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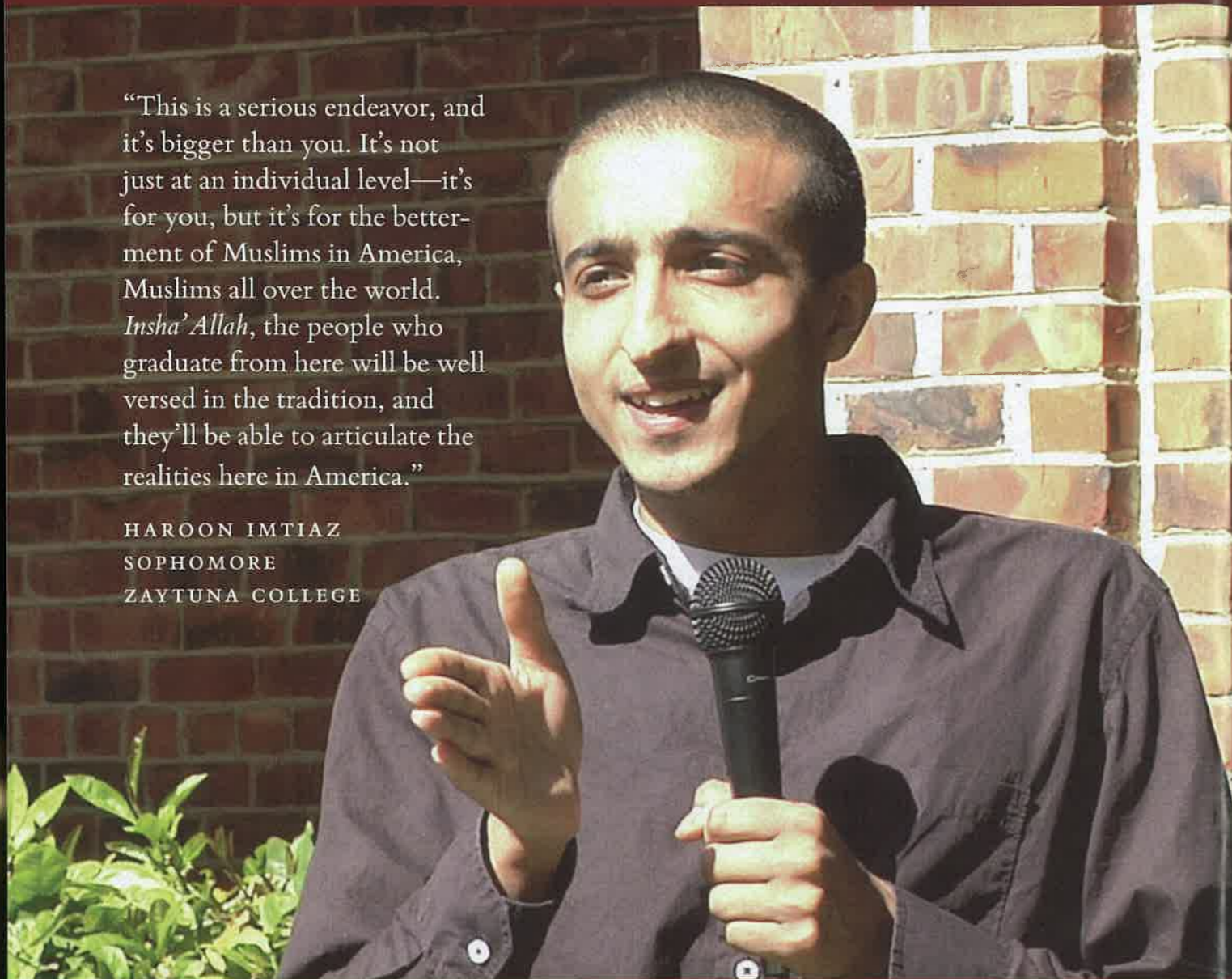
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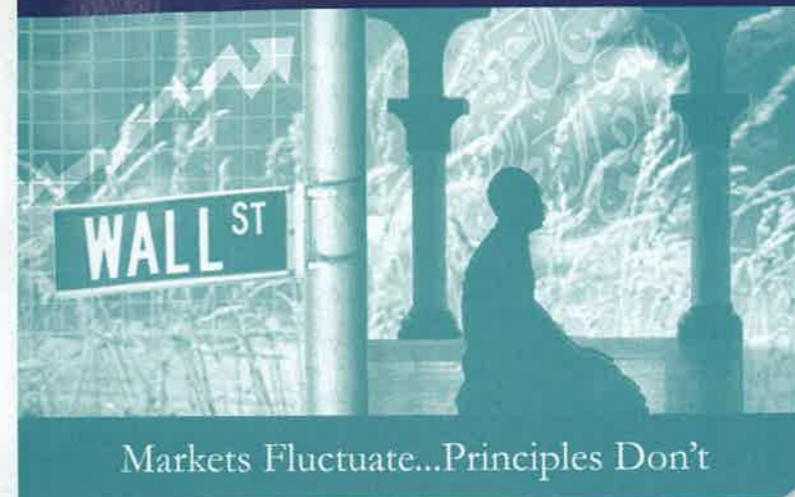
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Providing Comfort

