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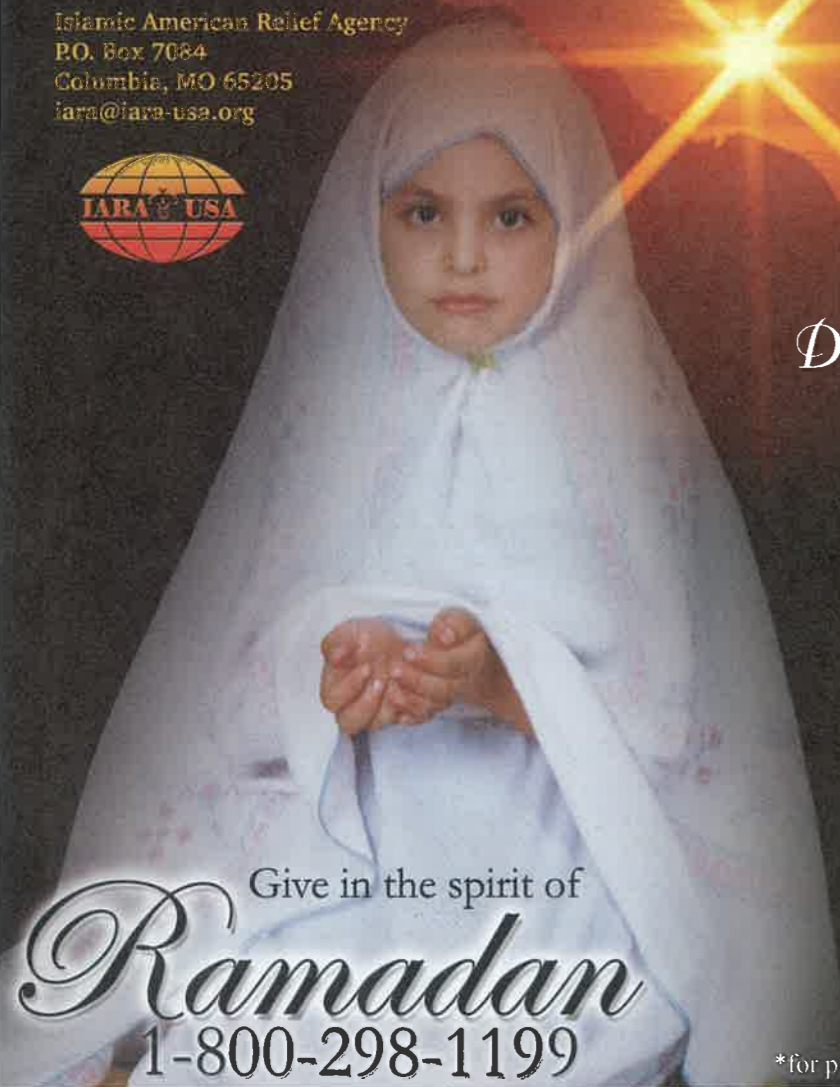
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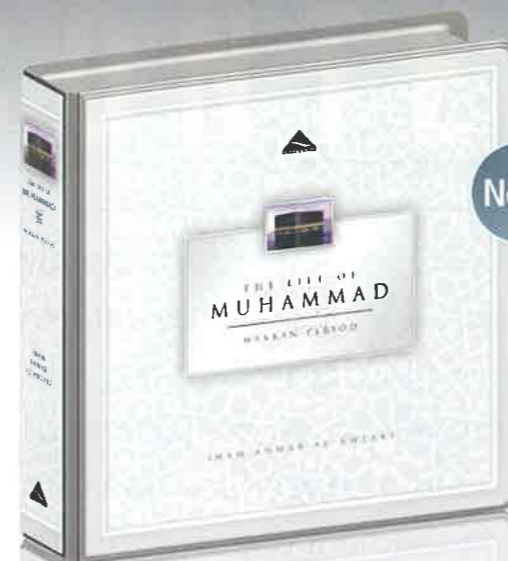
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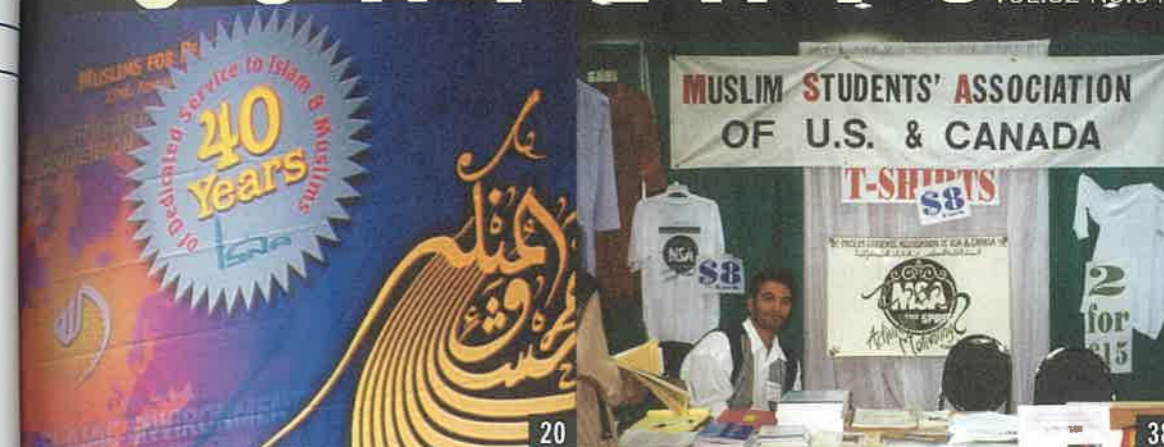
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All references to the Qur'an made are from *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Amana, Brentwood, MD.

## Our Obligations Beckon Us

Some 30,000 Muslims from the U.S. and Canada gathered in Chicago during Labor Day weekend to focus on the practical application of Islamic values in every day life. This year's convention theme and the convention's proximity to the most important annual event in Muslim life, Ramadan, offer reason for thought and introspection.

Dr. Abdalla Idris Ali, a former ISNA president, writing in the Sept./Oct. 2003 issue of this publication, reminded us that Allah *subhanahu wa Ta'ala* emphasizes the importance of fulfilling our contracts. A vital part of our contract to Allah is to be actively involved and working towards progress. No doubt, today many Muslims in the U.S. and Canada participate in ritual involvement such as voting, and this is very important, but our involvement must extend beyond this to participation in the community and in organizations. Through such involvement, we simultaneously work towards fulfilling our contract, as well as our individual and group potential.

Ramadan is more than just a blessed month of fasting and extra prayers; it is a time of personal growth and desire to draw closer to Allah. Indeed, it is, also, a time for personal study and reflection. It is not without significance that the first word of the Qur'an to be revealed was *igra*, read.

Regrettably today many of us have given our leaders and our ancestors, the responsibility of "reading" for us, allowing them to assert the "truth" without ensuring their accuracy or even their legitimacy. In other words, we are following our "fathers" and our "priests and anchorites." In the Qur'an, Allah condemns this attitude, and all of His Messengers disapproved of and warned against it when it reared its ugly head among the people.

We seek to avoid the effort it takes and the responsibility we have for seeking knowledge and learning. It is so much easier just to ask for answers from or blindly follow someone "with a reputation." Where has this practice landed us? Have we not sunk deeply in the quagmire of *taqlid*? Today instead of being recognized for speaking "truth" and delivering the message, as we are commanded to do, our beloved religion has, due to the mistakes of some members of the community, been rendered synonymous with terror, fanaticism, backwardness and ignorance.

While it is our civic duty to vote and our obligation to fast Ramadan, it is essential to our survival as a community, a community that engages with and contributes to North America, to "read," study, and analyze the Qur'an and sunnah. We need to formulate our own answers as to how we should live in North America, instead of relying on scholars back home who have no idea of what living in North America entails. We need to produce literature that can help us fulfill our obligations here, instead of depending on texts written centuries ago to address the needs of societies that no longer exist. In short, we need leaders who understand what it means to be a Muslim in North America. This Ramadan, and at all times, we must remember to "read" and become "involved" with the Qur'an and the sunnah, so that we can become equipped to fulfill our responsibilities and develop strategies to stop our community from continuing on a downward spiral.

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**PUBLISHER**  
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**SECRETARY GENERAL & CHAIRMAN OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD**  
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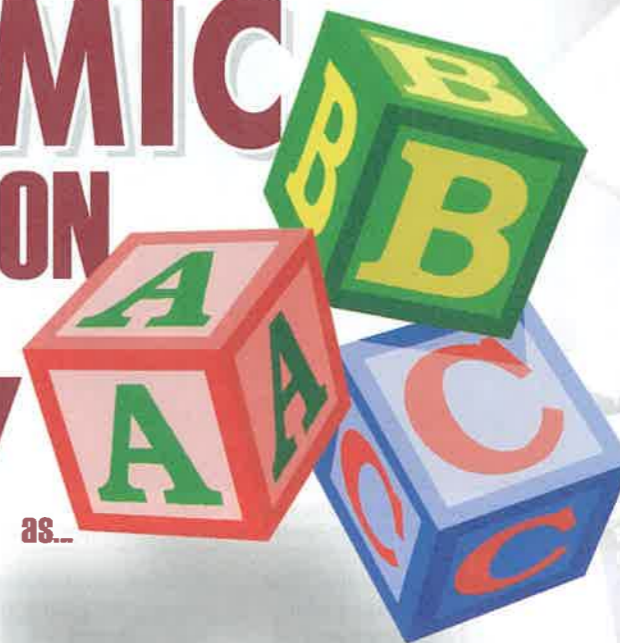
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## A Strong Statement in Favor of Islamic Arts

On July 26th, Houston, TX, experienced a new dimension of Muslim artistic expression with the Expressions of Faith 2003 Islamic Arts Festival, supported by ISNA and cosponsored by the Islamic Society of Greater Houston, the city's largest Islamic organization with 38 masajid, and the Five Pillars Center, a young, local Muslim group who provided much of the event's onsite help.

Mohammed Amer emceed the three-hour show, which brought over 500 attendees and local media to the downtown Houston Theater District's Hobby Center. A newcomer to Muslim community events, Amer, a Palestinian American comedian, said most of his comedy was general, rather than ethnically or religiously based, but he didn't feel that detracted from his reception that night.

From the alleys of African cities to the streets of San Francisco, Muslim culture from around the world was reflected in the event, which was hailed as an overwhelming success by attendees. Amer said, "This is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the



"Taj dar-e-haram" Singers - 786 spring a surprise on the crowd, changing into traditional Pakistani shalwar-kamiz to perform a classic qawali song

talent in the community." The show featured a mix of talent from around the country; the headlining acts for the evening were Ghana native Ahmed Tijani from Chicago, and, what many call the first "Muslim boy band," 786 from Detroit. Both headliners have, also, performed on the ISNA main-stage at the national convention-Tijani years before and 786 at the 2003 convention. For 786, who are all Detroit-area college students

of Indian and Pakistani descent, the Houston show was a sort of audition for the national convention, but it was obviously more for them as well. Local media, including the *Houston Chronicle*, focused more on them than other acts because of their unofficial "Muslim boy band" moniker. Other performers included members of the Calligraphy of Thought arts collective of Northern California; Rima Choudry and Mother Story

performing slam poetry and storytelling; local student and spoken word performer Bassam Tariq performing a dramatic monologue about a fictitious Muslim inmate's life in prison; Dallas-based Nasheed group Al-Nojoud; and new-comer Ahmad Abd Raffur, a young Malaysian singer with soaring vocals who currently teaches at an Islamic school in Oklahoma.

With Expressions of Faith, for the first time, ISNA provided financial support that propelled the show above previous ISNA Entertainment sessions and events. For local students and event co-organizers Zehra Qureshi and Ahsen Khan, the event was the result of a long struggle. Khan is a Houston-native who was active for years in the Muslim Student's Association at the University of Texas in Austin, and Qureshi, a newcomer to the city, was active with Islamic schools and MSA work in her native Maryland.

The show was a brainchild of former ISNA central zone representative, Monem Salam. He said ISNA Entertainment was attempting to take the existing entertainment sessions at the various ISNA events around the country and provide them with continuity and cohesion. Other, less formally supported Entertainment Nights, had already occurred, over the past year, in Dallas, Madison, WI, Minneapolis, MN, and Washington, DC/Virginia.

The full "ISNA Entertainment Extravaganza" entertainment session that took place at the Annual Convention is currently online at [www.isna.tv](http://www.isna.tv), and the entire Expressions of Faith event will, also, be online in the near future. *Islamic Horizons* Assistant Editor Fawad Siddiqui has served as coordinator for the ISNA Entertainment Efforts for the past four months.

## ISNA Supports Marriage Amendment

ISNA has voiced support of the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment, which calls for protection of the institution of marriage between a man and a woman. The amendment, drafted by the Washington-based Alliance for Marriage, a diverse coalition, was first introduced with bipartisan support in the last Congress, said Dr. Matt Daniels, president of AFM.

ISNA Secretary General Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed joined Congressional and faith leaders in addressing a press conference in Washington on September 17th in support of the 3 year campaign for the amendment. Syeed, who spoke on behalf of other Muslim members of the AFM board, said that the amendment offers hope of a centrist solution to the question of the future of marriage in America. Dr. Syeed noted that in Congress, bipartisan support for the bill had grown to over 80 members.

Senators Rick Santorum (R-PA), Sam Brownback (R-KS), and Jeff Sessions (R-AL), and Christian and Jewish faith leaders, also, addressed the press conference. Sen. Brownback reminded, "We must all work to protect marriage and family, which comprises the fabric of our society." Another amendment supporter, Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX), chairman of the subcommittee on the Constitution, sent a letter to his Senate colleagues on September 17th, calling for action to defend the institution of marriage. Rev. Walter E. Fautroy declared that to define marriage as a union between a man and a man or a woman and a woman is simply a misnomer. The civil rights leader, stressing his support for the amendment, warned, "It is not the inalienable right of anyone to redefine for all of us what is meant by the term marriage."



Dr. Syeed joined Congressional and faith leaders in endorsing the proposed marriage amendment



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## L.A. to Host ISNA Conference

A first of its kind ISNA Regional Conference will be held in the Los Angeles, CA on December 25th-28th, capping-off a year of newly formatted ISNA regional conferences. The conference, co-hosted by the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California, which represents over 89 area Islamic centers, will include parallel Grant Writing and Youth Camp programs organized by the ISNA Community Development Department. "The special thing about this conference is that it is being done with the Shura Council, which means that we will have a very resourceful host, such as with the Annual Convention in Chicago," said ISNA General Secretary Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed.

Dr. Syeed mentioned the "exponential increases at the other regional conferences this year," which included ISNA's first South Central Regional Conference in Dallas, TX, a new ISNA event



Grant Writing workshop at one of ISNA's regional conferences

that drew over 3,000 area Muslims over the July 4th weekend. Meanwhile the Upstate Regional Conference in Rochester, NY on June 7th-8th and the ISNA Central Zone Conference in Kansas City, MO on May 23rd-25th, both, drew close to two thousand attendees, hundreds

more than in previous years. ISNA's West Zone office, which is operated in cooperation with the Indian Muslim Relief Committee in Santa Clara, CA, also, organized the 8th Annual Seerah Conference in Northern California in conjunction with the ISNA-affiliated Muslim Communities Association of San Francisco Bay Area, July 7th-11th.

While ISNA has conducted previous events in Los Angeles, such as a successful Islamic Finance and Banking Conference in 2000, said Dr. Syeed, those events were smaller and mostly organized from ISNA headquarters without much local involvement. This year, however, with the election of former ISNA President Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, president of the Islamic Society of Orange County in the L.A. area, as the chairman of L.A. Shura Council, preparations are now underway for a full-fledged West Zone Conference and expectations for the event are building.

"This is basically the first time we are doing a full-fledged community event in Los Angeles, and we are hoping that it will serve as a chance for the full involvement, cooperation, and participation of all the different



### ISNA Honors O'Bannon

ISNA Assistant Secretary General Ahmed Elhattab attended the memorial service for well-loved, Indiana Governor Frank O'Bannon in Indianapolis on September 23rd. O'Bannon died on September 13th, five days after suffering a stroke while attending a conference in Chicago.

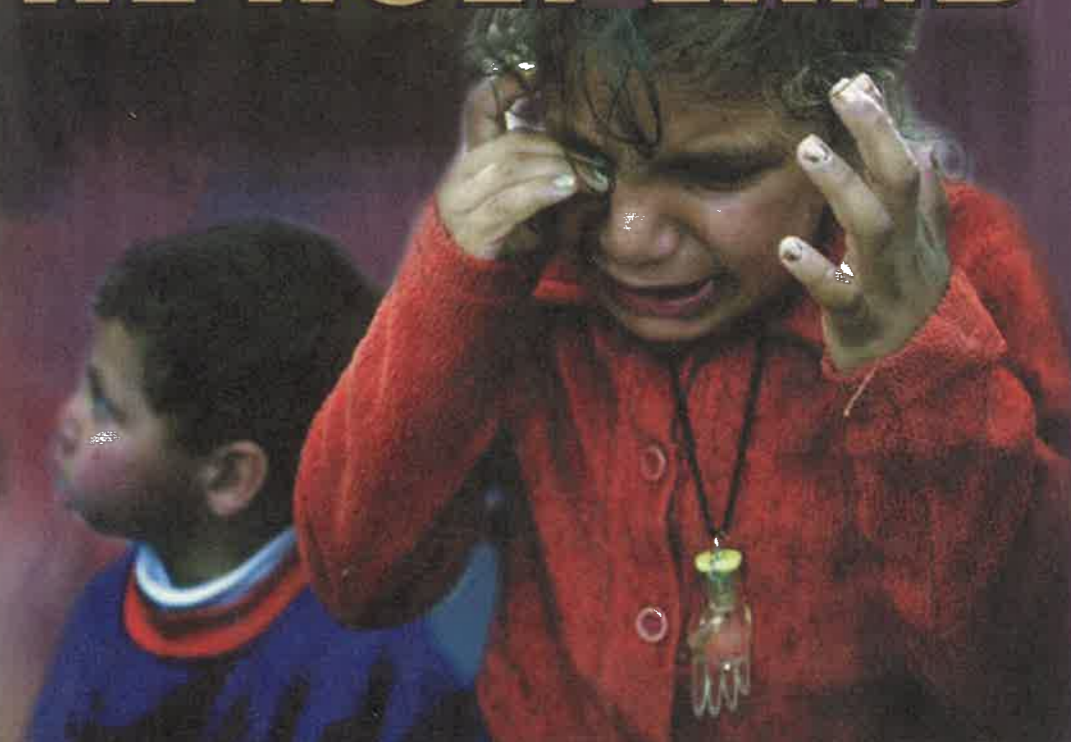
"The Islamic Society of North America is saddened at the demise of Governor Frank O'Bannon," said ISNA Secretary General Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed in a statement condoling the governor's death. "Mr. O'Bannon was a man of faith who recognized and respected people of faith and spirituality across religious barriers. His eagerness to understand and encourage minority groups in the state of Indiana made him a popular governor and his relations with the Muslim community and with our leaders were ideally positive, and we pray for patience and strength for his wife, Mrs. Judy O'Bannon."

masajid and Islamic centers there," explained Dr. Syeed.

