

# Muslim professor embraces positivity

Ali rekindles her faith post 9/11 but faces challenges

By **KATRINA BOND**  
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Shazia Ali stepped into line, ready to board the plane, when a security guard came over to her. He asked her to remove her shoes, explaining he was performing a “random check.” Ali had already been through more than four security checks since she set foot in customs, and it was getting old.

When Ali had left for vacation two months before, she passed through customs without any extensive pat-downs or security checks. As she returned to Dallas, she was stopped at every new station and asked to repeat the same checks over and over. The only difference was that she was now wearing a hijab.

This incident took place in 2002, when airport security was heightened in response to the 9/11 attacks. Ali wondered why they weren’t pulling aside people without headscarves. The increase in security seemed directed specifically toward Muslims.

At the time, Ali had just recently begun wearing a hijab.

“It was the most incredible experience of my life,” she said. “And that moment really hit me, ‘Oh my God, I’m going to be a different person if I wear this, and I’m going to be viewed very differently.’”

Ali, an English teacher at Eastfield, has seen a resurgence of hostility and harassment over the past year since Donald Trump began arguing that Muslims were dangerous people. The president-elect has previously stated he would like to ban all Muslims from entering the United States and have Muslim-Americans register so that the government can keep a better watch on them.

“I would argue that it is worse today for Muslims in America than it was post-9/11,” Ali said. “The rhetoric is being spoken out openly, everywhere. Before, it was more under wraps. Now, when you have [the future president] who’s going to talk about it openly on a podium, you need a little bit of inner strength.”

She said this climate of mistrust and fear that Trump is creating is



ALEJANDRA ROSAS/THE ET CETERA

**English professor Shazia Ali reads the Quran at the East Plano Islamic Center. Ali has practiced Islam since 2002.**

damaging to the community.

Ali said she frequently experiences the negative effects of stereotyping. Because she grew up in the Middle East, many people expect Ali to speak Arabic or have a very traditional, religious lifestyle. While Ali was born in Pakistan, she grew up in Dubai, which she described as “almost the Las Vegas of the Middle East.”

In Dubai, Ali led a secular and privileged life. Although she grew up surrounded by Muslims, she was unaware of many aspects of the religion. She considered herself culturally Muslim because of her family’s customs and traditions but knew very little about Islam.

Ali went to a British high school in a time when her family had housekeepers and chauffeurs. For fun, she would go to ice skating rinks with her friends or hang out on the activity floor of her building, playing tennis or badminton. Ali wore jeans and T-shirts, spoke English and craved hamburgers and milkshakes.

“It was like the melting pot of the world,” Ali said. “Different nationalities, different ethnicities, exposure to different kinds of people. It was a

very diverse population.”

Moving to the U.S. at 22 wasn’t much of a cultural shock for Ali, barring her introduction to American football. She was a cultural minority, but she was already used to a Western lifestyle.

On Sept. 11, 2001, things changed.

She was an administrative assistant at the University of Texas at Dallas and still leading a non-religious lifestyle, caring for her son and pregnant with her daughter. Her friends knew she was Muslim, but she didn’t necessarily “look” Muslim.

“One of the first things I encountered [after 9/11] was that people asked me these questions,” Ali said. “‘Oh you’re a Muslim too, right? So can you tell us why they’re doing this? Can you tell us where it says that you have to kill people or you have to bomb yourself?’ They were asking really hard questions, and I had no clue how to answer them.”

At this point, Ali took a step back to take a long look at herself and Islam. She began reading more about the religion and tried to figure out what it means to be Muslim. She soon realized that she truly identified with Islam and decided to embrace it.

As she grew into her newfound faith, Ali began changing aspects of her lifestyle. She began wearing long-sleeved, loose-fitting clothing, and she abstained from alcohol. The most noticeable outward change was that Ali began wearing a headscarf, known as the hijab.

“I liked the idea of being recognized as a Muslim,” she said. “That kind of made me feel more confident about myself.”

Ali said that pulling aside everyone who “looks” Muslim or wears a headscarf is an uneducated and sometimes nasty approach to security. She said not everyone who wears a hijab is Muslim, and not every terrorist is going to have roots in the Middle East.

“It’s the same thing as looking at an African-American male, and if he’s 6 feet tall, you’re just going to assume he must be some kind of a thug,” she said. “It’s stereotyping at its worst.”

Simeon Dohmen, a 6-foot, African-American majoring in construction, is taking Ali’s English class. Dohmen said he has experienced instances where people assumed he was going to steal from them. His

mother raised him and his brothers to dress in ways that would stop people from stereotyping them.

Even at work and school, Ali noticed people treating her differently. She had trouble adjusting to wearing the hijab regularly. She would choose not to wear her headscarf some days.

“The first year was a mess,” Ali said. “I could see the difference. I would walk the same halls, and when I had the headscarf on, people would look at me differently.”

In 2003, Ali faced the brunt of more stereotypes, this time in the classroom. Ali was a freshman at Richland College and approached her humanities professor to ask what majors were available in the field. She was interested in the humanities, but her professor dismissed her. He said she could “possibly do something with religion,” implying that a Muslim woman had no other interests or passions.

Seven years later, Ali earned her doctorate in humanities and literature from UTD.

Now, Ali said she sees more aggression toward her community.

**See Professor, page 4 ►**

## FAFSA applications open

The application period of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid is open for the 2017-2018 academic year.

The application period opened Oct. 1, three months earlier than in previous years. The new date is a permanent change to the FAFSA process. A FAFSA is required for all students applying for federal grants, loans and work study.

The change was made to help students attending four-year schools, but it should benefit community college students as well, said LaKisha Wooden, program coordinator for Rising Star.

"It will help students receive their award letters earlier," she said. "They will exceed meeting the priority deadline and can focus on other things like getting registered for next semester."

The earlier application window also means students may use information from

their 2015 completed tax returns rather than making estimates before their latest tax returns are complete.

"The earlier students get this done, the greater chance they will have receiving additional grant funds that are awarded first come, first serve," Financial Aid Director Karen Lazarz said.

