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ISLAMIC HORIZONS

TRADITIONS WITH ISLAMIC ROOTS

Sapelo Island offers a glimpse into how local Christian traditions such as shunning pork and women covering their hair originate from early African American Muslims.

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Finding a balance between competing causes

**Yasmin Mogahed on
Coping with Hardship**

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The Original Sources

every year, we experience African American History Month, with its usual accoutrements: schools organize events, the media makes splashes, some organizations arrange events, and of course, politicians do their pompous best. However, this should not be the be all and end all of this moment, especially for Muslims because African American history has Muslim roots and is relevant to all Muslims.

If we survey the horizon, even figures like Malcolm X are being interpreted in so many strains, left to right. Muslims must integrate African American history into textbooks focusing on Muslim American history to serve our Islamic schools. Our future generations must become better informed, fervent caretakers of this legacy.

The ISNA Education Forum is not just extensive but also inclusive, and is well positioned to lend a hand to such a project. It should be books that go beyond Yarrow Mamout's (Muhammad Yaro) struggle to preserve his faith ("traditions" as declared by the mainstream). There is need to include at least a survey of the lands from where these slaves were transported, which help readers gain a firm grasp of what they had been deprived of, instead of the usual stereotypes of a people who lived in the wild. There is need to show that they stood against extreme coercion because they had strong roots.

No doubt Imam W.D. Mohammed has an unparalleled accomplishment to his name, but there is also the need to reach further back to see how the theft of a heritage created a situation such as Elijah Muhammad's race-tainted "Islam" and practices.

In highlighting the achievements of the Muslim African Americans we need an impassioned approach, where careful sifting is a must. Touting famous names or figures simply because of star power does little to promote a positive image of Islam. Such a situation is especially problematic with the entertainment world, where we see those perceived as Muslims behaving badly. The positive side is that more and more examples of Muslims that have achieved renowned success without abandoning practices central to Islam have emerged, such as football players Hamza and Husain Abdullah.

It is thus imperative that Muslim educators, irrespective of the organizational affiliations, pool their resources to develop textbooks that offer an inclusive history of the African American struggle to reconnect to Islam. For instance, such books will research and shed more light into the life and struggle of the slave whose master complained in the local newspaper that this "ungrateful" person had refused a glass of some fancied alcoholic drink as reward for his labor. Indeed, it is not just documenting this accomplishment but a guiding light for situations where people keel in submission to social situations and overlook the requirements of their faith.

There is a need to broaden the reach that the lessons in African American history teach.

This documentation of the *muja-hideen* of our earlier American generations should inspire Muslims of all colors and ethnicities. Instead of waiting for another February, why not start now? ■

ISLAMIC HORIZONS

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ISNA PRESIDENT JOINS HUMANE SOCIETY

ON NOV. 6, ISNA PRESIDENT IMAM Muhammad Hagmagid Ali joined as the 14th member of The Humane Society of the United States Faith Advisory Council.

"Imam Magid's participation on The Humane Society of the United States' Faith Advisory Council highlights a history of Muslim compassion for animals," said HSUS faith outreach program senior director Christine Gutleben. "We look forward to working with Imam Magid to engage other Muslim leaders and communities in the work of protecting animals."

Imam Magid pointed out that the Quran (6:38) asks Muslims to be kind and merciful towards animals, and that there are many stories and sayings associated with the Prophet Muhammad (*salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) that demonstrate his strong concern for animals.

The principles of Halal, he added,



reinforce Islam's benevolence toward animals by insisting that slaughter itself be humane. In the modern world, he said, unfortunately, there are broader

and more alarming cruelties associated with the raising of animals for food that place an even greater moral burden upon us in our faith. Many farm animals in the U.S. are routinely locked inside of cramped cages where they can barely move. They are denied the ability to engage in the behaviors God intended for them to exhibit.

As Muslims we ought to question these farming practices and do our utmost to ensure that animals raised for food are shown the kind of mercy called for in the Quran and exemplified in the life of the Prophet himself."

The Faith Advisory Council plays a leading role in encouraging all people of faith to be responsible stewards and caretakers of God's creation. The HSUS Faith Outreach program engages faith communities, leaders and institutions with animal protection issues on the premise that religious values call upon us to act in a kind and merciful way towards all creatures. ■

ISNA PARTICIPATES IN AMP CONFERENCE: A MOVEMENT UNITED



THANKSGIVING WEEKEND, ISNA SECRETARY general Safaa Zarzour spoke at the American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) fifth annual Conference for Palestine in the U.S., focusing on the theme "A Movement United."

The conference gathered more than 2,000 attendees over the course of three days. Attendees listened to presentations on Palestine and the Arab Revolution, the crisis in Syria, Islamophobia and the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, with specialized tracks for youth and campus activists.

Representatives from diverse groups discussed how to build strong coalitions and make the cause of Palestine relevant to the American public. "The movement for Palestine is not for Palestinians. The movement for Palestine is for all lovers of justice," said Shakeel

Syed, AMP board member.

"We have seen the power of God when He places the steadfastness in our hearts," said Zarzour, calling people to faith and hope during his presentation on the crisis in Syria. Zarzour also spoke during what many considered the conference's most inspiring session, "A Movement United," where representatives from more than 10 groups, as diverse as Zaytuna College and the U.S. Campaign to End the Occupation, spoke, calling for all to work in concert, within their specialized areas. Each panelist spoke about how their organiza-

tion's work contributes to the cause, and how to broaden the effectiveness of the movement.

Islamic Horizons assistant editor Deanna Othman also presented in a session titled "Citizen Journalist: Media Activist" and focused on the emerging cadre of citizen journalists, especially within the Middle East, who are covering events in real time in Gaza and Syria.

"Citizen journalists and bloggers in Gaza allowed us to experience the most recent bombing campaign in Gaza as it unfolded and provided us with verifiable information in real time, before any mainstream news outlet would or could," Othman said.

She also presented in the Campus Activism track on essential media skills for college students, focusing on messaging strategies via outlets such as Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

"This year's Palestine Conference was successful in more ways than can be counted. Besides bringing together thousands of activists, speakers, community members and supporters of the Palestine solidarity movement, the conference succeeded in making the theme 'A Movement United' a reality," Awad Hamdan, National Programs Director for AMP said. ■

BAPTIST-MUSLIM SUMMIT



DR. SAYYID M. SYEED, NATIONAL DIRECTOR for the ISNA Office for Interfaith & Community Alliances, led the ISNA delegation that participated in the Baptist-Muslim Summit hosted by the Newton Center Mass., based Andover Newton Theological School, on Nov. 30, 2012, where more than 75 Baptist and Muslim leaders from across the U.S. met to explore the theme "Loving God as a Pathway to Peace."

They share a growing urgency to seek

to improve relationships between the two faiths.

Among the attendees were President Obama's Ambassador for Religious Freedom, Dr. Suzan Johnson Cook, and the President's Ambassador Rashad Hussain, U.S. Special Envoy to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, present. The speakers spoke on the issue of "Muslims and Christians Working Together for Peace: Signs of Hope and Challenges."

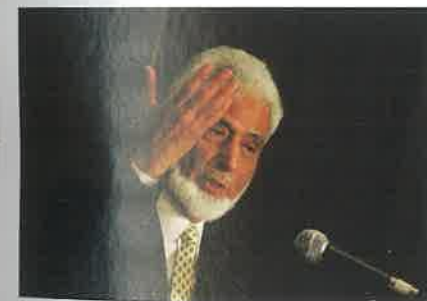
The Rev. Dr. Roy Medley, general sec-

retary of American Baptist Churches USA (the second largest Baptist denomination in the U.S. after the Southern Baptist Convention) led the Baptist delegations.

ISNA, The American Baptist Churches USA, the Cooperative Baptists, the Alliance of Baptists, the Progressive National Baptists, the Lott Cary Society, and Andover Newton Theological School were co-sponsors of this invitation-only gathering. In 2009, there was an inaugural gathering of Baptist and Muslim scholars and religious leaders at Andover Newton. From this first step, the senior representatives of the Baptist and Muslim communities realized that the lack of understanding of "the other" has regrettably contributed, directly or indirectly, to despicable acts of fear and hatred by extremists on both sides, adding to the urgency of this continuing Baptist-Muslim engagement and the counter-voice it offers.

Andover Newton, the internationally recognized as a leader in interfaith learning, founded in 1807, is the first graduate school of any kind in America. ■

ISNA SUPPORTS FOOD BANK



DR. SAYYID M. SYEED, National Director, ISNA Office for Interfaith & Community Alliances, joined Capital Area Food Bank and other faith leaders for the dedication of its new \$37 million Bedford Falls Distribution Center in northeast Washington, D.C. on Oct. 12, 2012. The celebration began with a joint prayer.

The food bank was originally founded in 1980 by an interfaith movement to address the hunger crisis that faced the D.C. metropolitan region. It now reports distributing 33 million pounds of food annually, half of which is

fresh produce, through more than 700 partner agencies to 478,000 local residents. The new center is 123,000 sq. ft. and will enable the food bank to better house and distribute more food for those in need in the area.

Syeed told the audience that Muslims are inspired by the Quranic chapter 76, verse 8, which says that the righteous "feed, for the love of God, the poor, the orphan, and the captive."

U.S. Rep. Eleanor Holmes, one of the program participants, said, "I think of the Capital Area Food Bank as the mother ship. This beautiful building invites more food."

She noted that 92 cents of every dollar donated to the city's largest nonprofit food distribution center goes straight to purchasing food. ■

ISNA CALLS FOR NATIONAL HOUSING FUND

DR. SYEED, REPRESENTING ISNA, JOINED MORE THAN 50 national faith organizations on Nov. 15, 2012 in Washington, D.C. at a national event for the 5th Annual Fighting Poverty with Faith mobilization, "Building Opportunity through Affordable Housing for All" to call on Congress to fund the National Housing Trust Fund as one way to ensure quality affordable housing is available for all who need it.

The event, held at public housing in D.C., built with the help of local trust funds, brought the organizing power of the faith community to action on behalf of those living in poverty and without shelter in America.

Four out of every ten families spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent. More than 18 percent of all families devote more than half of their income to rent. Affordable housing is an underlying issue facing a majority of families living in poverty in America. In 2008, the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) was enacted as part of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act with the purpose of creating dedicated sources of funding to build, preserve, and rehabilitate housing for low-income people. Unfortunately, Congress has never approved any funding. Subsidized housing not only stabilizes individuals and families, but can revitalize neighborhoods; and with over 630,000 Americans homeless, the organized faith community is calling on Congress to fund the NHTF at \$1 billion, providing quality and affordable homes to 3.5 million extremely low-income households over the next 10 years. ■



ISNA COSPONSORS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP AND THE RIGHTS OF MINORITIES IN MUSLIM-MAJORITY COUNTRIES

ON NOV. 19-20, ISNA CO-SPONSORED the "Inaugural International Conference on Citizenship and Minorities in the Muslim World" in Tunis, Tunisia. This groundbreaking conference represents ISNA's ongoing work with Muslim leaders worldwide to establish consensus on Islamic standards and protocols for the advancement of religious freedom, particularly for religious minorities in Muslim-majority countries.

The other cosponsors of the conference were the Global Centre for Renewal and Guidance and the Tunisian Ministry of Religious Affairs, led by Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah and Dr. Noureddine al-Khademi, respectively. Conference participants included Ambassador Rashad Hussain, President Obama's Special Envoy

to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Bou Abdallah Ghulamullah, Algeria Minister of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, Ministers of Religious Affairs and scholars from numerous countries, including Syria, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and several other countries.

Since 2011, ISNA has been working with Muslim scholars worldwide, particularly Sh. Abdallah Bin Bayyah, Vice President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, to develop a mechanism to address challenges faced by religious minorities in Muslim-majority communities around the world. Last week's conference is the latest in a series of scholarly meetings this year, including one this past July in Nouakchott, Mauritania. This conference serves as the inaugural event

for an even larger conference of scholars which will be held in 2013 in Morocco.

In advance of this November conference, ISNA commissioned three prominent scholars, Sh. Bin Bayyah, Dr. al-Khademi, and Sh. Rached Ghannouchi, Vice Secretary General of the International Union of Muslim Scholars to present foundational papers on the notion of citizenship and the rights of religious minorities. The scholars' presentations helped define the numerous contentious issues and key obstacles that Islamic scholars face in discussions on concepts of citizenship and minority rights. For example, Sh. Bin Bayyah argued the need for a new definition of citizenship, one which is no longer based on shared histories, ethnicity, and religion, but rather on a voluntary association between individuals in a particular land. What is needed now, he argued, is a nondiscriminatory body of laws that mediates justly between competing claims in an ethnically, religiously, and racially diverse public square.

The conference was broadcast live by several international and regional media outlets, including Al-Jazeera, and several Arab papers highlighted the conference in morning editions of local and international news. Conference organizers also met with Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki to brief him on the goals of the conference. He expressed his support for ISNA's ongoing efforts to promote Islamic standards and develop protocols for the advancement of religious freedom and rights of minorities in Muslim-majority countries. ■

ISNA SECRETARY GENERAL INVITED TO INAUGURATION OF VIENNA CENTER

ON NOV. 26TH, SAFAA ZARZOUR joined with more than 800 delegates from around the world to celebrate the official opening of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) in Vienna. The Centre building was formally opened on Monday afternoon by the Foreign Ministers of the three founding states—the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Austria and Spain, witnessed by the Holy See as Founding Observer and KAICIID's Board of Directors.

In addition to the ceremonial opening of the Centre, events on that historic day



in the KAICIID journey included a Best Practice Symposium and afterwards a Gala Dinner, held at the Hofburg Palace. The Best Practice Symposium provided a platform for sharing exemplary practices, projects, initiatives and activities,

presented by leading organizations working in the field of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The goal of the Symposium was to promote wider learning and provide inspiration so that others might adopt and benefit from proven best practices in interreligious dialogue. Deep conversations with an exchange of experiences in interreligious and intercultural matters were enjoyed by the guests. Evening attendees were inspired by the message of KAICIID and by the spirit of the event, which concluded with a commitment to the belief in new horizons for dialogue. ■

KAICIID was founded to enable, empower and encourage dialogue among followers of different religions and cultures around the world. The Centre will act as a hub, facilitating interreligious and intercultural dialogue and understanding, to enhance cooperation, respect for diversity, justice and peace. Its mission is to support, through grants and other means, the work of partner organizations and creative initiatives striving for the common good. ■

ISNA PRESIDENT PARTICIPATES IN NRCAT DELEGATION



THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGN Against Torture organized and led a delegation of 22 religious leaders and NRCAT staff in a meeting Nov. 27, 2012, with White House staff, at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building to discuss the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture. NRCAT is encouraging President Obama to sign the protocol, which has already been ratified by 64 nations and signed by an additional 22.

The treaty sets up oversight bodies and other international mechanisms to prevent torture and abuse in places of confinement including jails, police stations, prisons, mental health facilities, immigration detention centers, and detainee centers such as the prison at Guantanamo Bay. Tuesday's meeting was the second meeting on this topic with NRCAT and White House staff.

Imam Magid, President of ISNA, was pleased to join the delegation in this meeting. ISNA is a member of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture and committed to cooperate with interfaith partners in efforts to end torture in U.S. policy, practice and culture. NRCAT delivered 5,568 signatures on its petition calling for the President to sign OPCAT. More information on OPCAT is available at www.nrcat.org/opcat, where NRCAT continues to collect signatures urging the President to sign the treaty. ■



Healing the 'Murder Capital of the US'

Communities nationwide can join ISNA to bring the healing initiative offered in Flint, Mich.

ISLAMIC HORIZONS STAFF

THE FLINT (MICH.) ISLAMIC CENTER JOINED ISNA in hosting a two-day conference under the theme "Healing Flint: An Ethical Imperative on Muslims" on Oct. 12 and 13, 2012, which brought together more than 400 participants, and speakers such as ISNA President Imam Magid, Sheikh Ismaeel Mukhtar, and Imam Siraj Wahhaj of Brooklyn's Masjid Al-Taqwa.





“You have to have an attitude of defiance against the wrongs of your community — like the prominent activists of the civil rights era, including Rosa Parks.” —Imam Siraj Wahhaj



Safaa Zarzour, ISNA secretary general, delivered the welcome keynote address. Dr. Abelmajid Jondy, director of the Flint Islamic Center, welcomed the attendees. The ISNA Day program was sponsored by the ISNA Development Foundation (IDF) as a grassroots effort to target and help resolve problems in a community. For nearly three decades, Flint has been nicknamed America's murder capital. A city with only 102,000 people, Flint regularly experiences murder rates of several dozen annually.

The day was highlighted by moving lectures, along with speeches by youth presenters who offered the factual status of Flint, Mich. as a city on its way to healing, discussing a range of topics such as the education, crime, and poverty in Flint. To better understand the role we need to play in helping our community, this event explored multiple avenues of action.

Sheikh Ismael Mukhtar, the son of the Mufti of Eritrea, provided a seminar on the model community based on religious values, and Sheikh Abdullah Waheed provided one on healing the hearts—a task of the prophets.

Imam Siraj Wahhaj recounted the work he had done in what was once a very bad neighborhood in Brooklyn, N.Y., where he was able to buy a mosque for only \$25,000, and where for 40 days and 40 nights his community forbade people from entering drug houses—until the drug houses went out of business. However, he said that he did not recommend that the Flint community use the same procedure. The theme of his speech was that through faith, devotion, and dedication, with the emphasis on faith, Muslims will resolve problems in the communities that surround them and this will build love between them and their neighbors within the communities they live in.

“You have to have an attitude of defiance” against the wrongs of your community—like the prominent activists of the civil rights era including Rosa Parks, he said, adding, “Start from the foundation,” meaning faith. A seed grows down first, not directly into the open, it sets strong roots and then, when it grows up, with full roots. “There is nothing you can't do,” he said.

Tesneem Alkiek, an accomplished area student and youth leader, said, “It is only after we recognize the necessity for change that we can actually make a difference as a community. I believe that this conference truly helped shed light on our complex situation, not only in Flint, but all other Muslim congregations that can do more for their greater communities. With a better perception of our responsibility, I pray we can begin to collectively work in giving back to Flint and making a difference.” Imam Abdul-Malik from the Muslim House, a local mosque in Flint, was presented with an award for all of his services and efforts in the community. ISNA leaders acknowledged the efforts put in the local organizers and the IINN (Insight Institute of Neurosurgery & Neuroscience) building staff. The day also featured a dozen booth bazaar and Saturday began with tours of Animal Oasis Bird Encounter (a 28-foot trailer walk-in bird exhibit.) ■



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Camp for Life

Muslim American youth translate the experiences that MYNA camps offer into lasting ties.

BY YSRA ZARZOUR

THERE IS A GENERAL CONSENSUS that young Muslims growing up in America have rarely had it easy. Their challenges include difficulty in integrating into a society that has certain qualities at odds with Islam, or because being passionate about Islam may leave a person singled out, or even because questions youth have about embracing both an American and Muslim identity are often brushed off as contradictory.

However, there are initiatives in motion that stand out in this abyss of uncertainty.

Muslim Youth of North America, (MYNA) established in 1985 after the conclusion of that year's annual ISNA convention, has seen everything from pitfalls to breakthroughs since its inception. MYNA was first put together by Muslim youth in order to meet their needs, as many were unsatisfied with the programs being offered to them by the adults. Excitement was in the air as youth from around the country came together, holding various camps and conferences.

Such efforts, however, became more and more local. The real issue was sidelined: youth from different regions were cut off from each other, as there was not much

coordination with MYNA national. The organization thus came to a halt, primarily due to lack of institutional support, as well as the original members of MYNA having moved on to their college careers. Younger Muslims were left with no resources to continue the programs, as there was no prior planning, institutionalized training, or even proper documentation available. For these reasons, MYNA would only convene at the annual ISNA convention for the next decade and a half.

MYNA is now one unit, with a national executive committee as well as regional executive committees.

Nonetheless, 2007 witnessed the third phase of MYNA, in which the ISNA youth department identified the different problems that had led to MYNA's decline. A meeting was called to bring together those who had originally participated in MYNA to discuss and address these problems, under the title of Majlis Youth Committee (MYC) that gave its recommendations in October 2006.

The MYC, established by the ISNA Majlis Ash-Shura, devised the strategic plan and set up to oversee the operations of the ISNA Youth Programming and Services Department. MYC was revived to reinvigorate what was seen to be a gap in the then youth work in general across U.S. and Canada.

The first Majlis Youth Committee comprised former ISNA president Sh. Abdalla Idris Ali, Dr. Jawad Shah, ISNA vice-president USA Azhar Azeez, Riyad Shamma, former MSA president Dr. Altaf Hussain, then MSA president Mohammad Shaibani, Muslim Inter-Scholastic Tournament (MIST) founder Shazia Siddiqi, Dr. Omar Mahmood, Iyad Alnacheef. In addition, youth from across the country were invited to the ISNA headquarters in Indiana, and were assured ISNA support and finance, if they were willing to revive the youth organization. It was these youth who became the MYNA Executive Committee.

First on the agenda was restoring the youth camps, which was initiated with a national retreat in Akron, Oh. in July of that year. The young Muslims who attended the camp were able to see that this was a great and beneficial initiative, run completely by youth themselves. This prompted many of them to join and help the organization as well. MYNA held a second retreat in 2008 in Texas, and the number of camps held each

year has been growing since. In 2012 alone, 13 camps were organized throughout the country, and were planned solely by youth, who were responsible for such aspects as locations and speakers (including strong role models such as Imam Siraj Wahaj, Omar Mahmood, and Imam Zaid Shakir, among many others).

The spirit of the annual MYNA conference at the yearly ISNA conventions has been revitalized as well, and regional MYNA committees have held more local events such as social awareness measures.

One such example is the south central region's "Hunger Banquet," a poverty awareness campaign that was held in Dallas. Another advancement is that more youth activities inside and outside of the retreats are being developed, and there is now a full-time support system, consisting of ISNA staff members employed in the youth department, that backs MYNA up.

The resources that original MYNA members had been lacking, such as documentation and structural training, are now well founded and accounted for. MYNA is now one unit, with a national executive committee as well as regional executive committees.

The national executive committee comes up with nationwide initiatives after listening to the concerns of Muslim youth across the country that elected them. Regional executive committees share similar responsibilities; however, they only oversee the particular regions they are located. It is their job to select youth to be a part of the organizing committees that guarantee the success of different programs such as camps and conferences.

"MYNA's greatest asset is that it's owned by the youth, and the youth make key decisions. What makes MYNA distinctive is that it inspires the youth to own their faith instead of just being a part of it," says Iyad Alnacheef, ISNA's director of the Youth Programming and Services Department (YPSD).

Alnacheef has played a significant role in the revival of MYNA's national initiatives.

"MYNA allows youth to grow through trial and error," Alnacheef says. "The institution gladly tolerates mistakes, and adult advisers don't condemn mistakes, but instead guide youth in the correct direction to avoid any major catastrophes."

Alnacheef advises potential youth who are contemplating joining MYNA that they "should give it a shot — they should judge MYNA based on their own experience, not what they've heard from others, good or bad."

When speaking of parents who are interested in getting their children involved with MYNA, Alnacheef says that one of the largest challenges they are faced with is the lack of motivation and excitement their children have when it comes to practicing their faith.

He says that MYNA transforms basic obligations into a part of who they are as Muslims, and that they also find themselves surrounded by people they can relate to, from counselors to peers.