Other ISNA Community Development Department events, in the past year, have included the Community Development Conferences on April 18th-20th in Chicago, IL, with about 500 in attendance, and the Islam in America Conferences at the South-Central Regional Conference in Dallas, TX with about 200 participants.

For more information visit [www.isna.net/conferences/](http://www.isna.net/conferences/)

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## CONFERENCES

### AMSS Conference: East Meets West

The Association of Muslim Social Scientists held their 32nd Annual Conference entitled "East Meets West: Understanding the Muslim Presence in Europe and North America," on September 26-28th at Indiana University in Bloomington, IN.

The conference, cosponsored by the university's Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Program and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, brought together more than 50 scholars and researchers who presented papers in 13 sessions that ranged from studies on contemporary Islam in Europe to the lives of young Muslim women at American colleges; from discussions on Islam and democracy, women's rights and environmental issues in the Muslim world to questions on the validity of long-held American Muslim intellectual views, such as the "Islamization of Knowledge"



Dr. Ali Mazrui treats himself to a cup of tea after delivering an inspiring keynote address

theory and new ways to look at the Shari'ah. Eminent scholar Dr. Ali A. Mazrui (S.U.N.Y.-Binghamton, NY) gave the keynote address on "A Marriage of Two Civilizations: The Balance Between Western Norms and Muslim Values."

In addition to presenting a paper on interracial, interethnic Muslim marriages, Muslim filmmaker and University of Michigan doctoral student Zareena Grewal

screened her multifaceted film, "By Dawn's Early Light: Abdul-Rauf's Journey to Islam." The film received much acclaim. Subtler than most documentaries on the Muslim community, the two-year-old film about former NBA star Mahmood Abdul Rauf outlines the life of the famous athlete, from humble beginnings through the challenges of physical disability eventually to NBA superstardom

and Islam. The film, also, addresses the controversy surrounding his refusal to stand for the national anthem during basketball games in the 1990s. Furthermore, the film focuses on African-American and immigrant-origin Muslim communities in America.

AMSS conferences of late have started to be populated by a mix of younger scholars alongside, the seniors. The new AMSS Executive Board, headed by the recently inaugurated AMSS President Dr. Muqtadar Khan (Adrian College, MI), promised changes. The new AMSS Executive Board, also, includes Vice President Dr. Rafik Beekun (University of Nevada-Las Vegas), Secretary Kamran Bokhari (Howard University), and Treasurer Dr. Qamar-ul Huda. AMSS, also, announced a new editor, Dr. Katherine Bullock (University of Toronto), of the The American Journal of Social Sciences (AJSS), one of longest running Muslim academic publications in the western world. Dr. Bullock served as this year's conference chair, also.



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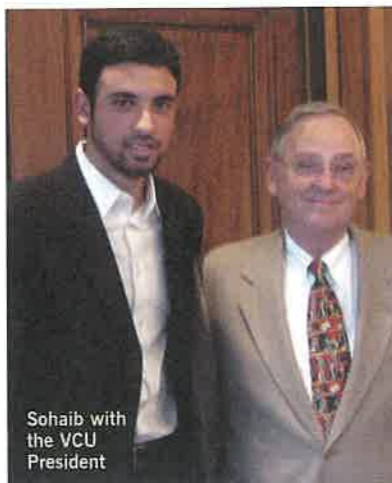
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## Muslim Student Wins Humanitarian Award

**S**ohaib Mohiuddin, a 2003 graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, was one of five students nationally to receive the Howard R. Swearer Student Humanitarian Award, recognizing student's outstanding efforts in public service and individual commitment in the community. Nearly 127 students were nominated from campuses across the nation.

Mohiuddin, 22, former president of VCU-MSA and the first VCU student nominated for the award, was cited for his efforts in student leadership, community involvement and humanitarianism. As MSA president, Mohiuddin led the organization in various projects ranging from a fundraising and awareness campaign aimed at combating hunger to community events for the 9/11 anniversary to education programs on human rights and civil liberties. "This award is a tribute to the hard work and sleepless nights that MSA members have sacrificed not only on this campus, but, also, on campuses all over," said Mohiuddin. "It is truly an honor that the work that has been going on here at VCU is



Sohaib with the VCU President

being recognized nationally, and it goes without saying that there are countless VCU students, faculty and administrators that have helped the MSA to foster, on this campus, a spirit of humanitarianism and civic responsibility that the Swearer Award represents."

The awards were presented at the Third Annual Education Leadership Colloquium in Denver, CO by Bernard Machen, chair of the board of directors for Campus Compact and president of the University of Utah, and Lindsey Kozberg, special assistant to President Bush and director of public and policy affairs

for USA Freedom Corps. Campus Compact, a national coalition of more than 850 college and university presidents, is committed to the civic purposes of higher education, and Howard R. Swearer, the 15th president of Brown University, was one of its founders.

The award includes \$1,500, which will be used for the MSA's "Unveiling Ignorance" educational lecture

series, a series aimed at giving the VCU community an opportunity to learn about Muslim American issues, stereotypes about Islam, and sociopolitical issues that continue to affect the nation and world.

Mohiuddin, now enrolled in VCU's School of Medicine, was a presidential scholar and student in the combined BS/MD program at VCU. As an undergraduate, he received other prestigious awards, including the Presidential Scholarship for International Education, which permitted him to study in Cairo, Egypt.

## Georgia Muslims Rebuild

**A** fire, what investigators are calling arson, completely destroyed the year-old Islamic Center of Savannah, in Savannah, GA on August 24th. In early August 2003, the Muslim community became the center of a string of hate crimes that included shots being fired at the masjid, burglary and threatening letters, and ultimately ended in the burning down of the Islamic Center. The serious nature of the crime has resulted in the involvement of the FBI and ATF in the investigation.



Savannah's Islamic Center was completely gutted by the fire

The Muslim community had bought a 4-acre property in a quite and peaceful suburb of Savannah in September last year with hopes of making the facility the center of community activities. They had renovated the existing facility to accommodate the growing Muslim community, and had plans to start a school for children and adults on the premises.

The community members, who are currently praying in a temporary tent erected on the property, are actively seeking donations to help them in setting up a temporary facility in time for Ramadan.

Tax-exempt donations may be sent to: Islamic Center of Savannah, 1030 Dutchtown Road, Savannah, GA 31419, (912) 920-0043, [www.islamiccentersavannah.org](http://www.islamiccentersavannah.org).

## Muslim Women Express Themselves

During their first annual convention on August 16th, the Richmond, VA-based National Association of Muslim Women stressed their roles as ambitious decision-makers striving for a better life for their families. The convention was titled "Braving The Storm - The High Cost of Freedom In an Era of Intolerance."

Jannah Aminah Qadir, a mother of four and partner in Richmond-based Aminah's Enterprise for the past 25 years, was named NAMW's Entrepreneur of the Year. Khadijah Ruffin-Mahdi, who co-founded The Islamic Homeschooling Academy in western Henrico County about seven years ago, was named NAMW's Educator of the Year.

Founder-president B. Aqila Mujahid Al-Bayati said she hopes to expand the organization to include Muslim women across the nation.

## Pakistani American Techs Meet in NY

**T**he Association of Pakistani Scientists and Engineers of North America (APSENA) ([apsena-usa.org](http://apsena-usa.org)) held its 20th Annual Conference on August 23rd in Albany, NY.

President Tariq M. Khan, P.E. said the APSENA annual conferences have been very popular among Pakistani American professionals and business leaders since they provide an excellent opportunity to network, build alliances, exchange information on mutual interests, and find ways to contribute to Pakistan's long journey towards prosperity.

Sen. Akbar Khawaja (PPP) was the luncheon keynote speaker, and Pervaiz Lodhi, a noted Pakistani American entrepreneur, was the banquet keynote speaker. The guest of honor, the Pakistani embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission Mohammad Sadiq, told the audience that their hard work and professional excellence "is giving a new image to Pakistan in this country... Your success, in fact, is Pakistan's success."

The conference chairman, Dr. Sajjad Alam, said the conference reached two distinct milestones: live presentations from Pakistan and an all time high in the percentage of out-of-town participants.

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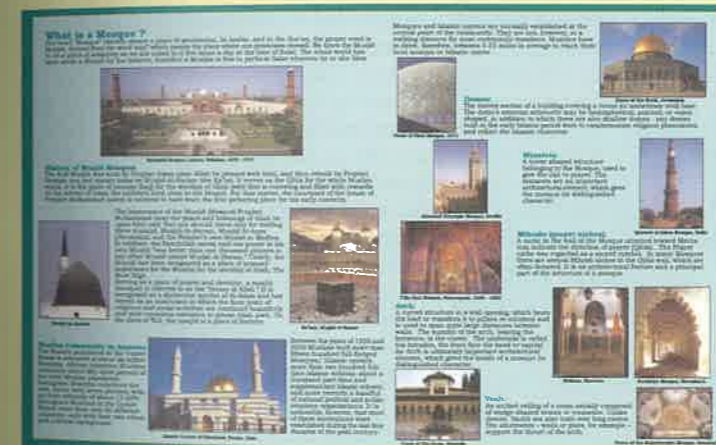
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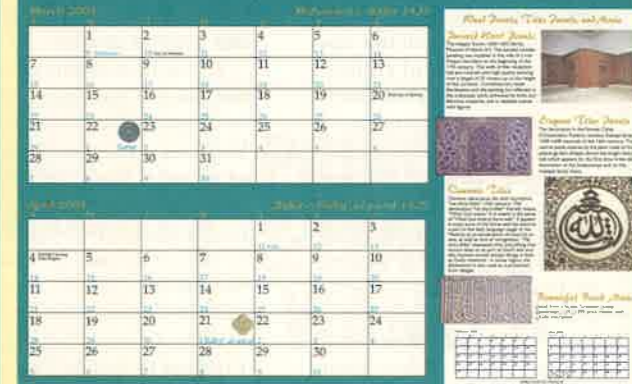
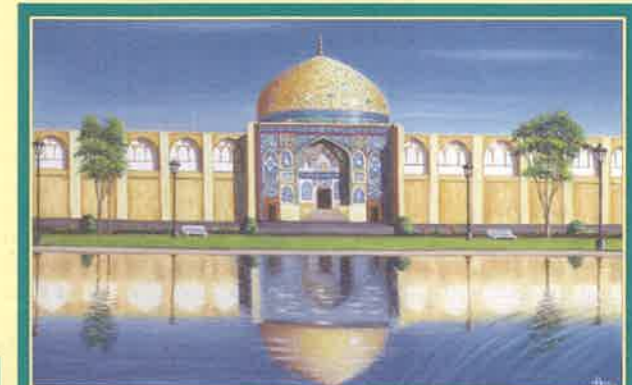
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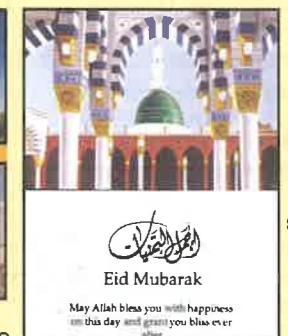
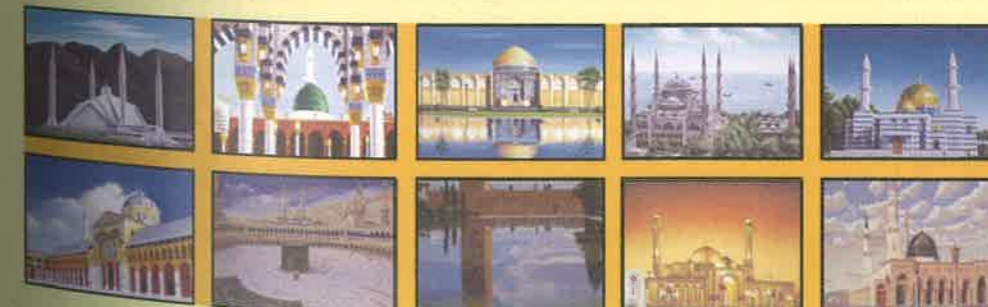
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## PALESTINIAN TRUTH TELLER DEPARTS

Edward W. Said, a Columbia University professor and leading spokesman for the Palestinian cause who had suffered from leukemia for years, died at a New York hospital on September 25th. He was 67.

The late scholar was born in 1935 in Jerusalem, then part of British-ruled Palestine, but spent most of his adult life in the U.S. writing passionately about the Palestinian cause and a variety of other subjects, from English literature, his academic specialty, to music and culture.

Edward Said never shied away from condemning human rights violations in occupied Palestine. He wrote two years ago, after visits to Jerusalem and the West Bank, that Israel's "efforts toward exclusivity and xenophobia toward the Arabs" had actually strengthened Palestinian determination. When Yasser Arafat signed the Oslo peace accords with Israel, Dr. Said chided the Palestinian leader for "collaborating with military occupation."

Dr. Said wrote in Cairo's English-language *Al-Ahram Weekly*, "Palestine and Palestinians remain, despite Israel's concerted efforts from the beginning either to get rid of them or to circumscribe them so much as to make them ineffective."

In 2000, he delivered a statement when he threw a rock toward an Israeli guardhouse on the Lebanese border. Columbia University, asked to censure him, said that his actions were protected by principles of academic freedom. For the Palestinians,

Dr. Said was a supremely articulate advocate whose presence will be greatly missed.

Dr. Said received a bachelor's degree from Princeton in

1957 and a Master's and Ph.D. from Harvard, in 1960 and 1964. Most of his academic career was spent as a professor at Columbia, but he was, also, a visiting professor at leading institutions, including Yale, Harvard and Johns Hopkins.



Professor Edward W. Said

In addition to his academic pursuits, Dr. Said was a gifted pianist.

In his immensely influential book, *Orientalism* (1978), he argued that the entire Western academic discipline of oriental studies was based on imperialist and racist myths about the Middle East. His other books include *After the Last Sky* (1986); *Beginnings* (1975); *Blaming the Victims* (1988); *Covering Islam* (1981); *Criticism in Society; Culture and Imperialism; Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature; The Pen and the Sword* (1994); *The Politics of Dispossession* (1994); *The Question of Palestine* (1979); and *Reflections on Exile* (2000).

In his preface to the updated version of *Covering Islam: How The Media and The Experts Determine How We See The Rest of The World*, he wrote: "Malicious generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign culture in the West."

Dr. Said, explaining to David Barsamian, director of Alternative Radio in Boulder, CO, said, "The sense of Islam as a threatening Other—with Muslims depicted as fanati-

## Islamic Finance Activist Departs

Mohammed Ahmed-Ullah, a founding member and president of Al-Amin Association, a retirement savings plan for Muslims, died on July 21st after a long illness.

Ahmed-Ullah, 65, was confined to a wheelchair after surgery to repair a slipped disk went awry. Despite his many challenges over the past 16 years, Ahmed-Ullah was a shining example of courage and patience. He worked from home and continued to serve the Muslim community in Toronto and Canada with projects like Al-Amin and the Islamic Cooperative Housing Corporation.

In 1983, he was elected and served as treasurer of the interest-free Islamic Housing Cooperative Corporation and, later, volunteered to spearhead the launch of the interest-free Al-Amin Association and its investment counterpart, Ansarco Inc. He negotiated trust agreements with various financial institutions and helped develop Al-Amin from a CD\$80,000 fund to the CD\$6 million program it is today.

Ahmed-Ullah was born in Hyderabad Deccan, which was occupied by India in 1948. His father died when he was 6, but he used the challenges that life dealt him to his advantage. He helped his mother raise his three other siblings while pursuing his own education. In his mid-20's, he moved to London, England, as a student. He lived there for 16 years, visiting Pakistan to get married, and, then, returning to England. In 1975 his family moved to Toronto, where he worked as an auditor with the government and became involved in various Toronto mosques, crossing organizational barriers in hopes of uniting the community. He took keen interest in and contributed to building the Islamic Foundation Mosque in suburban Toronto and, later, served as the trustee of the mosque. His colleagues remember that even after his surgeries, and despite his continuous pain, he always inquired about community projects and continued to volunteer his time to Al-Amin and Ansarco Inc., opening his home for numerous board meetings.

Outside of the Muslim community, Ahmed-Ullah's interests were many. He was an avid wrestling fan; tried his hand, albeit unsuccessfully, at cooking up concoctions like peach jam and mushroom curry; and, before his disability, enjoyed parasailing and scuba diving.

His wife, Shaheen; his daughters, Noreen, Tabasum and Saara; his sons-in-laws; and his granddaughter, Hebah, survive him.



Mohammed Ahmed-Ullah

cal, violent, lustful, irrational—developed during the colonial period in what I called Orientalism. The study of the Other has a lot to do with the control and dominance of Europe and the West generally in the Islamic world, and it has persisted because it's based very, very deeply in religious roots, where Islam is seen as a kind of competitor of Christianity. If you look at the curricula of most universities and schools in this country, considering our long encounter with the Islamic world, there is very little there that you can get hold of that is really informative about Islam. If you look at the popular media, you'll see that the stereotype that begins with

Rudolph Valentino in *The Sheik* has really remained and developed into the transnational villain of television and film and culture in general. It is very easy to make wild generalizations about Islam. All you have to do is read almost any issue of *The New Republic* and you'll see there the radical evil that's associated with Islam, the Arabs as having a depraved culture, and so forth. These are impossible generalizations to make in the United States about any other religious or ethnic group."

ISNA Secretary General Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, offering his condolences, said the world has lost a "towering intellectual" and a truth teller.

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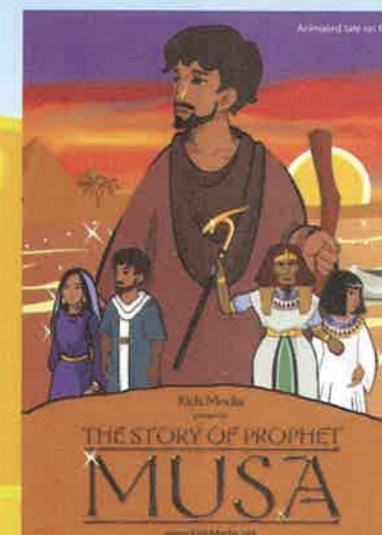
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Educator and social activist Dr. Syed Hasan has been nominated for the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize for his commitment to serving and uplifting humanity. He has dedicated over 60 years of his life for others.

Dr. Hasan is the founder and director of Insan (Urdu for human), an educational and humanitarian mission based in India. For almost 40 years the Insan Institute has been promoting education and educational awareness; educational accessibility to financially disadvantaged; adult literacy, preteen/teen marriages; local economy and employment to disadvantaged; and humanitarian assistance.

Insan School and College ([www.insanschool.org](http://www.insanschool.org)), a complex of 200 huts spread over 200 acres, serving 5,000 students in Kishanganj at the junction of India, Nepal and Bangladesh, started as one hut rented for less than a dollar a month.

