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STYLE SPRING COATS B4



fresh voices

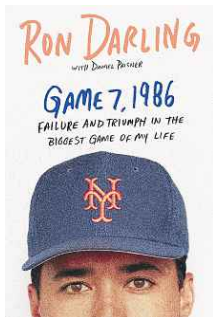
PERSONAL STORIES FROM THE MUSLIM WORLD, TOLD ONSTAGE B2



ASIAN EATS Top 10 Asian restaurants in Nassau and Suffolk newsday.com/restaurants

bookpitcher

Book Revue is one of the early stops on former pitcher Ron Darling's book tour. His latest book, "Game 7, 1986: Failure and Triumph in the Biggest Game of My Life," is set for release tomorrow. He speaks and signs copies of his book that breaks down one of baseball's biggest "forgotten"



ST. MARTIN'S PRESS

games, at 7 p.m. **Wednesday** at the **Huntington** bookstore. **ADMISSION** Free **INFO** 631-271-1442, bookrevue.com

firefighters

The Islip Town Fire Fighters Museum and Education Center and the Islip Arts Council present an exhibit that covers the **history of town fire departments**, including pictures of early and modern firehouses at Brookwood Hall in **East Islip**. The last of three presentations is 7 p.m. next Tuesday, spotlighting firefighting equipment from the bucket brigade era of the 1700s through the present. The exhibit ends April 30.

ADMISSION Free **INFO** 631-224-5420, islipartscouncil.org



Charles Beckwith photo

CHARLES BECKWITH

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ADAMI NADEL

Ferdous Dehqan, Tiffany Yasmin Abdelghani and Amir Khafagy in "Beyond Sacred," a production based on interviews featuring non-actors with a range of Muslim perspectives, to be performed **Wednesday** at Stony Brook University's Wang Center.

Issues of identity

Young Muslims share stories, often harsh, on stage

BY JANELLE GRIFFITH
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For Valley Stream resident Tiffany Yasmin Abdelghani, traveling — even locally — brings its own brand of angst.

In 2014, Abdelghani was on a Long Island Rail Road train heading home from class at LaGuardia Community College in Queens. Like many other passengers, she took a call on her cellphone. But Abdelghani's conversation was the only one cut short by an irate fellow commuter.

A woman was screaming at her, but not because she had violated the MTA's courtesy cellphone policy. Abdelghani, 27, was wearing a hijab at the time, and she believes the woman became concerned about her because she identified her as Muslim.

"I asked her what was wrong and she said, 'Why don't you go back to your country?'" Abdelghani says.

This experience is one of many depicted in "Beyond Sacred: Voices of Muslim Identity," Ping Chong + Company's interview-based

BEYOND SACRED: VOICES OF MUSLIM IDENTITY
WHEN | WHERE 6 p.m. Wednesday at Charles B. Wang Center Theatre, Stony Brook University
INFO 631-632-6400, newsdy.li/wangsacred
ADMISSION \$10 (\$5 students)

raised Muslim and Abdelghani, who converted from Christianity in her mid-20s.

"The word 'actor' would not accurately represent our intention, which is to bring real people to the stage to tell real stories," says Sara Zatz, co-writer and associate director of Ping Chong + Company, a theater group.

FROM LIFE TO STAGE

The participants, who range in age from 20 to 30, were all children at the time of the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks. Four lived in the United States and remember how the attacks shifted the way Muslims are perceived in the country, how people began to treat them more harshly.

The fifth participant, Ferdous Dehqan, did not immigrate to this country until 2013, but vividly remem-

production that will be performed Wednesday at the Charles B. Wang Center at Stony Brook University.

The 75-minute show depicts personal, historical and political narratives of young men and women from a wide range of Muslim perspectives.

"Beyond Sacred" does not feature actors. The five New York participants — the term the show's producers prefer — include four who were

ON THE COVER Kadin Herring, Tiffany Yasmin Abdelghani and Ferdous Dehqan are performing in "Beyond Sacred."

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DANIEL BRENNAN

bers facing a different kind of fear growing up in Afghanistan around the same time.

Dehqan first encountered the Taliban with his mother when he was just 4 years old. The scene is one of the earliest and most gripping in "Beyond Sacred."

For her part, Abdelghani says "Beyond Sacred" has given her an outlet to discuss her journey to Islam and to share its "hardships and goodness."

"I wanted to be a part of this production because it allows me to paint a realistic picture for people curious about Islam," Abdelghani says. "I think Islamophobia exists because of people being biased and not understanding or taking the time to learn about Muslims."

Islamophobia is a major theme of "Beyond Sacred." Zatz and her co-writers, Ping Chong and Ryan Conarro, believe it stems from a lack of awareness and understanding.

"From what we see in the U.S. and across the world today, political leaders and the media are portraying many diverse communities in black-and-white ways that foment

fear, suspicion and misunderstanding, often for their own political gain," Zatz says.

MAKING THE SHOW

The casting process took about four months. Zatz and her co-writers adapted a script after multiple interviews with each participant.

"We call 'Beyond Sacred' interview-based, rather than 'oral history' or 'verbatim' because, although the text is based on interviews, it is not always 100 percent verbatim to the original texts of the interviews," Zatz says. "Rather, some of it is adapted and scripted."

In this case, the real-life experiences were illuminated by the larger history of Muslims in America. The performers gave final permission before the work was performed on stage, she adds.

"'Beyond Sacred' intends to build bridges of understanding between people who might imagine themselves to be very different from one another, but, who, in the experience of this production, realize how much we all fundamentally share," Zatz says.



ADAM NADEL

Amir Khafagy, Tiffany Yasmin Abdelghani, Ferdous Dehqan, Maha Syed and Kadin Herring in "Beyond Sacred." Islamophobia is a main theme of the show.

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