Alnacheef says that even if some youth still feel reluctant about joining MYNA, it is important that they still be involved with something within their community.

"They have much potential, and need to take advantage of their age. The goodness in them will be translated into amazing actions that add meaning to their lives and those around them," he says.

ISNA is wholly committed to the growth and advancement of youth activities, for instance any funds not utilized during a budget year are rolled over into YPSD account. ■

Ysra Zarzour is a college student from Bridgeview, Ill. studying English education and mass communications.



TWO POSITIONS WANTED

Imam (Full-Time)

The Noor Islamic Cultural Center (NICC), the largest Islamic center in the Central Ohio area, is seeking a full-time Imam. The Imam at the NICC shall be required to: (i) lead daily prayers; (ii) teach various classes including tafseer and fiqh classes; (iii) lead study groups, perform halaqas, and deliver Friday khuthbas; (iv) provide Islamic counseling to all members of the NICC constituency; (v) perform marriages; and (vi) assist in burial services.

The ideal candidate shall: (i) have at least three (3) years of experience as an Imam at another institution; (ii) have the Qur'an memorized; (iii) have a strong Islamic education background which includes study in Hadith and Sharia; (iv) be fluent in both Arabic as well as English; and (v) have experience with people of other faiths.

Executive Director (Full-Time)

The NICC is also seeking a full-time Executive Director to oversee the day-to-day operations of the institution. Specifically, the Executive Director would work with the Executive Committee of the institution, manage the NICC's employees, represent the NICC to external organizations and the media, and guide the NICC's youth programs.

Any candidate for the position must: (i) have deep knowledge and understanding of the Arabic language, the Qur'an and Hadith; (ii) speak and write English fluently; (iii) be educated in the United States and have a bachelor's degree and masters/advanced degree (some Islamic coursework preferred); (iv) have at least 1-3 years of experience working as an Executive Director with another Muslim institution (or in a similar capacity); (v) have experience managing people; (vi) be an experienced public speaker; (vii) have experience with people of other faiths; and (viii) have excellent computer skills.

Interested candidates for both positions should send a cover letter and resume that explain the candidate's qualifications to jobs@noorohio.org by **January 30, 2012**.

Hate Groups Go Mainstream, Study Says

AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS USING FEAR and anger to spread negative messages about Muslims have moved from the fringes of public discourse into the mainstream media since 9/11, said a study by Dr. Christopher Bail, sociologist at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Bail's research, "The Fringe Effect: Civil Society Organizations and the Evolution of Media Discourse about Islam since the Sept. 11 Attacks," was published in the Dec. 2012 issue of the D.C.-based "American Sociological Review." Using plagiarism detection software, he tracked the influence of 1,084 press releases about Muslims from 120 organizations on more than 50,000 television transcripts and newspaper articles produced from 2001 to 2008.

Bail found that organizations with negative messages about Muslims captivated the mass media after 9/11, even though civil society organizations depict Muslims as



Dr. Christopher Bail

peaceful, contributing members of American society. He wrote that as a result "public condemnation of terrorism by Muslims have received little media attention, but organi-

zations spreading negative messages continue to stoke public fears that Muslims are secretly plotting to overthrow the U.S. government."

Bail, who is expanding this study into a book, found that the mass media has not only contributed to the spread of negative messages about Islam, but also given fringe organizations the opportunity to raise funds and build networks with elite conservative circles.

Thus, he said, "They are now so much part of the mainstream that they have been able to recast genuinely mainstream Muslim organizations as radicals."

Bail warns: "The rising tide of anti-Muslim sentiment in the American media not only tests foundational principles about religious tolerance, but may also validate foreign extremists who argue that the U.S. is at war with Islam, since American media messages routinely travel to the Middle East. ■

Justice Department Assures Muslim Americans



"I AM HERE TO SAY THAT THE UNITED States Department of Justice will stand with you," said Assistant Attorney General Tom Perez addressing the formal inauguration of the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro (Tenn.) on Nov. 18, 2012. "And all people of good will, to preserve this great nation and its fundamental values of freedom, equality, and justice." He informed that the DOJ started a trial in January of 2012 of a man for allegedly burning a mosque in Corvallis, Ore. In October 2012, DOJ indicted a man for setting fire to the Islamic Center of Toledo, Oh. They have also prosecuted three neo-Nazis who burned the mosque in Columbia, Tenn. to the ground four years ago.

The number of hate crimes spiked dramatically after 9/11, then declined steadily for several years. In 2010, there was a recorded 50 percent rise in hate crimes—not

nearly at the post-9/11 levels, but still very troubling. Muslim cases, he said, currently make up 25 percent of religious discrimination claims filed with the EEOC. These cases spiked after 9/11, then receded, but have been trending steadily upward over the last seven years. The Civil Rights Division, he said, has been successful in bringing suits to protect Muslims from employment discrimination under Title VII. In 2011, for example, DOJ won the right of a Muslim teacher in Berkeley, Ill. to take unpaid time off to go on the hajj.

Perez said that DOJ is deeply concerned about harassment of Muslim, Sikh, Arab and South Asian students in schools. He said anti-Muslim activity is rising fast.

The Civil Rights Division enforces the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). The law passed in 2000 protects people of all faiths from discrimination and arbitrary action by local zoning boards. Since then, the Division has opened 31 cases involving mosques. Of these, 21 in just the last two years. In September 2011, DOJ reached consent decrees in two cases: Lilburn, Ga., and Henrico County, Va., where city officials had openly expressed anti-Muslim bias, and denied mosques permits regularly been granted to churches. ■

Southern California Muslims Elect Leadership

DR. MUZAMMIL SIDDIQI (ISLAMIC Society of Orange County) has been retained as chairman by the general assembly of the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California elected for a three-year term.

The 2013 Majlis comprises of nine prominent community leaders: Samer Soubra (Islamic Institute of Orange County) as Vice Chairman, and Imam Taha Hassane (Islamic Center of San Diego) as Secretary. The other six Majlis members are Imam Sayyid Moustafa Al-Qazwini (Islamic Education Center of Orange County), Imam Hafiz Faiz Ali-Shah (Ar-Rahman Islamic Center), Dr. Ahmed Azam (Islamic Center of Hawthorne), Edina Lekovic (Muslim Public Affairs Council), Dr. Sophia Momand (Islamic Center of South Bay), and Imam Jihad Saafir (Masjid Ibaadillah). This Majlis of the Islamic Shura Council best represents the rich diversity of Muslims in Southern California. ■

British Grant Preserves Endangered Urdu Periodicals

AN \$84,000 GRANT FROM THE BRITISH Library's Endangered Archives Programme, funded by Arcadia, will enable the University of Chicago in digitization and preservation of 60 rare and endangered Urdu language periodicals. The digital images of magazines and journals will be produced at the Mushfiq Khwaja Library and Research Centre in Karachi, Pakistan, and made available through the University of Chicago Library and the British Library, giving scholars access to a significant archive of the most important Urdu periodicals from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Salāe ām, a highly influential periodical, was published from 1908 through 1929 from Delhi. It is held in the Mushfiq Khwaja Library and Research Centre.

"Without a doubt, Urdu periodicals published between the 1870s and 1940s are of critical importance for anyone doing research in the humanities or social sciences concerning the Urdu-phone populations of India and Pakistan," says Professor Emeritus C.M. Naim, who taught Urdu at the University of Chicago.

Urdu was the lingua franca in much of the subcontinent during the 19th century and Urdu periodicals provide a broad spectrum of writings on a range of important issues in South Asia through the 19th and 20th centuries, making their preservation invaluable for scholars of the language and the region.

"Thanks to the easy technology and low cost of litho printing, the only accepted form for Urdu script texts across South Asia, Urdu weeklies and monthlies began to appear in the 1870s," Naim says. "It was in the periodicals that all major modern writers and political and social figures made their debuts and gained popularity. And it is only in the periodicals that we can discover the full

extent of many literary and political controversies that are only now beginning to gain the attention of scholars."

A panel of internationally recognized Urdu scholars, including Naim, will select

the periodicals to be archived. The selected titles will be preserved by creating high-resolution digital page images.

Humāyūn was a prominent monthly literary magazine produced in Lahore from 1922 and continuing into the 1950s.

The Mushfiq Khwaja Centre, owned and managed by the University of Chicago Library on behalf of a consortium of U.S. research libraries, houses one of the world's finest collections of Urdu periodicals, making it an ideal location for the project.

James Nye, University of Chicago Library Bibliographer for Southern Asia and Principal Investigator for the project, acquired the collection for the consortium. He noted that "this

project is a testament to what is possible through the university's collaboration with our colleagues in Pakistan and India. The teamwork will benefit scholars around the world through free access to invaluable primary research resources."

Nasir Javaid, the Mushfiq Khwaja Library and Research Centre executive director, will lead digitization activities in Pakistan. As a byproduct of the project, best practices for conservation and digitization will be disseminated to collaborating institutions across Pakistan and India.

Digital images will be archived by the British Library and the University of Chicago Library, and disseminated via the Digital South Asia Library and the HathiTrust Digital Library. Digital and paper copies of the periodicals will be cataloged and made visible via OCLC's WorldCat and the South Asia Union Catalogue. ■



Dr. Basheer Ahmed Honored

DR. BASHEER AHMED, A PAST PRESIDENT of Islamic Medical Association of North America (1978-79), was recognized by the Texas-based Alliance for Healthcare Excellence at the eleventh annual Alliance for Healthcare Excellence Healthcare Heroes Awards dinner on Nov. 8, 2012.

In 1995, Ahmed established the Muslim Community Center for Human Services and continues to serve as its chairman. MCC, a medical and a social service organization, provides medical and social services to indigents in the Dallas-Fort Worth area (irrespective of religion race and country of origin).

The Alliance, an association of health industry leaders, serves to improve the nation's healthcare system. Members include healthcare providers, healthcare payers, employers who sponsor health plans, and healthcare consumers. The Alliance promotes access to quality, affordable healthcare through education, networking, cooperation, and collaboration.

Ahmed, a past president of the Islamic Association of Tarrant County, and the IMANA Board of Regents, is founding member and currently board member of the International Institute of Islamic medicine. A psychiatrist, Ahmed is author of "Domestic Violence Cross Cultural Perspective" (2009).

Additionally, Ahmed received the 2012 Peacemaker of the Year Award on Dec. 6, 2012 from the Dallas (Tex.) Peace Center for his extraordinary commitment to breaking the cycle of fear that many Americans experienced in the aftermath of 9/11 through creative use of human service, education and constructive dialogue.

Ahmed became convinced of the need to work for peace by his experiences coming face to face with the horrors of war while seeing victims of conflict in Afghanistan in 1980s and researching and publishing a paper on "The effects of war on children of Palestine and Bosnia."

In 2008, he was recognized by the Tarrant County Medical Society for his community work. ■



Congressional Honor for Anis Ahmed

ANIS AHMED, A COMMISSIONER FOR THE [Maryland] Governor's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs was recognized on Nov. 2, 2012, with an U.S. Congressional Certificate for his leadership role, distinguished services and contributions.

Ahmed, a Bangladeshi American who came to the U.S. in 1984, started community

services in 1998 in Montgomery County, Md., and surrounding areas through working with various city and county government advisory groups and committees. In 2006, he became a steering committee member of the Montgomery County Asian American Health Initiative to find out health disparities and basic health needs of county residents

and to advise to the county executive and county council.

Ahmed became a member of the U.S. National Association of Human Rights Workers in 2008 (NAHRW). Active in Asian American, Muslim American and civic affairs, he currently serves as general secretary of the executive committee of the Montgomery County Muslim Council (MCMC); he was elected as a director in 2008.

MCMC functions as a political forum of the county's Muslim residents. He is also a member of the Montgomery County Muslim Foundation (MCMF), a sister organization of the MCMC to functions charitable activities. Since 2008, he helped MCMF in raising funds, food collection drive for homeless people, Zahiba meat collection for charitable distribution and Toys for Tots for needy children.

In 2007, Gov. Martin O'Malley (D-Md.) appointed him as a commissioner for the Governor's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs. Ahmed became vice chair of the Maryland Democratic Party, Asian Wing and co-chair of the South Asian Wing for the Obama for President in 2007. In 2001, he became Democratic congressional district precinct chair. ■

Hossaini Wins Award

WAHED HOSSAINI WON THE LENDING-A-Hand Award from the Virginia State AARP in October 2012. He donated the award money to American Red Cross.

Hossaini, and his wife Arzina, who is involved with various social services such as food drives, is a senior Bangladeshi American, living in the National Capital Region for more than 38 years. However, after he retired in 2002, he became involved full time in public service volunteering.

Recently, he was honored for his 1,000 hours of service to the INOVA Fairfax Hospital. For about a year, he volunteered three hours every week at a Northern Virginia soup kitchen. In cooperation with the national and state AARP, he is involved in activities to make senior citizens' life a little better and to protect their rights. Hossaini, who is also actively involved in mainstream political process, has served as co-chair of the Fairfax County Democratic Committee. ■

American Hijab Design Contest

THE AMERICAN HIJAB DESIGN CONTEST is inviting all designers, established and aspiring—since brilliance can come from anywhere, seeking true originality. It need not be a scarf that covers the hair.

Contest creator Shaz Kaiseruddin wants designers to unleash their imaginative energies. The American Hijab Design Contest promises to do just that. And in that [contest creator] Shaz is a pioneer.

More and more, the chic looks are evident on the streets of New York, Chicago, and LA. The Muslim covered chic female fashion market is estimated at \$96 billion.

The project stems from Kaiseruddin's passion for fashion and human rights. She's received advice and encouragement from many including Project Runway winner Jeffrey Sebelia and CFDA winner

Alexis Bittar. To support the campaign or get involved visit indiegogo.com/americanhijab. ■



Shaz Kaiseruddin

Celebration of Faith and Culture

MORE THAN 300 PEOPLE OF MANY FAITHS gathered in Freeland, Mich., on Nov. 2, 2012 to celebrate the power of the arts to stir the heart and remind us of the Divine.

"This Cry of the Reed," organized by Encounter Islam in collaboration with the Bukhari Institute, Michigan, invited Muslims and their non-Muslim friends and neighbors to enjoy cultural displays, Middle Eastern and Asian cuisine and a talk by Muslim writer Kamran Pasha. The evening closed with a performance by the Poetic Vision Tour.

"Our goal is to offer an interfaith experience that draws people who might not usually come to a masjid open house," said Ray Lacina who, with his wife, Shona Siddiqui, and supported by members of the Midland and Saginaw Muslim communities, formed Encounter Islam in 2010. "It's more than one group presenting to the other. We'd like



Muslims and non-Muslims to experience the richness of Islamic culture together. We're also there to answer questions and provide resources on Islam."

Saad Omar of the Poetic Vision Tour said that he didn't see events like this as bridging cultures, but rather as celebrating a common, human culture. Kamran Pasha, who shared his own experience finding his way as a Muslim writer in Hollywood, reminded that any artist must remember that "God wants to use you as His instrument. Be the paintbrush for Him."

Dawud Wharnsby and Raef of the Poetic Vision Tour performed their own compo-

sitions and covers of songs many in their audience knew well, while Saad Omar wove the performance together, keeping the focus on the beautiful message of Islam.

"We are celebrating this event from the perspective of the arts," Siddiqui said. "The arts use universal language that connects us all. There are differences unique to each culture, but in the arts you will find unity in our diversity and we're hoping that this event draws us closer so there's no disconnect."

"Encounter Islam does a fantastic job at sharing their message... in a warm and welcoming environment," said Kenneth Larson, one of the non-Muslim guests.

In a statement, Joan Brausch, a candidate for the Michigan State House of Representatives, thanked the Tri-Cities Muslim community for "sharing your faith and your culture with all of us."

"This is important work, if we are to continue to be one people, one nation, one community moving towards the future together." ■

A Civil Rights Victory

PALESTINIAN-AMERICAN MUHAMMAD Salah secured his removal from the U.S. Department of Treasury's list of "designated terrorists" on Nov. 6, 2012 after a 17-year struggle.

This change resulted from a joint civil rights lawsuit was filed against the federal government by Salah, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). The Center for Constitutional Rights, the People's Law Office and the firm of Hughes Socol Piers Resnick and Dym worked pro bono on Salah's case because Salah was not able to pay for their services without a special government permit.

The Jerusalem born Salah, who moved to the U.S. in 1970, has long lived in Bridgeview, Ill. as a grocer and active community member. In 1993, Salah, while on a humanitarian mission to deliver charity to Palestinians in the occupied territories, was arrested by Israel while attempting to cross into Gaza. For 54 days, the Israelis interrogated and systematically tortured him, a violation of his rights as a U.S. citizen. Following this torture, Salah signed a "confession" in Hebrew, a language he was unfamiliar with, and thus jailed for almost five years in an Israeli military prison.



Muhammad Salah (front row, second from right)

In 1995 under Clinton, while still incarcerated, Salah was branded a "specially designated terrorist" by the Treasury Department based on secret evidence. Salah was the only U.S. citizen living in the U.S. to be subjected to such a designation. According to the Center for Constitutional Rights, thus Salah needed the Treasury Department's approval to "get a job, pay rent or a mortgage, pay for his children's education, obtain medical care or even buy a loaf of bread." Salah held several jobs after he got a work permit from the Treasury Department throughout the years, but was relieved of his duties whenever a news story came out about his case.

This designation also made it impossible for Salah to make regular donations to charity, or *zakat*. Lawyers argued that

these restrictions infringed on his religious freedoms. This designation even made it a crime for any U.S. citizen to provide Salah with medical services, making it difficult for Salah, suffering from cancer, to be given treatment. The designation also made it a crime for organizations like ADC and AFSC to speak out in support of Salah's rights, which is why they joined his lawsuit.

A decade-long legal pursuit of Salah in the U.S. after his return from Israel resulted in a 2004 indictment on several counts, including material support for terrorism. However, despite being acquitted, Salah remained on the designated terrorist list until early November last year. ■

Contributed by Shirien Damra

Muslims for Safer Communities



Dr. Jones receives award from Rayyan Ashraf of Madina Academy

CONNECTICUT GOVERNOR DANIEL P. Malloy addressing Muslim Coalition of Connecticut's sixth annual leadership banquet addressing "Working Together for Safer Communities" on Nov. 11, 2012 in Hartford,

officially conveyed honor and recognition upon the organization.

Gov. Malloy applauded the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut for its "leadership in the community through outreach and

Ahmed Rehab Receives Leadership Award

CAIR-CHICAGO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Ahmed Rehab was presented with the Prophetic Leadership Award at Arise Chicago's Fourth Annual Faith-Labor-Action Breakfast, Nov. 13, 2012. Arise Chicago is a 21-year-old organization whose mission is to build partnerships

between faith communities and workers to fight workplace injustice through education and organizing and advocating for public policy changes. In his keynote address, Leo Gerard, International President of the United Steel Workers told how the USW helps workers who face injustice in the workplace.

Other awardees included Illinois State Senator Kimberly Lightford for her Faithful Leadership and Stand Up! Chicago for their Inspirational Leadership. ■



advocacy." He noted MCC's "many efforts in building bridges with law enforcement and state and local leaders throughout Connecticut." He also thanked MCC "for your dedication and for improving the lives of so many."

MCC President Aida Mansoor received the official proclamation on behalf of the community.

Princeton Chaplain Sohaib Sultan presented the keynote address "Demystifying Shari'ah."

The awardees were Rabia Chaudry, president, Safe Nation Collaborative, Neil Dryfe, chief of police, Cheshire, Conn., Dr. James Jones, president, Masjid Al-Islam, New Haven, Conn., and Masjid Al-Islam; and John Olsen, president, Connecticut AFL-CIO. Honored guests included State Assembly Speaker Christopher Donovan, Dr. Saad Anwar, Councilman of South Windsor, Superior Court Judge Nawaz Wahla and Magistrate Judge Thomas Smith and the police chiefs of Berlin (Paul D. Fitzgerald), Cheshire (Neil Dryfe), Windsor (Kevin Searles) and Glastonbury (Capt. David Caron). ■

Qirat Competition Winners

THE BOLINGBROOK, ILL.-BASED Furqaan Academy students secured three prizes in the 6th Annual Qirat Competition sponsored by the Waukegan, Ill.-based Islamic Foundation North on Nov. 18, 2012. The competition had 130 participants contesting for 100 points and judged on the proper application of the rules of Tajweed.

In Level 4 Boys, Furqaan's Osama Rayan took second place; in Level 3 Boys, another Furqaan student Asad Sayeed took first place; and also in Level 3 Girls, a Furqaan student Rasha Sayeed took first place.

Furqaan Academy had won the award for The Best Hifz School in Chicago in the Mist 2012 competition.

"Competitions such as these highlight Tajweed as the most important basic foundation of learning Quran," said Wajahat Sayeed, founder and president of Al-Furqaan Foundation, who runs the Furqaan Academy. ■

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Howard County Muslims Mark 10th Year

HOWARD COUNTY (MD.) MUSLIMS marked the 10th year of the founding of the Howard County Muslim Council (HCMC), with a dinner celebration on Nov. 11, 2012, attended by some 300 people.

Founded in 2002, HCMC (www.hcmcmaryland.com) serves the Muslim and the broader area communities. Howard County Executive Ken Ulman lauded HCMC for its social services, and particularly for opening "the door up at Dar Al-Taqlwa [masjid] to break down barriers and educate the broader community is really a tribute to everyone here.

He added: "You inspire me and you've helped me to live up to those values over the last six years as your county executive."

State Sen. James Robey, a former Howard County executive, recalled at a time when he knew nothing about Islam, HCMC met with him, and he was touched by their willingness to work for betterment of the county. County chairperson Mary Kay Sigaty said: "You [Muslims] are now seen



HCMC President Rizwan Siddiqi (left) presents an award of appreciation to Maryland state senator Jim Robey (D).

as the fiber of our community [in Howard County], you are no longer just seen as Muslims." Rizwan Siddiqi reminded: "As part of our community, we [Muslims] should be giving back."

Noted attendees included Rep. John Sarbanes (D-Md.), Maryland state senators Allan Kittleman (R-Md.) and Edward Kasemeyer (D-Md.), Maryland State Delegates, Guy Guzzone, Shane Pendergrass, James Malone and Frank Turner. Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.) and Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-Md.) and sent citations to Pendergrass, James Malone and Frank Turner, and other civic leaders and government officials.

Founder Anwar Hassan related HCMC, the first of its kind in Maryland, has since been followed by similar groups in Baltimore, Frederick and Montgomery counties, as well as the Maryland Muslim Council.

HCMC acknowledged and praised its past leadership including founder members Anwar Hasan and Hasan Askari and past presidents Irfan Malik, Dr. Rashid Chotani and Raghid Shourbaji for their dedication and efforts in keeping HCMC moving forward.

The HCMC board led by Rizwan Siddiqi includes vice-president Samina Chaudhury, secretary Hasan Askari, and treasurer Aref Baig. ■

White House Invite for Scholarship Fund



THE WHITE HOUSE INVITED DOLLAR-A-Day Scholarship Fund to participate at its Summit on Global Entrepreneurship which held on Nov. 15, 2012.

