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WHAT

NEXT?

Following the events in Paris, the Iowa City community evaluates the state of tolerance after the attacks.

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CLOSE TO HOME

On Nov. 13, a series of terrorist attacks shook Paris. Multiple teams of terrorists coordinated attacks throughout the city, killing 130 civilians, wounding hundreds and putting many in critical condition. The most deadly of the attacks occurred in Paris' Bataclan concert hall, near the iconic Place de la République, where militants opened fire on the crowd, killing 89 people.

In addition to the acts of terrorism that occurred in Paris, a double suicide bombing occurred that same day in a civilian neighborhood in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 43 and wounding over 200.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, claimed responsibility for all these atrocities soon after the day of the Paris attacks. ISIL also claims to be responsible for bringing down a Russian commercial plane in the Sinai Peninsula, killing all 224 passengers aboard.

The recent attacks of ISIL have brought into question the security and safety of Western nations. In addition to creating a sense of concern, these attacks have given rise to the growth of Islamophobia and xenophobia, as seen by 31 state governments issuing releases banning the immigration of Syrian refugees.

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris, the security in France has been heightened even more, with armed guards in public places and monuments.

For French teacher Theresa Juhl, realization of the severity of the attacks did not come to her until the Parisian government took actions to stabilize and help keep the city safer in the days soon after the attacks.

"They shut down the Eiffel Tower. They shut it down. That's when it really struck home that this is a really scary thing that will change [French people's] daily lives from now on," Juhl said.

This is not the first time Paris has faced arduous times. On Jan. 7, a Yemeni branch of Al-Qaeda infiltrated the offices of the French satirical newspaper, Charlie Hebdo, killing 11 and injuring an additional 11. In addition to this, on Aug. 21 a terrorist attempted to kill passengers aboard a train going from Amsterdam to Paris. Unlike the Charlie Hebdo incident, this attack was subdued without any casualties.



Theresa Juhl,
French Teacher

"Every time it happens, it's increasingly gruesome," Juhl said. "You've got to keep it in mind that these were French citizens doing this to other French citizens. [It's hard] to explain to children living in France that terrorism exists, and that it's French people doing it to other French people."

Despite how shocking the attacks on Paris seem to students at West and around the country, the brutal reality of what happened is felt even more so in Paris.

After freshman year, Anoushka Divekar '16 went to France for a band tour. Divekar felt a strong sense of camaraderie with the French students she played with and developed friendships with many Parisians.



Joan Burns,
French Teacher

"My friends who lived in Paris are deeply shaken up. They never thought it would be them. My friends who live in the outskirts of France are scared out of their minds."

Last winter, French teacher Joan Burns and her family visited Paris for the holidays. During their visit they enjoyed the atmosphere of Paris and at times were within five blocks of where the attacks occurred.

"I went to the le marché, at the Place de la République the day after Christmas," Burns said. "Beautiful boulevards, the market was wonderful. And that's where one of the bombings was. My heart aches for that beautiful little neighborhood."

Juhl recalls that the son of a fellow teacher in France that she knew came to visit the U.S. earlier this year. He, too, was in Paris the night of the bombings.

"He lives blocks from where this happened," Juhl said. "This is the second time his son has been exposed to something like this. It's just gut wrenching. It's one of those events that you will forever remember where you were when it happened. And so, having walked through that city, having conversations with people there, I really know how they're touched by this."

Juhl's connection with French families makes this far-away tragedy all the more real to her.

Earlier this year, senior Devon Eberl hosted a French student visiting Iowa. After the attacks on Paris, Eberl was quick to contact his new friend to make sure that everything was alright.