Dr. Hasan, who obtained his masters and doctoral degrees from Southern Illinois University, says of his mission: "Our institution is community centered. We believe in total development. We feel that education should lead to self-development. This development should take place by

means of self-help and self-reliance. In a way, education means independence. It should make us free from others. We should become capable of running our own affairs as far as it is possible...we the educators are here to facilitate and to assist this process of development"

An unflinching worker, Dr. Hasan, affectionately known as Syed Bhai (Brother Syed), does not hesitate from doing the meanest tasks from cleaning the beds of the tuberculosis patients to eating with those who Hindus consider the untouchable classes.

Dr. Syed Hasan, himself named after the 19th century visionary Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, a leading educator, reformer, and founder of the Aligarh Muslim University, resolved to serve humanity after his meeting with Allama Dr. Mohammad Iqbal—the poet-philosopher and reformer, and Nobel Prize nominee, at the tender age of 13.

Dr. Hasan, who came to the U.S. in 1955 on a fellowship, has taught at his alma mater and Frostburg State University in the U.S., and Jamia Millia Islamia, National High School, and Nehru College in India. At SIU, he was a member of Phi Delta Kappa and Kappa Delta Pi.

## Russia Wants OIC Card

Pakistan opposes granting Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) membership or observer status to non-Muslim states, including Russia, a senior foreign ministry official told Pakistan's premier newspaper, *Dawn* on August 17th.

Russia, where Islam is one of the state religions and which has more than 20 million Muslims, wants to join the 57-nation body. President Vladimir Putin reportedly made a formal request to the former OIC chair Dr. Mahatir Mohammad, who stepped down from his position as Malaysian Prime Minister in October.

Pakistan is concerned that admitting Russia into the OIC would set the wrong precedent. Rejecting the existence of a Muslim minority in Russia as a basis for membership, an official said, "In every country there is a certain percentage of Muslim population, and if the OIC starts granting membership on this basis then tomorrow Israel, having a 1.5 million Muslim population, will also claim the membership of the OIC."

Another eager applicant, willing to accept observer status, is India, which has 150 million Muslims. For the last two years, Sudan and Qatar have tried to advance India's case, but most key OIC members, including Pakistan, have vetoed it.

Currently, no non-Muslim country has full membership or observer status. Any decision regarding OIC membership or observer status is based on consensus.

In 1962, he became an assistant professor of psychology at Frostburg where he earned the instructor of the year award. In 1965, Dr. Hasan returned to India leaving behind many opportunities in the U.S., opting to settle in Kishanganj area, at the time, the most backward and illiterate area, as a challenge to start his mission. He started an educational mission, founding Taleemi Mission Corps (Educational Mission Corps), and later founded an educational journal *Taleemi Biradri* (Educational Brotherhood).

## Moroccan Schools Teach Berber

Moroccan schools, for the first time, have started teaching the Berber language. Starting September 15th, the classes are being taught in 317 primary schools, and the government plans to have Berber in all schools, at all levels, within the next 10 years. The move signals an increasing recognition of Moroccan Berbers, who have long complained of being denied rights despite being the majority population. This is, also, the first step in the fulfillment of a promise made nearly 10 years ago by the late King Hassan.

Although it is estimated that at least 60 percent of Moroccans are ethnically Berber, or Amazigh in the Berber language, Morocco's constitution enshrines Arabic as the country's only official language.

The fact that Berbers were the original inhabitants of North Africa, before the arrival of Arabs in the 7th century, has ever since been seen as a potential challenge to the authority of Morocco's Arab rulers. In the 20th century, there were several Berber rebellions, and, as a result, many rights were curbed. Even the freedom to choose a Berber name for a child was banned. Last year, Moroccan authorities blocked a conference organized by the Association for the Defense of Victims of the Rif War. The organization alleges that the Spanish army used toxic gas to quell a Berber uprising in the 1920s and more than 70 years later the effects of the gas are still being felt. The Berber rebellion in the Rif Mountains of northern Morocco is one of the most celebrated events in modern North African history. In July 1921, the Berber Chief Abdulkrim, and a band of warriors armed with nothing but flintlock rifles, inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Spanish army, which at that time occupied northern Morocco. Nearly half of the 26,000 soldiers were massacred, and it took five years before the Spanish, reinforced by French troops, regained control.

Under King Mohammed, who succeeded his father Hassan four years ago, there has been some progress toward recognizing Berber rights. A royal institute for Amazigh culture was established in 2001; Berber history predating the Arab presence can now be discussed and taught.

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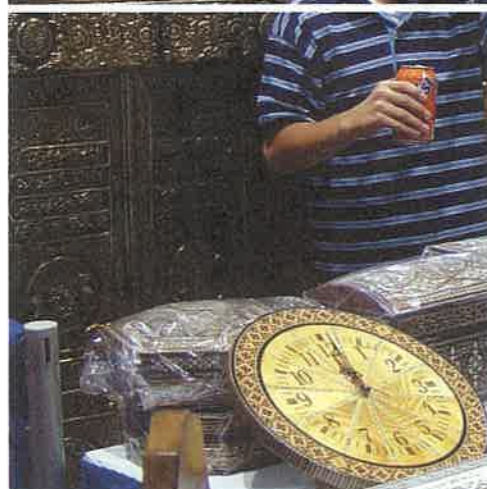
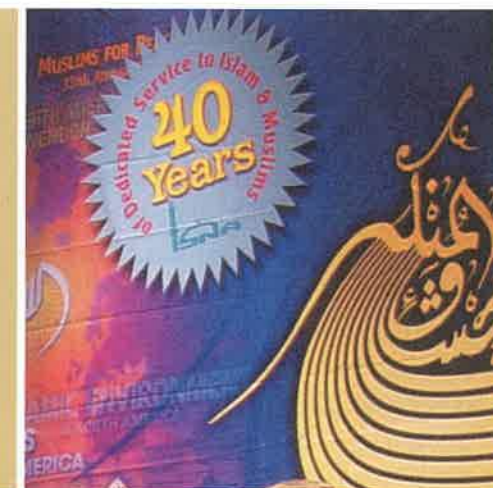
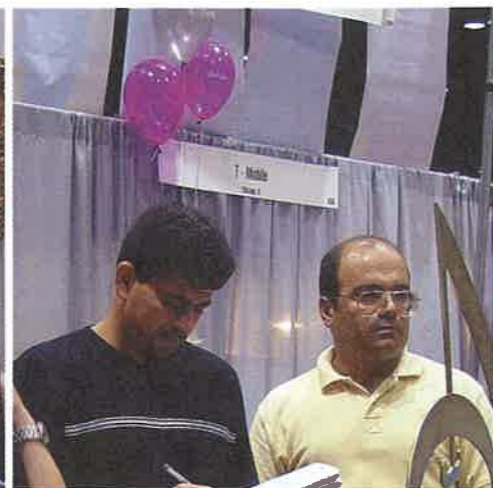
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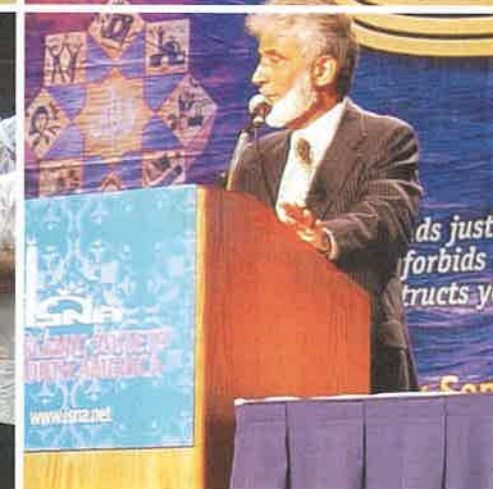
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# Living Islam

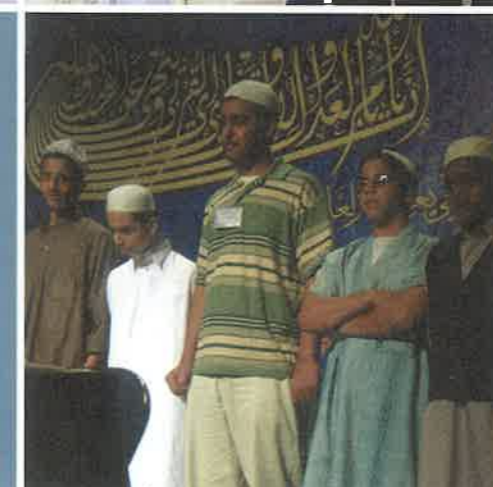
THE 40TH ANNUAL ISNA CONVENTION



MORE THAN 30,000 MUSLIMS GATHERED TO FOCUS ON VALUES THAT ISLAM OFFERS FOR EVERY DAY LIVING AND ON WAYS TO SHARE THEM.



opposite page from top: The world's marketplace comes alive at the Bazaar. Yusuf Islam spreads his gems of wisdom; Azhar Usman—the attorney who doubles up as a stand-up comedian. This page from top: ISNA President Dr. Muhammad Nur Abdullah leads the Friday prayer; Meeting friends and family at the Convention; ISNA secretary general Dr. Syeed addresses the main session; Competing to render the Words of the Creator with excellence.



**“W**e need to be living Islam...living Islam in the midst of people who may be hostile,” said ISNA Vice President Dr. Ingrid Mattson, addressing the convention’s theme “Islam: Enduring Values for Daily Life” drawn from the Qur’anic verse, “Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition.” (16:90)

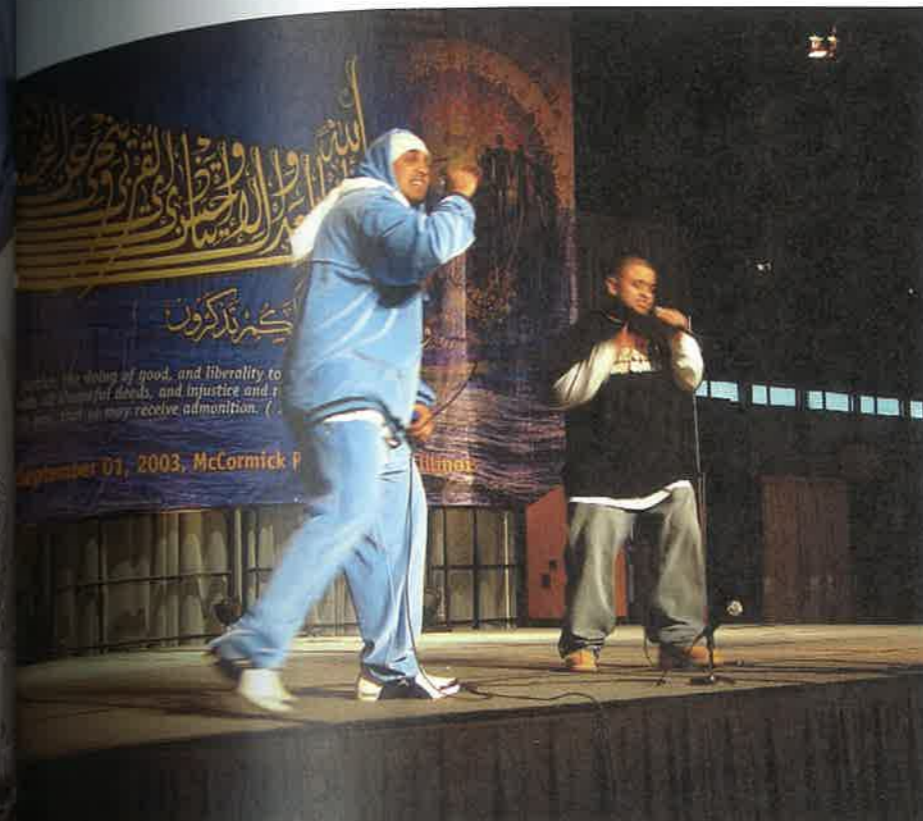
In the session, “Morality, Decency and Benevolence: Values that Endure”, Dr. Mattson added that as Muslims in this country, belief in promoting good and forbidding evil is not enough; belief must be implemented through avoidance of pervasive actions and images that transgress the boundaries of decency. Societal problems; harshness of language and discourse; the exploitation of both men and women; and violence are some such manifestations. Dr. Mattson further explained that these are not manifestations of American or pop culture, but rather products of the commercial culture that has evolved in this country. Former ISNA President Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi addressed this fundamental theme by enumerating the importance of showing benevolence to all creatures and humans. He reminded, “Religion is not about ritualism. Religion is about kindness...about charity.” Both speakers agreed that implementation of the model set forth in 16:90 is integral in showing the beauty of Islam to others. Dr. Siddiqi pointed out that people learn from what they see and experience; “people will not know the truth of Islam from the principles of Islam. People will know the truth of Islam from the practices of the Muslims.” Dr. Jamal Badawi, director of the Islamic Information Foundation, spoke about the importance of living according to the Qur’an.

The 40th Annual ISNA Convention was held in Chicago’s McCormick Center over Labor Day weekend. The convention was attended by over 32,000 individuals, including organizers, representatives from major Muslim communities and professional organizations, and leaders of other faiths. ISNA President Dr. Muhammad



clockwise from left: Dr. Bob Edgar stresses the unity of faiths; Congregants listening to the Friday sermon; A group performs during Entertainment Hour; Dr. Wan Aziza Ismail, wife of former Malaysian deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim; ISNA Convention Bazaar provides avenues of sprouting new friendships and business ties.

Nur Abdullah remarked that ISNA, with this convention, has reached “maturity.” ICNA President Dr. Talat Sultan remarked that unity between such diverse organizations is a requirement for Islamic strength in America; “We believe firmly that in North America if we have to strive and struggle, it has to be a joint cause.” This desire for unity was profound among representatives from other faiths as well. Dr. Bob Edgar, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, gave a moving



speech in which he pointed out that Muslims and Christians share many values, including peace, brotherhood, collaboration, and love for one another. He even called ISNA and the National Council of Churches “twin organizations,” both sharing a belief in the power of nonviolence.

The ISNA convention, which brought together some 32,000 Muslim Americans and Canadians, coincided with the American Society of Muslims convention, and registrants at the AMS convention were automatically registered for the ISNA convention. The conventions, also, coincided with the 40th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s landmark “I have a dream” speech. A simple yet moving ceremony marked the 40th anniversary celebration where all the previous MSA presidents spoke, offering not only memories but also reminding of challenges.

**LEGACY OF THE PROPHET.** Following the inaugural session, Dr. Jamal Badawi, director of the Islamic Information Foundation, and Imam Siraj Wahhaj of Masjid Al-Taqua in Brooklyn, NY, spoke about the historical view of the Prophet (*salla Allahu ‘alayhu wa sallam*) and his role in the lives of modern Muslims. They encouraged a reexamination of the Prophet’s life and left the audience motivated to act in line with his example. The idea of relaying the Prophet’s message beyond the borders of Islam was further echoed by Michael Wolfe and Alex Kronemer, producers of the PBS documentary “Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet.”

**CROSSROADS FOR AMERICAN MUSLIMS.** Dr. Abd AlHakim Jackson, professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Michigan, in the session, “Muslims at the Cross-

roads,” stated, “What this generation does will have an impact on the future of Muslims in America. This is a historically significant time and a historically significant place.” Neither assimilation nor isolation is the key, Jackson added. The answer is for Muslims to become indigenous, without sacrificing Islam. Muslim Americans deserve to have their rights protected just like other Americans, but they do not have to sacrifice their personal identities. The African American Muslim community has successfully done so, and other American Muslims can learn from their success, Jackson noted.

Learning how to negotiate the situation is the challenge. Since the tragedies of September 11th, Muslim Americans have been under a microscope, and this has caused them to react in three ways, said Ameena Jandali, a member of ISNA’s Majlis Ash-Shura and co-founder of the Islamic Networks Group. One group has chosen the mindset of “living with your head in the sand.” The second group has reacted with fear and has pulled away from Islam. The third group, which more people should emulate, has reacted and acted positively by attempting to educate and counsel the community, Jandali said.

U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service (CRS) Director Sharee M. Freeman spoke in the workshop on “Presenting ‘Cultural Diversity’ Training About Muslims to Corporations and Law Enforcement Agencies.”

“The Justice Department is committed to fighting hate and intolerance, as they tear at the very fabric of our great nation, a fabric that is strengthened by its diversity of races, religions and

national origins,” said Freeman. She said that the Convention was “an excellent opportunity to inform communities about government services available to them, as well as to let them know that their voices are being heard in Washington.”

CRS, a component of the Department of Justice, offers conflict resolution and mediation services to communities affected by issues of race, color, and national origin.

Karima Al-Amin, a lawyer from Atlanta and wife of Imam Jamil Al-Amin, concluded the session by briefly discussing Imam Jamil’s incarceration. She said that his current situation resulted from a speech he gave in which he said that the price of freedom is not free. Imam Jamil has been a significant figure in American history, and Al-Amin said her husband does not regret anything he has done to help shape this country. ▶



Dr. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, Alim Shabazz, and Sheikh Hamza Yusuf offered presentations on the historical influences of Islam and Muslims in the West in the session entitled "Historical Foundations for the Contemporary Muslim American Identity: Islamic Contributions to Civilization & the History of Islam in America." These presentations help to contextualize the current situation.

ISNA maintains an active program to keep community leaders informed about laws and how to implement them. In the post 9/11 situation, ISNA has offered several workshops that have helped these leaders to stay informed and to update their skills. Dr. Syeed presided over the panel on best practices in nonprofit management where Juan Zarate, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Anti-Terrorism, spoke about nuances of fundraising, and

## Muslim Americans Work Together

This year's ISNA Convention marked a note of historic cooperation between America's two largest Islamic organizations, ISNA and the Chicago-based American Society of Muslims (ASM), which also hosted its own annual convention in Chicago on Labor Day weekend.

Following recent years of increasing signs of closeness between the two groups, such as shared sessions, this year, ISNA offered free registration to its convention for all ASM attendees—an offer that was taken up by many, creating a first-of-its-kind exchange between the thousands of strong conventions.

Imam Warith Deen Muhammad, the traditional head of the ASM, sent a message of warm greetings and good wishes.

In the months building up to the convention, Imam Muhammad had also been invited to participate and attended several ISNA Convention Steering Committee meetings.

A member of ISNA's Majlis-al-Shura (advisory council) in recent years, Imam Muhammad would go on to formally step down as the ASM's leader later during the ASM Convention weekend, to focus, he said, on education and other aspects of Islamic work and make way for leadership from the younger generation.

On Friday morning, Aug. 29, at the ASM Convention, Imam Muhammad jointly addressed a press-conference with Kareem Irfan, chairman of Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater

Chicago (CIOGC), where they commended the spirit of cooperation that has been developing between their organizations and said they hoped for only more in the future.

Later that day, "Bilalian", a powerful documentary film about the history of the ASM and its transformation from the Nation of Islam of the 1960s to orthodox Islam today, helped kick off the Second Annual ISNA Film Festival, which ran throughout the ISNA Convention.

Young California filmmaker and ASM member Aminah Abdul-Jabbar, 28, said she was happy to have her film, which discusses the partial divides between the two communities at times, serve as a symbol of increased cooperation between the two organizations.