As part of Global Entrepreneurship Week, this event was attended by senior administration officials including Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Karen Mills, Administrator of the Small Business Administration, Deputy Secretary of State Thomas Nides, M. Gergawi, Minister of Cabinet Affairs (UAE) as well as numerous other leaders from the government, private

and non-profit sector. Founding Director, Salman Ravala, attended the event on behalf of D.A.D. In 2009, President Obama elevated entrepreneurship as a critical pillar of U.S. global engagement and to help channel the creativity, innovation, and potential of millions of individuals around the world to create economic opportunity. The event featured discussions with entrepreneurs, investors, and experts about how to foster needed skills, strengthen regulatory environments, and provide access to capital through programs, partnerships, and policymaking efforts. ■



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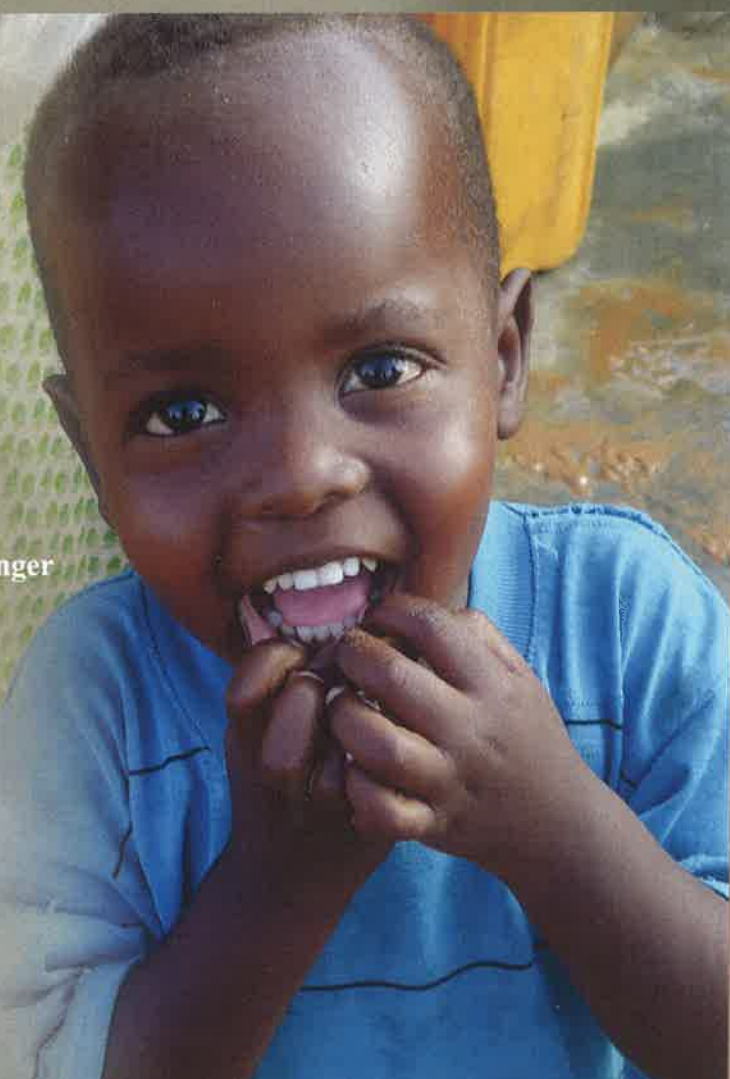
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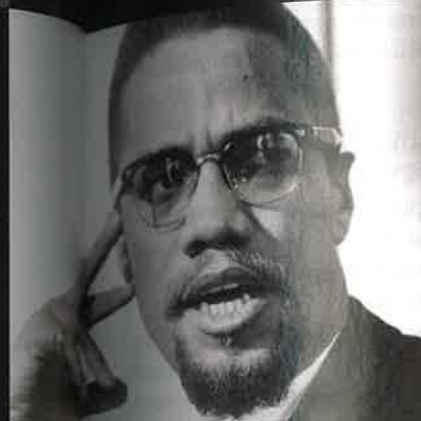
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Akbar Ahmed

CONNECTING HISTORY

Documenting African American Muslim history exposes the deep roots of Islam in America.



BY AKBAR AHMED

SOME 30 PERCENT OF ALL SLAVES TRANSPORTED to colonial America were Muslim, and despite every effort made to strip them of their religious identity, African American Muslims have rediscovered their history and thrived. One small island off the Georgia coast represents the struggle to retain identity, customs and traditions — churches face Mecca, men and women until recently covered their hair, took off their shoes and were segregated in church.

Though the residents of Sapelo are no longer Muslim, the imprint of the earliest Muslims here and across America is so strong that it continues to shape the country.

"CHRISTIAN BY DAY, MUSLIM BY NIGHT"

Sapelo island in southeast Georgia is straddled between the Doboy and Sapelo Sound and the Atlantic. A remote island, only reachable by air or boat, Sapelo's attractions include a state park, the University of Georgia Marine Institute, and a historic mansion once owned by tobacco magnate R.J. Reynolds. It is thought to be the location of the first European settlement in present-day America. Sapelo also gave birth to one of the most remarkable and important stories in the rich history of Islam in America.

The island is home to a tiny community said to consist of descendants of former slaves with a common Muslim ancestor who was captured in Africa and brought to

the present-day U.S. Despite the deliberate attempt to obliterate the religious traditions they carried with them, the community held on and miraculously clung to the memory of Islam, however tenuously.

Would these customs even be recognizable after several generations?

I, as part of a yearlong project to understand the Muslim community in the U.S., visited Sapelo to discover how much, if any, of their original Islamic culture or tradition survived. The study resulted in a 2011 book and film: "Journey into America: The Challenge of Islam."

The guide, Cornelia Walker Bailey, a direct eleventh-generation descendant of Bilali Muhammad and an author and lecturer on Sapelo's history and culture, believed her ancestor Bilali was originally from North Africa and possibly studying Islam or preaching when he was captured. He was first taken to Middle Caicos and then to Sapelo, where

he became the head “enforcer” over the other slaves.

Glimpses of Bilali Muhammad’s life and thought are to be found in the “Bilali Diary,” a manuscript he wrote entirely in Arabic characters, although the language he used is not standard Arabic. Bilali begins his manuscript with the phrase used as a benediction throughout the Muslim world: “In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.” This is followed by “God’s prayers upon our master, Muhammad and his family and his companions.”

The manuscript describes various Islamic activities such as *dua* (the direct prayer calling upon God for assistance and mercy), the *adhan* (call to prayer), and *wudu* (ablutions). Bilali’s emphasis on the washing of the arms, elbows and feet would be passed on to the following generations.

Bilali’s manuscript reveals a scholarly, pious, and intelligent man who clung to his identity and dignity. His legacy was kept alive through the generations by his descendants, including Cornelia Bailey.

There are few stories as inspiring in the annals of history as that of the rediscovery of Islam in America and the success, grace, and ease with which African American Muslims have come to embody it.

Bailey has turned her austere house located in Hog Hammock into a hotel. She painted some graphic images of the brutality that slaves suffered. History, for her, amounted to a constant battle to preserve as much of her people’s identity as possible. Her African Baptist Church, for example, was established to assert the congregants’ unique identity and distinct ancestors from Africa, including some possibly Islamic roots, she said.

Even though worshippers were Christian, the church seated the men on the left and women on the right. Both also took their shoes off, and covered their heads. The church was called a “prayer house,” an echo of the meaning associated with the term “mosque.” Churches face the east, she explained because the sun rises in the east and the “devil” resides in the west. Clearly, the east was originally perceived as good, and the west, because of its association with slavery, was seen as bad. Even as Christians,

they said their prayers facing east. Perhaps the significance of facing the east comes from the fact that Mecca, which Muslims face to pray, lies in that direction.

Bailey remembered a long tradition of washing hands and feet, which comes directly from the Muslim wudu. Modesty was pronounced among women, and, after puberty, arms and legs were covered. She recalled her grandmother not eating pork, although it slowly entered their diet out of necessity, but still in small, reluctantly eaten, quantities. She mentioned her ancestors and grandmother praying five times a day. Divorce was strongly discouraged, and even today men and women are not allowed to “live in sin.”

On a visit to the local cemetery, she emphasized that this was a rare concession as the community discouraged outsiders from disturbing the sleep of those buried there. Such permission was also in the Islamic tradition, as was the practice of burial on the day of death. The dead were buried facing

the east in the belief, Bailey said, that when people rose on Judgment Day they would be “facing the right way.”

The memory of elders having real authority reflects both African and Islamic tradition. A recognizable authority resting in elders gave stability to a slave community that was often dislocated as it was moved around. The elders also helped to keep traditions alive. As part of the rites of passage, young men and women were told to go into the wilderness and meditate for an hour or so at night and required the approval of the council of elders before being confirmed in the church.

Although all slaves were expected to convert to Christianity, Bilali clung to his identity as far as possible, passing some inherited beliefs to his children, who in turn passed them on to theirs. As Baptist preachers only arrived once a month to teach Christianity, Sapelo’s residents were largely left to continue their Islamic practices.



Bailey recalls her grandmother saying, “We were Christian by day and Muslim by night.”

REDISCOVERING A LOST IDENTITY

While Sapelo residents never reverted to Islam, their story is analogous to the African American Muslim community’s history. As African American Muslims attempted to rediscover their stolen religious identity, several iterations took place. Each informs the other and leads to the diverse community today.

However, the community cannot be simply seen in an evolutionary trajectory from the Nation of Islam (NOI) to what they call “mainstream,” or Sunni Islam, and view the two as mutually exclusive. The entire



range of experience that is common to African Americans needs to be considered. This includes influences such as the earliest stirrings of Islam among those brought here via the slave trade, the Black Nationalist Movements, NOI, Imam W. D. Mohammed’s inspiring leadership, and the myriad directions in which his followers have taken his message.

Thus, the African American Muslim community must be explored from the time its first members landed in America.

Even in the 19th century, African Muslims clung to Islam. Bilali Muhammad and Abdurahman, the famous subject of the documentary “Prince Among Slaves,” at the turn of the century, struggled valiantly not to lose their connection with the faith they had brought from Africa, a task that

became more difficult with each succeeding generation as Islamic custom, practice, and terminology faded.

The slow but sure path to the rediscovery of Islam goes back to the founding of the Moorish Science Temple of America in 1913 by Noble Drew Ali. Settling in Chicago, which Ali believed would become the second Mecca, he claimed to have been sent from God to instruct African Americans to return to “Islamism,” which he took to be the Moors’ original religion as he then believed the Moors dominated the world.

The Moorish Science Temple urged its followers to assert their true identity, to shed names like “black” and “negro,” and call themselves “Moorish Americans.” Members added “El” or “Bey” to their American names to make them sound more “Moorish,” prayed facing the east, and dressed in elaborate “Turkish” attire complete with fezzes, turbans, silk robes and curved swords.

In 1930, Wallace Fard Muhammad, after breaking away from the Moorish Science Temple, formed his own group, which would become the Nation of Islam. The frail, slight figure of Elijah Muhammad, born Elijah Poole, took over the NOI when Fard disappeared in 1934, never to return. Elijah Muhammad led NOI until his death in 1975, by which time it was a flourishing economic and political organization. As a young man, he had witnessed three lynchings and had “seen enough of the white man’s brutality [...] to last me 26,000 years.”

Elijah emerged to lead a movement that now gathered support with impressive speed. Members like Malcolm X, who converted in prison, became charismatic speakers and brought their oratorical and organizational skills with them.

While undoubtedly creating an Islamic awareness and passion, Fard and Elijah had also confronted the Muslim community with a theological predicament, having taught them that Wallace Fard was “Allah” and Elijah his anointed “messenger” on earth. This belief posed a fundamental challenge to Islam, despite the community’s many acceptable customs, such as abstinence from pork, smoking and drinking, the use of drugs, and gambling.

In addition, NOI followed a black separatist doctrine of reversed prejudice, teaching that the white race was intrinsically evil and shaped by the devil. Believing in its community’s total independence, NOI sought its own state or territory within the U.S.



Sapelo Island



From Slave Ship to Harvard

YARROW MAMOUT, among tens of thousands — if not millions — of Muslims brought to America during the slave trade, is one of few for which historians have much information.

Historic documents suggest Mamout (listed also as Muhammad Yaro by the Philadelphia Museum of Art) may be buried on the property he purchased after gaining his independence in 1797, in Washington, D.C.’s historic and now upscale Georgetown neighborhood. Its owner, real estate developer Deyi Awadallah, a Muslim American of Palestinian descent, has allowed archaeologists a chance — a few weeks or months — to investigate before he finalises his development plans.

James H. Johnston, a D.C. lawyer and freelance writer, spent eight years investigating Mamout’s story for his 2012 book “From Slave Ship to Harvard: Yarrow Mamout and the History of an African American Family.” According to Johnston, Mamout was sold into slavery as a teenager in Senegal in 1752.

The more popular of Mamout’s portraits by renowned early American artist Charles William Peale, which resides at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, says Johnston, represents dignity, perseverance, and resilience during a particularly dark chapter of American history.

Mamout, well known in the Georgetown community, was a body servant for Samuel Beall and his son Brooke, two influential professionals who regularly rubbed shoulders with the likes of founding President George Washington. Mamout was often remembered as cheerful, diligent and very devout in his faith, stopping to pray five times a day wherever he was.

Mamout, who was literate, was also an entrepreneur. In Georgetown, slaves were allowed to have their own side businesses, so Mamout became a brick maker. In fact, he won his freedom by building a home for his masters and saved his money to build his own house.

“It shows people that Muslim Americans are a part of the American fabric. He’s a real personality, not only in paintings but in his works and deeds,” says Amir Muhammad, director of Washington’s Islamic Heritage Museum.

For Washington D.C.’s official archaeologist Ruth Troccoli, any archaeological traces of Mamout help to better understand how slaves, especially Muslim ones, may have lived.

“That’s a parallel source of data on Yarrow that we can’t access any other way,” says Troccoli, who began a reconnaissance mission on the property mid-November last year. “Yarrow’s story is significant. It’s a story about a person who persevered. He was a slave who essentially bought his own freedom.”

(Source: Julianne Gage. Common Ground News Service [CGNews], Nov. 20, 2012, www.commongroundnews.org) ■

Strangely, the Ku Klux Klan was rumored to be funding NOI as it shared NOI's interest in keeping the two races separate.

THE GREAT AMERICAN REFORMER

Black and black Muslim movements ran parallel, often overlapping and invariably drawing from each other. The leaders across the board felt mutual empathy and together gave African Americans a sense of common aspirations and dreams. Their broad objectives were the same — to better the community's condition.

Some chose the civil rights route, some religion, and others political activism.

Upon their arrival in America in the late 20th century, immigrant Muslims were disapproving of what had been passing for Islam among African Americans. Many of them found un-Islamic the hatred of white people, the number of daily prayers, the rituals, and the references to Fard as "Allah," and Elijah Muhammad as "the Prophet."

What they failed to appreciate was the community's struggle to reach toward a distant vision of Islam in difficult if not impossible circumstances. Without the foundations laid by these communities, there would have been no Islam in America among African Americans.

Imam W.D. Mohammed, a direct beneficiary of their legacy, however radically changed its character and direction.

Although cross-cultural references can be misleading, it seems fitting to compare Imam W.D. Mohammed's impact on Islam among African Americans with that of Martin Luther (1483-1546), who radically altered the course and content of Christianity. Like Luther, the imam took on the entire establishment of what was normatively seen and accepted as Islam and gave it a new direction.

The genius of Imam W.D. was that he single-handedly moved the African American community toward identifying with pluralist American identity while moving away from Black Nationalist Islam. Today, millions of African American Muslims are comfortable with being as strongly American as they are being devout Muslims, demonstrating the two are not incompatible.

It was not easy. Imam W.D. had broken ranks with NOI and suffered every kind of calumny. He was "excommunicated" several times for simply denying Fard's divinity. The excommunication was particularly painful because it was executed by Elijah

Muhammad, his own father. But he would not relent. He was finally re-admitted into NOI in the early 1970s and, after his father's death, declared its leader.

Imam W.D. now set about instituting a major overhaul of NOI to align it with orthodox Sunni Islam.

To start with, he rejected his father's literal interpretations. He rejected black separatist views that reflected racism and reverse prejudices, and encouraged the learning and recitation of the Quran in the community and laid the foundations for an entire generation of Islamic scholars.

Emphasizing the personality and history of Bilal, Imam W.D. introduced the word "Bilalian" to refer to the African American community to draw strength and pride from Bilal's analogous experience during the Prophet's time. This direct link with the origins of Islam imbued the community with a sense of history and honor. The focus on Bilal also allowed Imam W.D. to avoid falling under the cultural and theological influence of contemporary Arab Islam, which he did not find particularly attractive.

Imam W.D. was not only a visionary but also a practical leader. He headed the Mosque Cares, an Islamic dawah project, and a business entity called the Collective Purchasing Conference. His videos, audiotapes, and television programs ensured that his message was reaching the community.

By the 1990s, mainstream America had begun to acknowledge Imam W.D.'s stature as a great American in the best pluralist tradition. In 1992, he was asked to give the first invocation by a Muslim in the U.S. Senate. In March of that year, he became the first Muslim to deliver an address on the floor of



Muhammad Ali

the Georgia State Legislature. The next year saw him offering the Islamic prayer at the inaugural interfaith prayer service hosted by President Bill Clinton.

Imam W.D. died in September 2008, having had a monumental impact on Islam in America, especially among African Americans.

AFTER W.D. MOHAMMED

For many Americans today, African American Muslims are synonymous with NOI, as if their history begins and ends there. But the history of African American Islam in the U.S. begins in the earliest stages of America itself.

Identity was stripped by others (as in Sapelo), reconstructed and stripped again.

Almost four centuries later, African American Muslims are rebuilding their Islamic persona on the basis of scholarship, memory, and instruction. It is an exciting experiment in the rediscovery of a lost identity.

While Islam unites African American, Caucasian and Latino converts and immigrant Muslims, each group expresses it differently. For African American Muslims, Islam often means tackling issues of health, education, violence, drugs, and poverty. For immigrants, by and large better educated and more prosperous, Islam is about uniting the global community of Muslims and rallying the world behind the suppressed Muslim minorities in Palestine, Kashmir, and Chechnya.

The Islam of African Americans is arrived at through personal choice and rediscovery

of lost roots, a process of trial and error, and is valued for its own sake. The Islam of immigrant Muslims is part of an unbroken line passing through the generations and is their inheritance.

For many African American Muslims, Islam is a simple and functional way of life, directly related to the example of the Prophet Muhammad as a social reformer. For many immigrants, Islam is a complex, grand, overarching historical experience initiated by the Prophet and the inspiration for splendid empires and dynasties.

African American Muslims contribute to American culture in extraordinary ways and are uniquely positioned to be a natural bridge to the non-Muslim community. Oddly enough, considering the rich potential for leadership due to their wisdom and experience, African American Muslims do not get the attention they deserve in discussions of Islam in America. Too often Muslim leaders brush this issue under the carpet as they feel it will impair the unity of the Muslim community.

In my travels, many African American Muslims complained that immigrants behaved as if they had a monopoly on understanding Islam, viewing African American Islam as a "secondhand" version, despite the efforts of individuals like Imam W.D. to promote orthodox learning and scholarship in the community.

African American Muslims are contributing not only in music and sports, but also in other fields such as journalism, scholarship and politics. Keith Ellison and André Carson, from Minnesota and Indiana, respectively, are the nation's first Muslim members of Congress. Both quickly cap-

tured the imagination and support of the Muslim community and remain extraordinarily popular.

In an America where Islam is often seen as an enigma, the presence and strength of African American Muslims only makes the larger community, and indeed America, healthier. Though the struggle to be adequately recognized for their contribution to both America and the greater Muslim community continues today, African American Muslims continue to contribute in many ways.

Sharing Sapelo Island's history and the earliest forms of African American Islam is not simply an exercise in storytelling but an important piece of the legacy of the African American Muslim community.

There are few stories as inspiring in the annals of history as that of the rediscovery of Islam in America and the success, grace, and ease with which African American Muslims have come to embody it. Through them can be built an authentic and viable bridge between Muslims and non-Muslims in America. ■

Akbar Ahmed is the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at American University and an adjunct scholar at Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. This article is adapted from his book, "Journey into America: The Challenge of Islam."



Sapelo Island cemetery



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A Muslim American Powerhouse

Nihad Awad's journey tells of a child living in a refugee camp who became the leader of one of America's most important Islamic organizations.

BY ALIYA KARIM

SEVERAL WOODEN PIECES OF WALL, charred black, remained standing as the sun peeked over the horizon and smoke billowed around what had once been the Islamic Society of Joplin, Mo. In the middle of the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims in Joplin would now be forced to worship and break their fast at home, not with the rest of their community, because their hometown mosque had been destroyed. With this attack having taken place less than 24 hours after the shooting at a Sikh gurdwara (a Sikh house of worship) in Oak Creek, Wis., the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) issued a community safety advisory to Muslims around the country.

Nihad Awad, CAIR's executive director, walks briskly into the CAIR national headquarters on Capitol Hill, fresh out of his most recent interview session and ready for at least two more meetings. Having spent the weekend managing and speaking at CAIR's national conference and banquet, where he and others hosted more than 1,000 guests — including the Rev. Al Sharpton — Awad maintains a calm expression, sporting a black suit and blue tie. His dark combed hair, neatly trimmed beard, composed face, and quiet yet firm voice hide his many concerns from his next visitor.

"Everyday I wake up, I think about opportunities, reaching out to more people [and being] willing to engage new challenges," Awad, a Jordanian-born American, says. "Today I woke up with three new ideas, and as I was driving to work, I was thinking, 'I have to do these three things today.'"

As the founding executive director of the country's first national Muslim civil rights and advocacy group, Awad is one of the prominent faces seen on television. In a span of two weeks, he appeared on more than 100 television programs in the U.S. and

across the Middle East discussing how to properly react to a recent controversial film on Prophet Muhammad.

"We do not have international offices, but our presence is felt worldwide because of the Internet, because of our appearances on national and international media almost on a daily basis," Awad says one recent afternoon in his office, surrounded by bookshelves and framed pictures of colleagues on television.

Several national Muslim American organizations already existed when Awad and others in the D.C. area — one a local news producer and the other an entrepreneur in IT — founded CAIR in 1994. None of those organizations, however, focused specifically on the protection of religious and civil rights but instead had broader functions, such as providing spiritually educational and social programs for Muslims in the U.S.

"Discrimination was widespread... [and people had] no place to turn to and no guidance, so despite the fact that we have an affluent, professional community, we were severely lacking in the area of political and civil rights work," Awad says. "It came just as a natural response to a need that was obvious to many people."

Born in Amman, Jordan, Awad grew up in a refugee camp, the only thing he knew of the world for the first 18 years of his life.



He lived in a two-bedroom home with 10 people in one of several Jordanian camps, housing tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees disenfranchised as a result of the creation of Israel.

"Having lived in a refugee camp all my life [until I left Jordan]... has definitely affected the way I look at things," Awad says.

With no running water, no electricity, no paved roads and no playground, he and his family waited in line once a week for water and food supplies from the UN. They relied on battery-operated radios to stay connected to the rest of the world. The children attended school in a large tent. Only when he visited relatives in other parts of Jordan — through cheap public transportation or hour-long walks — did Awad begin to realize this was not how life should be lived.

"I thought everyone was living like us," Awad says. "Alhamdulillah, I never lost hope... I knew I wanted to do something. What that thing was, I didn't know, but I knew I could do something different."

CAIR's work is not yet done, and its team — more than 80 percent of which is made up of people under the age of 35 — will continue to benefit the Muslim American community and the country as a whole, one that "lives up to the values of justice and freedom for all."

