

What Does 'The Honor Diaries' Tell Us?

By Alan Dale
The Plain Talk

According to Zainab Khan, a licensed clinical therapist in the movie, "The Honor Diaries," the biggest issues facing the panelists in the film are that people aren't taking a bigger stand against "honor" abuses and that political correctness has made it difficult to question a "culture."

"We are overly politically correct because if I question it, I am questioning their culture," Khan says in the film. "This is about human rights and not culturalism. It's not about a culture or anybody's culture to be abused."

Women have been known to be attacked for simply using Facebook or Twitter to talk to a man.

In Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed a driver's licenses.

Activist Raheel Raza, President of The Council of Muslims Facing Tomorrow, says in the film: "(Women's) lives are not

their own, their bodies are not their own."

Raza is Pakistani-born who is now a long-time Canadian. She is proud of her Muslim faith, but she is concerned with human rights violations that have come – erroneously – in the name of Islam.

One issue, according to Raza, is that the religion of Islam has become "politicized."

One example came in the 1980s during the Iranian Revolution. There, a nation once progressing toward equality amongst men and women, suddenly turned women into legal second-class citizens, Raza said.

However, all who see the film do not feel the same.

Ibrahim Hooper, Council on American-Islamic Relations spokesman, said the film is "Islamophobic" and noted that creators behind the film are "well known anti-Muslim bigots."

In an interview with the Plain Talk, Raza said she has had strong support



from many in the Muslim community and that the film is not about religion, but rather about the acts against women.

The activist agreed that women have battled subjugation by men throughout the centuries.

"Yes, women have battled these types of abuses in various forms in various cultures," Raza said. "The challenge for Muslim women is the fact that men get away with abuses wrapping themselves in religiosity and referring to man-made laws of centuries old sharia laws, which opens a whole other can of worms."

She added, "It is not a Muslim thing, but due to various reasons, it was adopted by some Muslim societies."

Raza also explained how the Islamic holy book "The Quran" does in fact not condone any of these acts, but "secondary commentary and hadith will support it in some cases."

"The film has the purpose to expose the problem, educate the masses and then eradicate the problem," Raza said. "In order to eradicate a problem you have to first acknowledge and be aware that it exists. If we push it under the carpet we will never be able to find a solution."

"It is a film that is very positive in that it shows positive, educated, eloquent, modern, caring, Muslim women who are speaking out and actually doing something about it. I have no time with those who want to make this a religious issue. This is a film about human rights and women subjected to violence in certain areas of the world."

CASA Expanding to Clay County

By Elyse Brightman
The Plain Talk

The Clay County Board of Commissioner's met on Tuesday morning to discuss a brief agenda at the Clay County Courthouse.

Among the discussions was Sherri Rodgers-Conti of Southeast CASA to announce the organization's expansion into Clay County. Southeast CASA is based in Yankton.

"CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates, so, as the name implies we are going to be working with the court system and we are going to be training people to be advocates and that special group that we advocate for are abused and neglected children," Rodgers-Conti said.

CASA is an organization that trains volunteers from the community to represent children who have been removed from their homes and put into foster care due to abuse and neglect by a parent.

"We are going to be expanding our services to Clay County as soon as we can recruit volunteers, train them to be CASA advocates and then we can begin

assigning them cases here in Clay County," Rodgers-Conti said.

According to Rodgers-Conti, CASA began in Seattle 38 years ago when a judge couldn't afford to hire advocacy workers and began training volunteers from the community.

Since then CASA has formed into a national organization with six programs in South Dakota.

"In the three and a half years that we've had services in Yankton County, we have served 60 abused and neglected kids," Rodgers-Conti said.

CASA will be looking to add three to four volunteers from Clay County then add an additional three to four within a year.

Volunteers work around 10 hours a month and are assigned one case at a time.

More information about Southeast CASA can be on its website southeastcasa.org.

The board passed an application for a pipe line by Clay Rural Water System and a proposal for the reconstruction of part of Highway 50 at Saginaw Avenue by Clark Engineering.

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March 27 meeting originally scheduled to finalize details of the upcoming conference.

She said the meeting was attended by only 5-6 people.

"I wanted to be there," Johnson-Struckman said. "When I walked in, there was (Sternadori) at the end of the table and there was an ongoing discussion about the film not being shown."

She went on to say no one was listening to Sternadori and some in attendance were attacking her credentials.

The implication was that students would be harmed by the showing of the film.