Lazarz offered these tips to improve the application process:

- \* Write down your ID, password and challenge questions. Since you use them only once per year, they are easily forgotten.

- \* Use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. The FAFSA online system can pull data directly from the IRS system so you don't have to enter it manually.

For more information about FAFSA and the financial aid application process, visit [dccc.edu/PC/FA/Pages/default.aspx](http://dccc.edu/PC/FA/Pages/default.aspx)

— Compiled by Kilee Torrez

## NEWS Briefs

### DART, DCCCD to provide free bus passes for students

The Dallas County Community College District and the Dallas Area Rapid Transit system have collaborated to offer free Student GoPasses to qualifying DCCCD students. Credit students must be enrolled in at least six credit hours, and continuing education students must be enrolled in at least of 96 contact hours during regular semesters.

During the summer, students must be enrolled in three or more credit hours, or 48 or more contact hours in the fourth quarter, respectively.

To get a GoPass, students must have a photo taken at their campus, download the GoPass app and fill out a request form for online verification. The form will be available sometime this month.

For more information, visit [dccc.edu/SS/On-Campus/Discounts/pages/dart-student.aspx](http://dccc.edu/SS/On-Campus/Discounts/pages/dart-student.aspx).

### Spring 2017 registration has begun, ends in January

Registration for wintermester and spring semester classes began in November. Jan. 11 is the last day to register for regular spring semester classes.

After the deadline, students can still register for flex term courses until the day the class begins. The last day to register for students who do not have "good" academic standing is Jan. 7.

### Campus will be closed from Christmas through new year

The fall semester ends on Dec. 15. Campus will close for the holidays at 5 p.m., Dec. 23 and reopen Jan. 3. Spring 2017 classes will begin Jan. 18.

#### Corrections

In the Oct. 26 issue of The Et Cetera, the names of volleyball player Kerstin Fredrickson's professor Stacey Jurhree were misspelled and Jarezy Munoz's gender was misidentified. The Et Cetera regrets the errors.

# Professor sticks to faith through struggles

Continued from page 3

The first few days after the election, reports surfaced of assaults on people of color in Trump's name. A woman in Ali's neighborhood was assaulted in a grocery store, and her hijab was pulled off. Even before the election, people had verbally assaulted Ali in public and vandalized her house.

"I think the biggest problem that all minorities face is the silence of the spectators," Ali said. "When you see something wrong happening, don't be silent. Speak up. There are no more choices left. If you see something happening, you have to address it. You cannot be quiet anymore."

Ali is not worried that Trump will have a chance to implement his plan to ban Muslims from the U.S. because it would most likely violate the First Amendment.

"I know that Trump's ideas of banning Muslims and building a wall, none of it is probably going to happen," Ali said. "But that's not the point. The point is that he said it. It has been verbalized and articulated and out in the open for everyone to hear. The 50 percent of America that voted for him thinks that the right thing to do. So if we are going to go ahead and assault a minority just because they're Latino or Muslim or gay, they're going to be OK with it because our president does it. It's



ALEJANDRA ROSAS/THE ET CETERA

### Shazia Ali and her daughters shop for new outfits and hijabs.

perfectly fine. No one is going to hold you accountable for that. So you've lowered the bar of your morality and your integrity by electing him."

However, she is trying to focus on the positives. The Thursday after the election, Ali attended a program at her third-grade daughter's school. A man gave up his seat for her, and another woman told her "things are going to be OK." It's little acts like these that give Ali hope.

"Even though there's a lot of negativity about Trump's election, this is one ray of hope that I see, that I've actually witnessed," she said. "I strongly believe that whatever happens is for the good. There's some good in it. We just don't see it right now."

Ali believes that the only way to

end these prejudices is to educate others and stand together.

"There is that curiosity that his rhetoric has built up within intelligent people who want to sit down and say ... 'What exactly are Muslims about?'" Ali said. "There are more conversations happening. There are more interfaith events happening. We are having those interfaith, intercultural conversations that are leading to more awareness and a more positive educational system where we start learning about one another."

Dean of Social Sciences Mike Walker said that Ali disproves stereotypes by being herself. She is patient and kind with others, even when they ask her inappropriate questions about her headscarf or Islam.

"She allows all of us to see that the stereotypes are nonsense," Walker said.

Until he met Ali, Walker said he had never truly known a Muslim person before. He only knew of the vague stereotypes portrayed by the media. Now, he considers Ali a great role model.

"She's all about the kind of values traditional American culture is about," Walker said. "She couldn't be more American."

Ali also has an advantage in the classroom, bringing in stories from her childhood in Dubai and her personal experiences as a minority in America. Ali and Walker co-teach a learning community that combines English composition and U.S. history. Walker knows that Ali has a unique background and perspective, and he encourages her to tell her side.

"We're a better nation if people bring their different cultures into the mix," he said. "We're a better country for that."

Ali and Walker's students appreciate this as well.

"It opens up our eyes to different perspectives of what she went through differently than what we go through," nursing major Nani Brown said.

Ali does not deny that there are differences in her daily life from that of other Americans. However, she sees herself as a regular person;

a wife, a mother of four, no different than the next American. She takes her children to the roller skating rink, entertains friends and writes creatively in her free time. Her poetry was recently published in the Dallas-Fort Worth anthology "Cattlemen & Cadillacs."

Most importantly, Ali thinks, is the fact that she's a mom. She smiled as she mentioned her eldest daughter, who is 14 and began wearing the hijab within the last few years. She laughed about her daughter stealing her more fashionable scarves in order to match them to her outfits.

Ali admires how her daughter wears her hijab without hesitation. Ali made the decision when she was in her mid-20s, and it came with lifestyle changes and a search for her identity. For her daughter, wearing the hijab is simply part of growing up and doesn't come with much baggage.

As Ali's two other daughters come of age, Ali said that ultimately, the decision to wear the hijab will be their own.

"It's a choice that [they] have to make," Ali said. "It doesn't need to come from me or anyone else."

