demonstrate solidarity with Muslim students in the form of a multiracial/ethnic coalition. Hence, panelists presented powerful testimonies on issues of solidarity and living under marginalization, hyper-surveillance, and repression. We also had the pleasure of having student representation on the panel. Fatuma Ali presented her perspectives on being a Muslim woman in this problematic social milieu.

Q: Is there anything you want to say to students who feel a solidarity forum is unnecessary?

A: It is often easy to dismiss and/or question these types of significant events when one does not dare to imagine what it must be like to walk in someone else’s shoes. Privilege and not reflecting on the unearned benefits of privilege are often the causes of quick dismissals…

Q: Will the conference return in 2017 or again this year?

A: The School of Urban Education Forum planning committee has discussed the very real possibility of planning future events of this nature in order to sustain a culture of consciousness raising.

Q: Are there other details about the conference that you want to share?

A: This event would not have been possible were it not for the wonderful support of President Molhotra, Provost Arthur, Renee King, Thomas Maida, and Metro State students, community members, staff, and faculty who attended this positive event in the spirit of solidarity.

Q: Are there future events in the works by the department? What's the best way for students to find information about them?

A: The School of Urban Education will be hosting Dr. Sonia Nieto on March 3, 2016, as she will be presenting a series of presentations at the St. Paul campus. Dr. Nieto is an internationally known and respected teacher educator who focuses her work on multicultural and urban education. For more information, please contact Dr. Nadine Haley at nadine.haley@metrostate.edu