The Convention is addressed by both men and women; by scholars and activists; such as Salam al-Maryati, Executive Director, Muslim Public Affairs Council, top, and Dr. Abd al Hakeem Jackson, professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Michigan, bottom

what nonprofit organizations need to do to comply with laws.

**RIGHT AND WRONG ACTION.** One point many Muslims often neglect when considering the Islamic injunction of "commanding the good and forbidding the evil," is the application of this Divine command to their own lives, community, and the ummah; many apply this to others before implementing it in their own lives, said Merve Kavakci, a former member of Turkey's parliament who was removed from her position due to her wearing hijab. Kavakci, addressing the session, "Right and Wrong: Two Sides of the Action Coin," also, discussed Muslims' treatment of women. She said, "My concern is not about the Muslim professional women here [in America], but about the women in Gujarat, the women in Palestine, and

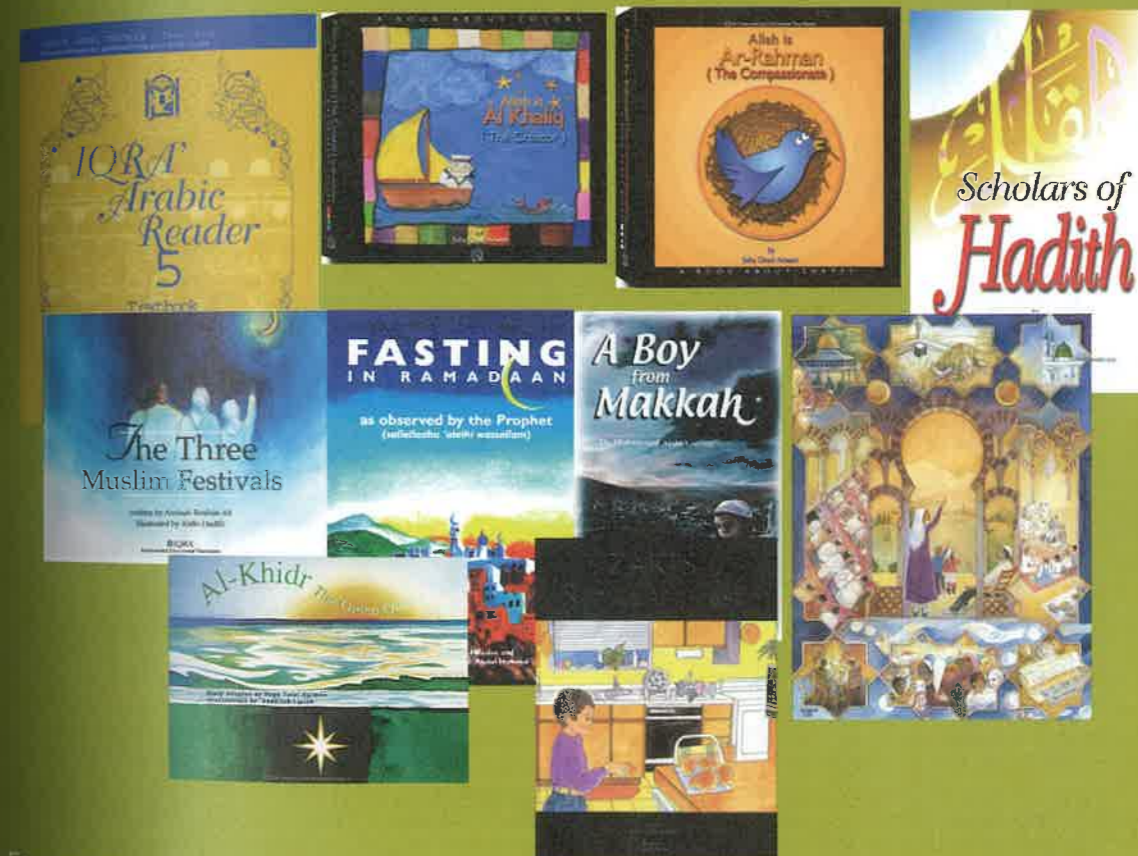
the women who are persecuted for wearing hijab." Muslim scholars, she said, must study and research Muslim American issues and state clearly that Islam does not hate democracy and that it is more than compatible with the West.

Dr. Azizah Ismail, founder of the Justice Party and wife of Anwar Ibrahim, former deputy prime minister of Malaysia, related her party's experience in Malaysia and called for the elimination of injustice. She reminded that genuine patriotism is not to love a country and not criticize it, but rather it is to criticize and work to make it better. She explained that this criticism and work must be done in a political and peaceful way, according to the laws of the country, and added that "political struggle is a form of jihad."

Imam Zaid Shakir discussed the discrimination and bigotry practiced by some in the U.S. and reminded the audience that Muslims should not fight evil with evil, but repel evil with that which is better—an important part of which should be our love for our brothers in humanity. "Never belittle the power of Islamic brotherhood," Shakir said. "We must be people of love, the fundamental relationship

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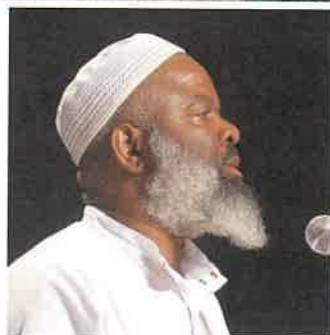
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must be one of love and mercy." If Muslims are to be people of patience and not of anger, they should seek strength in their conduct and behavior through emulation of the Prophet and his community. He concluded, "Together, with the people of goodwill, we can change this country and strengthen it. Worry not about the wicked in this country, but about what good we can bring to it."

**HONORING COMMUNITY SERVICE.** Every year the Community Service Recognition Luncheon hosted by the ISNA Development Foundation honors a member of the Muslim community with the Mahboob Khan Community Service Award. The award is named after Mahboob Khan who was known for his devotion to oppressed Muslims. This year ISNA honored Dr. Ahmad H. Sakr, who helped found the Muslim Students' Association

top: The ISNA Convention Bazaar showcased more than 500 booths, offering from DVDs to books, and jewelry to financial services, besides booths of nonprofit organizations. bottom from left: Imam Siraj Wahhaj; ISNA vice president Dr. Ingrid Mattson, and Dr. John Esposito of Georgetown University

of the U.S. and Canada (MSA), the precursor to ISNA. Dr. Muhammad Nur Abdullah described Dr. Sakr as "a Muslim who has not only been a pioneer of Islamic work, but has been the founder of [successful] organizations."

The luncheon keynote speaker, Dr. John Esposito, director of the Center for Muslim Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, offered advice on how Muslims can continue to follow in Sakr's footsteps. He said ISNA has come a long way in only 40 years, but only continued help from volunteers will allow the

ummah to progress. He said, "The fact is challenges can be turned into opportunities. The Muslim couch potato is the one that talks about the issues ... or writes the convenient check. One has to be willing to be stand up and be counted."

**MARKING DIVERSITY.** The session on Islam Among Latino Americans featured Benjamin Perez, a Native American Hispanic from Carlsbad, NM, who shared his personal experiences about discovering Islam. Juan Galvan, a Mexican American, who presented some striking statistics about Hispanic Muslims, said Latino reversion to Islam is on the rise, simply "because it is the truth." Abdul-Samad Romero, who accepted Islam 22 years ago and founded the Islamic Institute in Granada, discussed the state of Islam in Spain. Dr. Umar Faruq AbdAllah, also, spoke of his experiences in Spain and encouraged everyone, especially Hispanics, to visit. "Da'wah in Spain has tremendous potential," he said. (For information about Islam among Latinos, visit [www.hispanicmuslims.com](http://www.hispanicmuslims.com) and [www.latin-odawah.org](http://www.latin-odawah.org)).

**SERVING COMMUNITY NEEDS.** "Health awareness is very low among the Asian population, with very little preventive action." Based on this concern, voiced by Naveed Akhtar, co-chair of the Health Fair Committee, ISNA ran a free, weekend-long health program geared at teaching Muslims about health issues. Akhtar, also, encouraged Muslims to learn how to stay healthy, pointing out that the "lifestyles we live here are very dormant, and we need to become more active."

The Matrimonial Referral Services fulfilled another vital community need. Among other things, they held a formal event at the convention, where single Muslims met with other singles, in an appropriate manner and setting, with the intentions of pursuing marriage. Basman Dahleh, vice-chair of the Matrimonial Services, chose to serve on the committee because he understands the challenge and the need for such a service in the community. "Traditionally, immigrant Muslim families seek a spouse for their children by inquiring within their circle of confidants that include extended family members and close friends," said Dahleh. "For most families [in America] this process is not nearly sufficient to aide [young Muslims] in pursuit of marriage." Matrimonial Referral Services has tried various methods to match their services with the needs of single Muslims, said chairperson Tasneem Qadeer; this year, one session was

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clockwise from bottom: Selecting books in the Bazaar; The Friday sermon; Dr. M. Munir Chaudry, IFANCA; Imam Mohamed Magid Ali, ADAMS; ISNA President Dr. Muhammad Nur Abdullah with Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, right, and Dr. Ihsan Bagby; Shaykh Hamza Yusuf delivers another inspiring lecture; Native Deen inspire with a beat.

limited to ages 26 and younger; another session for 27 and older; and the third session, on Sunday, was open to all ages.

**ENCOURAGING YOUTH.** "One," said Mohammed Abdul Hai, director of the Islamic Center of Chicago, when asked how many girls participated in ISNA's Fourth Annual Qirat Competition. Samia Mubarak was the only girl out of the 32 final contestants. The criteria for judging were recitation/memorization and *tajwid*; seventy points were allotted to the prior category and thirty to the latter. Mohammad N. Sha-reef, the competition organizer, stressed the aim and necessity of the competition. "We have to keep Qur'an on our minds and the minds of the youth. By having these competitions and giving a cash incentive, we can encourage people to memorize the Qur'an and encourage the young *hafiz* to keep their memory intact so they will be ready to lead Taraweeh prayers." In the complete memorization category, Zaid Shelia placed first, Ammar Haq placed second, and Ahmed Khorshid placed third. In the 15 juz category, Syed Sadad Ali placed first, Ayub Mohiuddin was second, and Hisham Mohammad Dawood was third. In the 5 Juz category, Afif Khaja placed first, Akram Rajab was second, and Fawad Fitter was third. Next year, the organizers hope to have pre-registration so that more people can participate thereby making the competition an even larger success.

**SAVING CIVIL RIGHTS.** The Bush Administration's assault on civil rights has compelled Muslims to act. In the session entitled The PATRIOT Act in Action, CAIR attorney, Khurram Wahhid, explained how the Act gives controversial new powers to the government, jeopardizing specific levels of privacy. This act includes a "sneak-and-peak" provision that permits law enforcement officers to search an individual's premises without the individual's knowledge. This Act has not completely taken away rights, but rather, has simply made it more difficult for Muslims to enforce their rights, Wahhid explained. He declared, "The USA PATRIOT Act has dented our constitution, but, instead of living in silence about certain accusations, assert your rights. The only one that you should fear is Allah."

Joshua Salaam of CAIR in Washington, D.C. stressed the importance of reporting

any injustices that may have occurred, whether it was being restricted from an airplane or being fired from a job. Every report gives the Muslim community more information and supports the validity of discrimination claims, he stated. Salaam emphasized the need to help, not only family and friends, but, also, others going through the same situation; "it's a human disease that you never get involved in anything until it happens to you."

Muslim Americans realized, even before the September 11th attacks and the crackdown that followed, that they had made a mistake in 2000 with first unified endorsement in a presidential race of George W. Bush. At the convention, they resolved to register one million Muslim voters and to make civil rights a top issue in any future endorsement of a presidential candidate.

## "RELIGION IS NOT ABOUT RITUALISM. RELIGION IS ABOUT KINDNESS... ABOUT CHARITY." — FORMER ISNA PRESIDENT DR. MUZAMMIL SIDDIQI.

"A defining moment of Islam in America is approaching," said Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a civil rights group based in Washington. "We cannot surrender our future and our destiny to hate in this country." Agha K. Saeed, head of the Muslim American Congress, led the crowd in a chant: "I am an American, I am a Muslim and I vote."

**COPING WITH DIFFICULTIES.** The question of being "Steadfast in Difficult Times" was discussed by Majd Kam-Almaz, from the International Institute for Psycho-Social

Development in Virginia, and Hamdy ElSawaf, executive director, Islamic Center of Minnesota. Dr. Abdul Basit served as moderator. Kam-Almaz, who has traveled to Bosnia and Kosovo, pointed out, "It's not stress that is the problem, but it is how we respond. For when Allah loves a servant, He will challenge him to his ability."

El-Sawaf stated that the only way to survive these ordeals is through iman, which "is not a wishful thing, but takes work." He added that "salah is the best stress management" because it integrates a kind of meditation and reminder and, at the

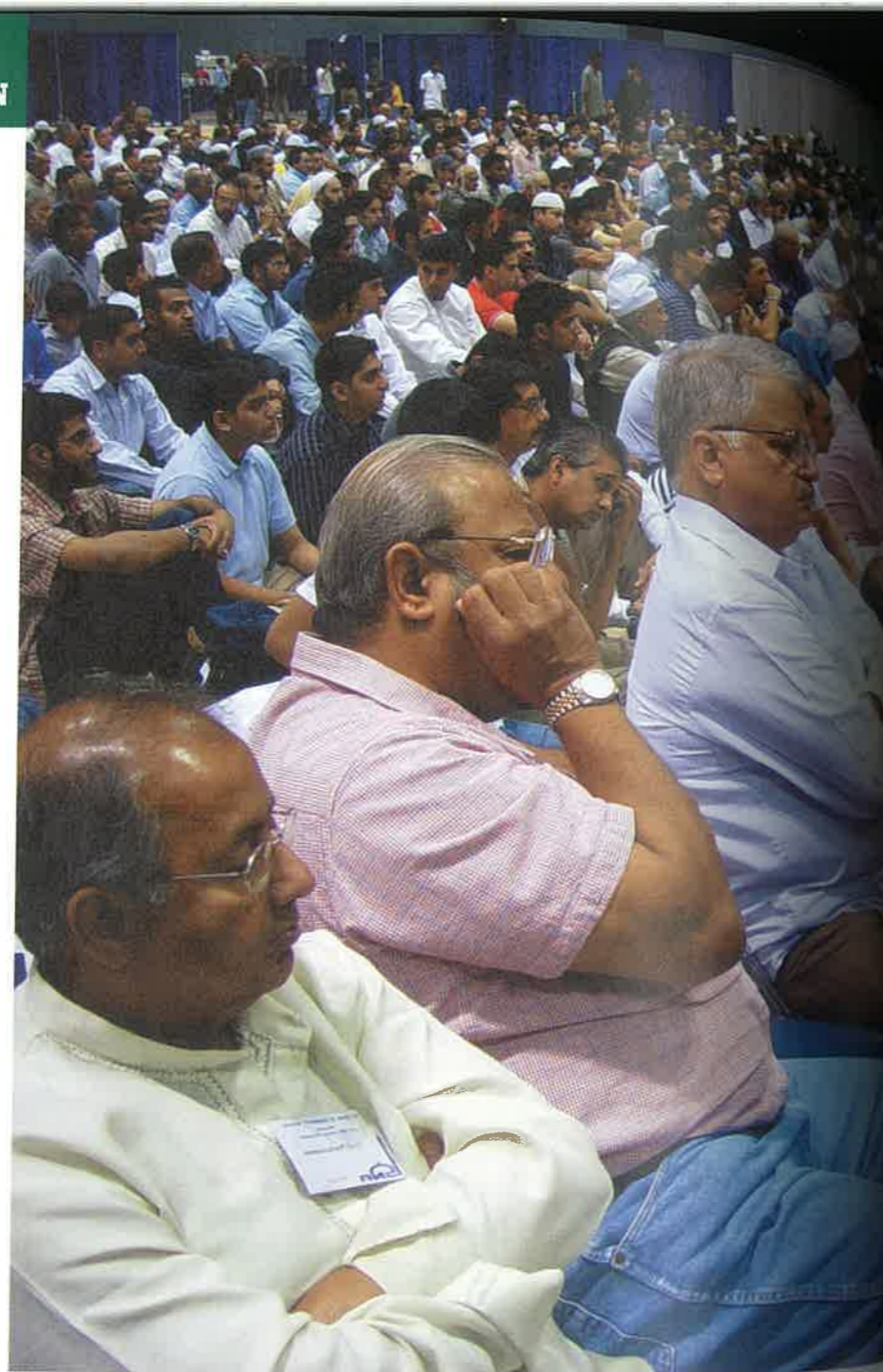
same time, places things in perspective and channels anger.

**MUSLIM MINORITIES AROUND THE WORLD.** Journalist Allison Weir, addressing the panel on "Islamic & Christian Perspectives on Middle East," stressed the need for change in American attitudes toward Zionist atrocities. The average American remains uninformed about the deaths in the Middle East because others do not tell them, she said. Weir, who traveled to Palestine to discover the other side of the news, said, "In the first six months of the first Intifada, they [the media] had omitted the deaths of 88 Palestinian children." Israel, said Weir, shoots and beats journalists all the time. The necessity is to awaken the "sleeping giant"—the American public—and expose the truth, she stressed. Expanding on these ideas, Mustafa Abu Sway spoke of the relationship between the Israelis and Palestinians. He said, "Not even in your wildest imagination would you know the steps they [Israelis] take to make life difficult for us." Another panel focused on "Kashmir: The Gateway to South Asian Peace and Prosperity."

Dr. Ayyub Thukkar, president of the World Kashmiri Freedom Movement, said the Kashmiri movement appears as a Hindu-Muslim struggle, but activists maintain that the issue of Kashmir is one of nationalism, not religion, since most Kashmiris, if given a choice, would choose total independence. Edward Hasbrouk, author of the *Practical Nomad* travel book series, explained that this, however, does not make the Kashmiri struggle a secessionist movement since it has never been

part of an established nation. Many Americans, he said, who consider themselves as part of the peace movement, do not concern themselves with the Kashmiri issue as they equate it with stereotypical Islamic fundamentalism. Further, Americans draw no distinction between India and South Asia, and thus have trouble understanding any anti-India sentiment in the region. In order to increase American support for the Kashmiri cause, it is necessary to educate the public with unpropagandized, citizen journalism.

**ATTAINING SERENITY.** Imam Mohamed Magid Ali and Daoud Nassimi of the All-Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) spoke about reaching a state of prayer in which the benefit of worship is maximized. Dr. Muhammad Nur Abdullah added, "Our ultimate goal is worshipping Allah and



obeying his commands." He explained that our *ibadah* should please Allah, not us. Allah sent down the *wahi* to teach us how to do *ibadah* properly. Our *nafs* has a choice between obedience and disobedience, between *taqwah* and *fujul*. We can train and develop our *nafs* to obey Allah, or we can be reluctant; it is our choice, our jihad. As humans, we struggle, and our *nafs* is divided between right and wrong. The five *salawat* train us and bring us closer to Allah and the right path. Former ISNA President Dr. Muzamil Siddiqui stated that there are two aspects of development: developing your own self and developing your soul. Prophet Muhammad said, "If the heart is good, everything will be good." Dr. Siddiqui said the heart is the "seat of the soul," our "spirit."