#### ABOUT THE COVER

DR. SHAZIA ALI ATTENDS HER MOSQUE.  
PHOTO BY ALEJANDRA ROSAS  
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION AND DESIGN  
BY DAVID SILVA AND AHMAD ASHOR

# GIRL BOSS

## Dean embraces femininity, strength in leadership role

By **TAYLOR ROBERTS**  
Contributor  
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“Who runs the world?”

Judith Dumont wants to – or at least her little corner of it.

A Beyoncé poster in her office asks that question. Dumont agrees with the singer’s response: “Girls.”

Dumont is proving that “girls” can be successful, even those who were once told they weren’t “college material.” She has been promoted four times in a five-year period since coming to Eastfield College in 2010. Now, as executive dean of workforce, corporate and continuing education, she is responsible for organizing, planning and budgeting multiple departments as well as building relationships with corporate agencies to help find jobs for future students.

In doing so, she has earned the respect of her staff, who have given her the title “Girl Boss.”

“She is full of enthusiasm,” Center for Corporate Solutions account manager Janet Foreman said. “She’s full of ideas, and she sees into the future. She sees what this department can be and where we can go. She knows how to get us there.”

But for Dumont, getting here wasn’t easy.

Through many jobs and negative messages, Dumont has been on a journey to prove her leadership skills.

She grew up in Enid, Oklahoma, where a high school counselor told her that she would be better off in

cosmetology school than college. The discouraging messages didn’t stop there. She felt disgraced by teachers and even family members.

“You are very smart, Judith, but you lack discipline,” they said.

“There was always a ‘but,’ ” Dumont says today.

Sometimes Dumont feels like she’s still fighting that battle for respect. When she was promoted to executive dean last December, she was eager to share the news with her family.

“I don’t believe you,” her father said.

“Dad, I promise you.”

Eventually, she sent a picture of her office nameplate to her father to prove it was true.

Dumont has been working non-stop to prove herself once again. Since she has been executive dean, she has led the district in the tornado relief effort of 2015, created Camp Harvey, a youth camp for children to stimulate learning, and built up the Adult Education and Literacy Program.

“She is whip-smart,” said Rachel Wolf, associate vice president of academic affairs and student success. “She’s hilarious, high-energy and she is able to take things that are really kind of undefined and underdeveloped and turn them into really amazing things.”

Being a wife and mother of a 5-year-old while working consistently, Dumont finds it hard to juggle her husband, son and job at the same time. When she is at home, she fo-



ALEJANDRA ROSAS/THE ET CETERA

Above, Judith Dumont takes her 5-year-old son, Ryder Dumont, to the park to play. Left, Ryder drew on a mirror that hangs in Dumont’s office.

somehow, everyone at the bar knew who she was.

She felt special, like she was a celebrity. But not all the memories of her father were pleasant.

“We didn’t know what behavior was going to walk through the door when my dad got home,” Dumont says. “We were scared to go to bed sometimes. We would hear my dad’s truck and we would hide and say, ‘Oh, what’s he going to do?’ Some nights it was fine, but other nights it wasn’t.”

When Dumont was in sixth grade, her mother graduated from college and left her father. Her mother’s diploma allowed her to pursue a career in teaching, which gave Dumont and her siblings a more comfortable lifestyle.

This was Dumont’s first lesson about the value of a college degree.

“It was like an escape route,” she says.

### Noticing social injustices

From a young age, Dumont saw injustice everywhere, and it seemed that girls and women were always treated differently.

To her, nothing seemed fair.

It wasn’t fair that her brother got to stay out until 2 a.m. while she had to be home by 11 p.m. It wasn’t fair that her father didn’t pay child support when her mother was raising four children on \$40,000 a year.

“We didn’t have a choice but to be poor, and that made me mad,” she says.

She recalls sitting in a church pew with her siblings and feeling the stares of the congregation piercing through them during the sermon.

See Social, page 8 >

cuses on her family, and when she is at work, she sticks to the task at hand.

This past year has been long but rewarding for Dumont.

“You know how the presidents look way older after they’ve served?” she says. “I kind of feel that way.”

### Her early life

Dumont grew up poor in a small town with her brother, sisters and mother. Her father was rarely in the picture.

One of Dumont’s earliest memories is visiting her father in prison. She was only 9 months old when he began serving a two-year sentence for his part in a stolen car ring. He spent another 18 months in a halfway house after that.

Her mother raised four children on her own. With no college degree, she relied on welfare and donations from the church to get by. When the children needed clothes, she would buy them at thrift stores.

When the children reached grade school, Dumont’s mother enrolled in college. Her father was out of prison, but he was a heavy drinker and drug-user, so the children were kept busy.

“We were at church Sunday and Wednesday. Softball Tuesday and

Thursday,” she says. “I realize now that [my mom] was booking us so we weren’t home.”

But Dumont always knew where to find her father. His office was Chuck’s Place, a local bar. And she knew the

“You know how all the presidents look older after they’ve served? I kind of feel that way.”

—Judith Dumont  
Dean of Continuing Education

phone number by heart. Sometimes she even visited him there.

One afternoon, Dumont walked into the bar, grabbed a cue and began shooting pool with her sisters. Then she encountered a bar regular who called her by name.

“Oh, you’re Judith!” he says. “You were on student council, and you won the writing contest.”

Dumont’s father had never attended any of her school events, but

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The Et Cetera

# Social justice, dedication to students drive Dumont

Continued from page 7

sermon. Everyone knew her father was in prison.

They pitied her, and it pissed her off.

Sometimes Dumont took her aggression out at school.

"I popped off at teachers and was suspended a lot," she says. "I was suspended once a year. Seventh grade, eighth grade, ninth grade and 11th grade. I skipped so much that I wouldn't have graduated if I didn't forge a bunch of letters from doctors."

Later, after she began working, she found more inequity. It wasn't fair that a male colleague who had the same education as she did was taken more seriously than she was.

And it wasn't fair that every time she went to lunch with an older male mentor, she was automatically accused of sleeping with them for a promotion.

It felt as if the whole world was against her.

## Finding her path

Dumont knew at an early age that if she wanted to go to college, she would have to pay for it herself. Before graduating high school, Dumont was not happy at home. Her mother's second husband had abusive tendencies.