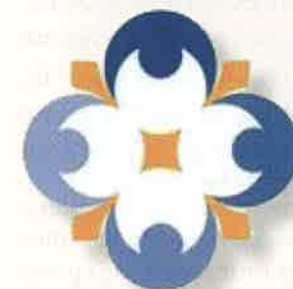
Even though political and state violence had driven his family into becoming refugees, they never got involved in politics. Awad says they taught him about everything he needed to know: perseverance, family values, strong character and the importance of education.

Because Jordan had few universities and colleges, Awad walked from one foreign embassy to another, asking for information about universities in other countries and getting help to write in English to those universities for applications. He received a small scholarship along with some tuition discounts due to his refugee status, and his family saved up 73 dinars (about \$100) so he could travel to Italy, where he studied Italian for one year and engineering for four years before coming to the U.S. in 1984.

He became active in the University of Minnesota's Muslim Students' Association and General Union of Palestinian Students and interacted with classmates who knew little about his religion and culture. It became evident that Muslim Americans had not done enough in reaching out to the rest of the public. The idea of building an organization around this issue soon began buzzing in Awad's head.

Awad believes CAIR can provide a safe haven, a space in which an American minority group can find defense against all hostility and violence. By working to bring attention to the media and the public about attacks against fellow Americans, "then these profifers of hate-mongering, they will shrink and they will lose," Awad says.

Over the course of 13 days in August last year, seven other attacks were made on American mosques. Some were vandalized. Worshipers in one mosque heard air rifle shots that damaged the building's brick wall. Muslim gravestones in Illinois were spray-painted with anti-Islam graffiti, including words like "RAGHAED KILLER" [sic]. A homemade acid bomb was thrown at the home of a Muslim family in Florida.



CAIR

Consider this: In the first seven months of 2012, 10 attacks on mosques were recorded across the U.S., according to CAIR.

In response to the Joplin mosque burning, CAIR offered a \$10,000 reward for information that would lead to the arrest and conviction of a perpetrator; the reward money would come from the regular contributions to CAIR from average Muslim American families. FBI later announced a \$50,000 reward for information on a man caught on surveillance during a July arson attempt on the same mosque.

By Aug. 9, the Joplin community raised more than \$205,000 to rebuild its mosque and, by Sept. 21, surpassing its original goal by more than \$160,000. Although the person responsible for the fire in Joplin has not yet been apprehended, a man has been arrested for another, more recent mosque attack — where a fire was intentionally set in October — in Toledo, Ohio. The community, in the meantime, is working with neighbors, other faith groups and CAIR to make their case known.

"We coordinated a reception with local churches who embraced the local [Joplin] Muslim community," Awad says. "This incident became a story of community, a story of unity against hate and against attempts to spread fear in society."

Awad hopes to continue on the path of civil rights advocacy in the future. He says CAIR's work is not yet done, and its team — more than 80 percent of which is made up of people under the age of 35 — will continue to benefit the Muslim American community and the country as a whole, one

that "lives up to the values of justice and freedom for all."

For him, as long as Muslims continue to follow the Prophet's example, keep a positive attitude and turn their challenges into learning opportunities, all will be well.

"I hope that young Muslims who have the passion to be active, who want to do something, should think of themselves as future neighbors," Awad says. "When you

give up your desires for the sake of God and the sake of the community and country, that's leadership." ■

Aliya Karim is a recent graduate in journalism and mass communication from George Washington University and is pursuing a master's degree in media and public affairs.



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California's Hidden Muslims

A vibrant and growing Muslim community thrives in Bakersfield, Calif.

BY EMAN SHURBAJI

WHEN MOST PEOPLE HEAR OF THE MUSLIMS IN CALIFORNIA, they often think of the progressive Bay Area, super-active Orange County Muslims, or perhaps some posh L.A. Muslims. Yet California cannot simply be divided by regions based on geographic axis: Central California is home to millions of people as well, and thus a substantial Muslim population.

Bakersfield, Calif. is seated in Kern County, a region known largely to the world for its produce, oil, natural gas, and geothermal production. Kern is one of several central valley counties, an area marked by rich soils, warm summers, and a conservative nature. While most of California votes blue, the central valley, and largely Bakersfield, has a Republican presence. The city has a population of almost 400,000, with the metropolitan area having about 800,000 people; Muslims are thought to number as high as 5,000.

FROM FARMERS TO BUSINESS OWNERS

Abdullah Sharaf knows what it's like to work with his hands, pray on bare dirt and establish himself from the ground up. He was one of the first Muslims to arrive in Kern County, having moved from Ibb, Yemen in early 1967. He, and dozens of Yemenis,

worked the farms of the valley, collecting money and sending it back home. They worked for Alco Farms, traveling up and down the valley as they picked fruits according to the season. Grapes, peaches, asparagus and the bright sun filled their days. As they were a large group, management set aside a space for prayer.

Sharaf went on to open supermarkets and convenience stores (at one point numbering more than eight), as fellow farmers went back to Yemen to bring their families to America. Yemenis owned many businesses, including hamburger stands and convenience stores. The city's largest wholesale distributor to this day is Yemeni.

This dozen of Yemenis, a handful of Pakistanis, and a few other ethnic groups were praying at a small space on the east side Bakersfield. In 1983, they purchased what was once a small church in a more central, active location, and right across from the

county fairgrounds—what would later be top property.

Sayed Rashed was the imam at the masjid, and worked with the community, inviting others to come pray. An Egyptian by origin, Rashed arrived in 1987, having worked as an airline pilot and trained pilots in Oakland, Calif. He moved to establish a car business in Bakersfield, and today his family of wife and eight children call the city home.

"We were growing so fast we needed to find a larger property. We even tried moving to a Pakistani brother's house, and founded the Ming Masjid," Rashed says.

This small Ming Avenue mosque was named Ming Masjid after its respective location. It's Southwest Bakersfield location attracted Muslims from more affluent areas, and began to grow in number and in ethnic groups: Palestinians and African American Muslims joined the medley.

EAST SIDE MOSQUE

As the Ming Masjid grew, the east side of town lacked a mosque, and the community was growing there as well. A building that was once a bank—had become a meetup for drug lords—sat on a sizeable lot on Kentucky Street—a street known for its drug activity.

For five years, the community tried to purchase the building, but the price was too high. Finally, seeing that the building would

The Islamic Shoura Council of Bakersfield is seven years old. Yet despite its young age, it has worked to unite the two existing mosques and the soon-to-be third.

not be sold or rented, the landlord gave in, and the building was purchased in 1996 for less than half its original price.

Yet it wasn't that easy. The community was hurriedly looking to collect funds to purchase the building. The owner was grudgingly dealing with the issue, and the price was a steal—but only if they could pull in the money by the deadline. Dr. Mohamad Harb, a neonatal specialist, came to the rescue.

"Harb approached us and wanted to help with the Kentucky Masjid, and we told him we were short. He gave us \$100,000, and made it happen," Rashed says.

In 2005, donations were once again collected for a new building that cost about \$1 million. As of 2012, the mosque is now complete, with a fire plan, classrooms, a children's babysitting room, and state-of-the-art bathrooms.

"We purchased the lot in the back of the masjid, will turn it into three stores, and will rent it out, and the income will go to the masjid," Sharaf says.

Sharaf now runs a halal convenience store across the street from the masjid.

"It's a dream to pray at the masjid and then come back to work," he says.

MING MASJID EXPANDS

The Ming Masjid expanded and grew at an exponential rate over the last 20 years. Then-imam Mohammad Saeed rallied the community and traveled across the country, collecting donations for the \$2 million project.

From 2004 to 2008, what was once an unnoticeable home on a busy street turned



Muslim Women's Association: Assisting Children and Families

IT BEGAN WITH A DREAM, BUT HAS NOW BECOME A REALITY, giving hope to hundreds of Muslim women and their families in the valley. The Muslim Women's Association of Bakersfield was established on Feb. 18, 2005. The organization is a registered 501 (c)3 nonprofit, and was able to procure a physical office space last year.

Dozens of events have been held in liaison with local women's groups, universities, and utilizing the talents and expertise of women in different fields. There is also a once-weekly Montessori school program for children; a hajj-day for children and their parents; and a summer program. Annual back to school drives collect backpacks and school supplies for needy children going back to school. MWAB is an active member of the International Women's Day Committee, which nominates a woman every year for an award for serving the community.

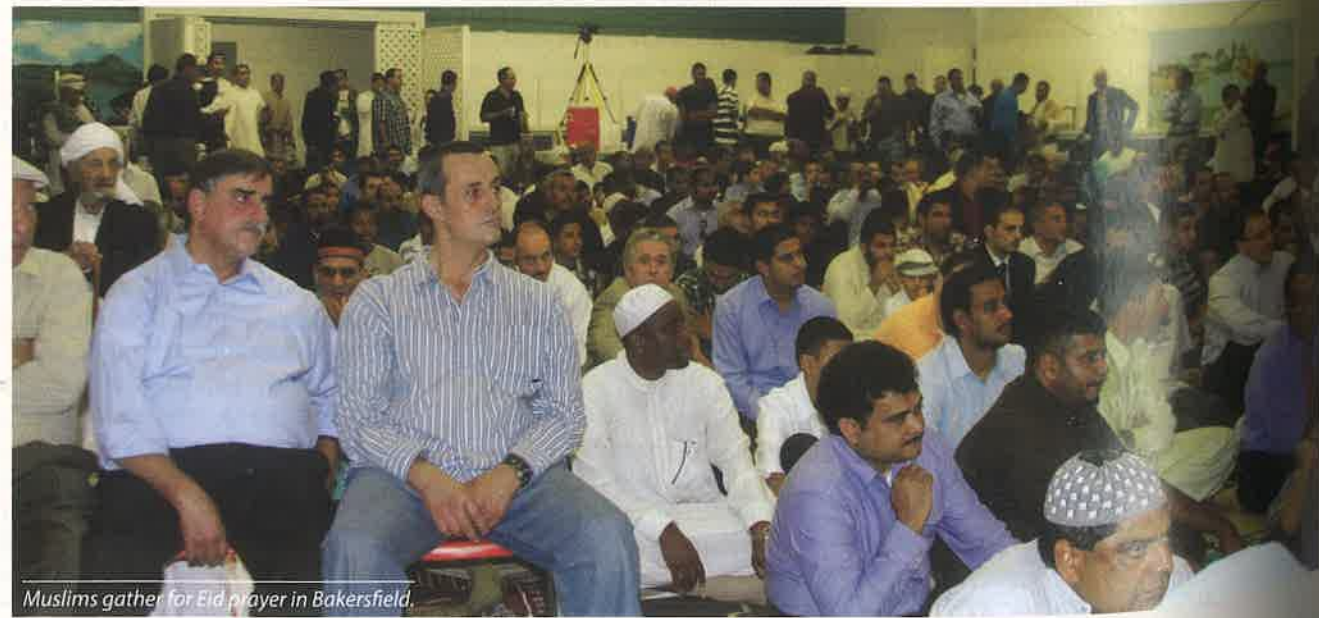
MWAB has also been instrumental in putting together Humanitarian Day. Joining communities across the country, Bakersfield Muslims feed the homeless and give away clothes and shoes. Women cook the food and collect donations, and also call upon support from non-Muslim groups and churches.

Other noteworthy events include a healthy cooking symposium; a panel on women's rights in Islam at California State University, Bakersfield; and hosting a "Women and the Power of the Vote" for Kern County's Fifth District Supervisor. Candidates spoke to more than 30 women about their stances on issues. Among the speakers supporting the Democratic candidate Leticia Perez was celebrity Dolores Huerta, of United Farm Workers. Huerta, a labor leader and civil rights activist who, along with César Chávez, co-founded the National Farmworkers Association, which later became the United Farm Workers. Huerta's presence at the event was a great achievement; it was also covered by local media. Former deputy public defender Perez won, securing 52 percent of the vote.

MWAB leaders Majida Shehadeh and Jan Fleury have many hopes for the future.

"We want more programs for girls, especially in education and career development," Shehadeh said.

Indeed, MWAB currently has several scholarships for women and girls to attend local colleges and universities, but there remains a need donations to keep the building running, and for on-going programs. To donate to MWAB, please contact Majida Shehadeh at (661) 565-6761. ■



Muslims gather for Eid prayer in Bakersfield.

into a building noticeable from two miles away.

The two-story, 10,000 sq. ft. building designed by Fresno, Calif.-based architect Ashraf Ebrahim, in addition to the prayer rooms, includes: four classrooms, a multi-purpose room, a kitchen, offices and five bathrooms.

Bassam Abed and his family have been in Bakersfield for 27 years. Palestinian by origin, Abed's father was an entrepreneur, selling stereo goods. Abed is now married, as are two more of the four siblings; they believe the Ming Masjid is a testimony of how much the community has grown.

"The masjid is so packed on Friday prayer, we have to expand the men's side," he says. An estimated 2,000 people use Ming Masjid, and the weekend school is popular for families with young children. About a dozen families utilize the part-time Islamic school.

The area in which the mosque is located, Southwest Bakersfield, is especially known for its highly-educated population.

"The community has diversified in different ways, we were once in insurance, car businesses, and now we have so many professors and tech-savvy people," Abed says.

Indeed, Ming Masjid's diversity ranges from Nigerians to white Americans to African Americans to Indians. Hana Kheiralla-Suleiman, who moved to Bakersfield 13 years ago from Kansas, is a categorical and curriculum office specialist for a local school district. Her husband, Mahmoud Suleiman, is a professor of education at California State University, Bakersfield.

"It's a nice-sized town, and the community is small enough where you get to know each other," she says. "Because of the small size, it's easier to coordinate and organize events."

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

As Bakersfield is home to one of the nation's largest petroleum industry, companies such as Oxy and Chevron have large offices and hire many talented professionals to work there. Among the countries they are recruiting from is Indonesia. Currently, there are

20 families from Indonesia, many whose husbands are brought in for their oil industry expertise.

Teresa Leach, a destination consultant with the UK-based Going There Global Destination Services, a relocation company, assists families with finding a home and familiarizing themselves with the city.

Most people, she says, are coming on a two-year visa sponsored by Chevron. She helps the women learn more about Bakersfield: taking them out for lunches, helping them make new friends, and most importantly, becoming acquainted with their neighborhoods.

One such lady is Madiha Abdelrahman, a native of Egypt, who has lived in Indonesia.

"People are very welcoming, and my neighbors are nice," Abdelrahman says.



Children in Bakersfield on Eid.

Leach is an instrumental part of helping families learn about American culture, too. Having traveled the world herself, she is always looking to meet new people and gain experiences.

"We want them to have a smooth journey," Leach says.

SHOURA COUNCIL: UNITING THE CITY

Emad Meerza is president and elected amir of the Muslims in the Islamic Shoura Council of Bakersfield.

Meerza, a long-time Bakersfield resident, who is raising his children here, wouldn't have it any other way. His brother, sister and mother all live in Bakersfield.

The Shoura Council is seven years old. Yet despite its young age, it has worked to unite the two mosques and the soon-to-be third. A mosque located further in the southwest part of Bakersfield is now in the works.

"Our goal is to stay united, and when there's a third masjid, we want them to be with us, too," Meerza says. "We have three committees—one for each masjid, and one for the shoura, and we vote on the issues."

The Council's activities include: media relations; government and FBI negotiations when necessary; announcement of Ramadan and when other important events will start; monetary support for needy families and community functions. Noteworthy is the Council's positive and beneficial relationship with U.S. Attorney Ben Wagner's Office in Sacramento and Fresno.

The Council also puts together the annual Dawah Conference, which is heavily attended by members of many religious groups. In addition, they work closely with the American Muslim Jurist Organization (AMJA), relying on their rulings for issues they cannot answer.

The Council put together a pilot school over the summer, to look into supporting a future charter school or program. The school offered math and science subjects, including Arabic and Quran. The classes were taught by certified teachers and more than 60 participated.

Most children either attend weekend school at the masjid, through private lessons, or with Wahida

Khankan. Khankan once had a classroom in the old Ming Masjid, and has now relocated to her classrooms to a separate building. Having moved to Bakersfield in 1990, she has many hopes for the masjid and its programs.

"My [former] students now bring their kids to class," she happily says.

Among the issues the Council is trying to get Muslims involved in is voting locally. "Whether its supervisors or legislators, it doesn't matter, if you have a block of voters 3,000 to 5,000 in number that are committed, it's a lot of votes," Meerza says.

Indeed, as the community has grown, and its presence becomes more prominent, we can only hope to see more come out of Bakersfield.

"We need to stay united and work together," Meerza says. ■

Eman Shurbaji is a freelance feature writer from Bakersfield, Calif.

MUSLIMS IN ACTION

Holding the Rope of Unity

Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago celebrates 20 years of visionary work

BY FERAS ABDELRAHMAN

MUSLIM AMERICANS NEED TO influence those in power: politicians, advocacy groups, and political action committees, reminded Azeem Ibrahim, a Muslim Scottish business tycoon and social activist. Delivering the keynote address at the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago (CIOGC) in Chicago on Nov. 3, 2012, Ibrahim said that if one feels strongly about an issue, there is a likelihood that others feel the same. Herein, he added, lies the opportunity

to organize advocacy groups to move towards goals of creating change.

Muslim organizations, he reminded, are underfunded and understaffed, and stressed the need to make it an obligation to finance initiatives for the future. Ibrahim said that it was important to involve the youth in the community through political activities and allow them to shape debates.

"It's great to see 20 years later that this [the Council] is the new forum for mobilizing the community," said Safaa Zarzour, ISNA's secretary general.

The CIOGC, founded in 1992, has held onto the baton passed by previous communities who faced trials and tribulation. The organization was shaped after years of formulating ideas; Muslim communities across the Chicagoland area decided a Muslim federation was imperative for their collective ambitions.

The 20th anniversary celebration honored the Council's founders and the vision they inspired others to share.

"They [founders] sacrificed their time, their wealth and their energy," said CIOGC chairman Dr. M. Zaher Sahloul. "They were not pursuing personal gain or to reach certain positions or to try to make connections that would progress their career. They did not say what's in it for me. They said what's in it for the community. They persevered in spite of the failures. They are unifiers. They protected and connected us to our faith partners."

Without any hesitation of what challenges were ahead, the Council worked diligently to unite Muslim organizations under one umbrella while forming long lasting relationships with interfaith partners and government officials. Along the way many community members lost sight of the purpose of the Council because unlike weekend schools, community centers, or relief organizations, it was unclear how to determine measurable success.

The need for representation and unity was a foreign concept for immigrant and indigenous Muslims, much more so for immigrants who were ethnically and reli-



Safaa Zarzour presents the Visionary Leaders Award to CIOGC Chairman Dr. Zaher Sahloul.

giously homogeneous most of their lives. While in America Islam and Muslims were unfamiliar terms to the majority of American so Muslims families fit seamlessly into the fabrics of society simply as foreigners.

The necessity for Muslim representation was met after 9/11 when Muslims in America were investigated by agencies, vilified through the media, and verbally, harassed, and physically assaulted. It was in this situation that the Council filled the void for the Muslim community seeking protection and guidance against the onslaught. Overnight the Council evolved from a visionary organization to an organization of practicality.

"Our message as Muslim were to be a peaceful community and to change our image," Ibrahim El-Gindy, one of the founders, said of the Council's message. "We aspire to the good of all—Christians, Muslims, Jews and to all mankind. Our true faith is through unity and collective efforts."

Some of the founders and former chairmen of CIOGC include:

- Dr. Ibrahim Elgindy
- Talat Othman
- Dr. Abdul Rahman Amine
- Dr. Bassam Osman
- Dr. Mohammed Kaiseruddin
- Dr. Talal Sunbuli
- Syed Shanawaz Khan
- The Late Mary Ali
- Jabir Herbert Muhammad
- Tawfik Nassar
- Dr. Abdul Waheed Fakhri
- Dzafer Kulenovic
- Dr. Zia Hassan
- Kareem Irfan
- Dr. Abdul Malik Mujahid.

Unity was no longer scoffed at as wishful thinking but a religious duty for the security of Muslims in this country. The Council leadership exercised the tools that previous communities had at their disposal,

community, interfaith and political coalitions, and the media. Moving forward, the Council relied on disseminating their message of peace and other qualities akin to other religious communities in an effort to show that despite our differences we share common ground.

The Council has instilled civic engagement, interfaith and intra-community partnerships, and media relations as the pillars of their ongoing work. Ignorance about Muslim Americans con-

tinue to threaten the collective ambition of the community. In the last several months, Muslims were subjected to McCarthyesque hearings with Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) leading the charge. His type of rhetoric potentially fueled hate crimes such as the Joplin, Mo. mosque burning and the multiple attacks on mosques in the Chicagoland area. Through times of despair the Council never wavered about the implications of defending the rights of the community.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "The ultimate test of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and moments of convenience, but where he stands in moments of challenge and moments of controversy."

Although detractors will always stand to stagnate change, there is comfort in having an organization with the grit to accept injustice as an inevitable challenge to progress. ■

Feras Abdelrahman is editor of CIOGC's *Chicago Crescent*.

Building a Tradition of Waqfs in America

Muslim Americans step forth and revive the Islamic tradition of waqf to assure a sustainable future of their institutions.

BY SA'AD H. ANSARI

MUSLIM AMERICANS PERHAPS ARE UNANIMOUS IN the opinion that much work needs to be done toward sculpting a better future. Education, mosques, the continuation of Islamic scholarship, social services, entrepreneurship, providing charity at home and abroad, political involvement, the arts and family-life support, are excellent endeavors that require sustained funding. An all too common failure to plan for this reality results in subpar facilities, succumbing to interest-based loans out of compulsion, organization collapse, the inability to expand, a decay of managerial dignity with each emergency survival fundraiser, and other ails all ultimately precluding the rise of great, enduring institutions.

Muslim Americans will find the *waqf*, the charitable endowment, a pious revival of a beloved sunnah and an urgently needed tool toward surmounting the challenge of sustained funding.

ENDURING CHARITY

Since the prophetic call to *sadaqa jariyyah* (enduring charity), Muslims have sought sustainable mechanisms to benefit society and thus attain nearness to their Creator, accumulating blessings even after their own demise.

Umar ibn al-Khattab's son narrates about his father: "Umar said, 'O Allah's Messenger! I possess some property which I prize highly and want to give in charity.' The Prophet said, 'Give it in charity with its land and trees on the condition that the land and trees will neither be sold, nor gifted, nor bequeathed, but the fruits are to be spent in charity.' So Umar gave it in charity; it was (designated) for Allah's cause, the emancipation of slaves, the poor, guests, travelers, and kinsmen. The person acting as its administrator could eat from it reasonably and fairly, and could allow a friend of his eat from it provided he had no intention of becoming wealthy by its means" (Bukhari Vol. 4, Book 51, No. 26).

The prime contribution of the early Muslims is knowledge and its manifestation in the enlightened personalities to whom later Islamic civilizations would nostalgically look to for guidance; unsurprisingly, the iconic architectural achievements typical of other empires generally do not define this early period. Still, we do find the framework that would result in some of the most splendid structures in the world. Unlike the monuments and statues built for the self-aggrandizement, the concept of endowed charity and hospitality as mentioned in the Prophet's response to Umar, would result in such splendors as the Şehzade Complex in Istanbul, replete with a mosque, school, charity-kitchen, garden, hospitable inn, and other amenities.