**CARING FOR EDUCATION.** The panel on "Building Islamic Schools in Your Community" attracted record attendance. Dr. Abdalla Idris Ali, Dr. Yasmeen Qadri, Dr. Safaa Zarzour, and Yusuf Islam addressed issues related to Islamic education. It was stated that families in North America are turning to the Islamic school as an answer to their differences with public schools. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly vital to build and develop competitive Islamic schools to meet the demand. The speakers stressed the integration of regular subjects with Islamic studies.

The session entitled "Is Our Character Development Curriculum Succeeding?" brought together Dr. Abdullah Idris Ali, a member of the board of trustees of the Islamic Teaching Center and a keynote speaker, Yusuf Islam and Edriss Khamissa. Dr. Ali, who acknowledged deficiencies, stressed the necessity of improving the character development curriculum within the Islamic school system.

IBERR, the Islamic Board of Educational Research and Resources ([www.iberr.com](http://www.iberr.com)), is headed by Yusuf Islam who explained that "in the West, we are struggling against an environment [with] no perception of Islamic culture and values." Furthermore, many schools are inclined to compete with others and isolate themselves. IBERR is striving to break these barriers and unite schools through the flow of ideas and development of textbooks. ▶

## Understanding Among All

"It was a banquet where there was actually more talk than food," remarked IS-

NA Secretary General Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, referring to the 6th Annual ISNA Interfaith Unity Banquet. "We need more occasions where people of different faiths can come together and talk, talk, talk."

Tom Whittle, senior editor of Freedom Magazine, stated that truly

Christians, as well as Christians from other traditions, whose words and deeds are different than those often reported in the media. We desire understanding, community and common cause."

Rev. John L. McCullough, executive director of Church World Service, who could not attend, but sent a message, noted

that "we all seek to glorify God and to fulfill God's will in this country and the world."

Clifton Kirkpatrick of the Presbyterian Church USA, reminded, "Truly, we are at a moment in history when persons from different faith traditions must find ways to give witness to our shared human destiny and common concerns."

Interfaith work is central to ISNA, and the dinner was just one such session at the convention.

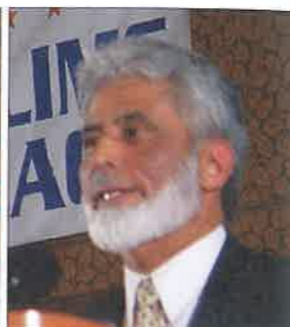
Another session discussed models of interfaith dialogue. In this session, Dr. Farouque Khan, Mohamad Rajabally, and Dr. Hussain Nagamia used their personal experiences to demonstrate different approaches. They offered examples of community successes, such as the Fremont, CA community where they cooperated with a synagogue and were able to construct an extremely large mosque that now serves the Fremont area. It became clear by the end of the session, that there exist many ways of communicating and interacting with other faiths, and that one should utilize the method that fits their community's specific scenario and situation. ■

"freedom-loving" people can overcome the "hatred and venom" the world holds against others. Other faiths are joining hands with Muslims to battle drugs and other problems that penetrate all faiths and societies. Whittle believes that conflicts can be resolved by interfaith groups coming together to defeat social decay; "religions can, once again, walk in harmony. Let us walk together, let us talk together, let us make a difference," he said.

Reverend Susan Taylor, emphasizing the importance of working together, cautioned, "Evil and men will often try to divide us, but if we stand together, united, under God, we will win." To better ourselves and our communities, "each individual must decide to be great and for his society to be great." We must work hard to remove hate and evil from this world, for "happiness and strength endure only in the absence of hate."

Dr. Daniel Vestal, coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship offered his regrets about the Islamophobic statements issued by some Baptists and assured that "there are other Baptist

from left: Bishop Edwin Conway, Rev. Robert Reynolds, and Dr. Syeed joined speakers of others faiths to stress unity



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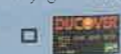
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The panel on "Funding College Education" stressed that it is vital for Muslims to be serious about saving for college, since Islam places great emphasis on education. Safaa Zarzour, Suhaib Quadri, and Omar Hayder introduced various funding avenues, responded to questions, and reminded the audience that, no matter how old a child is, there are avenues by which a parent can get involved and save some money before the child is ready to enter college.

Youth training experts, Ekram Beshir and his wife Dr. Rida Beshir, shared their experiences and advice on raising children with the proper Islamic values. Dr. Beshir related values that are critical in the life of a child, including the love of Allah and the acceptance and appreciation of His guidance. It is very important to instill this value at an early age because it will grow inside the child, and children will, thereby, learn to differentiate between right and wrong. The Beshirs reminded that real happiness is living within the boundaries of Islam without being isolated; "we shouldn't raise children that are completely isolated from or

affected by the society. Our children should have both worlds, but should contribute positively to the community."

**T**he panel on "Muslims in the Media" brought together Tariq Jalil, an NBC producer; Rashid Gazi, founder of a sports entertainment agency; Michael Wolfe and Alex Kronemar, the directors and producers of PBS's "Mohammed: Legacy of a Prophet"; Geneive Abdo, *Chicago Tribune* religion reporter; and Rumana Hussain, a reporter for the *Chicago Sun Times*. Ms. Hussain said that she sees a change occurring in the news in that there exist a new breed of journalists that are more knowledgeable about Islam. Each of the panelists encouraged the audience to get involved in the media.

CAIR conducted a panel on "Setting Up a Media Watchdog" where speakers, Rabiah Ahmed, Ibrahim Hooper, and Helal Omaira dealt with how the individual can make an impact on how Islam is perceived and displayed in their local media. The "watchdog" would involve the community and help it effectively com-

municate with the local media. The community, or an appointed monitor, would look for factual errors, unbalanced coverage, editorializing of new stories, and headlines that do not reflect the story or reality. In addition the person, or the Muslim community, that is acting as the watchdog, must be able to effectively relate their concerns to the media. It was stressed that the "watchdog" idea does not aim to alienate, but to communicate and inform.

In a workshop, Ameena Jandali, Salam Al-Marayati, Umar Faruq Abdallah, and Jamal Badawi offered their advice on how to deal with questions about Islam. They talked about the question of Islam advocating violence, jihad, the Prophet's life, and slavery. The workshop helped people learn effective ways to respond to difficult questions asked by non-Muslims. Jandali advised, "When asked a question about the religion, try to speak at that person's level. Compare Islam to other known religions. Try to relate to the person. A key point is to try and differentiate religion from culture. Do acknowledge that Muslims as all other humans make mistakes. Also, do not preach. Don't try to impose Islam, teach



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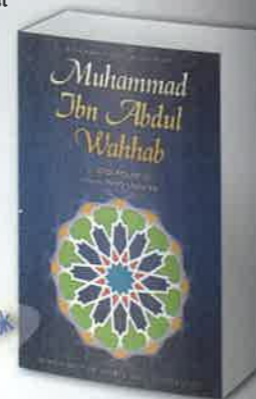
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about it. Don't get too emotional, stay rational and give logical answers. Lastly, don't be afraid to say you don't know. Try to win the heart not the argument." Al-Marayati made three points, "Answers should be succinct, be pithy, and short answers are better." He added that there are four areas we need to win over/impact: attention, respect, mind, and heart. He, also, said, "We need to make it clear that we are proud to be Muslims today on this earth." Badawi explained how to explain misconceptions about the term jihad.

**POLITICAL ACTIVISM.** Former U.S. Senator Carol Moseley Braun, a democratic presidential candidate, addressed the convention and compared the civil liberties struggle of Muslim Americans today to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. She reminded, "The Islamic community today is faced with a new version of an old struggle. My late mother used to say, it doesn't matter whether you came to this country on the Mayflower or on a slave ship, through Ellis Island or the Rio Grande. We're all in the same boat now." Another Democratic candidate Rep. Kucinich (D-OH), also, addressed the convention, severely berating the Bush administration for the ill-conceived attack on Iraq.

Dr. Louay Safi addressed the session "Need for Islamic Democracies" and stated, "The only way to support democracy is to make sure that Islam is the basis for that democracy." Dr. Badawi, Dr. Rafik Beekun, and Dr. Jamal Barzinji, also, spoke on this issue and discussed leadership through emulation of the example of Prophet Muhammad. Dr. Badawi reminded the audience, "Not only did he do the right things, he did the right things rightly," and added, "People, not systems, will be able to challenge the status quo."

**FIRSTS IN THE ARTS.** Another subject of growing interest is the emphasis on developing, creating, and celebrating Muslim art. In addition to the art exhibit and a joint ISNA-MSA program organizing different creative forces, ranging from hip-hop to calligraphy, ISNA held its 2nd Annual Film Festival.

This year was the first time ISNA held an open, nationwide call for artists to submit their work. Submissions included Arabic calligraphy; abstract paintings; digital photography; watercolor on paper; pen and ink mixed with various media; and even some original comic strips. "The colors caught my eye first, then the Islamic calligraphy," said Yasmeen Khan, a conference attendee from Long Island, NY. One featured artist, Huda Totonji, a graduate student at George Mason University,

displayed various pieces of art that not only express her devotion to Islam, but are, also, expressions of being a Muslim woman. She continues a glorious tradition of Muslims who have long been known for their artistic expression.

The film festival, entitled "In Our Voices," celebrated many different genres of films, from professional documentaries such as PBS's "Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet" to "Perils of Prayer," a five-minute short film by students from the University of Dallas. Though documentaries were the majority, there were a few films submitted in the fiction category. The viewers and filmmakers had the opportunity to interact with one another

### "WHAT THIS GENERATION DOES WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE FUTURE OF MUSLIMS IN AMERICA." —DR. ABD ALHAKIM JACKSON

in an exchange of ideas and experiences. "It bridges the gaps," said Shaziya Siddiqui, an attendee at the Film Festival, about the importance of art in Islam. Maneeza Iqbal of Kansas City, KS, also, found the film festival very interesting.

For the first time this year, ISNA dedicated two and a half hours solely to entertainment. The session featured a comedian, hip-hop groups, spoken word poetry, and acapella singing. Stand-up artist Azhar Usman delighted his fans with jibes, such as renaming the Muslim Students' Association to Matrimonial Students' Association. "I think it's important that Muslims express themselves and that ISNA is providing a forum for them to do this. It shows the importance of entertainment. They gave a block of time to them," said Naziya Hasan, who attended the entertainment session. The entertainment session, also, allowed fans of MYNA raps to go back in time and hear Sons of the Crescent and Native Deen. Many audience members who had grown up listening to the groups sang along with the lyrics. Sami Yusuf got the crowd involved by clapping while he sang "Meditation."

"Expressions of Faith," the Islamic arts discussion panel was addressed by filmmaker Zarqa Nawaz who screened two of her films, "BBQ Muslims" and "Death Threat", that explore, with a satirical sense of humor, issues pertinent to the Muslim community. Jorge "Fabel" Pabon, vice president of the Rock Steady Crew, spoke about his involvement with dance and hip-hop. Pabon addressed questions from the audience about how he balances what he does with Islamic values.

This session brought up a lot of concerns from those who want to pursue arts

and may feel that it is still not acceptable within the Muslim community. The panelists all agreed that to make a decent living in any form of artwork, it depends on how far you can go in your studies.

**SHOP TALK.** The session "Opening Your Own Door: Entrepreneurialism for Muslims" included addresses by Aymen Toor, founder of CresSoft Inc.; and Omar Amanat, founder of TradeScape and president of Bridges TV, a new television network for Muslims. Quoting Michael Milkin of the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business, Amanat explained "All of life is sales." How you present your products and opportunities, ultimately decides

your success or lack thereof. Entrepreneurship opportunities are everywhere, so be diligent and aware, and always remember, "Salesmanship is the essence of entrepreneurialism." Those who are interested in entrepreneurial support, he said, can visit the Organization of Pakistani Entrepreneurs of North America's (OPEN) website ([www.open-us.org](http://www.open-us.org)), which, despite its name, is open to all Muslims.

The ISNA Convention Bazaar provided avenues of sprouting new friendships and business ties. Bazaar coordinator Baharat Saleem said this year's the bazaar had more than 500 booths, offering from DVDs to books, and jewelry to financial services, besides booths of nonprofit organizations.

ISNA healthcare services had three booths in the Bazaar, offering services such as blood pressure and cholesterol checks, blood donations, and screening tests. ■

**CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS REPORT INCLUDE:** Sohail Sultan, 2003 chair ISNA Convention Reporters Committee; Nashiah Ahmad, a graduate student in Journalism, former founding chair of the Committee (2002); Umair Abdul-Qadeer; Salman Aftab, Midwest correspondent, Afghan News Network, Chicago; Umer Ahmed, a vice president at Bank of America Global and Corporate Investment Banking in Chicago; Sadat Almoshelli, Benedictine University; Sumerah Rahim Bakhshi, University of Chicago; Isra Bhatti, University of Chicago; Sana Gafoor, University of Illinois, Chicago; Sehar Gafoor, senior at Lincoln Park High School in Chicago; Amrien Ghouse, junior at Neuqua Valley High School; Asim Iftikhar, a graduate of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Zuha Irfan, junior at Islamic Foundation School; Naz Kazi, Northwestern University; Nadia Malik, graduate of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Mariam Mohiuddin, Austin (TX) American-Statesman; Julia Salameh, University of Illinois, Chicago; Mariam Sobh, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Sara Suleiman, Naperville Central High School; Maryah Qureshi, University of Chicago; Baseer Tajuddin, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Ali Irfan, Photographer; and Omar Syed.

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# THE NEW MSA EMPOWERED TO SERVE STUDENTS



BY SABRINA ENAYATULLA

(from left) MSA LEADERS REACH OUT TO MEMBERSHIP: Dr. Salem Omeish, a former president, addresses a meeting. Abdullah Adhami addresses the 1997 East Zone Conference. Mohammad Islam, west Zone representative (1996). Former ISNA President Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi addresses a West Zone conference. Asad Siddiqui mans the MSA booth at the 1996 national conference.

MSA STORY, FINAL IN A SERIES OF FOUR PARTS  
IN THE EARLY 60s AND 70s, A generation of Muslims came to the US in search of a brighter future. When they arrived, they realized that there was something missing from this picture perfect American Dream; they realized that one of their most valuable assets had been left behind. These young immigrants who came from a variety of places including Iraq, Iran, India, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Pakistan, not only left behind their homelands, but, also, their close-

knit families. Their families and the larger Muslim communities seemed to be a lifetime away. This shared sentiment, coupled with the bond of belief, led the immigrant, Muslim students to yearn for the establishment of an organization that would foster unity and a sense of identity, as well as facilitate networking, campus awareness, and interfaith dialogue. Thus, the Muslim Student Association of the US and Canada was born, and a new breed of Muslim student leaders emerged, leaders who now had a voice to encourage the development

of community on campus, and in the larger society.

Ghulam Nabi Fai, then a graduate student at Temple University, served as vice president in the original MSA; he later became the first president of the post-ISNA MSA, now identified as MSA National. He served as president for two terms between 1985-1989, and he is currently the executive director of the Washington-based Kashmiri American Council (KAC).

Dr. Fai remembers that when he took charge of MSA in 1985, there were four major Muslim organizations in North America-ISNA; the New York City-based Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA); the Chicago-based Muslim American Community led by Imam Warith Deen Muhammad; and the Atlanta, GA-based Islamic Community led by Imam Jamil al-Amin. "None of these organizations, however, catered to the needs of the students. What they needed was an organization formed by them, for them and the many others who would come after." Dr. Fai explains, "The MSA was established to provide, and make sure that there was, an identity for Muslim students in America. There was a need to preserve a lot of what the first migrating students brought with

them. We also needed a dialogue between faiths because most college students are open-minded it was that much easier."

When Dr. Fai became president of MSA, the organization was in transition; it had lost some of its original momentum, but its mission remained clear. The mission was to be a campus run organization that would serve as a forum in which Muslim students would feel comfortable and be able to share their ways of life with each other. The MSA, also, became an arena for training in leadership skills; it engaged younger students and trained them for future leadership positions on campus, as well as in the larger Muslim community.

**THE EMERGENCE OF ISNA, WITH ITS FOCUS ON THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES AND PROFESSIONALS, ALLOWED THE MSA TO WORK ENTIRELY FOR STUDENTS.**

Mahmoud Harmoush who served as president of MSA at the University of California, Polytechnic Institute (Cal-Poly) from 1990-1992, prior to his MSA National presidency, recalls some of the organization's main focuses; "there were three main things that the MSA did to serve college students. It recruited members to serve the MSA and its chapters. Members were required to distribute Islamic material and get involved in training programs, and provide leadership to the campus and campus activities. They were also responsible for securing financial resources."

Diversity and outreach became hallmarks of MSA. Activities such as Islamic Awareness Week displayed the various ethnic backgrounds and cultures of the Muslim students and introduced non-Muslim students to Islam. Dr. Fai notes that, by the mid 70s, interfaith dialogues and relations were prominent on campuses nationwide; the MSA was in the forefront of this dialogue and was actively working to share Islam with others.

Dr. Mohamed Salem Omeish, who first served as vice president of the MSA at George Washington University and, then, as president of MSA National (1995-1998) says that one of his, and MSA's,

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major accomplishments was the establishment of an executive board in which both men and women participated in decision-making; "men and women had been separate when it came to the executive board. I felt that it was time that the sisters had an equal say in the running of the MSA." "Important issues were often times looked at by the men, rather than the women. I wanted to make sure that the sisters had the opportunity to sit in the executive committee," he recalls.

As the MSA progressed, both socially and nationally, the organizational structure grew stronger. Simultaneously, the original members grew older. Although MSA had played a crucial role in their lives as students, their lifestyles were changing. Most of them had completed Masters and Doctoral degrees. Many of them got married, settled down and began raising families. MSA, which was originally formed solely for immigrant students, had successfully fulfilled its purpose. Nevertheless, the adult Muslims had new and different needs. The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) was established, and it appealed to and was able to cater to the needs of the adult Muslims. "The reason that members of the MSA felt it was necessary to expand

and become members of an established ISNA was because they were now professionals," Dr. Fai explains. "When ISNA began, the idea wasn't to turn MSA into ISNA because they were both extremely valid. It was just that the previous members of MSA grew up. Getting married, starting families and careers, they were facing different life issues outside of their college communities," Dr. Omeish clarifies.

ISNA's main priority and objective was to connect the community nationally and interpersonally. Helping families, children, schools and social groups in North America was primary. "ISNA became an Islamic solution helping communities with their affairs, education, political, and religious ideas. It was a constituency that MSA just couldn't reach. They became like an umbrella organization for other Muslim organizations," describes Dr. Omeish. "We had MCA, which wanted to unite communities, but it didn't fly for long. MSA was focused for college campuses and then there was ISNA, which assumed its role and took its focus and resources and geared it toward diversity in the community." ISNA gained the spotlight due to its professional membership, experienced leadership and quest for a

strong and unified Muslim community.

