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Moroccan Student Society celebrates International Women's Day with henna

Keira Gilmore

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Senior biomedical major Noor Abdelrah celebrated International Women's Day with the Moroccan Student Society on Friday and received a henna tattoo from henna artist Sanae.

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The Moroccan Student Society held a female-only henna night on Friday, celebrating International Women's Day together.

International Women's Day is celebrated worldwide to promote women's achievements and rights. According to the United Nations website, in many countries, it is also considered a

national holiday and it has been sponsored by the UN since 1977.

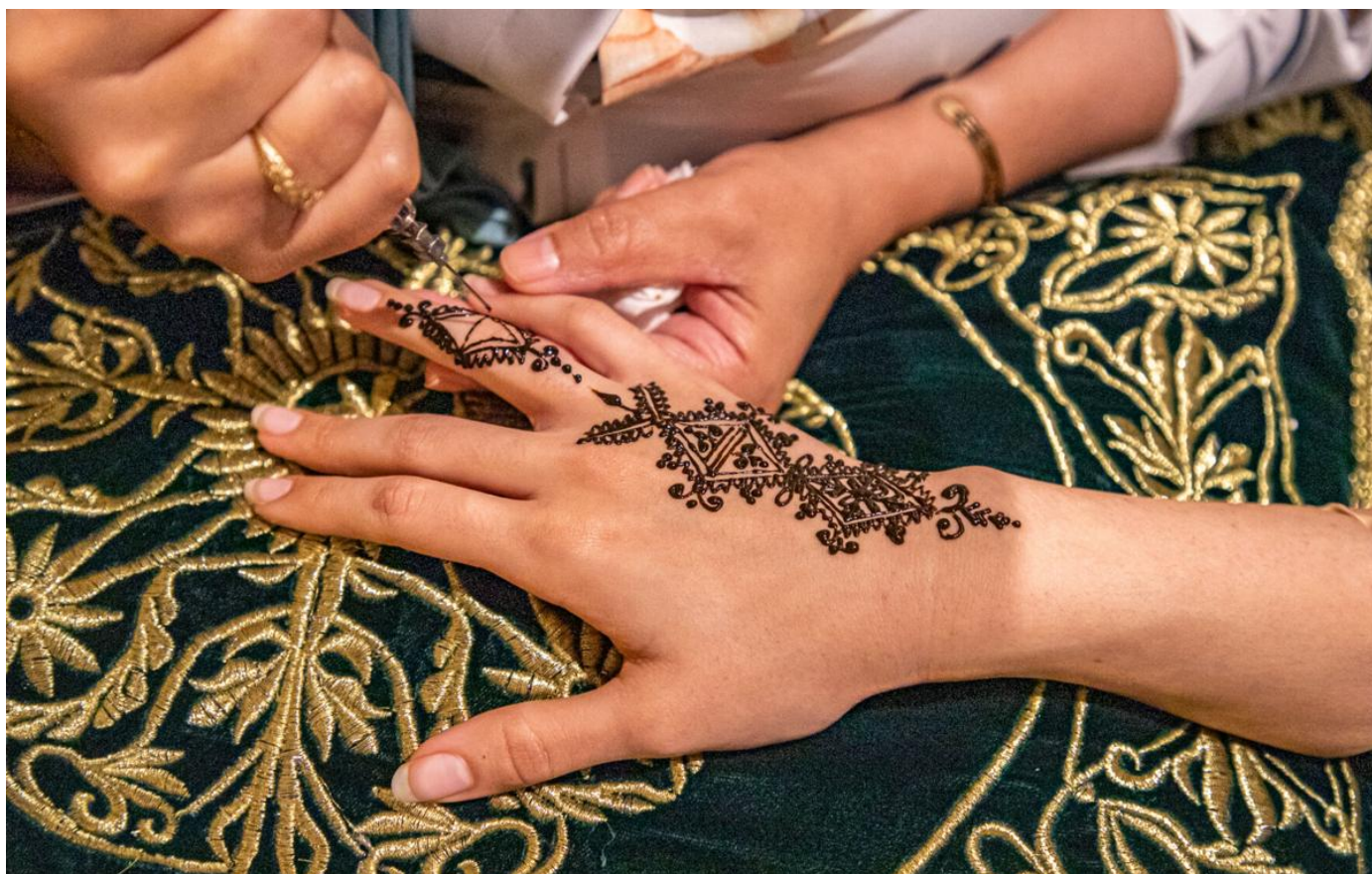
Junior biotechnology major Salma Slaoui was born in the United States but lived in Morocco for 12 years. With a passion and love for her culture, Slaoui said she became the president of the society.

“As Arabs and North Africans, we're often portrayed differently or viewed as mistreated,” Slaoui said. “International Women’s Day to us shows that women are still cared for and appreciated in cultures.”

With a lively atmosphere, students were welcomed in and shared a Moroccan meal before getting to the fun parts of the night: henna tattoos. Students could pay five dollars per hand for a ticket to receive a henna tattoo from a henna artist.

Henna itself is a natural dye made from the leaves of a *Lawsonia inermis* plant commonly known as a henna tree found in Africa and Asia. It has been used as a natural dye for thousands of years, and when it makes contact with skin or hair it creates a stain.

“It symbolizes womanhood and is something special for her to share,” Slaoui said.





Henna designs are a form of body art that uses temporary dye, has a different meaning in each culture and can vary from very simple to more ornate designs.

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Henna plays a big role in many cultures, as it is used frequently as part of celebrations, such as wedding ceremonies, baby showers or celebrating achievements. Most often, people decorate their hands, palms or feet with intricate floral designs.

Salma Bechar, senior political science major, and her sister Sara Bechar, freshman health sciences major, are MSS members who helped Slaoui host the henna night.

“Women can feel free here, have fun and be comfortable around each other, and allow everyone to feel recognized,” Salma said.

While the ladies of the society didn't intentionally plan this event around International Women's Day, as Slaoui, Salma and Sara said, it was a happy coincidence. They were glad to give the ladies of the MSS the chance to participate in a night of celebrating women and their culture together.

“I just want the ladies to have an opportunity to look good, feel good, dance and to get a taste of our culture,” Slaoui said.