These were functional monuments, providers of public good. This phenomenon also reflects a *calculated* approach; charity need not be confined to the simple instance of granting money, from one hand to another, its final result and efficacy unconsidered (see www.charitynavigator.org). Rather, charity may proceed from understanding the needs of a particular constituency, and then an investment strategically framed to meet those needs in longevity. In other words, just as one plans for their children's college tuition as they still rest in their cradle, Muslims nurture their sprouting communities with foresight and creativity.

Of the various endowments throughout Muslim majority countries, an example of Sultan Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi's levying of the "Export (Tax Given) to the Scholars and Impoverished, at the Alexandrian Seaport" demonstrates the varied manifestations endowments might take (here, the seaport itself acted as the endowment). Regrettably, however, many long-running endowments were dismantled in modern times against their founder's wishes, including that of the once apex institution, Al-Azhar University, upon its nationalization. The recent economic crisis provides a glimpse of what would happen to Harvard or Yale if their endowments were similarly destroyed and capped from recovering, and highlights the brilliance afforded through their financial independence.

Though the establishment of the Şehzade Complex and the Alexandrian trade tax office constitute grandiose, royal endowments, instances of the average well-to-do families establishing endowments also abound, and are quite within the range for Muslim Americans, especially acting collectively.

THE FOUNDATION IN AMERICA

Just as the Muslims of the Classical Period, many of them converts from Rome, inherited the best of Roman tradition and fulfilled the prophetic imperative of enduring charity by adapting and cultivating Roman endowment practices suited to their contexts, Muslim Americans may also fulfill the imperative similarly, and learn and improve upon the practices of both Islamic civilization and their home country.



Compared even to Europe, the American endowments culture is uniquely rigorous. Before 1910, the U.S. featured only 18 endowment-based foundations, but since then, the spectacular growth of the country's economy and rich entrepreneurs per capita has resulted in over 50,000 foundations, with nearly half a trillion dollars in assets by 2001, and growing, notes Mark Dowie (American Foundations: An Investigative History).

Above charity, American endowments have also served as mechanisms for fueling public policy and social change across various sectors, such as health, education, environment, energy, art, and science. They do not avoid controversy; despite foundations' grants constituting less than 10 percent of the total nonprofit sector budget, the fact such foundations draw from a deep pool of resources and in donate larger sums (e.g. one check for a million dollars) than many individual donors (e.g. \$2 million from 1,000 donors contributing \$1,000 each)

results in what some argue is a greater than deserved influence over the uncoordinated voices of the many disjointed others.

This contention targets the American endowment tradition that endowments are *used* to leverage opinionated voices through money when lobbying for policy or social change. Of course, this critique would not exist were it not for the fact that endowments are effective in the first place.

It is interesting to note this common strategy of leverage utilized by many American foundations is quite deliberate. Instead of paying for everything, foundations will donate just enough to tip over enough momentum for other contributors to join, thus saving their own resources for opportunities elsewhere. The classical example is that of Andrew Carnegie.

Though dazzlingly wealthy, he could not fund the expansive U.S. public library system on his own. Instead, he purchased the buildings for the libraries, with the commitment that the host communities would staff and stock them, thus establishing a massive national institution in perpetuity. His contribution was but a fraction of the cost of the gargantuan project, but it was just enough to tip it into a successful reality.

MUSLIM AMERICAN CASES

Precedents amongst Muslim American community exist as well, from families endowing Islamic studies chairs at universities, to establishing entirely new endowment-based organizations (foundations, trusts, etc.). For example, the Islamic Center of Tucson purchased an apartment complex which recovered its principal in less than a decade and now funds the center. They plan to pursue

the same model for its Islamic school. Also, Zaytuna College is inviting endowed chairs. They accept bequeathed estates as well, which is a common method in acquiring property-based endowments.

Small nascent foundations are also sprouting up across the U.S., such as a group of professionals in New York who donate \$500 a year to an account in Amana Mutual Funds, intending to grant the dividends to worthy Islamic causes each year (expected to be 4 percent of the principal). Once they attain a substantial sum, they plan to employ their own fund manager for even quicker growth. Finally, the North American Islamic Trust has been involved with establishing sustainable income for Islamic centers as a key strategy.

Such organizations, however, are the exception, and not the rule. Awareness and encouragement of building endowments must spread through the grassroots in order for Muslim Americans to become widely sustainable in their network of projects, and gain enough experience with the institution to fine tune its efficacy.

GROWING DEEP ROOTS IN AMERICA: TRADITION

"We must be producers of culture, not passive consumers of it," wrote Umar Faruq Abd-Allah in 2004 ("Islam and the Cultural Imperative," *Nawawi Foundation*). A part of that culture is developing a tradition of Islamic-American endowments. Just as Caliph Abu Bakr gave his entire wealth in public, Muslim philanthropists should put forth their own seed money to initiate foundations and encourage other donors to join, as long as ostentation is avoided. It must become almost reflexive to contemplate long term sources of income when beginning the brainstorming session for a future Islamic center, educational project, social service, or any other worthy endeavor that requires sustained funding. Though a bit of an exaggeration and slightly comical, the shift of Muslim Americans from donation-only based organizations to those which sustain themselves through careful planning may be akin to the development of nomads to settled peoples, or hunter-gatherers (of funds) to farmers (of dividends). Through history and such logical parables, we clearly see that the *waqf* has deep roots in both Islamic and American traditions, and if nurtured and spread through awareness, it has the potential to support the financial stability and institutional rootedness of the American Muslim community. ■

Sa'ad H. Ansari, nonprofit organization development consultant, is a graduate student at Yale.



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Election 2012

A recap of the gains and upsets of the night

BY MEHA AHMAD

THE COUNTRY'S FIRST BIRACIAL president won a second term in office, after the most expensive presidential race in U.S. history.

It was a wild election ride, but one thing's for certain: most of us are probably just glad it's over. What was considered for the last leg of the election to be a narrow race turned out to be a big win for President Barack Obama against GOP challenger former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney. With a minimum of 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidency, Obama won 332 votes; Romney wrangled in 206.

THE LONG ELECTION NIGHT THAT NEVER WAS

Expected by many on-the-ground journalists and media outlets to be a very long night of recounting votes and lawyer contestations ended up falling very short of expectations.

I was warned that I'd probably be up until the wee hours of the night covering the election in Ohio. I thought my stay in Columbus, where I was stationed to cover the Swing State Madness (as I was beginning to refer to it), had a good chance of even being extended (God, please no, I prayed. There really is nothing to do in Ohio) another couple of days.

But God must have heard my prayers, because in a turn of events few saw coming (except perhaps Nate Silver), the election was called a few minutes after 11 p.m. Obama won, Romney had to whip up a concession

speech out of thin air (he famously never wrote one), Democrats control the Senate, Republicans control the House, and what was supposed to be The Longest Night Ever became one of those things that's so overhyped that disappointment at the outcome is the only option.

In his (brief) concession speech, Romney urged leaders of both parties to put aside their differences.

"The nation, as you know, is at a critical point," Romney said to supporters in Boston, after calling and congratulating President Obama on his victory. "At a time like this, we can't risk partisan bickering and political posturing. Our leaders have to reach across the aisle to do the people's work."

Obama, who four years ago ran on a

platform of hope and change, echoed his 2008 slogan in his victory speech.

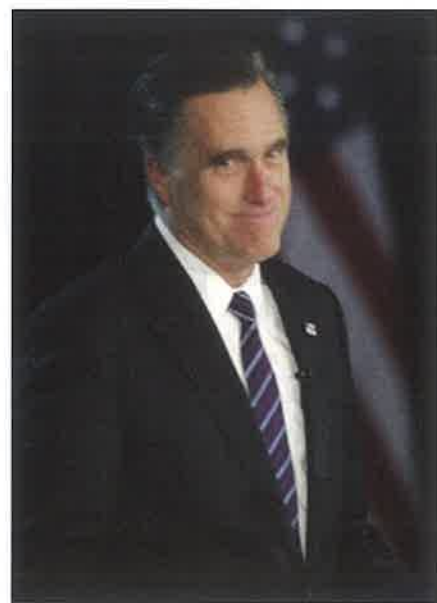
"I have never been more hopeful about America. And I ask you to sustain that hope. I'm not talking about blind optimism, the kind of hope that just ignores the enormity of the tasks ahead or the roadblocks that stand in our path," Obama said to thousands of cheering supporters at McCormick Place in Chicago. "I have always believed that hope is that stubborn thing inside us that insists, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us so long as we have the courage to keep reaching, to keep working, to keep fighting."

He went on to say that he planned to build on the progress made so far and will continue to fight for new jobs and new opportunities and security for the middle class.

SWING STATES: WHO NEEDS 'EM?

For months, the eyes of analysts, journalists, politicians and voters alike were on the famous swing states. Ohio was the key to the election, according to so many pundits. No Republican has ever won the presidency without Ohio, with its 18 electoral votes, voters heard over and over again. As it is in almost every election, Florida was also a wild card (29 electoral votes), as well as, interestingly enough, Virginia (13 electoral votes).

But the big surprise in this election wasn't that Obama won swing states Ohio, Florida, and Virginia (a usually Republican state whose recent voting results is indicative of new swing-state battle ground status).



The real surprise was that, in the end, Obama didn't even need any of them.

Even if all three states had gone red, the newly reelected president of the United States would have won anyway—proof that the election wasn't really as close as pundits predicted. While several states' polling was very close—in fact, Romney lost Florida by just less than one percent of the vote—and though the popular vote was a narrow win for Obama, electorally speaking, the overall result could actually be considered a landslide.

Despite record numbers of campaign money involved, it took more than just dollars and cents to win the voters and, ultimately, the election—even if those dollars and cents did add up to about \$853 million and \$752 million spent by Obama

The big surprise in this election wasn't that Obama won swing states Ohio, Florida, and Virginia. [It's] that, in the end, Obama didn't even need any of them."

Yalla Vote!

BY JANNE ANDERSEN

YALLA VOTE, A NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGN launched by the Arab American Institute, at the start of the presidential election campaign cycle, mobilizing Arab Americans to vote. They wanted to send a message in this election—that the approximately 4 million Arabs in the U.S. can play a crucial role as a minority group on the national political map.

On Election Day, a team of young New York Arab American women headed out on their very last route to ring the doorbells of Bay Ridge and Brooklyn residents. They had been there before to register eligible voters. Now they returned to remind around 800 voters to go and actually cast their vote.

The first step is to get people to the polls and get them to take a conscious decision.

"We Arab Muslims love to talk about politics, but we can't be taken seriously politically, if we are not registered to vote," says Ayisha Irfan, 24, a Bay Ridge resident and a volunteer with The Arab American Association of New York (AAANY).

The Arab Americans are perfect immigrants—they don't lack money, but it's their political leanings that are missing, she says, noting that even many doctors and lawyers are still not registered.

and Romney, respectively. Much of Obama's win can be contributed to his remarkable on-the-ground campaign.

IT'S A GROUND WAR

Romney may have had some deep-pocketed allies on his side, but the Obama camp's funding combined with their voter-to-voter contact and personalized outreach gave him the edge needed to win the day. In the end, Obama had a well-honed ground game.

Organization was key, and nobody does on-the-ground campaign organizing like the Obama camp, with its 901 staffers—compared to Romney's 403 staffers—and countless volunteers.

Like a militia, campaign foot soldiers—organized, focused—were ready to Get Out the Vote. Door-to-door they walked, knocked, urging people to hit the polls. They helped potential voters get registered, made sure everyone knew their nearest polling station, and even helped senior citizens find transpor-

The Yalla Vote campaign never rallied for one particular party, but recommended people to choose their candidate based on how they would work for their interests as an Arab minority. On their website they listed all the candidates positions on issues like the Arab Spring, civil rights, immigration, Islamophobia, Iran, Palestine, Syria and the War on Terror.

Irfan says that the Arabs have been so eager to pursue the American Dream as immigrants, that they haven't had surplus to interfere in civil society. She mentions Palestinian Muslim American Linda Sarsour, the 31-year-old AAANY executive director as an example of a new attitude among Arab youth to actively participate their communities.

There is a 30-year age gap between her and the next generation that were active in their communities. She is the oldest person in her office, and she is young. AAANY volunteers organize fundraisers and demonstrations, work through social media and mobilize humanitarian aid for the people of Syria, Lebanon and Gaza—most recently, they collected humanitarian aid for victims of Hurricane Sandy.

Young people take everything they've learned with them for the next time, says Irfan. And getting young people engaged means that they are also taking their engagement home to their family. To prove her point the phone rings, it is Irfan's 13-year-old sister: Be sure that mom goes down and votes! Yalla vote. ■

tation to the polls. They focused coordinated team efforts on battleground communities.

In short: the Obama campaign was banking votes.

By the last week of the election, the Romney camp reported having made nearly 40 million voter contacts. Team Obama reported having made 125 million voter contacts. Combined with the on-the-ground organizing was the Obama campaign's outreach to marginalized groups: minorities, which included African Americans and Latinos, the youth, and, probably most importantly, women.

WOMEN MAKE GAINS IN CONGRESS, SENATE

Democrats weren't the only big winners on Nov. 6. Women also made their own strides.

Democrat Tammy Duckworth beat incumbent Joe Walsh for Illinois's 8th congressional district. Duckworth is the first Asian American woman elected to Congress

in Illinois, and is also the first disabled woman to be elected to the House.

In Wisconsin, Democrat Tammy Baldwin beat Republican former Gov. Tommy Thompson, winning herself a seat in the Senate. Baldwin will be the first openly gay member of the Senate.

In North Dakota, Heidi Keitkamp, a former state attorney general, won her bid for the Senate, along with Hawaii Democrat Mazie Hirono and Nebraska Republican Deb Fischer.

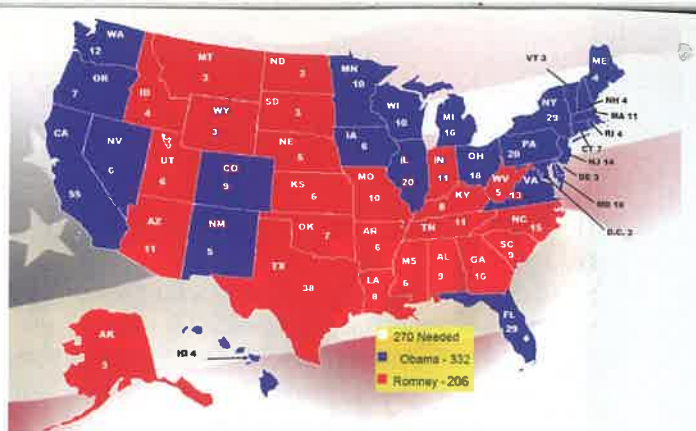
Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), the Democratic Party darling, won her bid for Sen. Scott Brown's Senate seat. Warren, a strong critic of Wall Street, will be appointed to the Senate Banking Committee, much to the unease of Wall Street players.

Women voters took control of their voting power on election night. More women voted than men and polls showed for months that women, overall, lean more favorably toward Obama. Many experts say it was women who delivered the victory for Obama.

Also worth noting is the unseating of Rep. Todd Akin and Rep. Richard Mourdock, both Republicans from Missouri and Indiana, respectively. Both Akin and Mourdock triggered national criticism after making unpopular statements regarding rape and pregnancy and, well, women voters found a way of shutting that whole thing down.

ROUGH NIGHT FOR THE GOP

Romney was not the only GOP member to end election night battered and bruised.



U.S. Rep. Joe Walsh (R-Ill.), member of the Tea Party and known for his anti-Islamic rhetoric, lost his campaign for 8th district in Illinois to Democrat and Iraq War veteran Tammy Duckworth, even though he spent almost twice as much money in campaigning. Walsh, labeled by Muslims as an Islamophobe, warned voters in August that "radical Muslims were lurking amongst them."

Walsh warned voters that a "radical strain of Islam" was lurking around corners and killing Americans every week. "It's here. It's in Elk Grove. It's in Addison. It's in Elgin. It's here," he said, naming suburbs of Illinois.

Hours later, a man shot at a mosque in the district while as many as 500 Muslims prayed inside. Even though many critics accused Walsh's words to be the cause of the hate crime, Walsh did not condemn the attacks.

But Walsh was not the only anti-Islam congressman to lose his seat.

Rep. Allen West (R-Fl.) lost the battle for Florida's 18th congressional district seat to Democrat Patrick Murphy. Known for his scathingly negative views on Muslims and Islam—at a 2010 public forum, he called Islam a "very vile and very vicious enemy"—spent more than \$17 million campaigning (nearly five times as much as Murphy's \$3.6 million).

Murphy's win in two key counties mirrored that of Obama's; they both won the same two of three counties in the 18th congressional district (St. Lucie and Palm Beach Counties).

"These encouraging results clearly show that mainstream Americans reject anti-Muslim bigotry by candidates for public office and will demonstrate that rejection at the polls," Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, told the Huffington Post. "This election witnessed an increased political awareness and mobilization effort among American Muslims that dealt a major blow to the Islamophobia machine."

But it wasn't a total loss for the anti-Islam GOP politicians: Rep. Michelle Bachmann (R-Minn.) and Rep. Peter King (R-NY) managed to hold onto their respective seats, however.

The only two Muslim congressmen—Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) and Rep. Andre Carson (D-Ind.)—both won their reelection bids. Ellison won a third term to the House of Representatives after receiving more than 74 percent of the vote. Carson also enjoyed an easy win of a second term to the House, with nearly 60 percent of the vote.

LOOKING AHEAD

With the election over, and Inauguration Day just around the corner (mark those calendars for Jan. 20!), Americans will soon be seeing the impact of their vote and waiting for the president to revisit his 2012 campaign promises (and more than a handful of his 2008 ones, too).

In 2012, Obama promised to roll back Bush tax cuts for upper-income people during his second term. He also promised to cut the deficit by \$4 trillion over the next decade and create a million new manufacturing jobs in the next four years. He also promised to make higher education affordable for everyone.

"While our journey has been long," Obama said in his victory speech on election night, "we have picked ourselves up, we have fought our way back and we know in our hearts that for the United States of America, the best is yet to come."

We'll see. ■

Meha Ahmad is the copy editor of *Islamic Horizons*, and a freelance producer for Al Jazeera Arabic in Washington DC.

POLITICS AND SOCIETY

New York's Community Safety Act

BY MANAR KHALIL



A New York City Council hearing on the Community Safety Act

AMERICA: THE HOME OF THE free and the land of the brave—with some imperfections. For many, the U.S. is a dream country, one that promotes the hope of living peacefully and with all of the human rights people are entitled. But every country has its pros and cons. Human rights are violated every day, even in America.

Here is New York City's story, where the Community Safety Act has been created from the voices of people and groups who have had enough of the NYPD's discriminatory ways. The bill that awaits the City Council approval, sets out to end discriminatory policing and hold the police accountable for their actions. The bills included are:

- Intro 800—Protecting New Yorkers against discrimination by the NYPD
- Intro 799—Protecting New Yorkers against unlawful searches
- Intro 801—Requiring NYPD officers to identify themselves and explain their action
- Intro 881—Establish an NYPD inspector general office
- Intro 800 would ban racial profiling and discrimination as well as hold the police accountable for their actions against different groups, like the stop-and-frisk practices. This bill also protects the prohibition of profiling based on sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, housing and

immigration status, language and disability.

Intro 799 requires police officers to have verbal or written permission to search. It also ends the practice of the NYPD deceiving New Yorkers into believing it is required to consent to unnecessary searches and that officers have to explain that a person has the right to refuse a search when there is no warrant present.

Intro 801 demands that a police officer must provide a reason for their actions, such as the stop-and-frisk. It also requires an officer to provide a business card with their name, rank and phone number at the end of their activity for the Civilian Complaint Review Board.

Intro 881 creates an Office of the Inspector General to review and examine issues in the NYPD to protect residents from police misconduct.

The four bills want to be implemented because there have been accounts of the NYPD stopping and frisking civilians of color or ethnic background. The majority are black and Latino.

According to the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), an analysis revealed that since 2002, four million New Yorkers have been subjects of police stops and street interrogations. The analysis also revealed that of those stopped, 9 out of 10 are innocent, according to the NYPD's own reports.

A bill supporter and advocate, Candis

Tolliver of the NYCLU, strongly believes that the act will bring an end to the injustices that walk the streets of NYC.

"I think it's very important to stand up for the act because the majority of New York City—and probably people in other cities—feel violated and feel like they don't even live in America anymore because of stop-and-frisk searches and random interrogations because you aren't white," Tolliver said. "We need more people, everyone of all races and backgrounds, to come together and stand up for what is right."

The two public hearings in Brooklyn and Queens brought out residents testifying about being stopped-and-frisked by the police.

Tolliver says the people are fed up with feeling violated while walking down the street. The only way to overcome this step down in policing is to step up against injustice. ■

Manar Khalil is a freelance writer based in New York.



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Halal Street, New York, N.Y.

During the last decade halal street food has become a New York City staple. These omnipresent citywide carts can be found loyally serving dishes that New Yorkers have come to love and rely on — The Combo in particular.

BY JANNE LOUISE ANDERSEN

THE HALAL GUYS, IT SOUNDS like a sitcom, but in 1992 it was one of the first street push-carts selling halal meals in New York City, on 53rd Street and Sixth Avenue in Manhattan. Since then halal carts sprouted up across the city, and for years The Halal Guys and New York Best Halal Food were competing serving halal meals at the busy business intersection. Today, they have merged, now New York Best Halal Food serves business people and residents in the daytime (from 10.30 a.m. – 7.00 p.m.) and The Halal Guys cater to hungry clubbers, cabbies and other late-nighters until 4 a.m. New Yorkers can now get their favorite halal meals around the clock.

"It's almost the same food," says Mustafa Hegazy, the New York Best Halal Food partner in the joint halal venture. "But in the night people only want to feel the taste of the white sauce. In the daytime they want to taste the meat."

And they do. Last fall, on a cold November Monday at around 5 p.m., at least 20 people were patiently waiting in line to

get their dinner — most likely being the Combo Over Rice — yellow rice with a mix of marinated lamb and chicken, salad and the famous white sauce. That is what Pistol is having, a New York rapper and the brother of the renown DJ Fat Joe.

"I come from far away to get my food here, it's the best," he says and greets Hegazy with a slap on his back. Hegazy in return lets the regular VIP skip the line and puts extra white sauce in the yellow plastic bag with The Halal Guys logo that match the shirts of the employees.

"Alhamdulillah, it's good business, but the economy makes things hard," Hegazy says. However, the company will go a long way before raising prices of the \$6 plates.

To adjust, he is expanding the menu to include fish and vegetarian dishes to attract new customers. For that, he bought a new bigger pushcart built by Steve's Sheet Metal in Queens. There are at least 11 other pushcart manufacturers in NYC, and Hegazy says he works with the ones that can best meet his needs for function and design.

The other prerequisite to the food cart

business is having a garage to store it in. Hegazy's is an actual kitchen in Queens where two employees cook rice, chop salad, marinate the meat and make the highly praised white sauce. They then deliver the carts to each of their respective corner on 53rd Street at 10 a.m. and pick them up again at 7 p.m. and 4 a.m.

There to receive them are 56-year-old Mustafa Abdel Hamed from Cairo and 24-year-old Mohammad Omar from Alexandria who work six to seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. The job allows Omar to save up money and enjoy the city before eventually returning to Egypt.

"Work with pork and drinks is no good for me, so this is good," he says.