During her senior year, she basically lived out of her car because she didn't want to go home. This strained her relationship with her mother.

After graduating high school in 1995, she headed to Oklahoma State University. But she quickly realized that college was more expensive than she originally thought.

"I could barely feed myself," she says. "I was giving plasma to eat. I had to choose between shelter and school."

Dumont ended up choosing shelter.

"I felt like a dropout and a quitter," she says.

At 19, with only \$50 in the bank, Dumont wasn't sure where to go. She was dating a law school student who was moving to Dallas, so she decided to move there and live with him.

"It's like a stupid 'Thelma and Louise' story," she says now.

Her boyfriend was the "perfect guy," until he drank. Dumont soon saw that he was an alcoholic, just like her father.

After living together for two months, he started becoming physically abusive. Dumont tried to get all



of her belongings out so she could leave before he returned home one day, but she was too late. The two began arguing, and he hit her several times.

She left with nothing but the clothes on her back.

"I didn't have a place to live for three to four weeks," she says. "I stayed on [a friend's] couch. I could have gone home, but I was too stubborn."

Five days before Christmas, Dumont moved into her own apartment.

She recalls spending Christmas Eve listening to Christmas carols on the radio while sitting on her twin mattress. The only other furniture was an end table she found on the side of the road.

"It was a dark time," she says. "It was then I knew I needed to start doing something different. I just didn't know what it was yet."

Dumont picked up extra shifts at the restaurant where she worked. Within a year, she earned enough money to go back to school at Richland College.

This time, college was her escape route.

## Fighting for social justice

Today Dumont holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Dallas and a master's degree from the University of North Texas. She is currently shopping for a college to begin work on her doctorate in educational leadership.

While in graduate school, Dumont interned with Youth First Texas, a nonprofit agency that works with young runaways, ages 14 to 22, in the LGBTQ community. She chose the organization because one of her best friends in college came out as a lesbian as was kicked out by her parents.

The internship led to a permanent position where she gained experience in administration. She sorted budgets, created programs and worked with agencies to find money. While working there, Dumont helped create a counselors group, survivors group, gender identity group and a Coming Out 101 program.

"The gender question fascinated me," she says. "I like anyone who challenges the system."

Dumont was selected to be a part of the "NOH8" campaign, a pho-



ALEJANDRA ROSAS/THE ET CETERA

Left, Dumont points out the United States to Ryder on a map mural. Above, Dumont pushes Ryder on a swing in the park.

tographic silent protest in response to California's Proposition 8, which prohibited same-sex couples from marrying. She was also a part of the 2009 Equality March in Washington D.C., which she attended with several of her Youth First kids.

Her academic career began in June 2010, when Dumont became the program coordinator of the Gateway to College program at Eastfield. She quickly moved up to associate dean of college readiness and mathematics in December 2011, and three years later she became the associate dean for arts and communications. While in this position, she created The Link, a tutoring center for students enrolled in English, reading, writing or language courses.

"In just a very short amount of time, she created a space in the library," Wolf said. "We didn't have a location for [The Link], so she created a space for it."

By December 2015, Dumont had moved up to her current position as an executive dean.

In the past year, she has found ways to strengthen the college's brand as well as the individual programs in the Workforce, Corporate and Continuing Education Division.

"The thing I am most proud of is the team I hired," she says. "Young people, fresh out of school and grad school that are ready to make a difference."

## Reuniting with family

Despite their rocky history, Dumont reconciled with both her parents.

A few weeks before Thanksgiving, Dumont got a phone call. Her father had had a stroke.

His organs began to shut down, and he was unable to control his body.

Family and friends came to visit Dumont's father in his last few days, knowing there wasn't much the doctors could do. He died Nov. 17.

"[I'm] just really grateful I had as much closure as I did with him because absolutely nothing was left unsaid," she said.

While Dumont was in Oklahoma, she went through her father's apartment and came across a few items. She found her father's GED certificate, his voter registration card and a scrapbook with everything Dumont and her siblings had ever accomplished.

"He had every news clipping," she said. "Even though he wasn't emotionally present and sometimes not even physically."

The favorite thing she found was his silver identification bracelet. Dumont wears it from time to time and thinks of him.

Dumont is still healing from her loss. She feels as if she is in the middle and doesn't know how she is doing yet. Dumont often draws upon her father's energy and wants to enlighten people about him.

"I try to think about what was really good about him and what was really beautiful about him, and how I can present those same characteristics," she said.

While happy with her successes, Dumont knows she will face further challenges, both professional and personal. But she plans to draw energy from a source that has never betrayed — her self-confidence as a strong woman.

"It gives me a sense of relief that I can be a big, loudmouth, sassy girl that's not going to roll over and be told who I am and what to think," she says. "I've been called a bitch more in the last year than I have been in my life, but I'm OK with it."

# 'I just want to survive'

## Student with Duchenne muscular dystrophy fights through health issues, attends school

By **DAVID SILVA**  
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A large cardboard "22" adorns the "Star Wars"-themed cake sitting in front of Edwin Alanis' table. The large crowd surrounding him, all in their Sunday best, gleefully finish singing "Happy Birthday." Edwin's mother, Guadalupe, lights a single candle at the center of the cake.

Edwin gathers his breath and blows with considerable effort, yet he only manages to release a soft puff. Nevertheless, the candle goes out and the family celebrates.

Edwin's 22nd birthday fell on Easter this year. More than 20 family members visited his home throughout the day to celebrate.

The younger members sat near Edwin's electric wheelchair and shared their memories of him and one another.

What hides behind the celebration is that Edwin has been through a recent emotional slump due to complications with his illness.

"I think it's always going on, but [sometimes] at a lesser level," he said. "It's not that it's depression. It's more of a feeling that you don't belong."

Edwin is a digital media major living with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, an extremely rare genetic disorder that causes progressive muscle degeneration.

DMD occurs when a particular gene on the X chromosome lacks dystrophin, a key protein that promotes muscle strength.

The disorder does not allow Edwin to walk and negatively affects his immune system, heart and lungs. The disorder affects about 500 people nationwide.