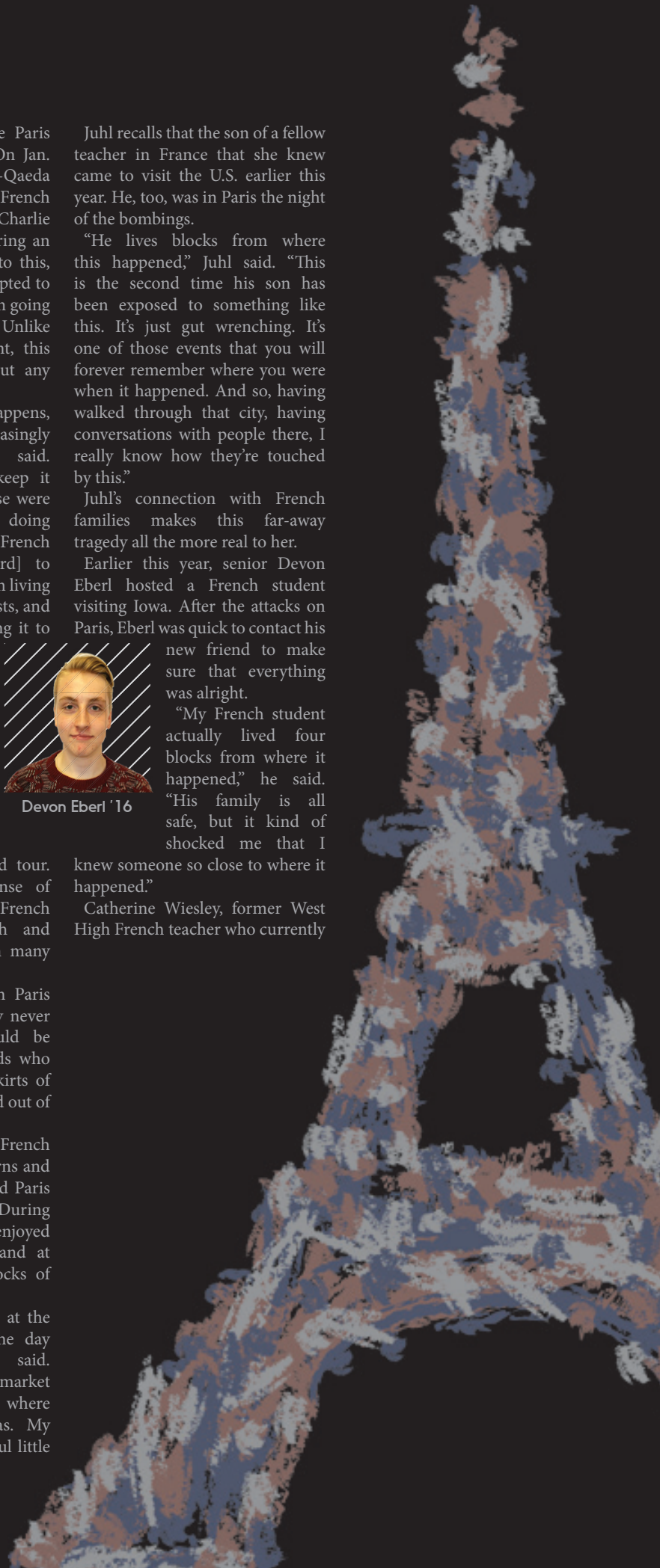


Devon Eberl '16

"My French student actually lived four blocks from where it happened," he said. "His family is all safe, but it kind of shocked me that I

knew someone so close to where it happened."

Catherine Wiesley, former West High French teacher who currently



resides in Toulon, France, was equally disturbed by the events in Paris, and postulates that this may be caused by French government policy.

"France is a country that teaches and imposes assimilation," Wiesley said. "It is desired that immigrants learn not only French, but the French culture and history and 'share' this common history and knowledge. In making everyone the same there is very limited discussion about diversity. In my opinion, France has a very steep hill to climb and must make a more concerted effort to make immigrants feel welcomed and like they can belong in France."

However, Wiesley sees a glimmer of hope in the desolation felt after the extremist attacks on Paris.

"Hopefully, [the Paris attacks] will incite a discussion about social problems in [France] and in turn create some changes. I think this is optimistic [considering] France is historically a country resistant to change. I hope to be proven wrong," Wiesley said.

Despite the tragedy surrounding the recent Paris attacks, Burns sees a double standard in the media's portrayal of radical extremists.

"There have been countless killings, bombings and suicide attacks in the Middle East in the past month, where hundreds of lives have been taken of innocent civilians, and yet those don't make the front page everyday. And so why does this incident that occurred in the West, in a culture with which we can better identify, suddenly take all of our ink and above the fold space in our press?"

Burns said. "We're too comfortable to pick and choose when we want to be concerned about the Muslim issue and when we don't. I think that we need to feel for all the loss of lives, all the casualties, whether they were a Syrian [civilian] or an everyday Parisian."

ISLAM AGAINST TERROR

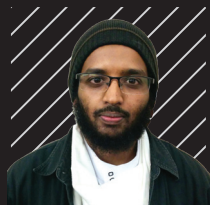
The recent attacks of ISIL have brought into question the security and safety of Western nations. In addition to creating a sense of concern, these attacks have given rise to the growth of Islamophobia in the United States.



