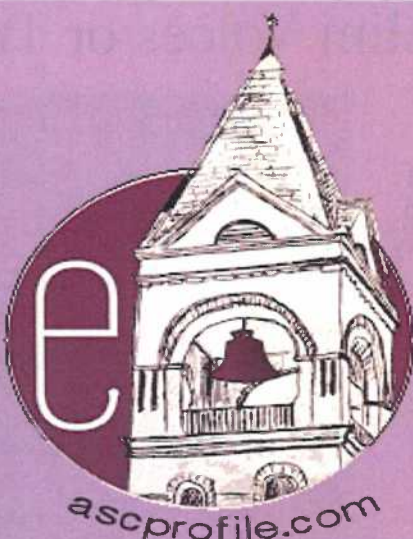


The Profile



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Thirty Seconds of Static: Caribbean Students Bear the Loss of Communication to Loved Ones

By: Angelica Martini '21
Staff Writer

Sweeping through the Caribbean this past September, Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria did more damage than structural. Families with relatives off of the islands have suffered from loss of communication with loved ones, making the survival through this time of natural disaster that more unbearable.

Less than a month into the fall semester, students like Leah Trotman '21 were left adrift, wondering the well being of the families they left behind.

“Imagine not knowing where your parents are in a category five hurricane, and you are just seeing pictures of torn houses on Facebook,” said Trotman.

Native to St. Thomas, Trotman is currently 1600 miles away from her home. The night of Sept. 7 left her restless, yearning for signs of safety from her family.

“I waited up until 2 a.m. to see if they would call,” said Trotman.

For Leah, it would be two days after Irma had passed that she would hear from her mother. They spoke for thirty seconds filled with static via the family’s satellite phone.

Carla Bosch '21 was in a similar situation.

“I know everyone here is hurting, and trying to communicate with their families,” said Bosch. Bosch’s grandmother just recently



A plane in Vieques, an island off Puerto Rico’s coast, was found in pieces after Hurricane Irma. Photo courtesy of Shannon Matthews.

moved back to Ponce, Puerto Rico from the United States mainland and has been living on the island for six months. With few means of communication, it has been difficult for Carla’s family to assess the best situation to assure her grandmother’s safety.

“All communication has been through other people,” said Bosch.

Air traffic in and out of Puerto Rico has been minimized due to the loss of electricity, making it a challenge for islanders to leave or for families to move and assist restoration. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has offered for volunteers to enter the island with the intent to stay for a minimum of two months. However, many families are stuck to choose between the financial loss of two months salary and the responsibility to their hometowns.

“I feel kind of helpless, and it makes me worry more,” said Bosch.

Support groups have spread across campuses offering prayer, well wishes, and comfort for students, faculty, and staff whose families have been affected by the catastrophes. In response to the disasters that have occurred in the past month, Agnes Scott College has created a relief committee to help promote different ways to provide support. *The Irvine* released details Oct. 3 on specific organizations providing humanitarian aid to the islands including Adopt-A-Family and Global Giving. Relief will continue as the Caribbean works toward recovery way into the new year.

Scotties Caught between Muslim Voices or Tradition

By: Ciel Zhang '18
Campus News Editor

On Oct. 5, the Thursday of the college's 102 Black Cat Week, three celebrated Muslim poets arrived on campus for a reading at 7 p.m., the same hour when the traditional bonfire is lit up in front of Alston.

The poets were Shadab Zeest Hashmi, Kazim Ali, and Deema Shehabi, all distinguished in their writing, teaching and anthologizing career. This literary event was preceded by a dinner reception at 6 p.m. that day and was followed by a panel discussion Friday at 1 p.m., both led by Dr. Waqas Khwaja from the English department.

Unfortunately coinciding with one of the biggest campus traditions, this event was moderately attended by professors, students and friends of the English department. A few recent alumnae showed their presence at the event. During the reading, several veiled Muslim students walked in quietly with their class mascot costumes and stayed for the rest of it.

"This was a huge mistake in scheduling," said Dr. Christine Cozzens on behalf of the English department. "Many people would have come to it; now it is a difficult choice between a campus tradition and a pressing current issue."

The three poets expressed deep gratitude in having this opportunity to meet each other and read together. As Deema Shehabi saw

it, the event was a "festival" for them. Although the three of them paved their own creative journeys, they each shared a poem written in the form of ghazal, an ancient poetic form founded in Arabic poetry and traveled around the world.

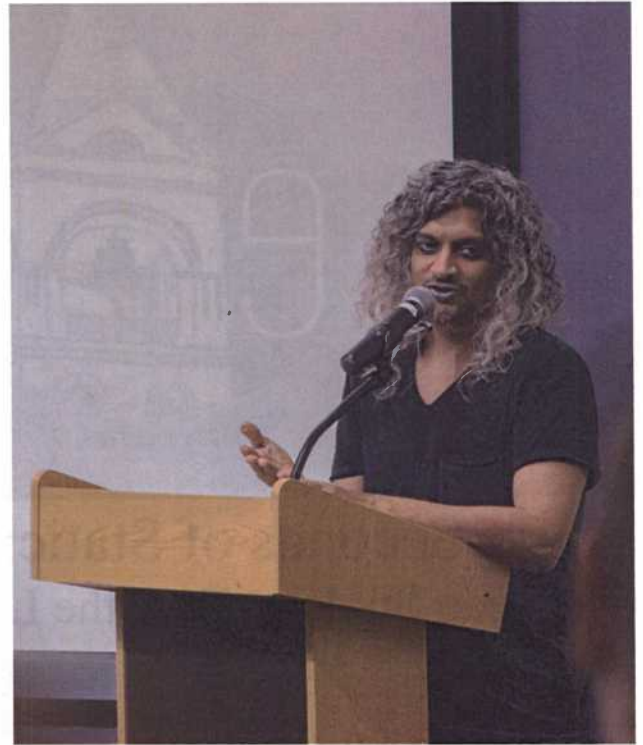
"I now remember more English ghazels than Arabic ghazels," said Hashmi. "It is also popular in Italian."

During the Q&A session following the reading, the poets were asked what it feels like to be a Muslim poet under the current political climate or, using the wording of the questioner, "in the age of Trump."

Kazim Ali answered first by clarifying that being a Muslim poet is never a one-time mission, but rather a perpetual one.

"In the long poetic history of Muslim world," said Kazim Ali, "there had been many difficult times like this, or even worse ones. Our mission is not surviving as Muslim poets in the age of Trump, but surviving as Muslim poets period."

Deema Shehabi followed him up by stressing Muslim poets' aversion against the reduction of their poetic identity.



Kazim Ali reads a currently unpublished poem and from his book "All One's Blue." Photo by Joann Lee '20.

"It is reductionist to see our work through an exclusive lens of Muslim identity, since not every poem written by every one of us addresses issues concerning our faith and its relation to current politics," said Shehabi.

Although they critiqued the reductionist perspective, Kazim Ali said that their books do sell better in this kind of age, which works in their favor.

Lauren Albin '12, who will be coming back to teach in the English department next semester, was at the event.

"This time coming back to Agnes Scott and playing a professional role, I feel I am still a student but in a different form," said Albin. "The pluralism of these poets' identity is what connects them as Muslim-American writers. They are just like the ghazels they read: each so different, but similar in form and rhythm."

Lyrik Courtney '21 sacrificed their first bonfire for this event.

"I really appreciate the opportunity to hear from all three Muslim writers at the same event," said Courtney. "They offered variations of a similar voice and added so much depth to the current political discussions."



Shadab Zeest Hashmi recites from her collection "Kohl and Chalk." Photo by Joann Lee.