Because men only have one X chromosome and the disorder is X-linked recessive, most of those affected are male. The average lifespan for people living with DMD is 25.

Edwin's family used to live in Mexico, but once his symptoms started to show at the age of 3, they realized that Mexico didn't have the resources to treat Edwin effectively. His family came to the United States in order to access the medical technology to treat his disease.

In April 2016, Edwin contracted



PHOTOS BY DAVID SILVA/THE ET CETERA

**Above, Edwin Alanis is wheelchair-bound due to his Duchenne muscular dystrophy and has to wear an oxygen mask due to recent complications. Lower left, Elizabeth Orta, a family friend, escorts Edwin to class. Lower right, Guadalupe Alanis, Edwin's mother, helps him with a drink at his 22nd birthday party.**



pneumonia and was hospitalized for four months.

Due to his weak immune system, his illness left him in critical condition. Edwin was certain he would die.

"I felt like a fish out of water," he said. "They had to keep increasing pressure on my lungs until they equalized me, which took, like, two weeks. For two weeks, I felt like I wanted to die."

Recovery was difficult. During his

hospital stay, he caught a rhinovirus, had to eat through a feeding tube and fractured both arms.

He now requires an oxygen tank to breathe.

When a member of Edwin's church entered his house on his birthday and asked why he had stopped attending, Edwin was honest.

Edwin's hospitalization forced him to acknowledge his mortality and has driven a wedge between him

and his faith.

Edwin's experience with pneumonia has also affected several parts of his social life.

"He's always been a very social person," Elizabeth Orta, a family friend who helps take care of Edwin, said. "But after his hospitalization, he's kept more to himself"

Edwin said he could have no other option but to attend college like any other student.

He said his disease leads to physical obstacles, but he's confident in his mental ability.

After graduating from Eastfield, Edwin plans to start his own graphic design company.

Despite his commitment to finishing school, Edwin often wishes for a life without his disorder and sometimes feels like he's invisible to the students around him.

"I am scared of dying before everyone else," he said. "And I do wish to have what other people have sometimes. I just want to be like everybody else."

Edwin finds support in his family. His father, Pablo, provides for the family, his mother or Orta accompany him to school and his sister and her husband, Denisse and Justin Dillard, are always helping Edwin.

"My sister has always cared about me, has sacrificed things so that I can be OK," he said. "During my time in the hospital, they would make me soup, come play games. They talked to the doctors, fought for different things, and they always gave me emotional support."

Edwin's closest friend is his 12-year-old brother, Elliot. Edwin and Elliot spend a lot of their time playing video games together, a passion they share. The two also share a lot of friends, with Edwin a part of most online matches.

Guadalupe said that Edwin hit an emotional and physical road bump following the complications relating to his illness, however he remains optimistic.

Edwin said the oxygen tank might elongate his life. It provides support to his breathing and monitors his overall health.

"The doctors said that I could live up to 10, 20 or 30 more years," he said.

Although his life may surpass the average life expectancy for those with the disorder, he struggles with his persisting condition.

Through the most difficult moments, Guadalupe reminds him of the mentality that has allowed him and his family to persevere.

"We tell him that everyone has to push through no matter the situation," she said. "Nothing should stop

See Edwin, page 5 >

# Student leader strives for engagement

By **MACKS PREWITT**  
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Zach DeCamp, a member of numerous clubs and a student leader on campus, is the 2017 recipient of the Student Leader of the Year Award, an honor commending outstanding academics, leadership and community involvement.

An accounting major, he is president of the Accounting Club, treasurer of the Communications Club and Eastfield's Phi Theta Kappa chapter, a senator in the Student Government Association and a member of the Sigma Kappa Delta English honor society.

He has working toward the President's Volunteer Service Award, which grants recipients a medal and a letter from the president of the United States if they complete the award.

Awards are categorized between 100, 175 or 250 volunteer service hours in a year. DeCamp plans on completing the 250-hour award.

When he moved from Pennsylvania to Texas in December 2016, DeCamp did not participate in any extracurricular activities on campus.

It wasn't until Accounting Club adviser Regina Brown asked him to become a member that DeCamp discovered the variety of clubs at Eastfield.

He now wants to help other students become involved in clubs by working with the Eastfield Board of Campus Activities, which he will be serving on for the next academic year.

Brown said DeCamp is driven and self-motivated.

"He's the kind of student you don't have to follow up with," Brown said. "He will follow up with you. He's the kind of student you want to help."

DeCamp said his passion is to help Eastfield students through his volunteering.



DAVID SANCHEZ/THE ET CETERA

## Student Leader of the Year Zach DeCamp poses in the Fireside Lounge.

"I really enjoy giving back to people," he said. "That's why I like tutoring. What I want the students to know is that I truly am here for [them]. All the titles are meaningless. What I truly want is to make Eastfield a better place for the students."

However, DeCamp said that he sometimes he has too much on his plate.

"While it's very rewarding to be in all these positions of leadership, it is a lot and it is overwhelming at times," he said. "So there are times where I have to turn down extra opportunities, which is really hard for me because the reason I got involved with a lot of these clubs was



YESENIA ALVARADO/THE ET CETERA

## DeCamp gets a pie thrown in his face as a part of a Communications Club fundraiser.

because people would ask me to be an officer and be involved, and I don't know how to say no."

DeCamp said he is dedicated to his responsibilities as a student leader.

"A lot of the time, I'll end up sacrificing a lot of personal time and sleep," he said. "I'll have to tell my girlfriend, 'Hey, I can't come over. I have to turn this in or work on this project.' It's a struggle to find a balance, but it is all very rewarding."

DeCamp said he looked to Alejandra Sal-

cedo, president of the Communications Club, as his mentor. Salcedo was Student Leader of the Year for 2016-17.

"A lot of the student leaders on campus are in it for the titles, but Zach is very selfless," Salcedo said. "Most of them will be like, 'Here are my titles, respect me,' and Zach is over there like, 'Hi, I'm Zach, want to hang out?' I wasn't surprised that he was awarded Student Leader of the Year. When it came time for applications and he asked me if I thought he would get it, I told him yes. There wasn't a doubt in my mind."