Islam has no institutionalized clergy, and any informed person can serve as an imam. However, modern challenges require a trained person, not only to counsel, but also serve as liaison with secular institutions like schools, hospitals, employers and prisons.

It is such modern needs that have created the institution of chaplaincy. Chaplains are ministers in a specialized setting such as a priest, pastor, rabbi, imam or lay representative of a religion attached to a secular institution such as a hospital, prison, military, police, or an educational institution. Though originally the word "chaplain" referred to a church representative, it is now applied to men and women of other religions or philosophical traditions. In recent years, many lay individuals have received professional training in chaplaincy and now serve in various institutions alongside or instead of official members of the clergy. A chaplain is not an imam but an imam may serve as chaplain. Thus, even Muslim women—who are ineligible to lead mix-gender prayers—are encouraged to seek careers as chaplains, a service which is especially needed by Muslim women dealing with secular institutions.

Perhaps one of the major news-making events in Muslim American chaplaincy was the appointment of Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad as the first U.S. Army chaplain. It was recognition of the long-standing Muslim presence in the nation's military. Now all branches of the military have Muslim chaplains. The other major news-maker was the appointment of Imam Yahya Hendi as the Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University, the first American university to hire a full-time Muslim chaplain. Today, many universities have embraced this reality. In fact, it is heartening to note that many of these campus chaplains are American-born Muslims that certainly would be facilitating better rapport with their public.

ISNA—which serves as an endorser—

has played a leading role in not only educating but also facilitating Muslim Americans focusing toward careers in chaplaincy. In 2005, ISNA held its first annual Muslim Chaplains' Conference, which emphasized that Muslim chaplains are in a new phase of their history and represent the "face of Islam" in many U.S. institutions. Such focus continues at ISNA conventions each year.

Today, Muslim Americans have many opportunities to obtain training as chaplains. For instance, Hartford Seminary's 72-credit Islamic Chaplaincy program, headed by the former ISNA president, Dr. Ingrid Mattson, offers training and resources. The Islamic Chaplaincy website is a resource for Muslim chaplains, and for chaplains of all faiths who address the needs of Muslims in their institutions. Such respected institutions notwithstanding, however, noteworthy is the observation made by "Islamic Horizons" editorial advisory board member Dr. James Jones, at the 48th ISNA annual convention, that the Muslim community needs to be sensitized to establishing religious leaders who are competent and qualified to conduct services in the Islamic traditions. In order to do this, Jones indicated that the Muslim community needs to establish its own institution of higher learning, or an Islamic theological seminary as the way forward to train its imams and lay leaders.

In some areas of life, chaplaincy services, however, need to go beyond serving the needs of those associated with a secular institution. For instance, Muslim prison chaplains need to look beyond the services they render to inmates—many of them revert to Islam. Most prison inmates are poor, and their families face immense challenges after the head of the household moves to prison. Muslim organizations need to work with chaplains to help such families find the means of living, especially where children are being raised by a single parent (and where now the absent father is not much of a role model). ■

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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PUBLISHER

The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)

PRESIDENT

Mohamed Hagmagid Ali

SECRETARY GENERAL

Safaa Zarzour

EDITOR

Omer Bin Abdullah

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Deanna Othman

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Susan Douglass (Chair); Dr. Jimmy Jones; Dr. Sulayman Nyang; Dr. Ingrid Mattson.