Although the goals of both organizations were still the same, the approaches were different. ISNA began to focus on communities, mosques and schools, whereas MSA continued to focus on helping and guiding students throughout their time on campus. ISNA and MSA catered to two different audiences, yet each played an important role. Harmoush, currently an imam and the director of Temecula Valley in Southern CA, explains that the establishment of ISNA didn't take anything away from the ultimate purpose of the MSA. "ISNA became the result of an evolution." He said, "People graduated, started families, and we needed a community organization, not one only for our college days. ISNA meant the birth of leaders and thinkers, and the MSA wasn't meant to be left behind, it was just a transition." Dr. Ahmed Totonji, among the pioneers of the MSA, agrees and says that the emergence of ISNA, with its focus on the needs of communities and professionals, allowed the MSA to work entirely for students. It allowed the MSA to fulfill its three major roles: providing and nurturing an Islamic environment for its members; enriching each other in knowl-

edge through continuous interaction with other Muslims; and training Muslims to share Islam with others.

The transition from MSA to ISNA was much needed, but not easy. "In a sense, it was like a daughter giving birth to a mother and then being left an orphan for a few years," Dr. Fai says. But the vision and mission of MSA, he adds, "never changed." Harmoush recognizes that "ISNA became slightly more relevant for the time, and there was more effort from different administrations. MSA was always in necessity for the younger generation." The original members of MSA, now active members of ISNA, never doubted that MSA would return full force; "MSA never lost its validity...we always knew it was needed," Harmoush adds.

In 1985, there was an extreme need for a Muslim student run organization at the regional level, if not the national level. So Dr. Fai and his team began a series of train-

**ISNA GAINED THE SPOTLIGHT DUE TO ITS PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP, EXPERIENCE, LEADERSHIP AND QUEST FOR A STRONG AND UNIFIED MUSLIM COMMUNITY.**

ing programs "More than a hundred people came to the first training project in New Jersey," he recalled. "The results were great." Funding, office space, and attention from the local press were only a few of the perks of the efforts in New Jersey. Such leadership training has always been an integral part of the MSA's growth. One result of the leadership program was the development and publication of the *Training Guide for Islamic Workers* by Hisham Altalib. Today, this publication has been translated into 25 languages and is not only being used in North America, but, also, in many Muslim countries worldwide. This is only one example of North American Islamic literature being exported to the rest of the Muslim world.

Dr. Fai, also, remembers his efforts to help the tiny MSA chapter at Temple stand tall once again. "I contacted and met with three or four MSA former presidents and spent days trying to gain some of their wisdom and experience. Along with what I knew, I knew we had to re-energize the terms for Muslim students." In 1987, they started on the mission. They focused on the special selection of the topics and encouraged interfaith dialogue. "We approached topics relevant to students of the time." Dr. Fai says. "Every-

thing from the use and abuse of cocaine to American family life." They, also, pursued involvement with the student government. A Muslim student was running for the position of vice president, and MSA members actively supported her. This strategy of approaching the student body was a winning one.

By the early 90's, the MSA was on its way back into the college student's life, but resources and funding were minimal. "MSA students and leaders lost some of their trained leadership and in a way, it was time for the MSA to start all over again," Dr. Fai says. "We started getting a lot of help because everyone had the same dream. We wanted the MSA to flourish." Dr. Omeish, who currently works for a nonprofit organization and is a volunteer chaplain at George Washington University, recalls the MSA being located in the ISNA headquarters in Indiana. "When I first came to work with the MSA in 1991, we were struggling to establish a national headquarters. It was finally established in Washington, DC, signaling an independent entity, but aligned with ISNA."

Between 1991-1993, the MSA began pushing for unification in order to provide students with direction, opportunity and the ability to take ownership in the organization. Armed with a brand new generation of leaders, the new MSA became active again. "When MSA became active once again, it came back with a restructured administration." Harmoush says. "It was very important to accommodate Muslim students in a higher level organization. They needed to share activities at universities and discuss both local and national problems at large. Having an organization like the MSA is very emotional, personal and spiritual for student's daily lives as Muslims."

Today's MSA is the product of extreme determination and focus. Expanding the MSA and providing for the needs of Muslim students remains the foundation. Altaf Husain, the immediate past president and a doctoral student at Howard University, shared some short-term goals he has for students and the association as a whole. "We want to facilitate the establishment of MSA chapters, affiliate and sustain affiliation of MSA chapters and promote development of MSA councils." He says, "We are, also, coordinating Islam Awareness events such as the Ramadan fast-a-thon and the upcoming national food collection drive." They are hoping for a full-time office in the future, but this vision will need more than just an empty building. "We need a \$1,000,000 endowment fund and membership of at least 100,000 Muslim students," he said, adding with a smile, "We also have to complete a 4-year curriculum for Islamic study circles!" The MSA would,

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also, like to train MSA alumni to become trainers for the MSA National and to develop an MSA alumni network. Setting such high goals and working to achieve them seems like a daunting task, but much of the challenge comes from the diversity of the students. "Muslim students come to college with diverse backgrounds and levels of commitment to Islamic work," Husain explained. Since each student is different, Husain says, they may face different obstacles and stresses. It is important to recognize and acknowledge this. "Some students may often experience a 'culture shock' upon discovering for the first time the Islamic lifestyle of other Muslim students. Regular participation in MSA activities helps to lessen the shock and over time, insha' Allah, helps the person become comfortable living the Islamic lifestyle."

One of the goals that has been passed onto ISNA and that the MSA has continued to pursue with full dedication is interfaith dialogue. Having worked previously with only the Abrahamic religions, Christianity and Judaism, they have expanded their horizons and are now dialoging between many other faiths. "Interfaith dialogue is extremely important. Now, this dialogue has further spread and Muslims

are dealing with all religions, which is a great improvement," Dr. Omeish reminds.

This is not the only change. Today, the MSA is enlarging its focus. Husain points out, "The original MSA, even until the mid-1990s, encouraged chapters to focus on students who chose to participate in the MSA, helping them to survive as Muslims on campus. MSA National today maintains a dual focus on the well being of the individual Muslim student, as well as the chapter as an organization. The goal is to help the Muslim student, whether he or she is involved in the MSA or not, to thrive as a Muslim student on campus. MSA National promotes da'wah to Muslims as well as students, faculty and staff of other faiths." He sees this as important because one student may seek involvement in the MSA, while another "approaches the MSA with

ambivalence and is not likely to participate in MSA activities unless a personal invitation is extended to him or her from a trusted friend or colleague."

While MSA National thrives as an independent national student body, it also serves as an active affiliate of ISNA, enjoying the benefits of ISNA resources, such as the convention and the professionals. Without this, colleges and universities nationwide would miss out on a lot. Husain encourages students to participate in ISNA conventions, but reminds that the MSA gives students a special opportunity that they will not experience elsewhere. "Students should still attend conferences, but the MSA chapter provides many more frequent, interactive opportunities for small-group discussions to help the student clarify aspects of the religion as well as the Islamic lifestyle. Conferences provide an opportunity to become motivated about Islam and Muslims, to socialize with family and friends and other Muslims, and to network with other Muslims," stresses Husain.

Since the MSA reemerged in the mid-1990s, it has been focused on addressing relevant issues that students face today. "As an organization we are responsive to the

student's needs, and reform-oriented not only at the organizational level but also at the individual level," says Husain. This relevance has led to the restoration of confidence of young Muslims. The thing Husain sees as the MSA's greatest accomplishment since its rebirth. "MSA National is a viable, thriving, grassroots organization that is relevant, responsive and reform-oriented. Our total number of affiliates has risen from between 60-75 to 175."

With all of the goals MSA has set, its main objective, still, remains to work with organizations that serve young Muslims in North America. "One of our organizational goals is to foster greater cooperation and collaboration between MSA National and organizations whose mission in whole or in part is to serve Muslim youth," Husain adds. "MSA National is, also, the training ground for Islamically-inclined Muslim youth who will insha' Allah comprise a majority of tomorrow's community." MSA would like to educate and empower students to be able to face any issues concerning Muslim Americans. "We want to mobilize Muslim students to deal with both domestic and international issues of concern to the Muslim community and society at large," states Husain, adding, "MSA National also promotes collaboration with organizations whose primary focus is on social justice issues, but whose members are students of other faiths."

Two separate generations, with the same vision, contributed to the birth and growth of MSA. Although each took a different approach, the dream of a place where Muslim Americans could share and express their identities never changed. "The time factor is what makes the old MSA different from the new one," Dr. Fai says. "When people from my generation first came to the United States or Canada, we had one foot in this soil and one foot back home. The new MSA is different. It is now in the hands of American and Canadian born Muslims—not only children of foreign-born parents, but, also, first and second-generation reverts to Islam. They are second-generation kids who have different priorities and are leading Muslims not as foreigners, but as Americans and Canadians. I see a better tomorrow, a better future with MSA in the hands of these leaders. They have national priorities, and this is their home. Muslim Americans today are no different than the people who run the White House or who work in the Justice Department. This is a very healthy trend."

The MSA National holds its annual conference in conjunction with the ISNA Convention. It maintains a website, [www.msanational.org](http://www.msanational.org), that facilitates communication among members and chapters. It, also, publishes a newsletter. ■

Tabrina Enayatullah is a sophomore at Virginia Wesleyan University.

**SINCE THE MSA REEMERGED IN THE MID-1990S, IT HAS BEEN FOCUSED ON ADDRESSING ISSUES THAT STUDENTS FACE TODAY.**

## RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

The choice for a Muslim collegian is to find an empty classroom in which to pray, survive on tuna and eggs, turn to a non-Muslim counselor in times of distress, or seek some degree of religious accommodation. A Muslim student's college years are shaped by a variety of factors, and an environment conducive to living Islam enriches the experience. Establishing certain religious accommodations eases many daily struggles.

Over the years, MSAs have made great strides in getting college and university administrations to address their members' needs. To date, there are more than 90 Muslim prayer rooms, 15 halal food programs, and a handful of Muslim housing complexes and Muslim imams on North American campuses. The students are guided by Prophet Muhammad's (*salla Allah 'alayhi wa sallam*) guid-

ance: "He who finds relief for someone who is hard pressed, Allah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*) will make things easy for him in the Hereafter" (*Sahih Muslim*, Book 35, 6518).

As Muslim student populations grow, the struggle continues. In pilot surveys conducted during 2002, Muslim students prioritized various types of religious accommodation. The highest was the provision of prayer rooms, followed by curriculum development, Muslim imams/counselors, halal/zabihah food, funds for MSAs, Muslim housing, holidays, and athletic facilities.

Those working for religious accommodation encounter common challenges as they strive to make campuses more "Muslim-friendly." Among them are: ■ Identifying contacts. Regular MSA activities are not usually geared toward staff in facilities management, housing, or dining services. Before proposing certain changes to

accommodate a religious practice, they must navigate administrative hurdles to find the right contacts. As few colleges and universities have Muslim administrators who could liaise between students and administrators, the proposal might not make it to the right desk or might be given low priority.

■ Communicating needs. Once the proper contacts are identified, MSAs should know how to express their needs as Muslim students. A central challenge centers on the word *need* and convincing administrators that the proposed accommodation reflects a religious need, not a luxury.

■ Effective techniques. In the absence of communication networks and resources, MSAs may unknowingly use techniques that have failed repeatedly. For example, mass petitions tend to be ineffective. Similarly, legal arguments should be a sup-

plementary tool that is used only sparingly and as required.

■ Muslim student implementation. Once a religious accommodation is granted, success hinges on implementation and participation. MSAs must simultaneously sell the religious accommodation to both administrators and Muslim students. Additionally, the Muslim students who felt most committed to the cause could have graduated by the time the accommodation is granted. Some accommodations, such as halal food, are frequently granted on a trial basis. If the trial period fails in any way, the accommodation could be revoked. Reinstating it would involve convincing administrators that the situation has changed drastically.

Today, MSA National coordinates the religious accommodations issue through a chairperson ([rfchair@msa-national.org](mailto:rfchair@msa-national.org)).

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# From Conflict Resolution to Prevention

**BY NAJEEBA-SYEED-MILLER** — The field of conflict resolution spans a wide range of services and approaches. Some practitioners focus on intervention, which can include formal and informal mediation, arbitration, or some hybrid of these two types of intervention. Others focus on developing training and

educational curriculums to prevent the escalation of conflict before an intervention is necessary.

The Muslim community, ironically, has been unable to grasp the remarkable model of conflict prevention in their own history. Instead of focusing on the presently popular approaches, the focus of Muslim conflict resolution theorists and practitioners must be on developing a more preventive approach that draws on that historical model. The Muslim community needs to rethink certain methods of interaction that have become commonplace within various Muslim communities. There is a great need to study Prophet Muhammad's (*sallu Allahu 'alayhi wa, sallam*) sunnah and glean substantive examples of the preventive behavioral patterns that he exhibited.

Reflecting on the Prophet's interpersonal skills is a valuable, although under-appreciated way, of approaching his example. Even the most complex business litigation cases are often based on interpersonal interactions that caused misunderstandings, anger or bitterness. The power of interpersonal interactions holds true for everyone; human beings are constantly interacting with one another and interpreting each other's actions and words. If we are not deeply aware of how we may be perceived or perceive the actions of others,

we will be a walking *fitna*-producer. The reality is that if we are not cognizant of our effect on others, we will often hurt someone or create misunderstandings without even realizing it.

In one case, a misunderstanding emerged between two business partners. It became a community-wide financial dispute merely because of how fast one person spoke to the other. Partner A's English was quite limited, and his inability to articulate certain terms was interpreted by business partner B as a lack of understanding of their business agreement. Likewise, partner A found partner B to be imposing and loud because he consistently asked, "What do you mean by that" when he could not understand partner A's accent. If they had reflected upon how they were impacting and interpreting each other, their conflict would not have escalated to the point of litigation. When these misinterpretations were addressed in a mediation session, they gained a sense of clarity regarding their past dealings, and they repaired their business and personal relationship. If these misunderstandings had continued unabated, they may have never realized the option of resolution that lay in focusing on their personal interactions as the source of conflict, instead of the assumed source of conflict, i.e. the terms of their business agreement.

Prophet Muhammad did not resort to physical domination of others in order to secure his position as a leader; he lead through inspiration, not domination.

The following ten examples profoundly demonstrate the Prophet's conflict prevention skills.

## 1 Never raised his voice in interpersonal communication

This may seem like a deceptively simple skill. In the Qur'an, Allah reinforces the importance of volume control; Luqman tells his son, "be moderate in thy pace and lower thy voice, for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of a donkey." (31:19) Raising your voice when you are in the heat of an argument escalates conflicts; you lose your ability to remain calm and to make informed decisions regarding the situation. We lose the ability to utilize our *aql*, rational thought, a gift Allah has bestowed upon humans. This gift helps us to logically process a situation and take appropriate actions. Not raising one's voice is difficult; it takes discipline and control. If we always resort to yelling, the example we set for others and our own children is one of lack of control. Similarly, when mediating conflicts between married couples, one party often points out to how the other's screaming or yelling is threatening and obscuring the real issue about which they are talking. One couple, who made a decision not to ever yell at each other, when a dispute escalates, they remind each other

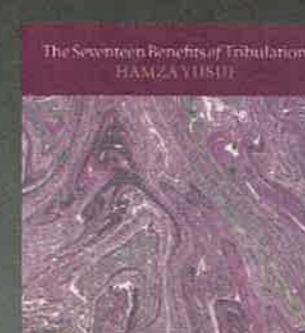
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of this promise. As a result, their disagreements are resolved amicably and far more quickly than other couples I have observed.

**2 Put agreements in writing**  
Even though not literate, the Prophet understood the incredible importance of putting things in writing, as exemplified in the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. The Qur'an, also, encourages this, especially in debt situations; "O you who believe! When you deal with each other in contracting a debt for a fixed time, then write it down; and let a scribe write it down between you with fairness..." (2:282) Many disputes are caused by oral agreements that are not recorded in writing, as people frequently, later, disagree over the terms of the agreement. This is particularly the case in cultures or communities that are close knit; people think they know each other and rely solely on handshakes to seal an agreement.

In one particular masjid dispute, feuding parties spent three years arguing over what they had agreed upon in an earlier arbitration process because agreements between them had never been recorded in writing. This skill can, also, be implemented in the classroom in Islamic schools. Using a process of dialogue in the class, you can establish rules of interaction upon which the whole class agrees. These rules should be written down and then posted in the classroom. The posting will serve as an explicit statement and reminder of the norms and the agreement; it will reinforce the idea of a mutually agreed upon set of behaviors, and it will provide students with a visual reference to consider before acting.

**3 His humor was never sarcastic or based on untruth**  
Our culture today is permeated with a sense of humor that is based on sarcasm and putting others down. It is nearly impossible to escape the pervasive notion that to be funny one must attack others. The Prophet did use humor, but never this type; there are numerous examples of the Prophet making jokes that were gentle in

nature and never at the expense of others. Some of the worst conflicts in Muslim communities come from jokes made about a particular ethnic community; frequently, serious consequences emerge when ethnic tensions arise between different groups within a masjid or school. In such conflicts, people often say, "I was just joking about the other guy. I don't mean all people from that group are that way, but it was just a joke. Why is he so sensitive?" Jokes about our culture or family can be lethal weapons; though they may be said innocently, the effect can be tremendous as such jokes attack our honor and identity, which are central and important to every human being.

**4 In personal interactions, the Prophet never raised his hand against another**  
Prophet Muhammad did not resort to physical domination of others in order to secure his position as a leader; he lead through inspiration, not domination. His companions followed out of love and a profound belief that his example was worthy of being emulated. Often in disputes, the threat of physical violence is naively seen as an option. If you lead your community or family by this means, you will not be a leader who positively changes and affects the situation around you, as this style of leadership creates a deep sense of bitterness and fear. It, also, impedes the learning process of those who surround a leader. If we do not create a safe environment in which to work with each other, we destroy mutual trust and lose the opportunity to learn from each other.


**5 When someone called the Prophet's name, he stopped and turned his whole body to face the person.**  
It is stated in our traditions that the dignity of a human being is in their face. Striking another person is their face is something Muslims abhor. The Prophet was keenly aware of this, and he acknowledged this sense of dignity by turning and facing people when he interacted with them. He would not just turn his head towards them, but rather his whole body. Disputes in both family and community situations often emerge when people do not

Even though not literate, the Prophet understood the incredible importance of putting things in writing, as exemplified in the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. The Qur'an, also, encourages this, especially in debt situations.

feel that others are listening to their concerns. Listening is not just the physical act of hearing the other; it is, also, based on a set of behaviors that show that we are truly paying attention. If you follow the Prophet's example, not only are you listening, but you are, also, giving the other person respect and making them feel that they are important enough that you make the effort to stop, turn around and give them your full attention.

**6 The Prophet, himself, was open to mediation**  
As we know with medicine, the Prophet most likely did not even need to take it, but did so because he wanted future generations to feel that it is okay to do so. Similarly, in his interpersonal relationships, he was open to interventions by others though he did not need their assistance. When Aisha (radi-allahu anhu) had a concern in a particular situation, he allowed Abu Bakr (radi-allahu anhu) to speak about this situation with him. If the Prophet himself was open to such interventions, then surely even the most influential of Muslim leaders today should be willing and able to allow others to intervene when conflict escalates. Of course, the person who intervenes should be qualified for the particular dispute resolution process. If it be one that needs a fiqhi ruling, a qualified scholar or such should be engaged; likewise, if the dispute requires an understanding of mental health, a mental health professional or counselor would be appropriate. Openness to intervention and admission that help is not just a necessary, but also a positive, step is important in resolving conflicts. In some disputes, people are not willing to seek such assistance. These situations eventually explode, and each side becomes so deeply entrenched in their position that no intervention will assist in reducing the conflict.

