

Lilburn-MountainParkPatch



'The Muslims Are Coming'

Show featuring Muslim-American comics hopes to foster laughs and understanding.

By Scott Bernarde

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When the producers of “The Muslims are Coming!” were looking for venues for their tour of free comedy performances, Gwinnett County, particularly Lilburn, caught their eye.

The satirical standup comedy tour, which features several top Muslim-American comics, aims to dispel “myths associated with Islamaphobia” in shows scheduled in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama and Florida, and later in Midwest states this fall.

The tour comes to the Aurora Theatre in Lawrenceville on Aug. 9, beginning at 8 p.m. Reserve the free tickets [here](#).

Shows are scheduled in Gainesville, Fla., Aug. 5 and in Columbus, Ga., Aug. 6, before the Lawrenceville show, then in Birmingham, Nashville and Murfreesboro, Tenn., afterward.

Muslim-American comedians Negin Farsad and Dean Obeidallah say the shows — and corresponding documentary by the same name — bring a message of understanding and open communication through laughter to the communities they visit.

“It’s going to be funny for everyone. It’s not just for Muslims,” said Obeidallah in a phone interview last week. “Our hope is to use the stand-up comedy to bring people of all faiths and backgrounds to laugh and to foster understanding.”

The Dar-E-Abbas mosque controversy in Lilburn caught their attention and prompted Farsad and Obeidallah to search for local venues to host the show. Obeidallah read about the controversy online — the city’s denial of a request by the mosque to expand its facilities on Highway 29 at Hood Road, the subsequent lawsuit filed by the mosque, and the Department of Justice investigation into the city’s decision. A decision on that issue could come at any time.

The comedians say their interest in bringing the show here is to shed positive light on Lilburn and the surrounding area, and not to use it as a foil for their comedy.

After all, we’re not all that different.

Farsad, who directed and produced the critically acclaimed documentary, “Nerdcore Rising,” and has written for or appeared on IFC, Comedy Central and MTV, grew up in California as the daughter of Iranian immigrants. She saw her parents become friends with Jewish neighbors and overcame her own misperceptions about gay people.

Obeidallah, who co-started in Comedy Central's "Axis of Evil" special and has been on other numerous TV shows, was born in New Jersey, the son of a Muslim father and Catholic mother.

"Hey, just like Christians have a cross-section of people, so do Muslims," Farsad said. "We want to reach as many people as we can, especially those who have never met a Muslim before."

Farsad and Obeidallah will produce a documentary later that will include on-stage excerpts from tour performances, interviews from local leaders, and man-on-the-street encounters — such as an "Ask A Muslim" booth and a Q and A at the end of each show.

The Lawrenceville show will include performances by Farsad and Obeidallah, plus Omar Elba, Mayshoon Zayid and Georgia's Gilbert Lawand.

"There is always going to be anger and hate in the world ... I don't know if we're going change people's minds. We just want to meet in the middle," Obeidallah said. "I have confidence in my fellow Americans. I think most people are tolerant."