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ISNA LEADERS JOIN NATIONAL PANEL ON RELIGIOUS NONPROFITS



FORMER ISNA PRESIDENT DR. INGRID Mattson and Dr. Sayyid Syeed, ISNA's national director for the Office of Interfaith and Community Alliances, were both appointed to a panel that will work with the Commission on Accountability and Policy for Religious Organizations.

The Commission on Accountability and Policy was formed following a staff



report issued in January by Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) that focused on the financial practices of six high-profile, media-based Christian ministries. After releasing the findings of his three-year inquiry, the senator asked the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) to spearhead an independent national effort to review and provide

input on major accountability and policy issues affecting religious and other non-profit organizations.

Issues before the commission include: whether churches should be more accountable to the federal government; whether legislation is needed to curb perceived abuses of the clergy housing allowance exclusion; whether the current prohibition against political campaign intervention by churches and other non-profits should be repealed or modified, or if penalties should be expanded for nonprofits and their leaders who engage in prohibited activities.

According to ECFA President Dan Busby, a total of 66 members have been named to the three panels by commission chairman Michael Batts. Members of the three panels will work together with the commission by providing input and proposals on the issues.

"The men and women comprising these panels are all experienced leaders representing various faith groups, various elements of the nonprofit sector and the legal profession," Batts said. "Their participation in addressing the important issues before the commission is essential to the effectiveness of the process, and we are deeply grateful for their willingness to serve." ■

ISNA LEADERS SHARE IFTAR NATIONWIDE

FROM TEXAS AND ALABAMA IN THE deep south to Massachusetts and New Jersey in the far north, ISNA leaders have really racked up the frequent flyer miles this Ramadan and enjoyed their time with America's Muslim communities, visiting over 30 mosques and Islamic centers.

ISNA Vice President Azhar Azeez, board member Altaf Hussain, Secretary General Safaa Zarzour, ISNA Development Foundation Director Ahmed ElHattab, and Youth Director Iyad Alnacheef have met with community members while attending and speaking at events all over the nation. During the visits, many local communities requested ISNA leaders to increase ISNA programming, specifically special events for the youth, regional conferences, and capacity build-



ing for community leaders. Staff at ISNA headquarters has already begun translating these suggestions into increased local and regional conferences and forums during 2012 on education, Islamic finance, diversity, safe and healthy families, and more. ■

NORWEGIAN DIPLOMAT MEETS WITH ISNA PRESIDENT

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE APPEAL to Muslims to pray for the victims, their families, and Norwegians at large following the terrorist attacks on July 22 in Norway, ISNA President Imam Mohamed Magid wrote a letter to the people of Norway to extend the community's heartfelt condolences.

One week later, in response to the letter, First Secretary Marita Solheim-Rensvik of Norway visited the ADAMS Center—where Magid is the executive director and Chief Imam—to meet with the community.

During this visit, Magid hosted a meeting with the first secretary to discuss the importance of working together to ensure that the acts of extremists do not weaken the resolve of those working toward peace, tolerance and understanding of all people, regardless of race, religion or ethnicity.

OBAMA HONORS MUSLIM AMERICANS AT WHITE HOUSE IFTAR

ISNA PRESIDENT IMAM MOHAMED Magid joined invitees at the White House's annual iftar on Aug. 10, where President Obama declared "the Iftar celebration 'quintessentially American.'"

The guest list included Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.); Rep. Andre Carson (D-Ind.); Hamza Abdullah, a defensive back for the Arizona Cardinals; Husain Abdullah, a free safety for the Minnesota Vikings; 32 ambassadors; officials from across the Obama Administration and Muslim leaders and community workers.

The annual iftar has become a White House tradition since the 1990s under former President Bill Clinton.

Obama, noting the then-upcoming 10th anniversary of 9/11, said: "It will be a time to honor all those that we've lost, the families who carry on their legacy, the heroes who rushed to help that day and all who have served to keep us safe during a difficult decade. And tonight, it's worth remembering that these Americans were of many faiths and backgrounds, including proud and patriotic Muslim Americans."

Obama also singled out Muslim American service members for praise.

The annual iftar tradition has spread to various departments. Among those host-



ing such iftars were the U.S. Department of Agriculture, attended by ISNA, and the US-AID; the State Department hosted an Eid reception.

Thomas Jefferson held the first White House Ramadan celebration in 1805.

