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Radford University welcomed Zohra Sarwari to speak on March 16, 2017, in the Bonnie Auditorium. Swarari is an American Muslim speaker, but is also a business owner, author, and entrepreneur, among other things, in the United States. Sarwari was originally born in Afghanistan, however, at a young age, she fled the country along with her family due to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Her family came to the United States and settled in New York City when Sarwari was six years old. They later moved to the suburbs of Virginia and then she graduated high school in California. Zohra Sarwari currently travels the country to educate others about diversity by sharing her challenges and experiences. Sarwari had three points she wanted to talk about Thursday evening, which was: terrorism, the meaning of Islam and the purpose Muslim women wear the clothes they do.

“Think locally,” was how Sarwari framed her portion on the meaning of terrorism. By thinking locally, she meant that acts of terrorism occur all around you. Using her definition of terrorism, Sarwari claimed that many acts of individual violence are terrorism, for example, spousal abuse, robbery, and assault. Using this definition, she argued that the label terrorism is only used when talking about violence by Muslims rather than white people. “It is not fair to judge a religion on the action of the few,” Sarwari said.

“Islam means peace and obedience to the creator and his creation.” Using several examples from the Quran, Zohra Sarwari wanted to show that Islam is not a religion of oppression or violence rather one of peace and submission to God. One of the important things she said when analyzing Islam, is that one has to separate religion from culture. The example of Saudi Arabia came up as she spoke about how women were not able to drive a car in that society. Sarwari pointed out that nothing within Islam defends that women do not have the right to drive, that naturally has developed within the culture of Saudi Arabia.

The final topic for Thursday evening was that of how women dress within the religion of Islam. Most people when they see a head scarf think of Muslims but as Sarwari pointed out head scarves are used within many religions, especially Christianity. She showed a picture of a Catholic Nun and a Muslim woman to show how similar their clothing is. Sarwari asked the audience why do Muslim women wear the head scarves, which she answered, not out of

oppression but out of the love of God and respect for his commands. Sarwari described the several different types of headscarves that “God has commanded” women to wear a hijab to a full body covering. By wearing the traditional clothes in public, Sarwari said, that it allows people to see them for who they are rather than judging them on their bodies.

Zohra Sarwari came to Radford to unite not divide. She wishes to educate people on the truths of Islam to help stop the discrimination towards Muslims in our society and throughout the entire world. She will continue to travel and speak to help identify the misperceptions of Islam within the United States to help foster a more inclusive society. With a little help from Michael Jackson, Sarwari concluded with, “change starts from within us.”