Shams Ghoneim

According to Ala Mohamed '17, presidential candidates like Donald Trump have elevated Islamophobia to new heights. Trump, who recently called for "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States," has stirred controversy, especially among the Muslim-American community.

"My parents are independent and have never voted. But I bet you this election my parents will vote for whoever is against Trump," said freshman Baraa Suleiman. Shams Ghoneim, president of the Muslim Public Affairs Council of Iowa and member of the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa's board of directors, encourages students to condemn discriminatory sentiment.



Molhim Bilal

"You've got to speak up against divisions and hatred for 'the other' because 'the other' can be anybody. It can be African-Americans, Asian-Americans, the poor [or] the disabled. This system has got to stop, and you cannot allow people

in political positions, like Trump, to do that. It pains me to see that people were cheering [for Trump's policies]. How can you cheer hate?" Ghoneim said.

With the passing of the recent terrorist attacks in Paris as well as in San Bernardino, California, a new wave of Islamophobia has spread across America, inciting fear similar to that felt during the Sept. 11 attacks.

"We as typical Americans don't do a very good job of informing ourselves of the history of the people who end up becoming these radical Islamists," Burns said.

Burns is afraid that after the Paris attacks, Islamophobia will negatively influence the community's perception and connotation of Muslims.

"I am concerned about the increase of Islamophobia in our society. I'm concerned that people will paint an overly wide stroke over all Muslims. Your everyday Muslim is just trying to just live their life. They denounce these acts."

In response to the potential advancement of Islamophobia in Iowa City, on Nov. 29 the Iowa City Mosque presented "Islam Against Terror," a talk led by the Imam, or spiritual leader of a mosque, Molhim Bilal. The talk outlined Islam's denunciation of terrorism and also provided a platform for community members to ask questions about the Islamic faith.

"The prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said, 'There will come a time when there will be a group of people who are Muslims. They will be young. They will read the Quran and they will not have

any understanding of it. They will kill the Muslims before they kill the non-Muslims.' Then he said, 'If I find them, I will fight them.' These are people of [ISIL] and Al-Qaeda. Where does that ideology come from? The ideology comes from ignorance, from misunderstanding of Islam. These groups of people, they take verses out of context," Bilal said.

Bilal hopes to bring an end to Islamophobia in the area by educating fellow community members about Islam and its true practices and interpretation. Much like Burns, Bilal believes that fear of Muslims and Arabs is brought upon by ignorance.

"The best way to fight against [ignorance] is to do things like [having interfaith talks]. To tell people that Islam is not about terrorism. We are just like you. Every Muslim came to this country to live simple, regular lives, like you. They want to go to school, they want to get a job, they want to have a family and they want to see their children do great things, like all of us. This is what every Muslim wants to do in this great country. And there are lots of Muslims [in the Middle East] who wish they could come to this country and have the opportunities that we all have," Bilal said.

Bilal believes that the first step in ending ignorance about Islam is to understand some of its core principles.

"The definition of terrorism does not include Islam," Bilal said. "Nor does the definition of terrorism include any religion. Islam condemns terrorism. [The prophet Muhammad] said, 'Whoever kills



Baraa Sulheim '18



Ala Mohammed '17

one person, it is as if he has killed all of humanity, and whoever saves one life, it is as if he has saved all of humanity.”

Freshman Maab Osman agrees that ending ignorance and discussing Islam is the best way to combat Islamophobia and is looking to start a club at West that is devoted to sharing the true teachings of the Muslim faith. Part of the reason Osman thought of starting such a club is because she has experienced Islamophobia firsthand in the Iowa City community.

“I was at the mall and a [worker] said ‘You can take that off now’ [referring to my hijab] and he said that everyone who wore a hijab was a terrorist. I just ... walked away. He clearly didn’t understand what Islam is,” Osman said.

Suleiman, who moved from Burlington, Iowa earlier this year, has experienced similar situations.

“We were the only Muslim family in my neighborhood in Burlington. My mom wore the hijab, and everyone stared at us wherever we went. I played basketball in seventh grade and during bus rides to [away games], kids would [say things like] ‘Oh, you’re a terrorist. Osama bin Laden must be your relative.’”

Osman and Suleiman both say that their experiences are not uncommon. Osman says that in light of the events in Paris and California, her friends have been increasingly concerned about the public’s perception of Muslims.

