



August 13th, 2011

U.S. Muslim comedy tour hits Deep South

By Summer Suleiman, CNN

(CNN) – The Muslims are Coming is a comedy tour that is traveling to small towns throughout the South in hopes of opening up a discussion about Muslim stereotypes.



The tour started in Gainesville, Florida, home of Terry Jones, the pastor who attracted international headlines by burning a Quran, and stopped in Lawrenceville, Georgia, outside Atlanta, on Tuesday night. It will continue to Alabama and conclude in Tennessee.

The shows feature comedians Dean Obeidallah, Negin Farsad, Maysoun Zayid and Omar Elba. They are targeting small, conservative towns in the South where controversies over Islam have erupted.

“We came to the South because it has this reputation of being intolerant. It has this stereotype of hating other groups, so we wanted to see,” Farsad said. “We have a feeling that they’re not actually uniformly sitting around hating Muslims.”

Obeidallah, who performed with the recent Axis of Evil comedy tour, and Farsad, producer of the 2008 movie *Nerdcore Rising*, are producing a documentary about *The Muslims are Coming*. The shows on the tour are free, they say, because they want to reach as many people as possible.

“We really wanted to make this tour a chance to reach out American to American, people of different faiths coming together, laughing together,” Obeidallah said.

He hopes the tour will start a candid dialogue about Muslim stereotypes - and that it will simply make people laugh.

And laugh they did, at least on Tuesday.

The Lawrenceville audience was receptive to the performance, even when it veered into sensitive territory. At one point, for instance, Zayid joked about meeting her husband in a Gaza refugee camp and telling him to “pack up his tent”.

The shows also feature a question and answer portion with the audience.

In Lawrenceville, many of the questions gave voice to stereotypes. “Is it true if a group of women get naked, that Muslim men must kill themselves?” one audience member inquired.

“We want to answer the tough questions, we encourage people to ask the tough questions, talk about the stereotypes that are lingering in your mind,” Obeidallah said.