**7 When listening to a grievance, the Prophet always allowed the story to come out in full narrative form before interrupting**  
When we read hadith and learn about the Prophet, we realize that he carefully and deliberately



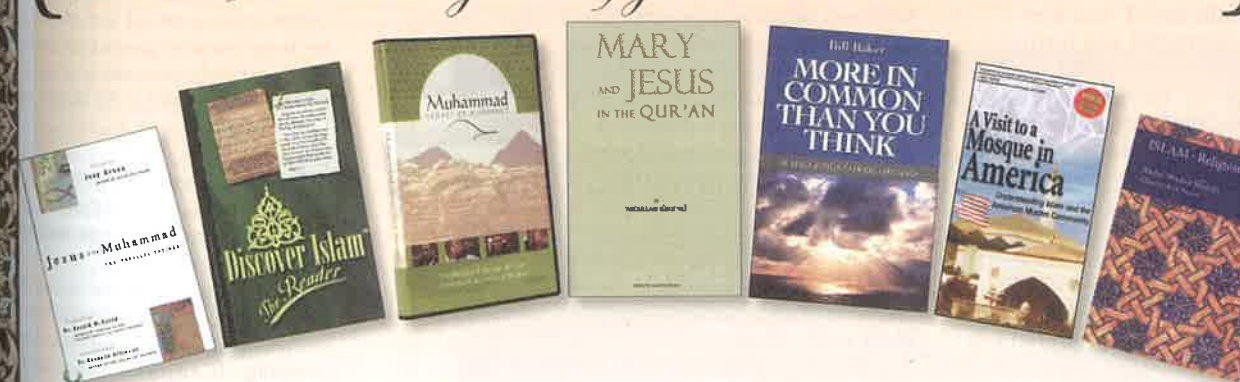
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choose his words and modes of expression. If you consider these variables, a hadith becomes not just a religious explanation by the Prophet on an issue, but, also, a guide to his mannerisms and techniques for interacting and conveying information. For instance, in many hadith narrations, people came to the Prophet with a concern. If you look at the text of such ahadith, you realize that he did not render his opinion until the full story was described. His advice was offered based on a sound understanding of the situation as a whole, and it was founded in a respect for the people who brought cases before him. Again, we see him listening, and not just hearing. Try this in your own life; before proffering your opinion, slow down and really try to get the full story from your spouse, co-worker or other person. This can have an enormous ameliorative effect as it helps you to better understand their concerns. When we offer our responses before hearing the full story, or when we interrupt someone before they finish, we lose the opportunity to gain a fuller understanding of their concerns, and we disrespect the other person. Many disputes rest on this pivotal point: people often speak prematurely. They do not hear the whole narrative before jumping in to express their opinion. This leads to frustration and alienation; people feel they are not fully heard, and they become distracted and further distressed when interrupted.

## 8 Never spoke negatively of others and discouraged the relaying of negative stories about others

The Islamic teaching that "backbiting is like eating your brother's flesh," is particularly poignant in a mediating situation. You can truly understand how the simile of eating flesh was a perfect symbol for speaking badly about another person. For example, gossip is the number one creator of disputes among youth in schools, and these disputes often lead to violence. At the same time, with adults, many community and family disputes are based on the fact that people heard something about another person via gossip. Gossiping chains expand conflicts; they make con-

flicts larger and cause them to explode and engage far more people than is necessary or appropriate. As more people become involved with a conflict, the tensions multiply, and they become even harder to resolve. We have all seen stories become sensationalized through gossip; each new person adds details until you can no longer recognize the original incident that instigated the conflict. The people, who are the subject of the gossip, get literally "eaten up" in the process.

Confidentiality regarding conflicts is key, as any mediator will tell you. When we intervene, confidentiality is important because it creates an environment where people will seek out help and be willing to resolve a conflict because they know it will not become public knowledge. People came to the Prophet to speak about their concerns because he did not make such stories public at the expense of those individuals.

Try this exercise one day; go for a whole day without trying to say one bad thing about another person. I worked with a Muslim youth group and asked them to not mention one thing negative about a fellow member in the youth group for one week. When they came back to me the next week, they reported that they actually had very little to say to one another; they found that all they usually talked about was negative gossip. Our very relationships with others in our family and community can be based on backbiting. The true danger of this behavior is that it becomes so deeply entrenched in our relationships with others that we no longer even realize that we are doing it.

## 9 The solutions that the Prophet rendered for individuals took into account each person's concerns and strengths

The Prophet explained Islam to people in many different ways. Some who came to him wanted to know exactly what practices would lead them to heaven; others wanted to know how to deal with complex philosophical issues. His ability to use appropriate explanations and his ability to identify what grabbed the attention of a particular person were highly commend-

Gossiping chains expand conflicts; they make conflicts larger and cause them to explode and engage far more people than is necessary or appropriate.

able skills in conflict prevention. He knew the nuances of the characters of each companion and utilized them to their fullest. For example, Khalid Ibn Walid (*radialahu anhu*) showed prowess in the battlefield and was assigned to such tasks. Other companions were eloquent speakers and writers and were utilized for such endeavors.

This ability to understand human nature with such sensitivity is often missing in many of the disputes I have encountered. Leaders are unaware of their subordinate's particular strengths or weaknesses. For example, they assign someone who is not detail oriented to organize an event that demands great attention to detail. Later on, the leader becomes upset at the person they assigned because they did not fulfill their expectations. A leader, either in the family, school or community, must know the distinct challenges and strengths of each member. For example, no two children in one family can receive the exact same type of punishment. For one child, being told to go to his room maybe a reward, while to another it may be a punishment. Similarly, effective organizational management takes into account the individual group members' strengths and weaknesses and uses these to compliment one another. What the Prophet did everyday was to assess his people and create plans that took into account this assessment. Many communities would benefit from such assessment processes before going straight into an action phase, as it would help them avoid unnecessary conflict.

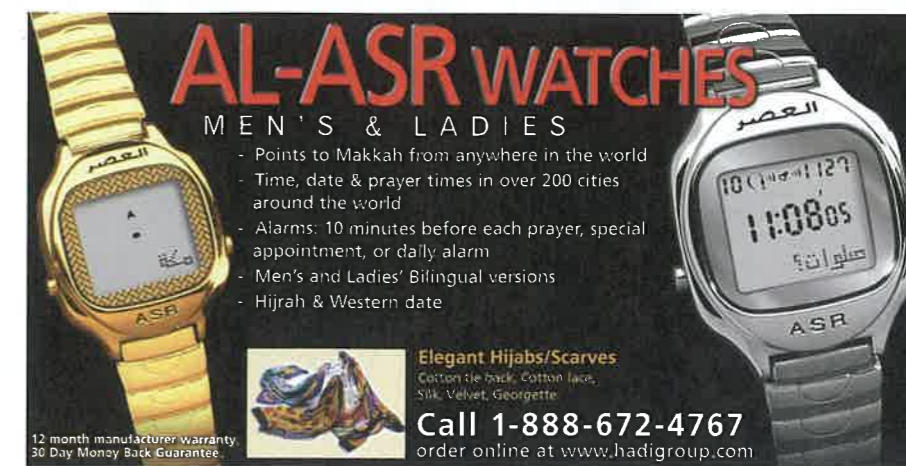
## 10 In interpersonal interactions, the Prophet corrected people quickly, privately and discreetly

The Prophet's example is replete with stories of his ability to correct people without humiliating them in public. If disputes arose and he had to deal with them at the community level, he did so, but if situations demanded individual attention, he sought out the person and privately offered feedback. This is one of the most important preventative methods you can utilize in conflict management. When people are corrected in front of others, they lose a sense of personal

honor and can feel a great sense of shame. If there is a chance to correct people privately, this allows the person to preserve their honor and to listen and learn more from the advice you offer. If you correct the person in public, the shame they feel may overshadow any lesson you are trying to convey. Ask yourself before launching into advice mode, "Is this something that can wait until I can offer the advice privately?" If so, it may be the better option. Many disputes have occurred, not because people disagree over the issues or the substance of a matter, but because they disagree over the method in which advice was offered. One side may have felt humiliated even if they agreed with the advice. Their judgment becomes clouded, and the dispute escalates because they now seek only to vindicate their own side without listening to the other due to past humiliation.

These ten skills are only a few of the Prophet's amazing behavioral patterns (*adab*) that can prevent conflicts before they occur. We must remember to study his interpersonal behaviors and stories not just for the religious rulings that come from them, but, also, for the techniques and mannerisms. There are many layers embedded in each story; they are narrative pieces that tell us "what" to do, but they, also, tell us "how" we should interact. Reflection on his example is important for people of all ages; too often, we think of these stories as good examples only for children. In many disputes between Muslim adults, it would help if they reflected on the Prophet's example. Practicing these skills is necessary in order to integrate them into your own behavior patterns. Just like learning how to pray, we must also learn about and practice positive interaction. When we reach such a level of behavior, many disputes will be resolved informally, and the need for intervention will be diminished. Remembering our rich tradition of peacemaking, as exemplified in the Prophet, is a crucial step in reducing internal conflicts within our communities and conflicts with others. ■

Najeeba-Syed-Miller (familylaw63@hotmail.com) is currently the Executive Director of the Los Angeles, CA based Asian Pacific American Dispute Resolution Center (APADRC).



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e) the date you paid zakah the previous year. (Date: \_\_\_\_\_)

Item Description	Amount/Item Worth
1) Cash on hand and in banks (deposit saving, checking, etc.; see note b above)	\$ _____
2) Gold, silver, their certificates and men's jewelry.	\$ _____
3) Business net worth (total assets less liabilities) of private business or your share in partnership.	\$ _____
4) Real estate (house occupied by you not included); Net worth = Total, less mortgage and loans against real estate; see note c above.	\$ _____
5) Women's jewelry	\$ _____
6) Value of cars more than the number of working persons in the family.	\$ _____
<b>Total of zakatable amount (add 1 through 6)</b>	\$ _____
Zakah (Total amount x 0.025):	\$ _____
Less any payments already made towards Zakah:	\$ _____
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# MUSLIMS SERVING HUMANITY

**M**uslim Americans and Canadians are applying Islam and the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (*salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sal-lam*) in their every day lives by reaching out to and helping others. The Islamic Society of Greater Indianapolis (ISGI) did just this last year when Exodus and Catholic Relief Services brought

many Afghan refugees to Indianapolis, IN. ISNA was approached by these organizations in order to determine if ISGI could assist, and, subsequently, ISGI President Babar Suleman and ISNA Secretary General Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed worked together to arrange assistance. ISNA established the tax-deductible ISNA Family Rehabilitation Fund, and the Indianapolis Muslim community, although most people had already paid zakat, was able to collect almost \$12,000. This money was spent on purchasing essentials for the refugees, including Eid clothing for the children; two months of rent; driver education fees for children coming of age; and need-based scholarships for occupational training for high school graduates. Additionally, a member-

donated car was given to the largest refugee family. For all those involved, the experience was uplifting and gratifying.

ISGI is currently turning this effort into a permanent community help organization. Suleman says, "At this point we would like this to become more of an institution that allows Muslims to get occupational training to prepare them to find better paying jobs and to assimilate in this society without losing themselves as Muslims. Our main focus is not to treat this zakat money as dole or a handout, but rather to use it to allow people to get on their own feet and earn a respectable living. We do want to continue to help people in need but that will be our secondary focus...our interest is in long-term rehabilitation, whereby we help the fam-



**OVERCOMING HER OWN PAIN:** After surviving a chronic blood disorder, Naila Alam now strives to serve those who need help.

ilies become self-sufficient over time. We pay for their training/retraining and efforts to secure gainful employment."

[To contribute to the ISNA Family Rehabilitation Fund, mail checks care of Bahauddin Bade, Director ISNA Accounts, PO Box 38, Plainfield, IN 46168]

In Northern Virginia, a highly successful social service effort, the Foundation for Appropriate and Immediate Temporary Help (FAITH), is thriving and providing humanitarian aid to those in need who live in local communities. FAITH, a nonprofit organization, was formed in October 1999 as an outgrowth of the social service work provided by the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS)-an ISNA affiliate. On August 9th, FAITH opened its faith-based thrift store, which is designed to raise funds for the nonprofit organization.

Services provided by FAITH include collecting and distributing charity to the poor and needy; elderly assistance; congregational health ministry; an endowment to help orphans; domestic violence assistance and education; halfway houses for the homeless; referrals to appropriate social service agencies, free and low cost medical and psychological services; and job skills training programs for unemployed adults. With the area's growing immigrant population, Tanveer Mirza, a board member of FAITH, said FAITH, also, helps immigrants assimilate, providing a wide variety of useful information ranging from instructions on how to use the bus system to referrals to social service programs. "We provide a bridge for them," she said.

Toward fulfilling its mission, FAITH has commissioned a community needs assessment. This study, conducted by professional social workers, researches services available through private and charitable institutions, and the possibility of providing interest-free loans to those facing temporary financial hardship.

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**"OUR MAIN FOCUS IS NOT TO TREAT THIS ZAKAT MONEY AS DOLE OR A HANDOUT, BUT RATHER TO USE IT TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO GET ON THEIR OWN FEET AND EARN A RESPECTABLE LIVING." —BABAR SULEMAN**

FAITH is striving to establish an endowment account to provide for services, such as helping hands; elderly care; congregational health ministry; orphan care; meals on wheels; job training; burial help; and counseling. The organization is, also, building a network with other social service groups. FAITH has already established a congregational health ministry with an area health provider and has become a member of a coalition against domestic abuse.

[To contribute to FAITH, please mail checks to: FAITH, 500 Grove Street, Suite 210, Herndon, VA 20170. (571) 323-2198]

Another social service initiative, Express Care, is the product of Herndon, VA resident Naila Alam who survived Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP), a chronic blood disorder. Lying alone in her hospital bed, feeling lonely and helpless, it seemed almost impossible that one day she would recover and walk out of the hospital;

doctors were unsure if she would ever get better and lead a normal life. It was at this moment that Alam felt "how nice it would have been if someone not from family, at least from the community, could come and visit me. That is why our Prophet Muhammad had put alot of emphasis on visiting the sick people. Just following our religion, we can truly create a wonderful community here. I think the assurance that you are not fighting the disease-yourself, as someone is with you, does expedite the healing process. Medicines do play a major role, but then prayers and kindness of others are in a higher authority."

The turning point that led her to health activism was her participation in the ITP Conference, organized by PDSA (Platelets Disorder Support Association) where she spoke to an audience of more than 200 patients and caregivers, as well as doctors and researchers from Europe,

Canada and the U.S. Alam reminisces, "It was like visiting 200 or so patients." Now, she strives to help women who come to the U.S. without the language skills to communicate effectively if they become ill and to find social services when they need them. The nonprofit Express Care provides translation services and referrals to existing social services.

To expand her outreach, she holds televised seminars, called Care Connection, on Fairfax county public access television channels. Alam's work has garnered her recognition from the Pakistani Embassy and awards including the Community Service Award 2003; UNICARE (State Sponsored Program); Mayor's Volunteer Appreciation Award 2003; and the National Association of Muslim Women (NAMW) 2003 Excellence in Achievement Award. For more information: naila71@hotmail.com ■

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# ISNA Commitment to a Mission



*"The action most loved by Allah is the one done regularly."*

The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) serves the diverse needs of Muslims in North America, and provides a unified platform of expression of Islam in all areas of life from da'wah to education to community development.

ISNA strives to serve Islam and Muslims today and laying foundations for the future in partnership with you. Prophet Muhammad (salla Allah 'alayhi wa sallam) said: "When a human being dies his deeds end except in 3 things: sadaqah jariyah (ever flowing charity), knowledge that will be benefited from, and a righteous child who prays for him/her."

### ISNA is Your Partner

- ISNA is working with communities, helping raise funds for their activities and projects.
- ISNA Conventions are attended by over 35,000 people.
- ISNA's flagship bimonthly publication Islamic Horizons magazine goes to 60,000 homes, libraries, and institutions.
- ISNA is reaching out to all areas: da'wah in prisons and among Latino Americans; helping the development of Islamic schools; training of imams; and community development.

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# Lessons from Three Wise Men

The lives of Averroes, Maimonides, Aquinas offer guidance for seeking truth from wherever it comes.

BY JACOB BENDER

**T**he three great traditions that spring from our common father Abraham (*'alayhi as salaam*) bond

Jew to Christian, Christian to Muslim, and Muslim to Jew. Even though all of our prayers speak of peace, these are dark and difficult times. War has replaced dialogue; terrorism has replaced tolerance; and ignorance has replaced understanding.

My own response to the events of 9/11 was to begin work on a documentary film, entitled "Reason and Revelation: Averroes, Maimonides, Aquinas in Their Time and Ours." Who were these three great men; Averroes the Muslim; Moses Maimonides the Jew; and Thomas Aquinas the Christian? And, what, if anything, can they teach us today? Before we can answer these questions, we must first explore, as will my film, the worlds into which they were born.

In the case of Averroes and Maimonides, that world was Al-Andalus, the splendor of Spain, during the centuries of Islam in Iberia. Knowledge of Al-Andalus is crucial to the world today for three main reasons.

First, the level of civilization that Al-Andalus achieved, at a time when the rest of Europe was shrouded in the Dark Ages, was remarkable; the Muslim city of Cordoba was the most advanced city on the entire European Continent. In philosophy, architecture, mathematics, astronomy,

medicine, poetry, theology, and numerous other fields of human endeavor, medieval Islam was the world's most advanced civilization. Second, Al-Andalus in particular, and Islamic civilization in general, served as both the repository of ancient Greek knowledge and science and the transmitter of that knowledge and science to the

Christian-dominated West. Third, the culture of Al-Andalus is justly celebrated for the extent to which religious pluralism and tolerance were hallmarks of this most glorious age, as manifested in Islam's respect for *ahl al-kitab*, the People of the Book.

Now, let us turn to our three wise men: Averroes, Moses Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas.

Abū al-Walīd Muhammad Ibn Rushd, known in the West as Averroës (1126-1198 CE), was born in Cordoba in southern Spain, and he is, without question, one of the greatest minds produced by Islamic civilization in Al-Andalus. As a young man, Ibn Rushd excelled in theology, religious law, astronomy, literature, mathematics, music, zoology, medicine and philosophy. It is in the field of philosophy, however, that Ibn Rushd left an indelible mark upon the intellectual history of Western civilization. In the year 1169 CE, Ibn Rushd was asked by the caliph to undertake new and up-to-date Arabic translations and commentaries of the works of Aristotle. Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle have greatly impacted both Christian and Jewish philosophy for hundreds of years.