# Edwin finds peace in science fiction

Continued from page 4

you. We always tell him that we have to live life the way God has given it to us. He tells me 'Well, I can't walk.' I say, 'Don't let that stop you. Your mind and hands are sound, and you can speak. There are so many young people that can do so much for themselves and the world, but they don't do it. Fight for what you want, and be who you are.'"

Guadalupe says that Edwin's personality and enthusiasm still shine.

Edwin spends a lot of time reading science fiction novels and is a huge fan of all things "Star Wars."

His room is decorated in "Star Wars" memorabilia, and his family's

bookshelf is full of "Star Wars" novels.

"I've read every "Star Wars" thing ever written, even if Disney says they're not canon," Edwin said with a roll of his eyes.

Edwin's passion for space operas isn't just because of their entertainment value.

During Edwin's most difficult moments, he finds himself clinging to a similar hope that pushes the protagonists of the franchise to persevere.

"In 'Star Wars,' they have the Force, but it's kind of like God," Edwin said. "If you believe, not just in God, but if you believe in what you're doing, you can do it."

Edwin lives with the "Galaxy Quest" quote "Never give up, never surrender" to push himself through his most trying times.

Edwin said his outlook on life doesn't prioritize the things he can't control.

His goal is to simply take things one day at a time.

He plans to make his return to church soon.

"You're always asking yourself, 'Why does everybody else have this, but I can't?'" he said. "But you also say, 'I'm me because of the things I have. Otherwise I wouldn't be the same person.' I don't really care about any of that. I just want to survive."



DAVID SILVA/THE ET CETERA

## Yaneira and Yaritza Guillen, Edwin's cousins, hold up his "Star Wars" related gifts during his birthday party.

# THE POLITICAL GAP

The Et Cetera examined the partisan culture on campus. We talked to people about their beliefs, the current ideological walls and the role that media plays.

By **JAMES HARTLEY**  
Managing Editor  
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By **KATRINA BOND**  
Life & Arts Editor  
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**N**icholas Singleton walks into his Texas government class, taking his seat at the long table that early-arriving classmates put together. He sets his bag down on the table and, in his low, soft voice, asks how everyone is doing before pulling his textbook out of his backpack.

Singleton, an African-American Republican, is one of the few conservatives in his government class. As the discussion starts up, he finds he is one of the only conservative voices in the room.

Singleton hasn't found many conservatives on campus and has yet to find another African-American student who's Republican.

He said that liberals have tried to use identity politics to change his views.

"I've heard 'Republicans are racists because they favor the prosperous,'" Singleton said. "Another one I've heard is 'You're African-American so you should vote Democrat because they're in favor of the poor.'"

Singleton's ideology is also unique at home.

"I didn't adopt my parents' political identity," Singleton said. "I'm a Republican, but my mom's a Democrat. We have opposing views, especially about gun control and the health of the economy."

Singleton often feels out of place around other students. His views are not typically well accepted, and sometimes he's been asked to not express them.

"I tried hanging out with a girl and her friends, and she stopped me to say that I really need to be careful what I say," Singleton said. "All her friends are Democrats, and they're disgusted by Donald Trump."

A 2015 national survey of college freshman conducted by the University of California Los Angeles found that 33.5 percent self-identify as either "liberal" or "far left," a 1.8 percent increase over 2014 freshmen.

The survey found that 21.6 percent of freshmen identified as "conservative" or "far right," only 0.6 percent higher than 2014.

According to the Pew Research Center, Trump received only 8 percent of the African-American vote. Singleton said he doesn't understand the unquestioning support of Democrats by African-Americans.

"I've asked African-Americans before what the Democratic Party has ever done for the African-American community," Singleton said. "They usually hesitate and can't provide me with any answer."

Most conservatives interviewed for this story said they feel outnumbered at Eastfield, and some wouldn't talk to The Et Cetera for fear of retribution from peers or professors. Those who were interviewed said they feel liberals don't understand them, and some reject them altogether.

Psychology major Josh Nelson, vice president of Phi Theta Kappa, said he's found liberals on campus with whom he can have respectful conversations, but most of the time, his opinion is rejected.

He said that while friends like Tristan Macklin, a mechanical engineering major and fellow vice president in PTK, accept him and tolerate his views, most people don't.

"About 70 percent of the time I get that staunch, 'How dare you believe that,' reaction," he said.

Kathy Bayne, a sign language interpreter at Eastfield who grew up in a liberal household, said that there is a larger conservative population on campus than there appears to be. They are just quieter about their political views than liberals.

Sam Farley, an undecided major who identifies as libertarian-conservative, feels he is an outsider among Eastfield students.



**Nicholas Singleton**



**Matt Hinckley**

**M**att Hinckley is so far left that he doesn't consider himself a Democrat but an anarcho-syndicalist, as well as a list of other political identities.

"I consider myself a social libertarian, an economic progressive and a foreign policy conditional pacifist and globalist," Hinckley said.

Hinckley, a history professor at Eastfield for seven years and a Dallas County Community College District employee for 23 years, said this basically means that he believes in a robust democracy, social justice and the government playing a significant role in the economy.

Although his background in history lends itself toward his analysis and views of the United States and its political climate, Hinckley also attributes his views to his upbringing.

"I was raised Catholic," he said. "The Catholic Church has a strong history of social justice on a lot of issues — concern for the poor, concern for the sick."

Hinckley said that because he was born a white male in America, he has a certain level of privilege for things such as not getting pulled over as often or being less likely to be taken advantage of. If he committed a crime, he feels he would likely get a shorter sentence than someone of color. He believes it's his job to use his circumstances to challenge privilege.

"I have a special responsibility to do things to make others aware of the existence of privilege and to act in ways that counteract it," Hinckley said. "My mom always used to say, 'To whom much is given, much is expected.'"

In the past, Hinckley has voted in the Democratic primaries.

"It's the only viable political party in the United States at present that espouses at least some of my ideals," he said.

However, Hinckley said that the Democratic Party has room for improvement.

"It's not sufficiently progressive," he said.