"It was an illusion of a reason for what was censorship for something that is important," Johnson-Struckman said. "(Women and Gender Conference committee members) were trying to do the right thing, but they were forgetting free speech in their quest to protect students. You don't protect students, college students are free agents. They don't have to go to that movie if they

don't want to."

According to Johnson-Struckman, discussions ranged from moving the film to a new slot to replacing it with a film that would be sponsor approved.

She said that without notice, the originally scheduled showing of "The Honor Diaries" did not take place.

Jesus Trevino, associate vice president for Diversity at the USD, and also on the Women's Research Conference Planning Committee, believes the issue was more about being able to better "process" the film.

Trevino said that "processing" is to have a dialogue where questions are heard and posed.

He said that the film needed a forum setting that allowed participants to not only discuss how acts portrayed in the movie hurt women, but also to protect the integrity of Muslims – making sure the majority that do not practice these type of abuses were not misrepresented.

"The committee voted for the film to take place and there is going to be no censoring on my watch, I will tell you that," Trevino said. "The film is very good because it brings up a good issue about women that

needs to be addressed."

Trevino said that no one representing USD has come to him with demands or requests to censor the film. He added that he was surprised the original showing had been cancelled, as well.

He also believes this Friday's showing will run as planned due to having more time to set the "process" in proper order.

Sternadori said she is confused and surprised at the opposition to the film.

"When I first defended the documentary, I defended it on First Amendment grounds and had not even seen it, and I argued it's about human rights," Sternadori said. "It doesn't talk about religion very much. We don't want to generalize about the religion of Islam because there are multiple cultures in multiple countries in multiple regions of the world."

"Can't we show the film and let people make up their own minds?"

Sternadori believes that the attempt to stop the showing of the film is a bigger issue.

"I don't understand why people are trying to define which Muslim community is more authentic, and which Muslim voices should be heard and which

shouldn't," Sternadori said.

Sternadori said no one has complained about the content of the film, but more about the motivations of the Clarion Project, which sponsored the film.

"This would not be newsworthy if there hadn't been any resistance in showing the film," Sternadori emphasized, when asked the reasons given in opposition to the film. "I dug in my heels because it went against everything I had studied in graduate school and my personal beliefs of having information out there."

As far as Sternadori is concerned, showing the film is simply about creating conversation.

"This is a film about women's rights and human rights," Sternadori said. "I am just putting it out there in the public's face and I hope there will be a good discussion about it."

She added that she believes the film will be shown on Friday.

NUMBERS ON 'HONOR' VIOLENCE

- Nine of 10 countries with the worst gender disparity are in Muslim-Majority nations according to World Economic Forum.
- Only 8 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women in the Middle East and North Africa according to the United Nations.
- Over 85 percent of women are illiterate in Afghanistan and 40 percent in Egypt.
- According to the film a number of abuses toward women are still occurring in the name of "honor" or how a woman can bring shame to a family.
- Since 1989, 125 million women and girls have been victims of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the Middle East and Northern Africa, according to the United Nations, 500,000 in Europe according to Amnesty International, and 150-200,000 are "at risk" in the USA and Canada according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
- 60 million women were married before the age of 18 in the Middle East according to UNICEF. The practice does occur in the United Kingdom and the United States. Many of these girls are forced into marriages at ages as early as eight and sometimes younger.
- The United Nations reports that 5,000 honor killings occur yearly in the Middle East but some advocacy groups believe that number to be four times that, according to the film.
- According to several sources, there are 1.6 billion followers of Islam. Thus, the above numbers, although too many in themselves, still represent a fraction of the entire Muslim community.

SPRING IS HERE!
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The City of Vermillion Code Enforcement would like to remind you that it is the responsibility of the occupant or owner of any property in the City of Vermillion to keep tall grass, weeds, and noxious vegetation growth cut whenever:

- Grass or weeds grow taller than 6 inches on any developed lot
- Grass or weeds grow taller than 12 inches on any undeveloped lot

Property in violation of this City ordinance will receive a notice and be assessed a fee of \$10.00 for the first offense and \$20.00 for each additional offense. If the grass and weeds have not been cut in the time allowed the City will cut the grass and/or weeds and the property owner will be billed for the cost of mowing plus a \$25.00 service fee.

If you have any questions please contact Code Enforcement at 677-7089.

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Alaska Double Denali Cruisetour	7/26/15	8/9/15
A Peek at the Old West in Montana & Idaho	8/18/15	8/28/15

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