Rabbi Moses Maimonides, his name in his mother tongue of Arabic was Musa ibn Maymun al-Qurtubi, was born 12 years

after Ibn Rushd. He is universally considered one of the most important Jewish thinkers in the last 2,000 years. The similarities between Ibn Rushd and Rabbi Musa are abundant. Both were born in Cordoba in Al-Andalus; both became philosopher/theologians; both were foremost interpreters of Aristotle within Islam and Judaism, attempting to harmonize the truths of reason with the revelations of the Qur'an and the Torah; both became jurists and authorities in religious law (Shari'ah in Islam and *halakha* in Judaism) that is central to Muslim and Jewish observances; both lived part of their lives in Fez in Morocco; and both became court physicians to their local rulers (Ibn Rushd to the Caliph of Cordoba and Rabbi Musa to the great Salah-ah-Din in Egypt).

Thomas Aquinas, born near Naples, Italy in 1225 CE, is the most important and influential Christian philosopher of the Middle Ages. His masterpiece, the *Summa Theologiae*, is widely considered the most comprehensive exploration of philosophy and theology in the entire history of Christianity. Like Ibn Rushd and Rabbi Musa before him, Thomas Aquinas was primarily concerned with finding a way to incorporate Aristotle's rationalism into Christian theology. It is, also, abundantly clear in his writings that he was indebted to Ibn Rushd and Rabbi Musa, both of whom he quoted on numerous occasions. Even the present Pope, John Paul II, has recognized this connection; he has specifically mentioned that one of the influences on Thomas Aquinas, the greatest theologian in Catholic history, was "the dialogue that Thomas carried on with the writings of the Arab and Jewish thinkers of his time."

It is not only the writings of these three great thinkers that speak to us today; it is, also, their life stories and their courage in pursuing, in the words of Rabbi Musa, "the truth from whatever source it proceeds." Herein lies part of the contemporary importance of our three wise men; they dared to advance the notion that wisdom

about the universe was not the exclusive property of one tradition, one people, or one faith.

In the Middle Ages, this was a controversial and, even, heretical idea, and the malevolence of intolerance and fanaticism, all too prevalent even in our own time, was existent in the Middle Ages as well. Ibn Rushd was exiled from his beloved Al-Andalus, and other Muslims burned his books. Rabbi Musa, now celebrated as the greatest Jewish philosopher who ever lived, had his books burned at the order of other rabbis. Thomas Aquinas was denounced by church leaders at the University of Paris for daring to incorporate the writings of a pagan into Christianity.

Just as our three wise men were not afraid to challenge prevailing opinions within their own religious communities during the Middle Ages, so, today, we must also be willing to openly criticize our coreligionists when they engage in extremism and intolerance. Accordingly, Muslim religious leaders around the world condemned the 9/11 terror attacks and the Taliban's destruction of the ancient Buddhist statues in Afghanistan. Many American Christian ministers denounced the bigoted attacks on Islam by Reverends Pat Robertson, Jerry Fallwell, and Franklin Graham. And many Jews, like myself, have for decades supported the right of the Palestinian people to an independent state and condemned Israel's brutal occupation with its assassinations, house demolitions, closures, and illegal settlement policy.

I believe that some 800 years after they lived, Ibn Rushd the Muslim, Rabbi Musa the Jew, and Thomas Aquinas the Christian can, still, enter both our hearts and minds if we let them. Their words, and their life stories, can both inform and inspire us in regard to some of the greatest issues with which we are confronted at the beginning of this new century, including the relationship between religion and the state, between faith and science, and between reason and revelation; the dangers of political extremism; and the need for courage in opposing injustice and searching for truth. By reading and interpreting their writings, we can discover that we, Muslims, Jews and Christians, are all *Ibnu* Ibrahim, the children of Abraham. We can discover that in the struggle to create a more just and peaceful world, we may perhaps have more in common with those from other traditions who share our values of justice, than with the more extreme followers within our own religious traditions. ■

Jacob Bender is a documentary filmmaker in New York. He can be reached at [reasonrevelation@aol.com](mailto:reasonrevelation@aol.com).

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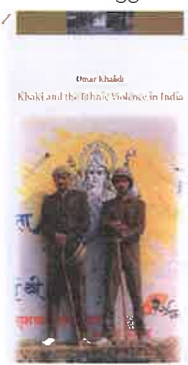
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## REVIEWS

### DRESSED TO KILL

**K**halidi examines how representative India's military, paramilitary, and the police are of the country's population. Khalidi finds that in the army, the upper caste Hindus, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and Christians are well represented; the Sikhs and Gurkhas over-represented, and Muslims greatly under-represented. The biggest difference be-



Khaki and the Ethnic Violence in India: Army, Police and Paramilitary Forces During Communal Riots; Omar Khalidi; Three Essays Press, New Delhi, India; 2003

between the pre- and post-independence Indian armies is that while the former had as much as 35 percent Muslims, today it has no more than 2-3 percent Muslims. Khalidi explains that most of the recruiting areas for Muslim became part of

Pakistan and that poor education among Muslims hinders them in the qualifying tests for commissioned ranks. The second part of the book describes and analyzes the impact of the composition of the security forces on their performance during anti-Muslim riots and pogroms. Khalidi says the army's performance was not uniformly fair during the 1947 Partition and the Operation Polo against Hyderabad in 1948. In a number of instances, the military units were affected and at times, behaved unprofessionally and in a biased manner, in Punjab and Hyderabad. However, after the turmoil of 1947-48, the army and paramilitary forces have been uniformly fair. Khalidi's study, however, excludes conflicts in Occupied Kashmir, Punjab, and Assam, which he says mer-



Innocent People  
Linda-Jamilah Kolocotronis;  
Leathers Publishing, Overland Park, KS; 2003, pp. 192

### INNOCENT PEOPLE

Set in the days following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, "Innocent People" provides a look into the daily lives of several Muslim families living in the U.S., where fear and suspicion ran rampant. Dr. Kolocotronis follows Sadia Abdullah as she and her husband continue to raise their five sons in a small midwestern city following 9/11. "Innocent People" provides an honest portrayal of a Muslim family, subjected to suspicion due to their religious beliefs, during one of the most troubled periods in recent history.

it a treatment different from those in the rest of India.

Khalidi finds that state police organizations, not autonomous enough to operate independently of the government, are totally subservient to its whims. Thus, even though the Muslim proportion of the Kerala and West Bengal police is about the same as the other states, fewer riots have taken place there

and when they happen, the police behave impartially and professionally because the state governments are controlled by parties dedicated to impartiality and fairness. Moreover, in Kerala, the Muslim League has a crucial voice in state politics, which cannot be ignored in public policy. Compared to Kerala and West Bengal, the police in other states have almost always behaved

partially toward Muslims during riots and pogroms.

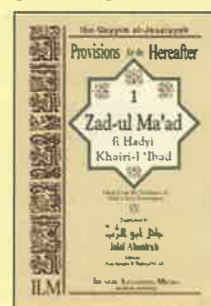
Khalidi demonstrates that even though it is desirable to have a representative police force, the executive branch must first be representative and capable of acting impartially. No student of Indian society can afford to ignore this pioneering study, which is supported with copious notes and excellent documentation.

—Condensed from a review by  
Dr. Omar Afzal, Cornell University

### THE KNOWLEDGE MINE

**A**bualrub offers the translation of "Zad-ul Ma'ad fi Hadyi Khairi al-'Ibad" by Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah (died 751 A.H., 1350 C.E.), a work that reflects much of his efforts in defense of the Sunnah and comprises a valuable resource for *fiqh* and *seerah*.

Abualrub has used extensive footnotes in his translation, providing definitions of terms and references for ahadith.



Zad-ul-Ma'ad fi Hadyi Khairi al-'Ibad; Provisions for the Hereafter Taken from the Guidance of Allah's Best Worshipper; Ibn Qayyim (Trans. Jalal Abualrub); www.ILMpublications.com

In addition, brief footnotes provide textual clarification and enhancement. The majority of the footnotes, however, provide detailed topical expansion with supplemental hadith and commentary on those as well as on the hadith included by Ibn Qayyim. It is not unusual for a footnote to comprise several pages of explanation, and provide valuable information on other than the topic at hand. For his footnotes, Abualrub relies heavily upon the works of Nasir-ad-Din al-Albani, on which reviews of the authenticity of the ahadith are primarily based. Accordingly, documented information is included from all of the scholarly sources used by al-Albani as well.

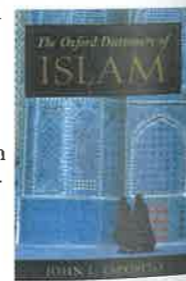
Vol. 1 includes topics from the *seerah* of the Prophet; Vol. 2 focuses on salat; and Vol. 3 relates to Friday prayers, guidance in the Prophet's speeches, traveling, visiting the sick, and reciting the Qur'an. Vol. 4 covers Ibn Qayyim's material on funerals in Part 1 and contains two additional sections prepared by Abualrub that include a list of 133 innovations in funerals and the importance of supplicating only to Allah.

of the scholarly sources used by al-Albani as well.

### One-Touch Knowledge

**Q**uestions about Islam and Muslims abound. In order to help inquirers, Dr. Esposito has assembled an easy-to-use, information-packed reference that contains more than 2,000 alphabetically arranged entries covering virtually every aspect of the modern Islamic world.

In compiling this volume, Dr. Esposito brought together a representative team of scholars and students of Islam and the Muslim world. This work follows the style and format of *The Oxford History of Islam* and is a handy reference to all those who need to know a little bit more about a specific concept or name.



The Oxford Dictionary of Islam; Dr. John L. Esposito, ed.; Oxford University Press; 2003; pp. 359; HB.



### SEEKING WIFE

**B064 Nov/Dec 2003** \* I'm a 40-year-old Muslim, looking for a wife. Professional or medical graduate. Indian or Pakistani, I am a U.S. citizen, good health. Medical, engineer, medical resident or USMLE pass girls respond.

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**S0107 Nov/Dec 2003** \* Sunni Muslim Indian parents invite correspondence for their U.S. born/raised daughter, 25, 1st year OB-GYN resident, wears Hijab; from a medical doctor. (NJ)

**S0134 Nov/Dec 2003** \* Healthy, slim, 5'6" tall, good character, mature, unencumbered professional looking for a Muslim gentleman with same values between 50-60 years old for lifelong commitments.

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**S0141 Nov/Dec 2003** \* Sunni Muslim Indian parents seeking prompt correspondence from 30-35 years old established professional for their beautiful, highly intelligent, 30 year old professional lawyer daughter. (GA)

**S0200 Nov/Dec 2003** \* New convert to Islam, artistic, sincere, Swedish-Mexican American, tall, slim, fluent in French with a heart of gold, searching for intelligent, handsome, financially stable, sensitive and kind gentleman from the Middle East between 38-44 for marriage. (IL)

**S0201 Nov/Dec 2003** \* Parents of Indo/Pak origin of American born Muslimah 21, fair, 5' 3", BS (Sociology) student, invite detailed correspondence from an interested Sunni Muslim professional. Contact mail/e-mail alig73@yahoo.com (NC)

**S0202 Nov/Dec 2003** \* Sunni Muslim Indian parents seek a match for their daughter, studying Masters in Health Admin, in U.S., on student visa. She is a Dentist from India; looking for an established professional between 30 to 35 years. E-mail your background info to: sarwarsyedabu@yahoo.com

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#### Minimum Qualifications

- Graduate of an accredited Islamic institute
- Permanent Resident/Citizen of United States of America
- Good command of the Arabic Language - Excellent communication skills in Arabic & English.
- Distinguished leadership skills in Islamic activities
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Candidates: Interested candidates should submit resumes to:

- Email address: [imamsearch@isb.org](mailto:imamsearch@isb.org)
- Mail: Imam Search Committee, 6631 Johnnycake Road, Baltimore, MD 21244

For additional information, please call 443-695-1791.

To learn more about ISB, please visit us at <http://www.alrahmah.org>  
For additional information, please contact Chair, Imam Search Committee at 410-455-9762, 410-951-3786

Resumes Deadline: Open until filled

# One Million Meals Project 2003-04

Feed the poor in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Africa

## Over 1/2 million served in 5 yrs

- Zakah distribution touched the lives of **280,000**
- Sacrificed over 3054 Qurbani & Sadaqa and reached approx. **360,000 people**
- Over **355** heads of families stood on their own feet
- Supported **145 families** every month
- Adopted over **115 schools**
- Supported over **5400 students**
- Sent **eleven 40-ft containers** (approx 172 tons). Over **500 computers**, hundreds of books, medical equipment and blankets, clothes, shoes etc
- Over **55 tons of dry ration** distributed in refugee camps and disaster hit areas

## 2002 Financial

Funds received / disbursed in US \$	
<b>Funds received:</b>	
Designated Donations	440,998
Non-Designated Donations	66,035
<b>Total Funds collected</b>	<b>507,033</b>
<b>Less:</b>	
Disbursement of designated donations	(301,278)
<b>Funds before operating expense</b>	<b>205,755</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>	
Employee benefits	6,194
Advertisements	8,270
Bank & Merchant Services Charges	2,587
Web Hosting, Commerce & Security	1,175
Dues & membership	898
Office Supplies	1,363
Payroll	37,434
Post, Printing and Publication	8,987
Travel	1,051
Payroll Taxes	14,743
Accounting fees	688
Telephone	3,178
Rent	6,090
Conferences, Conventions and Meetings	150
Depreciation Expense	563
Taxes returned from Yr. 2000	(1,933)
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>91,438</b>
<b>Funds after operating expenses</b>	<b>114,317</b>
Increase in value of stocks at year end	2,130
	<b>116,447</b>
<b>Less:</b>	
Equipment	5,067
Charles Schwab	2,130
	<b>109,250</b>
<b>Add:</b>	
Opening fund balance-Jan 1, 2000	15,455
<b>Net funds available at year end</b>	<b>124,705</b>

## Social Welfare

### Zakah Distribution

Hidaya handles your Zakah per strict shariah guidelines and as instructed by donors. Zakah funds are transferred to sister & reliable partner organizations in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh to support orphans, widows, poor elderly, families in extreme poverty, deserving students, health care and marriage support for poor girls.

### Sadaqat-ul-Fitr

It is obligatory to pay for all persons in the household. It is encouraged to pay it before the Eid salah, so that the poor can enjoy the happiness of Eid. The sadaqat-ul-fitr this year is \$7 per person.

### Qurbani/Udhiya 2004

Animal sacrifice is performed by Hidaya on behalf of donors and is distributed amongst the poor. The cost of goat/sheep is \$75 and share in buffalo/cow is \$60.

### Sadaqa Distribution

Hidaya distributes sadaqa in the form of cash and animal sacrifice (goat/sheep \$60) within 72 hours.

### One Million Meals

Hidaya volunteers raise funds for one million meals at the beginning of each Ramadan until Eid-ul-Adha and execute the project throughout the year.

### Aqiqa

Aqiqa is arranged upon request within 72 hours. It costs \$60 per goat/sheep.

### Kaffara

### Fidya

Marriage Support for Orphans and Poor Girls

### Disaster Relief

### Refugee Support

### Container Shipment

## Education

### Student Support

Hidaya Foundation provides books, tuition fee, exam fee, uniforms and/or stipends to underprivileged students. Our sister and partner organizations identify deserving students from primary to higher educational institutions and meet their needs.

### Adopt a School Program

### IT & Vocational Training

### English and Arabic Language Competency

### Books and Computers

### Alumni / Memorial Fund

## Healthcare

### Medical Support

Underprivileged patients are monetarily supported for doctor visits, lab tests, surgeries and medicines.

### Medical Camps

### Funding of Hospitals

### Save-a-Life

### Hidaya Foundation Revenue 1999 - 2002

1999	\$111,626
2000	\$307,029
2001	\$319,000
2002	\$507,033

Container being shipped from US



## Mission

To implement educational, social welfare and charitable programs in economically depressed areas of US, Canada, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and other South Asian Countries.

## Donate

### Cash Donations

Donate via **Check** or **Credit Card** and mail it to Hidaya at the address shown below. You can also donate online at [www.hidaya.org](http://www.hidaya.org)

### In-Kind Donations

Donate clothes, new or used items, computers, books etc.. for the **Container Shipment** project.

**Vehicle Donations** are accepted throughout the US and given to deserving in the community or sold to fund other projects.

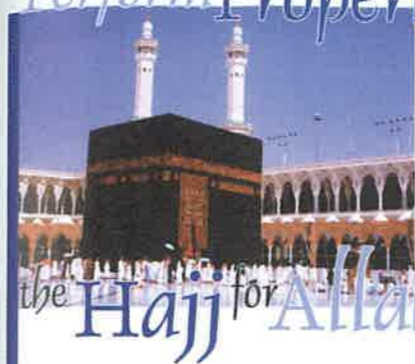
## Calculate Zakah

Zakah is obligatory upon all Muslims in possession of wealth equal to Nisab (minimum amount on which Zakah must be paid) for a period of one lunar year. Nisab for gold is 3 oz.; for silver is 21 oz.; and for cash, it is equivalent to the value of gold or silver (which ever is less). At present Nisab of silver is less, so cash may be calculated according to silver. 2.5% of the total value Gold, Silver, Cash, and assets such as Bank accounts, Stocks, and Real Estate investments (not house under personal use) are required to be included in Nisab when calculating Zakah.

(Adopted from a paper published by Darul-Uloom Al-Madania in Buffalo, New York)

Cash	\$
Checking Account(s)	\$
Saving Account(s)	\$
Total Silver value	\$
Business Bank Account	\$
Inventory of Merchandise	\$
Stocks	\$
Mutual Funds	\$
Real Estate (excluding personal residence)	\$
Total	\$
Total x 0.025 (Zakah you have to pay)	\$

Perform Properly

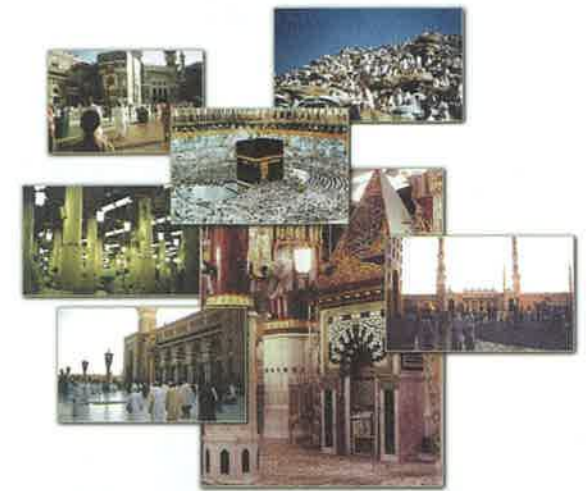


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- ✦ طاقم ذو خبرة فائقة لتلبية احتياجاتكم.
- ✦ مرافقة من قبل أئمة متخصصون.
- ✦ دوروس تعليمية للحج والعمرة.
- ✦ أسعار وبرامج متعددة تناسب رغباتكم.
- ✦ تنقلات بواسطة أوتوبيسات مكيفة.
- ✦ رحلات خاصة للتسوق في مكة والمدينة.

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