Hinckley believes the Democratic Party peaked during the time of President Franklin Roosevelt. He believes abandoning Roosevelt's economic justice platform is where the Democrats went wrong.

"Franklin Roosevelt won four landslide victories," Hinckley said. "There's a reason for that, and that's because he championed economic programs that helped to begin to form a viable, large working middle class."

Brianna Macias, a business major and liberal Democrat, believes that the growing wage gap is an issue that progressives and conservatives both need to work on.

"The middle class is diminishing, and they're not doing anything to impact that or improve it," she said.

Mechanical engineering major Tristan Macklin is a liberal Democrat who believes that the Democratic Party lost recent elections because of corruption within the system.

"Gerrymandering has played a big part in the lack of representation for liberals in this country, specifically in this state," he said. "The percentage of people that vote Democrat in Texas is much lower than the percentage of Democrats that hold office."

Macklin said that despite the losses in recent elections, he believes the party will only grow stronger.

"The fact that we lost a lot of stuff is just getting a lot of people stirred up, and I think it's going to be good for the party because it will get our voters out," he said. "Everybody wants to go march and nobody wants to show up at the polls."

Hinckley believes that Eastfield is a mostly liberal campus, but that it is open-minded

See Conservatives, page 5 ►

See Liberal students, page 16 ►

# Voice for third party voters isn't represented

This last election cycle, I felt less represented and understood than ever before. I felt more isolated, saw more hypocrisy from both Republicans and Democrats and lost virtually all faith in our current political system.

I'm a Libertarian. That means that I fundamentally believe in liberty as an inherent right for all people. I don't believe that, as an adult, I should ever be coerced into doing something I don't think is in my best interest. I believe all people have the same right.

The Republicans consistently break this rule by favoring police, imposing their moral restrictions on others and pushing ag-

Larsen Ullrich



gressive foreign policies. The Democrats break this rule by forcing others to adhere to their vision for a utopia in true socialistic fashion, whether that be demanding adherence to their sexual agenda or taking a significant portion of my wages to pay for the cigarettes of a man who hasn't worked in years.

These parties are not ideologies, but

political organizations with selfish agendas. It appears that these two political machines are now unashamedly public with their self-centered motives. They are willing to do anything to make themselves look good.

I left the Republican Party a few years ago because I did not agree with its inconsistent agenda. I found the party to be full of people existing only on the liberal spectrum: mindless sheep doing what they're told to do.

Through "liberal" and "conservative" media outlets, most Americans are taught how to think on social and political issues. This ensures easy manipulation and essentially creates a mob mentality — "all Republicans

think that way on this issue, and all Democrats think this way."

This is one of the things the framers of the Constitution sought to avoid along with an all-powerful central government. America has failed both of these objectives, and this two-party system is largely to blame for it.

If popular media outlets actually shared the news without bias or intentional distortion and only included their opinions later, we'd be much better off.

Biases are important because they challenge us to think differently, but they are only beneficial when different perspectives are heard.

See Two-party, page 7 >

## Conservatives feel outnumbered, marginalized

Continued from page 4

Farley grew up in a Jewish-American, conservative household. He said he isn't more liberal than his parents, just more Libertarian. Though his parents homeschooled him, they encouraged him to research and form his own opinions.

He said he feels Eastfield is a liberal campus and that most students and professors lean left.

"When I first got here, I was afraid to even open my mouth," Farley said. "With culture and media, I think a lot of conservatives feel like they're walking into the lion's den."

Economics professor Bob Felder, who has taught here since the campus opened in 1970, said he doesn't discuss his political views at work to avoid conflict with his co-workers. He said he feels comfortable on campus as a professor but not as a conservative.

"As long as I keep quiet, I'm OK," he said.

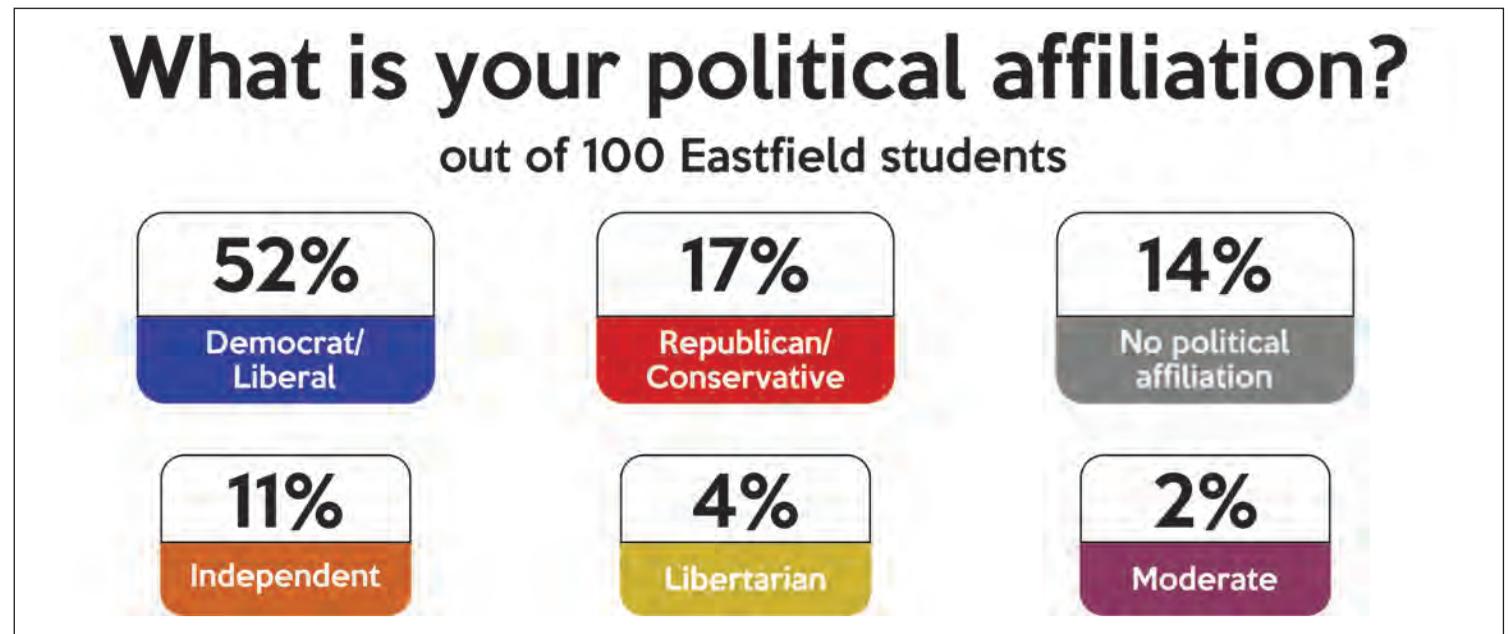
Farley believes that virtue signaling, where a person gets called a racist, sexist, homophobe, Islamaphobe, or other names because of their beliefs, is poisonous to discourse.

