

Pulitzer Center journalist Beenish Ahmed speaks at Kent State

By Conner Howard | Staff Writer Published: April 1, 2015 4:02AM

<http://recordpub.com/news%20local/2015/04/01/pulitzer-center-journalist-beenish-ahmed-talks-with-kent-state-university-communications>

In the experience of one international journalist, the most important stories are often the most overlooked.

Pulitzer Center Reporter Beenish Ahmed spoke to students of Kent State University's School of Communication Studies on Tuesday about her work covering women's and children's issues in the developing world, stressing curiosity and a thirst for the unknown as important tools for today's storytellers.

Ahmed currently reports for ThinkProgress and her work has appeared on Boston NPR station WBUR and in The Atlantic, VICE, The Daily Beast, Boston Review, Medium, The Huffington Post and more. About 125 students and community members attended the public speech.



During her presentation, Ahmed described her experiences in Pakistan, Malawi, Egypt and other developing regions, where she reported on issues facing women and children. Ahmed, whose family hails from Pakistan, reported extensively on young women who are discouraged from attending school, often with threats of violence.

"Going to school became a threat on their lives," Ahmed said.

Ahmed also shared with students her work on exposing sexual initiations for young girls in southern Malawi, harassment against female protesters in Egypt's Arab Spring, trans-gender groups in Pakistan, rehabilitation for female acid burn victims and other experiences often overlooked by traditional news outlets.

"So much of what fuels me as a journalist is that sense of curiosity," Ahmed said. "What's not being reported? I think that's really at the core of what I do."

The common thread in much of Ahmed's work was women across the globe struggling against deeply-entrenched societal systems that disadvantage women.

"It was all tied to empowerment ... that meant reclaiming their own space in society," Ahmed said.

Following her presentation, Ahmed said she hopes young minds are encouraged to seek out the hidden stories and work against human suffering around the globe.

"There's a lot of work to be done and stories to be told, so I just think that people should be encouraged to get into it," Ahmed said. "It's not my place to do a broad, cross-cultural study of conversion disorder ... but maybe there are people out here who are psychologists or neurologists who want to look into it. I hope that it sparks something."

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