Abdel Hamed first worked as a chef in an Italian restaurant in Little Italy when he came to the U.S. 28 years ago. Then he opened up his own restaurant that went bust after people plastered pictures of Osama Bin Laden on the restaurant's windows after 9/11 and everyone stopped dining there. Now he is using his gastronomic skills at the cart. It ensures the income of the family. Abdel Hamed has three daughters and he insists on putting them all through college.

POLITICS AND SOCIETY

HALAL

Hegazy swears by the authenticity of the halal meat he serves.

"We have a certificate in the kitchen in Queens," he says and points to an empty cardboard box with a halal logo on.

However, he knows that there are halal vendors who don't take the halal standards seriously. Hegazy experienced that six years ago while in another job, he had ordered three boxes of halal chicken. When the halal distributor only had two boxes, he just added a third box with non-halal slaughtered chickens. Hegazy says he left in anger.

"Halal has a religious and a healthy meaning — to mention the name of God before the slaughtering and to let all the blood out, not leave poison in the meat. Yes, it's another barrier for halal meat, but then it's fresh and healthy," he says and adds that the quality of the food is the key to the company's success.

He says they even see lots of Jewish New Yorkers at the carts who consider halal slaughtered meat as good as kosher. However, there are no studies verifying the vendors' halal claims or authority.

Feeding New Yorkers in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy

Last fall, after Hurricane Sandy hit New York on Oct. 29, most streets below 39th Street were dark and quiet. But on select corners, food carts attracted hungry residents, tourists and police officers with their BBQ smoke, their glow in the dark and their humming generators.

On the corner of Park Place and Broadway is the halal cart of 25-year-old Bangladeshi Mohammad Rohoman, or rather his uncle's, but Rohoman operates the cart from Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Rohoman came to the U.S. in 2010. His uncle gave him a crash course in cooking the dishes of the cart — all \$5 — and he completed the city's eight-hour food protection course for mobile food vendors and got the mobile food vending license. Rohoman is saving up to complete his accounting degree.

The breaks due to Eid al-Adha, which was followed by Hurricane Sandy, caused a dip in Rohoman's takings. Living in the Bronx, it takes him at least an hour-and-a-half to go and pick up the cart in a garage in Brooklyn and bring it to Manhattan. So today there is mutual gratitude between him and the halal residents who come for a combo rice or a gyro roll.

He has had non-Muslim customers inquiring about the halal meat.

"Sometimes they don't understand my explanation, so I just tell them that halal is healthy and clean meat," Rohoman says in a thick Bangladeshi accent and laughs.

Tiger Ali, 26, from Cairo was back working two days after the storm but moved his cart from uptown (where the power remained) down to 14th Street and Avenue C.

"There's no electricity here, it's good for business," he said. Ali arrived at 11 a.m. and said he intended to stay late. He is also trying to make up for the days of lost income — money he shares with his wife and their three- and five-year-old children in Cairo. Still, he leaves room for discounts for the poor, like Kevin, an elderly resident who got a \$1 discount to be able to afford the shish kebab.



For Nathaniel Hunt, an African American veteran and his two Egyptian colleagues, Abu Bakar and Ezzat Abeis, Sandy brought business. Two days after the storm, Hunt decided to move the cart to the entrance of Brooklyn Bridge, which pedestrians and cyclists were crossing in record numbers after the standstill of public transportation.

FEELING THE COMPETITION

In some cities, such halal carts are raising the ire of restaurant owners, who say that carts don't have to pay rents like them, nor their sort of overhead costs. All they need is a health department license, a state peddler's permit and get board approval. In response, the street vendors want the restaurants to learn to take competition and lock in their clientele.

Hunt has a sales tax license, a mobile food vending license and a mobile food unit permit but, like many other cart managers,

Hunt doesn't own the cart; he is leasing it from someone else, a Muslim, which explains why the Christian Hunt runs a halal food cart. He, however, thinks the halal brand has added value for business.

"People feel halal is more healthy than regular food and feel more comfortable with it," he says.

The chef Abu Bakar works rapidly behind the grill, while Ezzat takes the orders.

Abu Bakar's signature dish is the grilled chicken or beef shish kebab that is served in a hotdog bread with sauce of own choice: hot sauce or BBQ sauce.

Hunt claims Abu Bakar adds his own special touch to the famous white sauce, which is most often a base made on mayonnaise, or yogurt, cucumber and vinegar.

What exactly is of course a secret, part of the mouth-to-mouth branding. So is another essential, the smoke.

"It's the key to this whole business," Hunt confides.

Most people wouldn't ruin the mysterious fun by trying to "discover" what really is in white sauce. They believe that there's no question it tastes better that way.

The two Egyptian men get up at 6 a.m. to go the garage in Queens, pick up the cart and drive it in. When it gets dark, they take it back and clean it before heading home to their families. Ezzat has a two-year-old son and a baby on the way.

On good days, the halal food vending business is good livelihood, Hunt says.

"I put two kids through college with this," he says. ■

Janne Louise Andersen, a freelance journalist based in New York City, covers issues among Arab diaspora communities.

Tribunal, the UN and Statehood

What do events such as the Russell Tribunal and the recent UN bid for statehood mean for Palestine?

BY JANNE LOUISE ANDERSEN

LAST OCTOBER, A NEW YORK JURY, with some 900 attendees in presence, charged the U.S. of violating international law through its "unconditional military and economic support for Israel's occupation of the Palestinians."

It also found the UN guilty of passively observing what the jury called Israel's violations of fundamental rules of international law. The Russell Tribunal is a civic court named after the scholar and philosopher Bertrand Russell, who in 1967 created an international tribunal on Vietnam. Since then, the tribunal that doesn't have legal enforcement authority, has convened on Chile and Iraq, and last year, a new Russell jury assessed the situation of the Palestinians with international law as a legal frame of reference.

In this light, this fourth tribunal's verdict is hardly surprising. More noteworthy is the list of renowned cultural and intellectual personas, who have come forward to demand that the international community oblige Israel to comply with international law.

THE COUNCIL OF THE WISE

On the podium were Mairead Corrigan Maguire, 68, Northern Irish peace activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1976, and

Alice Walker, 68, poet and author of *The Color Purple*. They were joined by their peer Angela Davis, political activist, researcher and author and former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and 2008 presidential candidate for The Green Party (and at 57, the youngest panel member).

Also on the podium were activist Dennis Banks, 75, author and co-founder of the American Indian Movement; rock legend Roger Waters, 69; Miguel Angel Estrella, 72; Argentine pianist and UNESCO goodwill ambassador John Dugard, 76, a professor of international law at Leiden University in Amsterdam and former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Territories; Ronald Kasrils, 73, writer, activist and former minister; and Michael Mansfield, 70, a professor of law at the City University of London and a practicing human rights lawyer for 45 years, and the interim president and Honorary President Stéphane Hessel, French ambassador and famous philosopher; Holocaust survivor; and former French resistance fighter.

This aging jury of passionate academics, professional humanists and political activists (advised by six lawyers making sure that the jury would be working within a proper legal framework) gathered for two days to hear 19 testimonies from experts who, for



years, have followed the issue of Israel and Palestine.

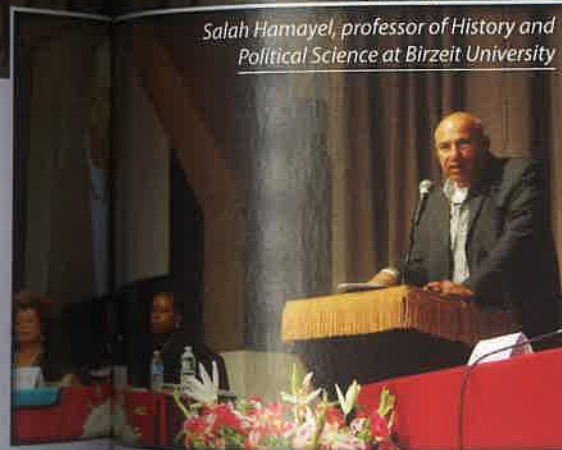
Two Palestinian witnesses, Raji Sourani, founder and director of the Palestinian Center for Human Rights in Gaza, and Leila Shahid, General Representative of Palestine to the EU, were also invited but did not receive a visa.

PASSIVITY IN THE UNITED NATIONS

The testimonies included the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, director of Exeter University(UK)'s Centre for Palestine Studies. He spoke about the origin of Zionism and its impact on the Palestinians—a topic he and other Israeli so-called new historians have covered since the disclosure of British and Israeli government documents that brought new insights into the establishment of Israel.

Peter Hansen, a former Commissioner General of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), gave a critical assessment of the role of the UN on Palestine as "only treating symptoms" with its enormous presence in the territories. He called for applying pressure on "those governments that call the shots" and challenged the UN decision not to include Palestine as a member.

Salah Hamayel, professor of History and Political Science at Birzeit University



He suggested a six-state solution: a confederation of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt and Israel, an idea that seemed to intrigue the jury.

So did many other testimonies, like that of Cindy and Craig Corrie, the parents of Rachel Corrie, who was killed in a demonstration by an Israeli bulldozer in 2005. Their civil lawsuit in Israel ended this August when an Israeli judge ruled that Rachel's death was "an act of war" for which the

Israeli military cannot be held responsible.

When the tribunal ended, the audience left and the jurors stayed to formulate a summary of their conclusions.

SCOLDING THE UN AT THE UN

The jury presented its conclusions at a press conference and then to the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People—counting 25 members and 24 observers, none of which are Western countries.

"The UN must take all collective measures to achieve the objectives of international peace and security, respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination and promotion of human rights for all," said Mansfield. "The UN must like a member state comply in good faith with its

international obligations and cannot only denounce and condemn Israel's violations without action."

Maguire said, "We need the UN to show the courage to recognize the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination and to act and speak the truth. In the Security Council, we see the USA with its veto and Israel, which is able to ignore all international laws and human rights and do what it likes."

Meanwhile she continues raising her voices for the Palestinians, also by trying to overturn her travel ban to Israel.

Angela Davis informed, "Now is the time for action. I look forward to talking to people across the country about the need to participate in this campaign."

Roger Waters, who continues to act in support of the Boycott, Divestments and Sanctions campaign, "What we must do now is to use social media and all the means at our disposal to spread these results, for they tell a very clear truth about what is happening in the Occupied Territories and in Israel, as well as the U.S.'s and UN's involvement. The next tribunal deals with The Way Forward, and I very much look forward to hearing testimonies on the issue."

The tribunal might not have triggered any political action, but it could be popular advocacy events like these, that are changing the public sentiment in support of Palestinian self-determination. Like when the General Assembly on Nov. 29 voted for an upgrade to the Palestinian status only leaving an odd coalition of nine member states to vote against: Israel, The U.S., Canada, Czechoslovakia and Nauru, Palau, The Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Panama.

With the upgrade of Palestine's status to a non-member observer state recognizing the Palestinian Authority as a state as opposed to an "entity" Palestinians are now entitled to participate in General Assembly debates and has a possibility of becoming a member of the UN agencies and the International Criminal Court.

For now the status upgrade is a diplomatic victory, though the situation offers no new rights to Palestinians living under occupation. However, this development sends the same message as the Russell Tribunal: the world has begun to wake up to the realities of injustice and oppression in the Israeli occupation of Palestine. ■

Janne Louise Andersen, a freelance journalist based in New York City, covers issues among Arab diaspora communities.

"We need the UN to show the courage to recognize the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination and to act and speak the truth."
—Mairead Corrigan Maguire



Immigration reform rally in Alabama

Competing Causes

What can Muslim Americans do to be equal opportunity activists?

BY KIRAN ANSARI

EVERY TELEVISION CHANNEL, radio station, email, snail mail and even your Facebook news-feed space is like a war zone of sorts. Everyone is competing to raise awareness for their cause. It could be a local issue, like running for the library board, or domestic, like raising funds for the victims of Hurricane Sandy. It could even be international, like rallying against the massacre in Syria. Running, raising, rallying ... the list goes on.

While there is so much destruction and misery in the world around us? Have we tuned out from all the mayhem or are we seeing an increase in the "my cause is more important than your cause" mantra?

Crises wake people up, according to Shatha Barbour. The Scottsdale, Ariz. mother

of two is also a part of the Arizona State University SOS (Save Our Syrian) Freedom organization. Unlike metropolitan cities, smaller towns don't hold as many activism events. However, she is still concerned to see that only some segments of the community are represented at events when such issues actually have the power to unite.

Growing up, she felt very American. She used to visit Syria in the summer, but now when she sees blatant destruction, she can't just tsk-tsk and flip to another TV channel.

"During the Bosnia massacre, so many of us thought, 'Thank God it wasn't us,'" Barbour says. "But today everyone feels that 'it could happen to me.' Now the atrocities in Somalia or Burma hit closer to home."

She believes such events bring the Quran

to life for her, such as the verse: "Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such [trial] has not yet come to you as came to those who passed on before you? They were touched by poverty and hardship and were shaken until [even their] messenger and those who believed with him said, 'When is the help of God?' Unquestionably, the help of God is near" (Quran 2:214).

While it can be easier for tech-savvy youth to raise awareness via social media, they should not end up as "armchair activists" just clicking buttons.

Tayyibah Taylor, editor-in-chief of *Azizah* magazine in Atlanta, Ga., believes that there is enough work for everyone. People need to pick a project and expend energy in getting it done rather than arguing about which cause is greater. Yes, people do have a natural inclination to be loyal to an ethnicity. But as Muslims, the cause of human beings in need should supersede this partiality.

"As believers, we should strive to compete in good deeds, not strive to compete in whose cause is better, whose pain is greater whose situation is more dire," Taylor says.

We should not be quick to judge, she says, who is a better activist based on event attendance. They could be doing more work behind the scenes, like writing letters, making phone calls or getting up in the middle of the night to make sincere pleas. That might help a cause more than wearing your finest clothes and sitting at a fundraiser.

"Cause ownership should be principle based and must go beyond the lines of religious, cultural and ethnic divides," says Dr. Tariq Cheema, CEO of World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists, based in Chicago

Competing charities? You bet!

If you feel, that you get way too many Facebook invites for causes or perforated brochures to donate, you are not alone. In 2011, total giving to charitable organizations was \$298.42 billion. About 73 percent of that giving came from individuals. Corporate giving accounted for just 5 percent. About 32 percent of all donations, or \$95.88 billion, went to religious organizations. The next largest sector was education with \$38.87 billion, then health charities, public benefit charities, arts, culture, humanities charities, international charities, human services, environmental and animal charities in this order.

Source: Charity Navigator and Giving USA 2012, The Annual Report on Philanthropy.

and Doha. "Otherwise it is supporting a cause in pure self-interest and with utter shortsightedness."

He feels that Muslims have in some ways become isolated from the mainstream as they are narrow in their cause spectrum, and further divisions in the name of country or ethnicity don't help.

YOUNG BLOOD

The youth are a prime example of how activism can cross ethnic boundaries.

Dana Al-Farhan, a junior at the University

of Alabama at Birmingham, believes that all struggles are connected. Even though she is of Iraqi descent, she has organized events for Syria and Palestine.

She is inspired by the hadith: "The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever" (Bukhari, Muslim).

Al-Farhan feels that, although it shouldn't be so, it is harder to mobilize Muslims when it's a non-Arab or a non-Muslim cause.



Dana Al-Farhan



Syrian walk

"I am passionate about immigration reform in Alabama even though it is incorrectly deemed a Hispanic issue," Al Farhan says. "Immigration reform concerns us all and we need to condemn laws that racially profile anyone."

Barbour echoes Al Farhan's point,

"I have seen the Syrian crisis mature so many young people in the community and give them an opportunity to grow and shine," Barbour says. "Obviously, there is naturally a greater pull for those who have family in Syria, but nevertheless, even those with no direct ties to Syria have stepped up."

Al-Farhan feels that while it can be easier for tech-savvy youth to raise awareness via social media, they should not end up as "armchair activists" just clicking buttons. Technology facilitates movements like it played an instrumental role in Egypt, but it shouldn't just have the "feel good" factor and make you feel like you have done enough.



Dr. Tariq Cheema



Syrian walk

When you log off from your Twitter account, you shouldn't log off from the cause.

WORD OF CAUTION

Cheema believes that while it is very heartwarming to see young men and women support multiple causes, and volunteering can beef up a resume, there is a need for balance. They are at a delicate stage of life where they have to establish their careers and financial future.

"Our youth should not miss the career window or the entrepreneurship bus because they were overzealous," he says. "The ugly truth is that most causes cannot be solved overnight. Those that become too involved too quickly may not be able to help that cause in the long run if they put their education or career on the back burner."

Just like flight attendants caution, we cannot help others by getting low on oxygen ourselves.

Most mosques, he feels, need to do a better job in raising awareness of the plight of those around the world. Some talk about only those causes that are dear to the demographic that attends that mosque, but many others mosques are just raising funds to pay the utility bills or build a parking lot.

BEYOND THE CHECKBOOK

When you feel overwhelmed by the number of friends asking you to support their cause, take a deep breath and admit that you may not be able to please them all—at least not financially. However, supporting a cause doesn't just have to be a dollar-centric decision.

Taylor shared how someone she knows couldn't work with inmates herself, but she still supported the cause by paying for gas and babysitting for someone who could work with the incarcerated. That was her contribution.

Similarly, we can alleviate the competing cause quandary by allocating different resources to each cause. We can support a few financially, and for others, we can donate time, skill, good advice, spreading the word, recruiting others and never underestimating the power of prayer.

God has promised that "with every hardship comes ease." The harder part is how we react to the test. Are we bystanders just shaking our head at the misery of others? Did we do something or did we just waste all our time wondering which cause is more important than the other? ■

Kiran Ansari is a writer and editor in Chicago. She can be reached at kiran@kiranansari.com.

AROUND THE WORLD

Palestine and Fair Trade

How Muslim Americans can help a fair trade company that focuses on supporting Palestinian farmers.

BY MARIEM GAMRUZZAMAN

NASSER ABUFARHA IS CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT Palestinians, one olive oil bottle at a time. With a bit of creativity, a background in business and a sense of determination, Abufarha brought the fair trade model that's common with coffee companies to the olive farmers in his native Palestine. His idea materialized in his creation of Canaan Fair Trade and the Palestine Fair Trade Association.

Speaking from Palestine during the busy olive harvest season, Abufarha explained the origin of Canaan Fair Trade and his vision for it for the future.

Q: How did Canaan Fair Trade begin?

NA: I'm a Palestinian American who grew up in Palestine in Jenin under Israeli occupation. I came to the U.S. to study anthropology and international development and established a business while I was in Wisconsin. It was there that I was introduced to the concept of fair trade.

Growing up in a farming community, the challenge has always been the irregularities of the market. I thought this would be a



Nasser Abufarha

great concept. None [of my American friends] was open to the idea but everyone was intrigued by the idea. The situation with the olive market was devastat[ed] because of the intifada at the time. Farmers don't have access to their own farms to harvest their olive oil. So I started raising awareness to what fairtrade is and how we could organize the farmers.

We started by building local collectives and then we unionized those collectives under the umbrella called the Palestine Fair Trade Association. We designed the project to be organic and fair trade. We have an organization of about 200 farmers. We've created a project where buyers in America and Europe can invest in social empowerment and development in Palestine.

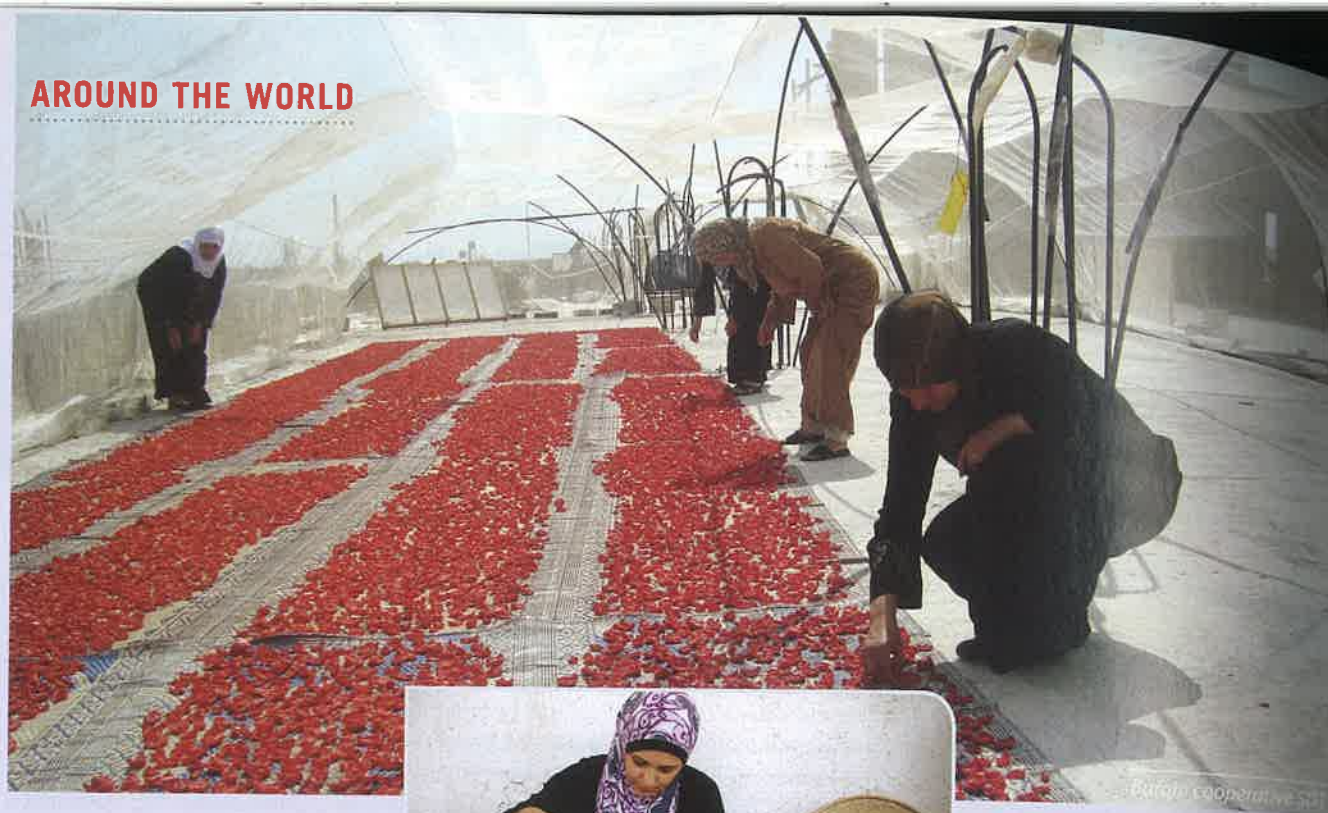
Q: What were the biggest obstacles you encountered?

NA: Fair trade intentionally tries to affect change on marginalized producers and farmers. The marginalized situation comes from policies of the Israeli occupation. This year our farmers were producing 67 tons of almonds, but these same farmers would've produced 196 tons if we had access to water. We have a cooperative near a settlement called Anin.

The Israelis built a buffer zone that claimed half of the villagers' land, so some farmers lost half of their crops. We try to raise awareness and to offset the loss by increasing the value of the products, and



Farmer and daughter



we also support farmers by delivering olive seedling for planting new trees.

Also, one time Whole Foods was harassed by a couple of violent bloggers (when they tried to sell Palestinian products), but in the specialty food market, co-op market, and fair trade market there is a lot of excitement about Palestinian products. People are very receptive and supportive of it. Of course, we'll always disturb some supporters in Israel in the U.S. but I think the product itself is a new kind of Palestinian presence in the marketplace.