Farley said he has been called a Nazi, which was ironic and offensive given his Jewish heritage.

"If someone were to call me a Nazi simply for holding a conservative position, even not knowing I was a Jew, that would completely shut it down," he said. "How would we even begin to have a conversation? I think we need to be very careful and know that the words you use to describe what you are seeing, words like 'white supremacy' and 'white nationalism' and 'nationalism.' Yes, these beliefs still exist. Yes, people still hold these views, but they are not conservatives. Not by an inch, or a mile, are they conservatives."

Nelson has experienced virtue signaling for his political beliefs and the color of his skin. He's been told many times that his views are irrelevant due to "white privilege."

"Corner after corner, I get shut down because I'm a white man," Nelson said. "Most of the time, they don't even know my beliefs."



SOURCE: ET CETERA SURVEY

GRAPHIC BY EMYLEE LUCAS/THE ET CETERA

Felder believes many liberals today feel disdain for conservative views.

"I think Hillary Clinton's comment encased it," Felder said. "A bunch of deplorables. That's how liberals see conservatives: They're deplorable."

Bayne laughed when asked if she believes liberals have any interest in understanding the point of view conservatives hold.

She believes group thinking doesn't allow room for liberals to understand the conservative ideas of individualism and leads them to care more about select demographics than individuals.

The conservatives interviewed said the news stories published, the rhetoric and word choices used in stories and the way certain issues are reported create a bias, usually in favor of liberals.

Farley believes the media has a major influence on the political identity of Americans.

"I think the news media contribute at least to the image that it is mainstream to be liberal," Farley said.

Farley gets his news from the Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Atlantic and National Public Radio.

"I don't think I can recall any interview from any major news source that really hounded President Obama in eight years," Farley said. "Nobody really asked him the super tough questions that I can think of. I can't recall a time when the media went after the president. Compare that to now with Donald Trump. Every day we have some breakthrough about what he's saying or what someone in his cabinet is saying."

Farley tries to find more moderate news sources and opposing views

"I've tried to get away from just news sources on the right," Farley said. "I think as a conservative in my generation, I am constantly having to guard against party bias."

Bayne doesn't mind focusing on mainly conservative news sources.

She consumes most of her news online from sources like News Max and other conservative

media. She said most mainstream news media has an agenda of discrediting conservatives.

Farley said he tries to get a balanced dose of views, but he does watch conservative commentators like Steven Crowder on YouTube.

Farley believes many conservatives, especially young conservatives, are going to non-traditional conservative media like Crowder because of the more casual atmosphere and more libertarian way of thinking.

"Crowder is very sociable, especially as a young person and a conservative," Farley said. "I can go to his website and get his talking points and his ideas and it connects with me as a young person from this generation."

Farley believes any hope for those with different political beliefs to understand each other and get along requires respect.

"I think that the way we combat political correctness is to hold ourselves, as conservatives, to a standards and to say, 'If we expect them to stop calling us Nazis, we need to stop calling them snowflakes,'" Farley said.

**ExtrEmylee** By Emylee Lucas

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## Liberal students, faculty feel campus is open, accepting to political discussion

### Continued from page 4

and accepting to opposing views nonetheless. "Eastfield is a reasonably open and accommodating place, and there are a lot of liberal and left-leaning people there," he said. "But even the people who I know who are conservatives are accepting of that. Eastfield is a person-centered college, and Eastfield is very accepting of ideological difference."

Albamar Seguinot, an education major, said Eastfield is a mostly liberal campus with plenty of opportunity for respectful discussion. Seguinot moved to the U.S. from Puerto Rico in 2014 and feels she has a unique approach to politics due to the fact that in Puerto Rico, the main political discussion is the issue of independence. Although new to U.S. politics,

Seguinot considers herself an independent with mostly liberal views.

"I feel comfortable with my political mindset at Eastfield," she said. "I have yet to encounter someone who has offended me or my beliefs. They have been very respectful. Of course, I don't agree with them and they don't agree with me, but we have been respectful about it."

Psychology major Ofelia Chapa said that when politics come up in discussions with her conservative friends, she listens to their points and responds honestly and respectfully according to her views.

Macias has a few acquaintances who are conservative, but she avoids talking politics with them in order to avoid conflict.

Macklin is friends with conservative

philosophy major Josh Nelson. The two are Phi Theta Kappa officers, and when they aren't handing out free popcorn in the Pit together, they have meaningful political discussions without issue.

"It's good to have varying perspectives in life so that you know what other people think," Macklin said. "A lot of times, if you only talk to people with the same political background, you're in a bubble."

Hinckley bears no animosity toward conservatives.

"I do not believe all conservatives are homophobic and racist," he said. "However... it seems to me that in our society, those who are racist and/or misogynistic, they tend to self-select towards the conservative end,

and they tend to vote conservatively. Not all conservatives are racist and sexist, but I would say most racists and sexists are conservative."

Chapa believes liberals have a more humanitarian approach than conservatives.

"I think they're closed-minded, not open for different interpretations," she said. "I think they make it hard for the right kind of change."

Hinckley believes we must become aware of systemic issues and the roles our everyday thoughts, words and actions can have in perpetuating suffering.

"We all need to 'get woke' about social justice and economic fairness issues," he said. "We need to 'get woke' about history. We need to 'get woke' about current events. We need to practice critical thinking."

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