“My friends were talking about wearing hats instead of hijab. [I guess] to disguise themselves to look ‘normal.’ ... this is who I am, I am not going to change myself for [others] ... we aren’t [terrorists].”

Mohamed acknowledges that people have the right to be afraid, however she has a few words of precaution.

“I know you’re scared, and we’re

scared, too, because we don’t know who is going to attack us. We don’t support [ISIL]; we hate them as much as you do. You tell us to leave our country, but what do you leave for us to go back to?” Mohamed said.

In addition to fighting against ignorance, Burns believes that to combat Islamophobia, the

government needs to implement better practices.

“I encourage our politicians [and] leaders to be reflective and thoughtful and most importantly [to] have a more long-term plan,” Burns said. “A long-term plan with a deep understanding of the history of these oppressed people and where they’re coming from.”



CROSSING THE LINE

On the Dec. 5 episode of *Saturday Night Live*, Ryan Gosling descended the iconic steps to the main stage and introduced himself as a seasoned New Yorker. Choosing his New York lingo carefully, he almost had the audience convinced before it was pointed out that Mr. Gosling is, in fact, a Canadian. Defeated, he stated, "Not everyone's a big fan of immigrants right now." Although clearly a joke, his words resounded with truth when contextualized with current events.

A few days after the Paris attacks, 31 governors, including Iowa's governor Terry Branstad, announced that they would not accept the promised 10,000 Syrian refugees coming into the United States. Then on Nov. 19, the House of Representatives passed a bill tightening oversight of Syrian refugees by blocking their entrances until they had gone through thorough background checks. Currently, Syrian refugees face 18 to 24 months of screening.

"They're scared that [ISIL] might be coming with these refugees, but ... what percentage of this group is actually [ISIL]? ... Why do you think these people want to leave their home - they're being attacked, as well. It's either that they join [ISIL] and die, or [ISIL] kills them and they just die. That's pretty much the option America is giving them," said Hiba Ibrahim '16. "[Even] after the Paris attacks, Paris is accepting 30,000 Syrian refugees. It just confuses me -- we're accepting a third of that. Why is that?"

For Noon Bashir '16, the refusal of immigrants into the country is more than just a political issue; it is a matter of family and survival.

"There are children who can build the future and [ISIL] may kill them," she said. "Give [refugees] the opportunity, give them a life better than the life they have in Syria."

Despite finding some sense in the rationale behind not being able to offer help to every refugee, JaeHee Eom '17 still harbors some qualms as to the government's reasoning behind their decisions.

"Help is right, but the government can't accept all immigrants," she said. "I understand their acts, because it's hard to get jobs in this country, but I want to ask why they just don't accept [refugees]."



Mas Omari '17

When questioned as to why people have been so quick to distrust Syrian refugees, Mas Omari '17 suggested that there isn't a logical reason behind this perception.

"People are scared that [immigrants] will come here and do bad things, but I don't think that's true," Omari said.

Zainab Makky '16 also believes that the xenophobic reactions arising from recent events are mostly unfounded.

"[Xenophobia is] just an irrational fear that Americans have of people from different countries. Those fears have no place here, considering America was founded

on immigrants and diversity. We've been improving so well up to now, when we're faced with [the threat of] attacks," Makky said. "If it's not American, if they're not speaking in a clear tone or if they're not acting the same way as them, that's what scares them."

When evaluated further, students believed that these occurrences are not altogether unheard of, and that xenophobic sentiments are not isolated to recent events.



Hiba Ibrahim '16

"Our parents immigrated from Sudan," Nada began, "I didn't know about it until I learned it here, that Al-Qaeda first formed in Sudan, and when we learned that in class, that made me shy away; I wasn't as quick to say 'Oh yeah, I'm from Sudan.'"

Makky agrees that xenophobia has permeated American society for quite some time, referencing her native Sudanese mother's experiences in the United States.

"If you were to listen to me or my brothers or my sisters speak, we don't have an accent, we were all born in America. However, [my mother's] accent is still a part of her and she'll never be rid of that, so everywhere she goes, the first thing that a person recognizes is 'oh, she's not from here,'" Makky began. "It's Iowa City, so people are kind to her, but there [are a] very few who are mean and aggressive. When she talks about it, she makes a point to say whatever they're mad about, it's

not her. She's just the easiest thing to attack."

Jireh Massaki '18 says that there have been small accounts where he has felt as though he has been targeted due to his non-native background.