IH: How have Muslim Americans been involved in your organization?

NA: One of our buyers at one point took the product to an ISNA conference three or four years ago, and I believe the sales there were successful. We seek partnerships with certain organizations to support our farmers and to fundraise for their own activities. This has been successful in churches and organizations for Palestine. We would like to connect more with the Muslim community.

One affiliate with the Muslim community in South Africa just started importing our products. They invited one of our farmers to an Islamic bazaar in South Africa in December [2011]. They also want to invite one of the women cooperatives to sell Palestinian food and introduce the community to Palestinian culture.

Certainly we think there is a lot of room for Muslim communities to help with what we do. By investing in the Palestinian farmers we're investing in the continuity of the culture of Palestine.

IH: What do you hope Canaan Fair Trade will accomplish in the future?

NA: We hope to see that we are impacting farmers in multiple regions. We are now mainly in Jenin and Nablus. We hope to expand the program to become a major share of the olive oil market and other agricultural goods and to build strong partnerships with solidarity communities like the Muslim community. The more we connect Palestinian farmers and grassroots organizations abroad, the more we create a nest of safety that is comforting for our farmers.



When farmers see when there are networks of internationals visiting, that support is very meaningful to the farmers and creates a lot of hope. Our farmers are more energized, more hopeful, and they do invest more to their land. Here we are helping the farmers with dignity. When farmers know that this product carries the name Palestine, the farming becomes more meaningful.

IH: What makes you proud about what you've accomplished?

NA: We're proud that we were able to meet international organic and certification levels and to have these small scale farmers produce quality that meets the highest standards in the business world, and we're doing it under very difficult conditions, which speaks volumes to the Palestinian farmers.

We sell our almonds to Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream's European branches. Our women cooperatives sell at Williams-Sonoma, a high end kitchenware store. We sell at Whole Foods in the northeast region. What I'm proud of is under challenging conditions, together us and the farmers were able to organize and to sell at very sophisticated markets. We sell at many of the neighborhood specialty stores and co-ops. For Palestinians as a whole, it shows the world that we have a lot to contribute.

IH: How are you helping women in the region?

NA: We like to empower women and integrate women into the work that we do. We work with the culture so we organized co-ops where traditionally the women do this kind of work in their homes. We set up a place where they can work collectively and they started producing couscous, sun-dried tomatoes, and zaatar. Of course, for all of them, it's also bringing them into the organization and affording them a chance for civic participation. ■

Mariem Qamruzzaman is a freelance writer pursuing her Master's degree in speech language pathology at the University of Texas-Austin.

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Unhappily Ever After

Can greater access to professional counselors help reduce the divorce rates among Muslim Americans?

BY LEEN JABER



THE PARTY IS OVER. THE GUESTS have left, the band has packed up, the wedding dress is back in the closet, and the happy couple is about to begin the most profound journey of their lives. Happily ever after is on the horizon... or so they thought.

The divorce rate among Muslims in America has risen to roughly 40 percent, according to Imam Mohamed Magid, President of ISNA and imam of the Adams Center Mosque in Virginia. This divorce rate is only slightly behind the national average. And there is no denying the impact that divorce and the dissolution of the nuclear family has on not just the Muslim community but on society as a whole. So, what has led to this dramatic increase of divorce among Muslims?

"The divorce rate is alarming, increasing and it is becoming a real crisis," says Abdel Azim Elsidig, a seasoned certified life coach and co-founder of the Aqsa Family Center in Chicago.

Among the contributing factors are financial struggles, in-law interference, emotional and physical abuse and having children before both partners are ready. One of the greatest causes of divorce, however, is the presence of false expectations. Both

partners enter marriage with different expectations, often quite unrealistic.

"Many people jump into marriage without really knowing what they're heading into," says Elsidig. "Many people think marriage is fun. But marriage isn't [just] fun. Marriage is responsibility and a partnership and a living commitment. If both partners aren't ready, they will fail."

Another such ill-conceived—and often disastrous—expectation is that the road to happiness is somehow paved by marriage.

"If you're not happy before marriage, you certainly won't be happy in marriage," says Elsidig.

What ends up occurring is depression of one or both individuals, which only creates more strife in the marriage. It is essential that individuals work on themselves and deal with their existing issues before entering into a marriage.

"Don't come into marriage with unrealistic expectations. You should be seeking the *akhira* (hereafter) not the *dunya* (this life)," says Elsidig.

The problem of false expectations is compounded by other factors such as age and lack of knowledge of what marriage will entail.

Within the arena of expectations is the issue of cultural expectations and differences. Many Muslim Americans divorcees or those who have experienced significant marital problems report that culture has played a significant role in their problems.

This was certainly true for Amirah Taleeb, 40, who has been married for 15 years, but had separated from her husband after 10 years of marriage.

"We are from two different cultures. He's from one part of the world, and I'm from another," she says. "I think [Muslim] girls from the United States are more concerned with the religion than men from back home." She perceives that men from overseas are more concerned with what is culturally acceptable rather than what is forbidden or permissible in Islam. As many divorced Muslim men and women have reported, the concern of "what people will think" has played a large role in their marriages, especially for those married to partners who have immigrated from smaller towns and villages in the Middle East and South Asia.

In a four-year empirical study conducted by the Institute of Social Policy and Understanding titled "Understanding Trends in American Muslim Divorce and Marriage," an astounding number of interviewees declared that varying cultural expectations of marriage played a huge role in their divorce.

This is especially true with American-raised females married to foreign-born men. Many women expect to share decision-making with their husbands and also expect to complete their education and work outside the home, which seems odd to their more traditionally-raised husbands.

This lack of mutual understanding about gender roles causes conflict in relationships. Also, in many cases where husbands encourage or allow their wives to work outside the home, they still expect them to shoulder the majority of the domestic responsibilities. Many have reported that that expectation has created a lot of stress, frustration and even depression attempting to do it all with little to no support.

In the sincere, but perhaps not deeply thought out, attempt to preserve not only religious practices but also to maintain (in most cases) Eastern cultural norms, many immigrant families find great comfort in finding spouses for their progeny from their home countries. It is rarely anticipated that the difference in where each individual was raised could cause major communication issues.

"There are huge cultural gaps that need to be addressed," says Elsidig. "We need to bridge the gaps. [...] Kids are floating between two distinct cultures."

Unsurprisingly, cultural differences and mismatching expectations will lead to an immense failure in communication, which, though not unique to Muslim divorces, is the No. 1 cause of divorce.

"Problems like infidelity are most times not the real problem," says Madiha Haroon, a licensed marriage and family therapist in the Chicagoland area. "Infidelity is usually just the final straw. [...] The source of most marital problems is ineffective communication."

Obvious communication problems tend to rise during great times of conflict and fighting. When spouses addressing conflicts variously, it generates greater stress and leads to more problems such as abuse, child neglect and adultery.

Ultimately, everyone wants to be heard, but without mutual forms of conflict resolution and affective communication, this is unlikely. There is no doubt that good communication skills are imperative in any and all kinds of relationships, but this is especially true of marriage. And, ironically, young Muslim couples are at greatest risk of facing marital problems due to a severe lack of communication. Because of the segregation between the sexes, most young Muslims do not know how to speak to or understand members of the opposite sex.

This is why premarital counseling is essential for intending couples.

"We need to develop family service centers, which would include premarital counseling programs," says Elsidig. Perhaps one of the greatest downfalls of the Muslim community, he explains, is the breakdown in admitting the need for help and support before and during marriage. "Muslims think they don't need premarital training, but they may need it more than others—especially due to [gender] segregation."

The reluctance that most Muslims have to counseling and therapy has only lent to the increase of divorce in the community. This reluctance usually stems from the existence of shame in admitting problems because it is somehow interpreted as a sign of weakness, not just for the individual but indeed for the entire family.

"Family conflict is normal," says Elsidig. Even the Prophet Muhammad struggled with his wives, as mentioned in the Quran (Chapters 33 and 66, specifically).

The reluctance that most Muslims have to counseling and therapy has only lent to the increase of divorce in the community.

Haroon, who has been in practice for more than a dozen years, explains the hesitance Muslims have in seeking professional help.

"Many people see it as a weakness, but in reality it is a strength," she said. "It shows that you are ready to go to great lengths to preserve what you have."

"Love" is usually not a factor when choosing a mate for most Muslim couples. And although any professional would say that love is not the most important part of having a functional relationship, its significance should not be underestimated. As Elsidig explained, a significant number of young people come into marriage with already existing feelings elsewhere, but feel too much pressure to ever tell their parents, leading to a loveless marriage.

Additionally, many are told that they will "learn to love" their mates. And although that can be true sometimes, in a lot of situations, that just never happens.

"There has to be a spark, a connection. You cannot just force things. Passion and love have to come on its own," says Kareem Ali, 44, who has been divorced from his wife for more than a year after a 13-year-long marriage and three children. "We weren't ever friends. Really, the smallest things can then damage the relationship."

When a couple finally decides that their differences are irreconcilable, divorce arises as the solution. While Islam permits divorce, it cautions that it is the most hated of permissible actions.

"Divorce is permutable, but always the last resort," says Elsidig. "Islam is for reconciliation as long as there is room to live a comfortable life."

"Slow it down, think it through, and seek

professional help," Haroon advises struggling couples.

Elsidig echoes this statement.

"It is always best to forgive, forget and move forward," he says.

There are many actions that can help restore peace and stability in the marriage, which can all be found through counseling and reaching out for support to those you trust and who can make a difference. And it is important to connect again with the true purpose of marriage in Islam.

"It really comes down to who can handle the pressure," says Ali. "And who can sacrifice for the sake of the whole family."

Conflict in the marriage and divorce can be especially tricky when children are involved. Many people are worried about how a separation would affect the children, and even how the reputation of a "divorced family" will affect their children's futures in the community, especially when it is time for them to marry.

But Ali felt that the divorce gave his children a sense of security that they didn't have during the marital strife.

"Right now, my kids are so happy. Before the divorce, they were scared and felt threatened. They didn't know what was going to happen. But now they have closure," he says. "The hardest part is while the divorce is happening; life after divorce is much better."

Many people report that divorce for them was not a problem, but rather a solution, especially for those dealing with abuse and violence.

It is important for people to take into consideration when deciding to make such a life-altering decision that even when the divorce is amicable, the lingering pain and suffering of divorce cannot be denied. There is a long-lasting impact. Some grieve the loss of the marriage for years, never dealing with it or desiring a new relationship. While others marry quickly thereafter, bringing the emotional baggage along with them, even finding themselves divorced for a another time.

"People have to learn to find themselves after a divorce," said Haroon. "You go into marriage with dreams and hopes, and divorce takes that away."

But grieving properly is important, according to Haroon. Through proper grieving and counseling, divorced individuals have the opportunity to rebuild themselves in a healthy and strong way, which will carry them very far in future relationships. ■

Leen Jaber is a freelance writer and musician from Chicago.



Harmonious Families

Muslims have a religious obligation to nurture and promote an environment where family harmony thrives.

BY RUTH NASRULLAH

MANY RECALL 2009 AS A YEAR OF both tragedy and hope for Muslim Americans. The gory murder of a well-known Muslim activist and entrepreneur prompted Muslim communities across the nation to take a hard look at the issue of domestic violence in the Muslim community.

In February 2009 Aasiya Zubair, architect and co-founder of Bridges TV, was brutally murdered by her husband, Muzzammil Hassan.

Activist Zerqa Abid saw this tragedy as a motivation for the community to get serious about a comprehensive program to fight domestic abuse. The victimization of a woman as high-profile and active as Zubair demonstrated how widespread abuse was.

Abid blogged about the murder, writing, "This is the news of the year that has once again damaged not only the Muslim image in American society, but it has also damaged our trust and the hope that we place in Muslim American leadership."

Anas Coburn of Dar al Islam, a New Mexico-based nonprofit advocacy and education organization, upon reading the blog, invited her to explore what broad solutions might be found to address abuse prevention and intervention. The led to a meeting of social service providers and community leaders from across the country to brainstorm remedies.

"[About] 35 or 36 organizations were there, most of them from a domestic violence background," Abid says. "But we also had [representatives] from Sound Vision and AltMuslimah, and some imams were present also. We had this one day summit in which we did a brainstorm exercise and a whole presentation."

The planning included a presentation by Aimee Thompson, creator of the "Close to Home" domestic violence intervention program. With input of active community leaders, and after two years of research, preparation and consultation with established organizations and experts, Project Sakinah was formed, and formally launched at the 2011 ISNA convention, with Abid at the helm.

Project Sakinah provides training and assistance to community-based teams by identifying and utilizing their specific resources. There are currently active teams in three cities: Columbus, Chicago and Atlanta.

Project Sakinah uses the slogan: "Wake Up, Speak Up, Team

Project Sakinah is trying to build a healthy, violence-free community. And we are aiming to have households with individuals who are healthy, who are not abusive and who can stop evil when they see there is an evil."
—Zerqa Abid, Project Sakinah



Up." The first two actions — "Wake Up and Speak Up" — urge activities to learn how to identify and raise awareness of different types of abuse.

The "Team Up" aspect is at the heart of what Project Sakinah does.

"We don't believe in just organizing and awareness workshops," Abid says. "Project Sakinah wants community members to actively think about the next step."

Team organization is comprehensive, from training imams to identifying and addressing domestic violence, to couples counseling, to youth sessions addressing topics like anger management.

"If a community wants to start a team, they contact us," says Allison Celik, Project Sakinah outreach manager. "We go into that community and make a presentation. We ask that there be at least 20 people present at the initial presentation."

Remembering that violence often occurs "close to home," following Thompson's model, Celik and Abid encourage those interested in forming a team to recruit friends, colleagues and relatives in addition to community leaders. "The team is open to anybody and everybody," Abid says. "From a high school kid to a senior person."

In fact, Celik notes, team members have included everyone from medical students to stay-at-home moms, to current domestic violence shelter staff, to lawyers and engineers. Men and women alike join in the effort. There is no turnkey model, and every community has different needs and resources.

"Some already have a lot of resources that are addressing this," Celik says. "They may have a really well-organized Muslim community, and in those communities it's a question of just bringing those groups together."

One such group, the Chicago Project Sakinah, is working to network the city's

existing groups to exchange and share expertise and experience. Some for instance, may already focus on adult counseling but are unaware of bullying programs in the public schools.

Following Project Sakinah's team-building model, local teams have autonomy in formulating their programs, and their work is supplemented with online meetings with Sakinah staff, held every six weeks.

There is unquestionably a need for what they do, and the organization has demonstrated that through their Project Sakinah Research Program. In collaboration with the Peaceful Families Project, they performed an online survey titled, "Attitudes of Muslim Men and Women Towards Domestic Violence." The study reported responses from 801 Muslims across the U.S.

Just over a third of respondents reported that the Muslim community had little or no educational resources or direct services available to assist victims of domestic violence. Asked about potential solutions, most respondents envisioned multi-pronged assistance for victims including counseling, intervention, and legal and financial help. Importantly, proactive measures were recommended.

"Across the board, people wanted more information and education in their communities to learn about domestic violence; what it is, how to recognize it, how to help victims, and what types of Islamic rulings can be used to explain that it is wrong," reported the study authors.

Islamic Social Services Association (ISSA-USA), a national organization dedicated to supporting social service providers through education and training, has collaborated with Project Sakinah. Aneesah Nadir, the organization's president, saw in Project Sakinah an opportunity to join forces to enhance their respective missions.

"When Project Sakinah developed, it was a natural fit to be collaborators and affiliate with Project Sakinah," Nadir says.

ISSA-USA has a long history of domestic violence awareness and education, and the two organizations offer each other support. They share not only training, education and vision, but logistical support as well. That includes help with promoting each other's programs and materials.

"We promote each other's activities and we support each other," Nadir says. "When Project Sakinah asked us if we wanted to join their exhibit booth at the ISNA conference, we said, 'of course.' We would be there to help them, staff it, and ship material."

It's a hands-on effort by individuals working together.

"Project Sakinah is trying to build a healthy, violence-free community," Abid says. "And we are aiming to have households with individuals who are healthy, who are not abusive and who can stop evil when they see there is an evil."

Abid says this is an Islamic value, that the slogan "Wake Up, Speak Up, Team Up" is based on a hadith in which the Prophet advised that if a Muslim sees an evil he should stop it; if he can't stop it, then speak against it; if he can't do that, at least hate it in his heart.

Project Sakinah is aiming at all three, with the help of their collaborating organizations: The Peaceful Families Project (www.peacefulfamilies.org), AltMuslimah (www.altmuslimah.com), ISSA-USA (www.issausa.org), Karamah (karamah.org), Close to Home (www.c2home.org), and Islamic Resources Foundation of South Africa (www.irfsa.com). ■

Read more at www.ProjectSakinah.org.

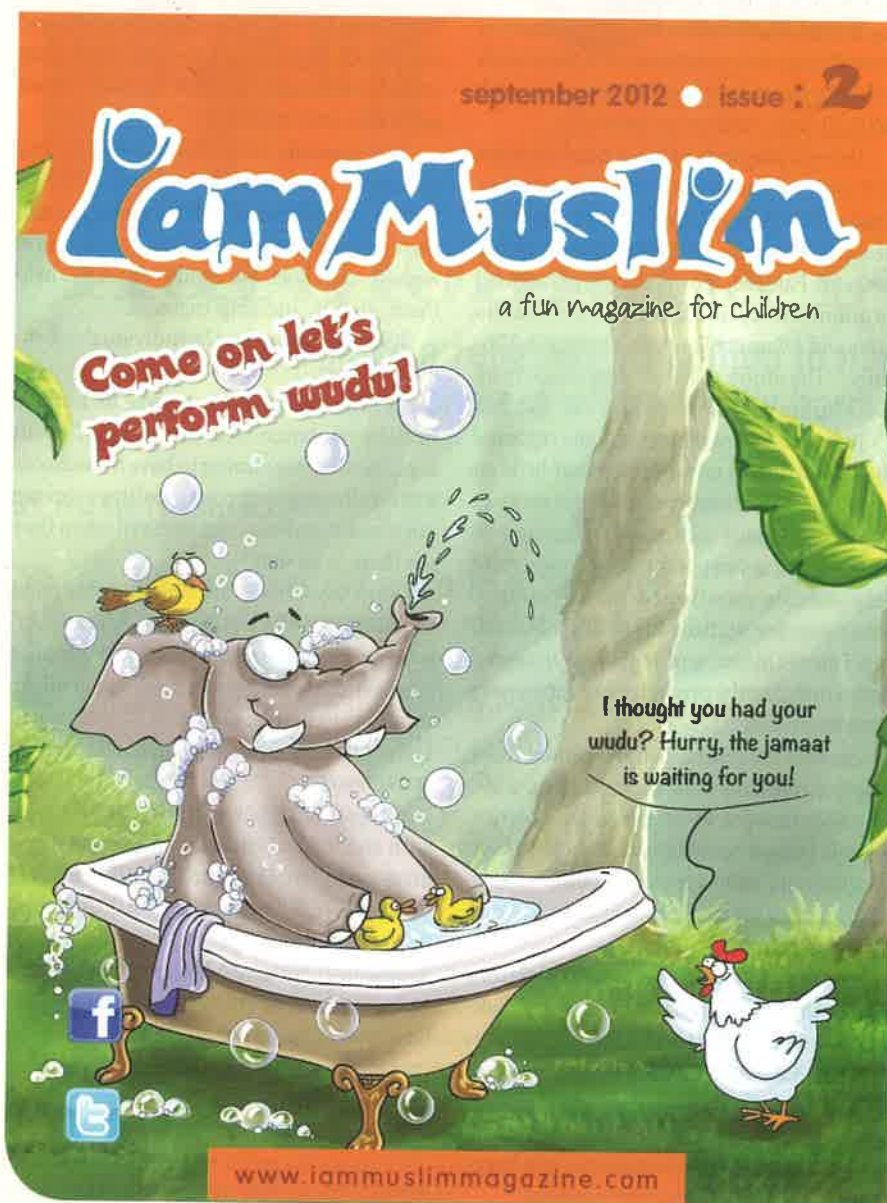
Ruth Nasrullah is a freelance writer living in Houston.

This is Fun, Mommy!

Muslim developers create "edutainment" for families who are looking for something more than just entertainment for their children.

BY ZEYNAP ALP

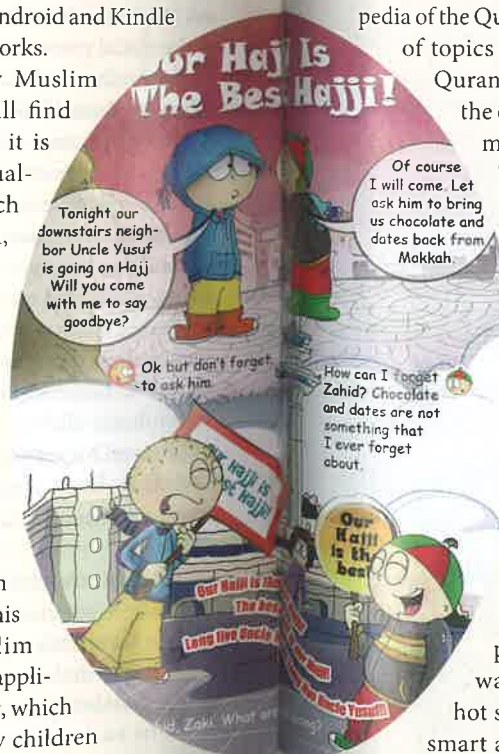
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN EASILY EXCITED ABOUT NEW books, the "old fashioned" hardcover kind or new e-books, but it has never been easy to impress my eight-year-old, who literally goes through books like chocolate ice cream bars on a hot summer day.



"This is fun, Mommy!" is what my daughter told me as she first opened the IamMuslim Magazine application on our iPad.

The fact that my daughter's enthusiasm was about a project that I had been a part of made it even more special. IamMuslim Magazine, an application developed for iPad and iPhone, has been a favorite among children since it hit Apple Store's digital shelves. The only Islamic children's magazine on AppStore, IamMuslim is its fifth most downloaded application in the children's magazines section. Android and Kindle versions are in the works.

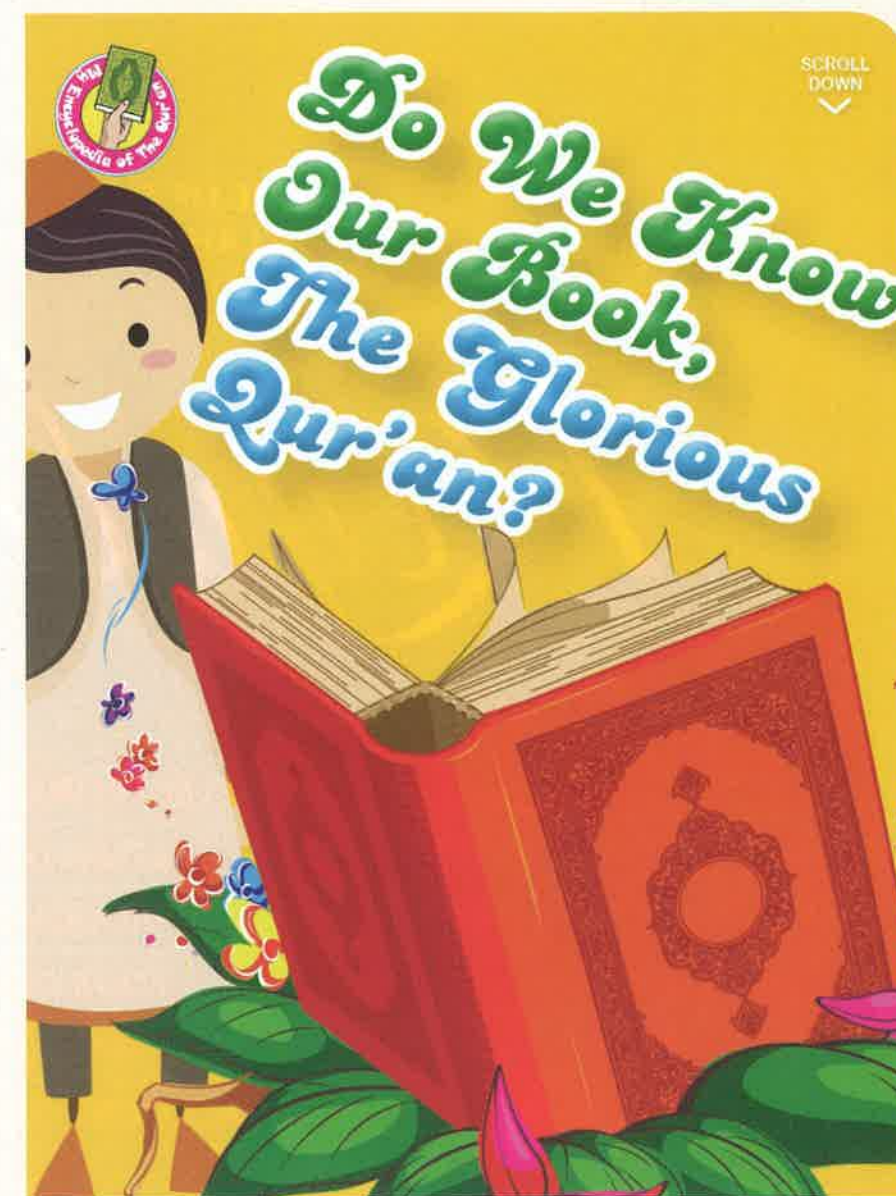
Ask almost any Muslim parent and you will find the same response: it is not easy to find quality material to teach children about Islam, especially in the face of strong competition from games and other game-like applications. Even though we are living in the age of apps, there is not much for Muslim families who are looking for something more than just entertainment. This is where IamMuslim comes in. It is a great application of edutainment, which can be used either by children themselves or by parents and teach-



ers who want to help children understand the teachings of Islam and instill a strong character based on the Quran and Sunnah. The character education program used in the IamMuslim stories and games focuses on building core values such as: responsibility, benevolence, justice, friendship, leadership, honesty, patience, respect, self-confidence and self-control. All these lessons are supported with beautifully drawn, colorful illustrations, modern graphics and fun games.

Each issue has a specific topic such as the Hajj, Ramadan and Relationships with Our Relatives. The topic is always connected to a child's daily life, helping to instill a sense of awareness about the teachings of Islam at all times. In every issue, activities about the related topics follow the introduction. For example, there is always a section on God's 99 attributes. Not only is this an easy tool for parents and educators to use to start a discussion, with Quranic verses and related terms we use in English and Arabic, but children also enjoy this section because they learn that it is possible to learn to include these qualities in themselves, and it is possible for them, (even as kids!), to work to become closer to God.

IamMuslim prioritizes educating children about the way Prophet Muhammad (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam) lived his life; teaching the seerah through stories and anecdotes. The section called "My Encyclopedia of the Qur'an" covers a wide range of topics and words used in the Quran. After looking through the different sections, one of my daughter's friends said, "This looks awesome on my iPad!" There are also many fun characters which have their own sections in the magazine. Each of them appeal to a different age group. For littler ones, there is Zahid and Zaki, coming up with funny ideas and making jokes. Then there is Bright Bashir, an inventor working on interesting projects like an underwater prayer station for hot summer days. Zahra is a smart and spicy little girl who loves puzzles. She keeps a diary and



shares it with her readers, along with her impossible puzzles.

The older children can tag along on the amazing travel adventures of Batuta, the great great grandson of famous traveler Ibn Batuta. He follows his great granddad's example as he travels the world on his flying skateboard. Batuta's flying skateboard travels through time and space, and wherever or whenever Batuta travels, he keeps in mind what Prophet Muhammad said: the whole world is a mosque.

After the children have had a chance to explore the adventures of Batuta, the narration and graphics can be used by parents and educators to teach about different geographies and cultures, and how Muslims are one Ummah with brothers and sisters all around the world.

Also, one section from each issue has a voice recording for those who get easily tired of reading but still enjoy a good story. Interactive activities and puzzles in each issue appeal to the little gamer.

Since its publication, IamMuslim received a warm and enthusiastic welcome from countries all over the world. The application has already been downloaded more than 10,000 times. ■

For more information please visit iTunes store: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/i-am-muslim/id543483896?ls=1&mt=8>
Website URL: www.iammuslimmagazine.com
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Zeynep Alp is editor of the Istanbul, Turkey-based Iam-Muslim Magazine.

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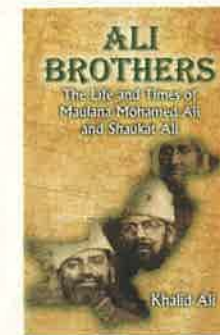


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REVIEWS

HISTORY CONCEALS SECRETS

**Ali Brothers: The Life and Times of
Maulana Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali**
Khalid Ali
2012. pp. 920. HB. \$55
Royal Book Company, Karachi, Pakistan



IN COMPILING THIS WELL-RESEARCHED (and copiously referenced) book on two of Muslim India's foremost freedom movement leaders, Shaukat Ali and Mohamed Ali (Jauhar), Khalid Ali has gone to original sources — their and the private and official papers of all British viceroys, contemporary newspapers, official records of the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League and the Khilafat Committee. He also consulted their contemporaries, including their own files, and family sources.

In every chapter there are revelations, including Allama Iqbal's denial that his Allahabad address was the affirmation of the idea of a separate Muslim homeland. That job was done by Mahomed Ali Jinnah. Equally interesting is the revelation that the first fundraiser for Turkey was conducted by none other than the British loyalist Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. He had changed his stance because of deterioration in British-Turkish relationship and his resolve to save the community on the lifeboat of loyalty. It was "secular" Jinnah, who after World War I, went to England and appealed for justice to Turkey, declaring that the attack on the Khilafat affected their faith.

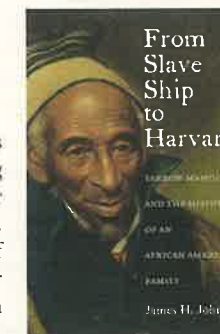
The book details Britain's treacherous role in destroying the Ottoman Empire, and imposing unending ignominy on Muslims. The Crusades have never been over.

History conceals so many secrets. This is a book that will be appreciated not only by history buffs but also by students of South Asian and Muslim affairs. And should especially be read by Pakistani politicians and generals who have driven the country to the precipice. ■

ARISEN FROM SLAVERY

**From Slave Ship to Harvard: Yarrow Mamout and the
History of an African American Family**

James H. Johnston
2012. Pp. 288. HB. \$29.95
Fordham University Press, New York, N.Y.



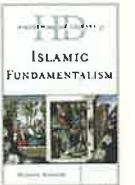
It is well-established that many slaves brought to America were Muslims. Among those who waged a jihad to maintain their faith was a Guinean captive, Yarrow Mamout. From Slave Ship to Harvard is the true story of an African American family in Maryland over six generations. Johnston has reconstructed a unique narrative of black struggle and achievement researching in fact part detective work — from paintings, photographs, books, diaries, court records, legal documents, and oral histories. He traces the family from the colonial period and the American Revolution through the Civil War to Harvard and finally today.

An educated Muslim, Mamout, the first of the family in America, was brought to Maryland on the slave ship and gained his freedom forty-four years later. Yarrow's immediate relatives — his sister, niece, wife, and son — were notable in their own right. His son married into the neighboring Turner family, and the western Maryland farm community, Yarrowburg was named for Yarrow Mamout's daughter-in-law, Mary "Polly" Turner Yarrow. A descendant was Robert Turner Ford, who graduated from Harvard in 1927. Johnston has added a valuable source to Muslim African American history. ■

SHORT TAKES

Historical Dictionary of Islamic Fundamentalism

Mathieu Guidère
2012. Pp. 504. HB. \$95.
Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Md.
Prof. Guidère (Islamic & Middle Eastern studies, Univ. of Toulouse, France) strives to clear up some of the misunderstanding and confusion regarding Islamic fundamentalism. This book, which is part of the publisher's "Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements Series," offers a useful starting point for researchers and those searching for a brief definition of a particular term.

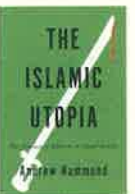


**Islam and Political Reform in Saudi Arabia:
The Quest for Political Change and Reform**

Mansoor Jassem Alshamsi
2012. Pp. 304. HB. \$165.
Routledge, New York and London
Alshamsi's book which is part of "Routledge Studies in Political Islam" discusses the role and contribution of the new generation of Saudi 'ulema is their struggle for reform, during the 1980s and 2006, showing how Islamic thought may inform a reformist discourse and agenda.

The Islamic Utopia: The Illusion of Reform in Saudi Arabia

Andrew Hammond
2012. Pp. 240. PB \$28.
Pluto Press, London, UK
Hammond asks: Will Saudi Arabia join the democratic wave in the Middle East? Despite the changes in the region, this kingdom remains a "black hole" for democracy — secretive, highly repressive and still propped up by the West. He argues that for too long Western media and governments have accepted Saudi leaders' claims to be a buttress against jihadist Islam, and that a new policy is needed towards the House of Saud.



Imam al-Ghazali: A Concise Guide

Edoardo Albert
2013. Pp. 84. PB \$9.95.
Kube Publishing, Markfield, Leics., UK
This richly illustrated short biography relates Imam al-Ghazali's progress from a humble background to become the preeminent Muslim scholar of the eleventh century and a towering figure in the history of Islamic thought. It also reveals why he left his prestigious teaching job to become a penniless traveler seeking the peace of a contented inner life.

**The Five Pillars of Islam: Laying the Foundations of
Divine Love and Service to Humanity**

Musharraf Hussain
2012. Pp. 304. PB. \$17.95.
Kube Publishing, Markfield, Leics., UK
Dr. Hussain, who is fervently dedicated to community service, offers a comprehensive and practical manual, directed at the contemporary Muslim audience, on the fundamental beliefs and practices of a Muslim and provides an understanding of the true spirit of worship in Islam. Written by a noted Muslim scholar and educationist, this is an invaluable reference for every home and classroom.



**Invisible Yet Invincible: Islamic Heritage Of The Maroons And The
Enslaved Africans in Jamaica**

Sultana Afroz
2012. Pp. 383. PB. \$21.67.
Austin & Macauley, London, UK
Prof. Afroz, in this well-researched volume, discusses the Maroons' Islamic heritage and Islam's role in freeing the enslaved Africans in Jamaica. She argues that those enslaved Muslims never accepted Christianity, although outwardly agreeing with these practices as was required of them by the governing authorities. Thus, she says, the prevalence of Islamic traditions retained in Jamaica denotes the continuing devotion to Islam which was a strong factor in their eventual emancipation. ■





Dealing with Hardship

BY YASMIN MOGAHED

Wisdom #25: “Nothing you seek through your Lord will be difficult, nothing you seek through yourself will be easy.”



Yasmin Mogahed

I KNOW A STORY THAT ISN'T JUST A story. It begins with a woman who never allowed herself to be defined or limited by her painful circumstances. God says: “God sets forth an example for those who believe — the wife of Pharaoh who said: ‘My Lord, build for me with Thee a house in heaven, and save me from the Pharaoh and his doings, and save me from an unjust people.’” (Quran, 66:11)

I've heard the story of Asiyah countless times. And each time it strikes me. But it wasn't until recently that her story hit me for another reason entirely. A few months ago, I was facing a difficult test. And the beauty of having righteous, angel-like souls as your company is something priceless. When you are in a difficulty, it only takes one text message, one status update on Facebook, one email, and you have a whole army of beautiful souls praying for you.

So I made that request. I asked for the greatest gift any human being can give to another. I asked for sincere *du'a*. What I received overwhelmed me. I'll never forget that gift of God. I had people praying for me in *qiyam*, while standing in front of the Ka'ba, while traveling, even while giving birth. I received so many *du'as*, yet there was one that really hit me. It was just a simple text

message, but it read: “May you be shown your home in Jannah (heaven) so that any hardship is made easy on you.”

I read it and it hit. It really hit.

And then I remembered Asiyah's story, and suddenly realized something amazing. Asiyah was undergoing the most severe torture any person could imagine. Pharaoh, the greatest tyrant ever to walk the earth, wasn't just a distant tyrant. He was her husband. And in her final moments, some commentators say Pharaoh began to brutally torture her. But something strange happened. They say that Asiyah smiled. She was going through one of the most severe hardships any human being could experience, and yet she smiled.

How is that? How is it that she could be tortured and smile, but when we face a traffic jam, or someone looks at us the wrong way, we can't handle it? How is it that Prophet Ibrahim (*alayhi as salam*) was faced with one

of the greatest calamities — being thrown in fire, and yet the fire felt cool for him? Why do some people who have nothing find no reason to complain, while others who have “everything” find nothing but reasons to complain? How is it that sometimes we have more patience with the big challenges in life than we do with the everyday small ones?

I used to think calamities were hard because certain things are just objectively difficult to bear. I thought there was a master list, a standard hierarchy of difficulty. The death of a loved one, for example, is always harder to bear than getting a traffic ticket. It seems obvious enough. It seems obvious.

But, it's also wrong.

A calamity of any type is not hard to bear because the calamity itself is difficult. The measure of ease or difficulty in hardship is on a different scale — an unseen scale. Whatever I face in life will be easy or difficult, not because it is easy or difficult. The ease or difficulty is based only on the level of Divine help. Nothing, nothing is easy, unless God makes it easy on me. Not a traffic jam. Not a paper cut. And nothing is hard if God makes it easy on me. Not illness, not death, not being thrown into fire, or tortured by a tyrant.

Ibrahim (*alayhi as salam*) was thrown into fire. God willing, none of us will ever face such a trial in this life. But there is not a person who won't get thrown into some sort of emotional, psychological or social fires in their life. And don't think for a moment that God cannot make those fires cool for us. Asiyah was being physically tortured, but God showed her a home in Jannah. So she smiled. Our physical eyes will not see Jannah in this life. But, if He wills, the vision of our heart can be shown the home with Him, so that every difficulty is made easy. And maybe we too can smile, even in those times.

Ibn Ata' Allah al-Iskandari said it beautifully: “Nothing is difficult if you seek it through your Lord, and nothing is easy if you seek it through yourself.”

So the problem is not the trial itself. It is not the hunger or the cold. It is whether we have the provision needed when that hunger and cold come. And if we do, neither hunger nor cold will touch us. It won't hurt. The problem is only when the hunger comes and we don't have food. The problem is when the snow storm hits and we have no shelter.

Hardships test us. But hardships can also be a blessing and a sign of God's love. Prophet Muhammad (*salla Allahu 'alyhi wa sallam*) said: “Whenever God wills good for a person, He subjects him to adversity.” [Bukhari]

And yet most people cannot fathom how adversity could possibly be good. Many do not recognize that hardship is in fact a purifier, which brings people back to their Lord. Let us ask ourselves these questions:

1. At what point in my life did I feel nearest to God?
2. Did my hardship bring me closer to God or further away?

Often we find that the times in our life

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when we feel nearest to God are during our hardships. If your hardship brings you closer to God, then it is in fact a blessing. These perceived misfortunes are in fact wake up calls. They humble. They shake. They remind us of how small we are, and how Great God is. And in that way they awaken us from the slumber of our deceptions, our heedlessness, our wandering, and bring us back to our Creator.

God says: “...And We tested them with good [times] and bad that perhaps they would return [to obedience].” (Quran, 7:168)

This lesson in humility purifies the human soul so much that God, the Exalted, comforts the believers in the Quran, assuring them that any pain they encounter is intended to elevate and honor them.

He says: “If a wound hath touched you, be sure a similar wound hath touched the others. Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to mankind by turns: that God may know those that believe, and that He may take to Himself from your ranks witnesses (to Truth). And God loveth not those that do wrong.” (Quran, 3:140-142)

But know for sure that with that hunger, thirst and cold, God also sends the food, the water and the shelter. He sends the test, but with it He can send the *sabr* (patience), and even the *rida* (contentment) to withstand it.

Indeed, He does test those whom He loves and He tests in proportion to the level of faith. But so too does God send His Divine assistance whereby any test can be made easy and any fire can be made cool. He sends His Divine assistance whereby a single glimpse of His light and the home with Him can make us smile — even in the midst of the flames of trial. ■

Yasmin Mogahed is a writer and public speaker. Her new book, “Reclaim Your Heart,” is available at yasminmogahed.com. To read this and previous commentaries on the *hikam* of Ibn 'Ata Allah, please visit www.isna.net.



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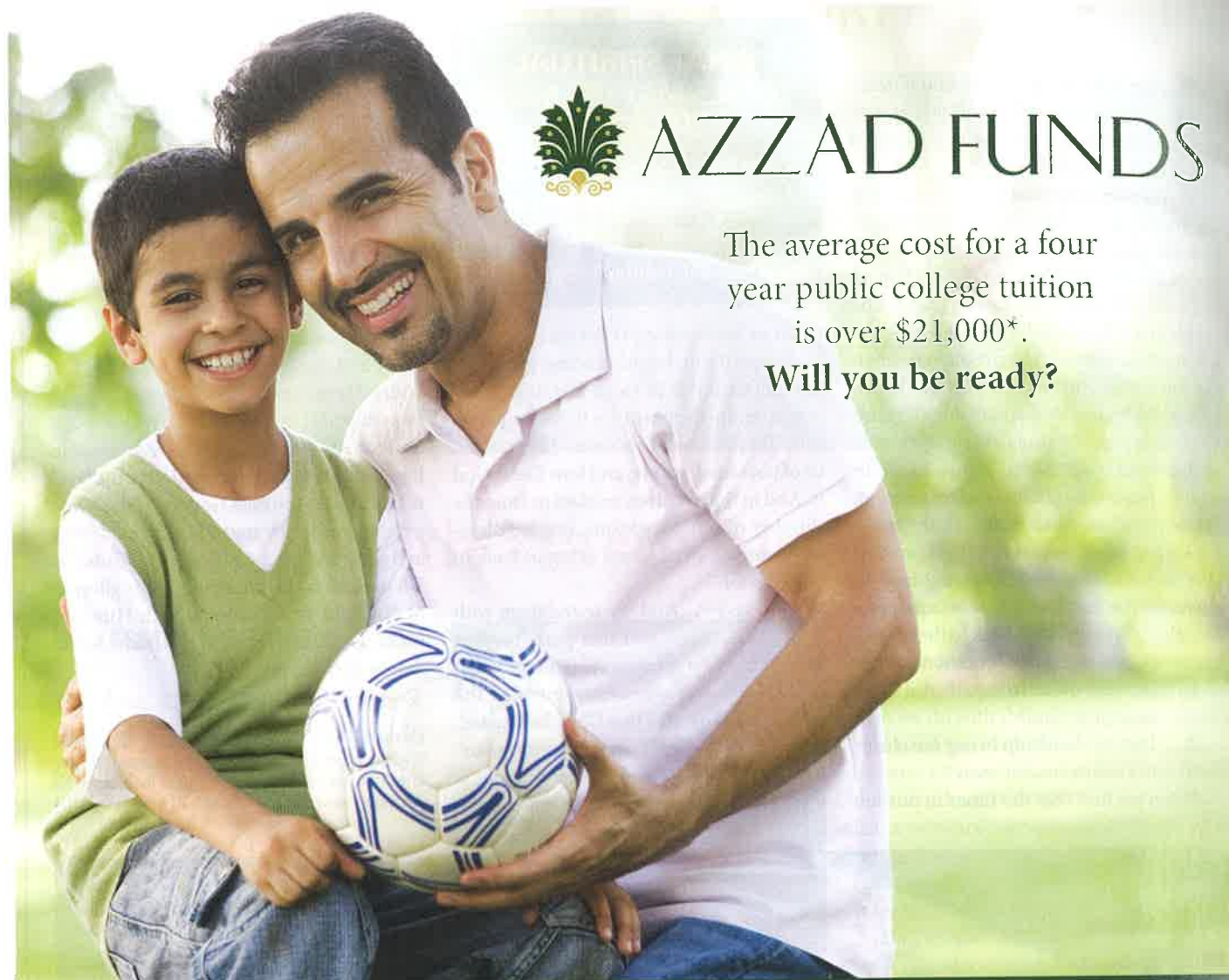
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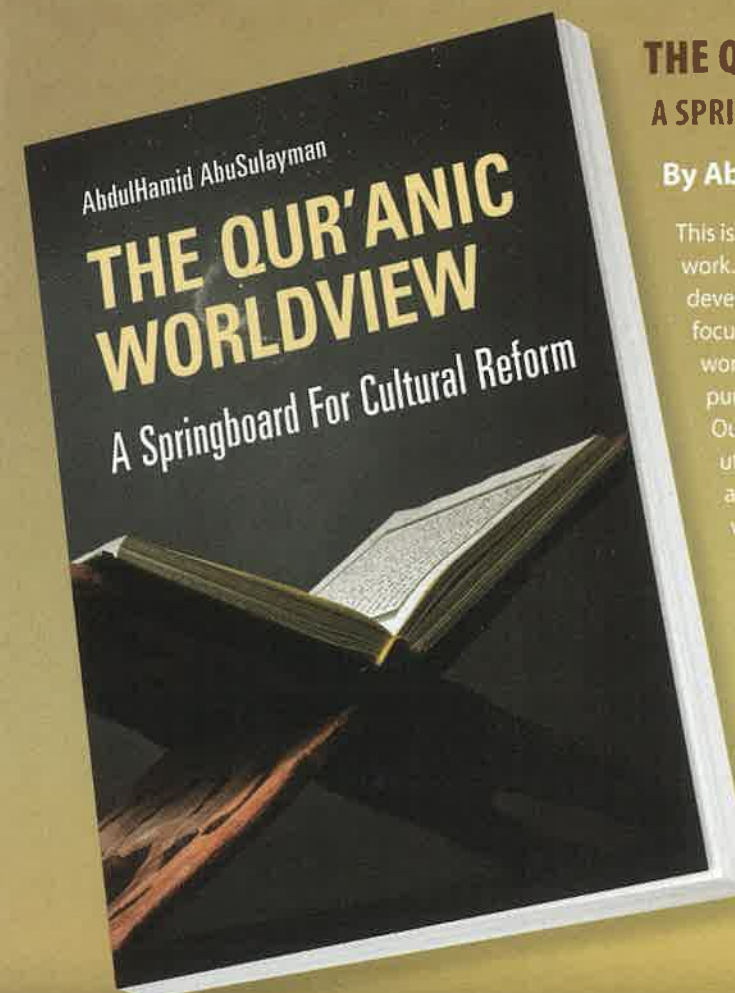
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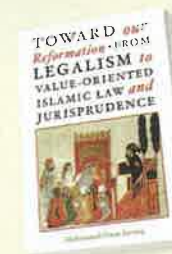


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