"I work at McDonald's and sometimes people make fun of my accent," Massaki said. "I don't have friends at school because people [can be] mean. They make fun of me. But then they say 'no, we're just kidding.' I think that they were laughing their hearts, though."

Bashir agreed that foreignness can lead to misunderstanding and intolerance, even in Iowa City.

"People bully [me] because of my hijab and my accent. One time, I was walking in the mall, and a girl asked why I was wearing a hijab," Bashir said.

Other students conceded that the environment at West itself isn't entirely hostile; however,



Nada Ibrahim '16

this doesn't mean that xenophobic tendencies don't arise throughout the rest of the country.

"At least here, at West, the only reason we haven't really felt [negativity] is because there's so many of us," Hiba said. "[But] I've heard stories of our family friends saying, after 9/11, 'when I was in high school, I was bullied.'"

According to student accounts, xenophobic ideals, when they're not explicitly keeping immigrants from entering a country, can have other lasting effects on the image of immigrants in the United States to natives and non-natives alike.

Hiba suggested that certain tenets



of American culture, for example, the “melting pot” ideology, are subtly promoting a xenophobic agenda.

“Some people don’t like saying ‘the melting pot’ because [it suggests] that everyone assimilates into one kind of culture, and it kind of takes away from theirs,” Hiba said. “For me, I was born in Iowa and I do know my American side ... but I try as hard as I can to bring [my Sudanese culture] out.”

Makky agrees that the discomfort some Americans may feel when confronted with other cultures leads to a loss of pride in one’s background and identity.

“[Assimilation] definitely happens [in Iowa City,]” Makky said. “I have friends who come here from Sudan, and the first thing they change is the way they dress. No longer is it the traditional headscarf; now they’re showing a little of their hair, or they’re tying it off. It’s because they want to look how other American teenagers look. I feel like they’re losing a sense of identity trying to conform and trying to fit in.”

Additionally, barring refugees and immigrants can sometimes make Americans even less tolerant of immigration, furthering intolerance in the country.

“Some people think Africa is a bad world to live [in] ... [they think] there are diseases, and that they’ll bring stuff here. When people say ‘no immigrants,’ they begin to discriminate more, and think you’re bad,” Massaki said.

However, Makky believes that situations like this can often

have the opposite effect on the population -- according to Makky, the majority may, in fact, become more accepting and tolerant.

“[Sensational news] will make people think. When they publish these radical theories, people are more likely to realize their own ideas on that topic,” Makky said. “I definitely think it is beneficial in that way. I hope that, as they’re reading the latest news, people will reflect, is this really America? Is barring people based on religion what we want as a whole? It’s good [in this way.]”

On the other hand, some students believe that the “melting pot” ideology is somewhat beneficial.

“America’s such a melting pot already, there’s no use in trying to limit or trying to define what ‘being American’ means. The mixing of cultures broadens the horizons, and broadens everyone’s cultural spectrum and . . . that’s an amazing thing,” said Ioana Cherascu ’16.

There’s a general consensus among students that not only should immigrants have a chance in America, but they are crucial to its’ social fabric.

“In Africa, a lot of people have intelligence ... but there’s no place to spread it out, and they don’t know how to [use it]. They need to come here to practice it and have more freedom and opportunity,” Massaki said.

Those who have immigrated to America also contend that

immigrants are an integral part of American society.

“[Immigrants] are important because they can build a better future [since] they’re going to work here,” Bashir said.

“Immigrants make every possible effort to adapt themselves to new circumstances. [Please] think more seriously about accepting new kinds of people into society,” Eom said.

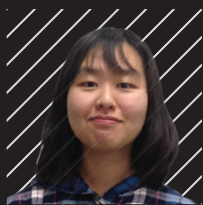
Makky agrees that America needs immigrants, and asserts that, furthermore, they need America.

“[Immigrants] are definitely essential. I’m in U.S. history now, and what I’m learning now is that America has been seen as this asylum for all of mankind, and this beacon of freedom and every immigrant that is fleeing something, whether it’s persecution and death, they come to America because they can depend on America,” Makky said.

Even with xenophobia making an ill-fated return, Makky still has hope.

“America is stable, it allows its’ inhabitants to enjoy a certain freedom that you can’t really find with certainty somewhere else. It’s a beautiful country and . . .

America should be honored that people want to be here, and that people aren’t fleeing instead. Immigrants empower the United States, it’s very empowering to have not only someone who looks different from you, but someone who can perform different things” Makky said.



JaeHee Eom '17



Jireh Massaki '18



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