Magid and Secretary General Safaa Zarzour attended an iftar hosted by officials at the Pentagon on Aug. 17. Attendees also included ISNA members and more than 150 Muslims from the military and civil service. During the event, a Muslim veteran who had served

in World War II and is one of very few surviving veterans of that era also was honored.

The dinner was keynoted by Imam Talib Shareef, retired army chaplain and imam of Masjid Muhammad, and was moderated by U.S. Army Chaplain Abdul Rasheed Abdullah. Shareef was awarded a plaque and flag for his service in the military during the program.

Retired Maj. Gen. James A. "Spider" Marks spoke about the importance of working together as different faith-based communities and his experience working with people all over the world, particularly in the Middle East.

Also in attendance was the mother of Cpl. Kareem Sultan Khan. Khan, one of many Muslim service

members who made the ultimate sacrifice while defending his country, has been cited by retired Gen. Colin Powell and Time Magazine.

Farah Pandith, special representative to the Muslim communities for the U.S. State Department, and Paul Monterio, associate director for the White House Office of Public Engagement, attended the iftars hosted by America's Islamic Heritage Museum. The museum is housed in the former Clara Muhammad School building in Anacostia. ■

LUTHERAN OUTREACH

DR. SAYYID M. SYEED, DIRECTOR OF ISNA Office of Interfaith and Community Alliances, addressed the 12th Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) in Orlando, Fla., Aug. 15-19.

ELCA is a partner among the coalition of organizations that have stepped up to end bigotry toward Muslims in America and worldwide. Syeed shared insights about Lutheran-Muslim relations in between plenary discussions at the assembly that consisted of more than 1,000 voting members from 65 church councils and more than 10,000 congregations.



"Lutherans and Muslims stand together against the wave of anti-Muslim

sentiments that we have experienced together," Syeed said. "When the Evangelical Lutheran Church Assembly established a committee on Lutheran-Muslim relations, it conveyed a message of love."

He emphasized the Lutheran Church's role in beginning the Shoulder-to-Shoulder campaign and in changing the rhetoric of hate and discrimination, reminding: "No particular church, no religious community, no nation on earth can fight the mountains of misunderstanding alone. It is a collective responsibility."

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson of ELCA led the assembly in dealing with the purposes, functions, and directions of churchwide ministries in addition to issues that affect the church as a whole. ■

DR. SHAKIR 2011 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

TWENTY OUTSTANDING STUDENTS HAVE secured the 2011 Dr. Abdulmunim A. Shakir Scholarship, administered by ISNA.

They are Hasana Abdul-Quadir, Evran Ural, Rolla Al-Abbasi, Aisha Mohamed, Najah Khan, Sarah Tanveer, Xhilda Xhemali, Faatima Arshad Khan, Sally Kassem, Shazia Ijaz, Amir Emamdjomeh, Amna Farrukh, Noor Joudi, Areej Fares, Roxana Tabrizi, Anna Khoja, Sami Shalabi, Genan Shaghir, Leena Samir El-Sadek, and Fatima

Nadeem Mirza. This year, a large number of applications were received for the 20 awards offered. To be eligible for the \$1,000 scholarship, applicants were required to have a minimum 3.0 GPA and be entering their freshman year of college. Scholarship recipients were chosen based on a number of criteria which included GPA, community service involvement, essay responses, and letters of recommendation.

"It is with great pride that we award

these scholarships to this fine group of students as a stepping stone in their giant academic leap into a better future for them and for the Muslim community, emphasizing Islam's focus on education, seen through the first word of the revelation of the Quran, *Iqra*, meaning 'read,'" said an ISNA's Development Foundation representative.

If you would like to support one of the many students that ISNA was unable to help this year, please contact the ISNA Scholarship Program at scholarship@isna.net or (317) 204-0930. ■

"HORIZONS" ASSISTANT EDITOR SPEAKS TO NATION'S OPINION WRITERS

JOURNALISTS SHAPE THE MINDS OF their readers, and Muslims can certainly attest to that. Horizons Assistant Editor Deanna Othman spoke at the National Conference of Editorial Writers convention in Indianapolis on Sept. 17 as part of a panel on the portrayal of Muslims in American media. Joined by Rafia Zakaria, associate editor of *AltMuslim.com*, an attorney and director of the Muslim Women's Legal Defense Fund and Amitabh Pal, managing editor of *The Progressive*

in Madison, Wis., Othman discussed the manipulation of politically-charged terms such as "creeping Sharia" and "Islamist."

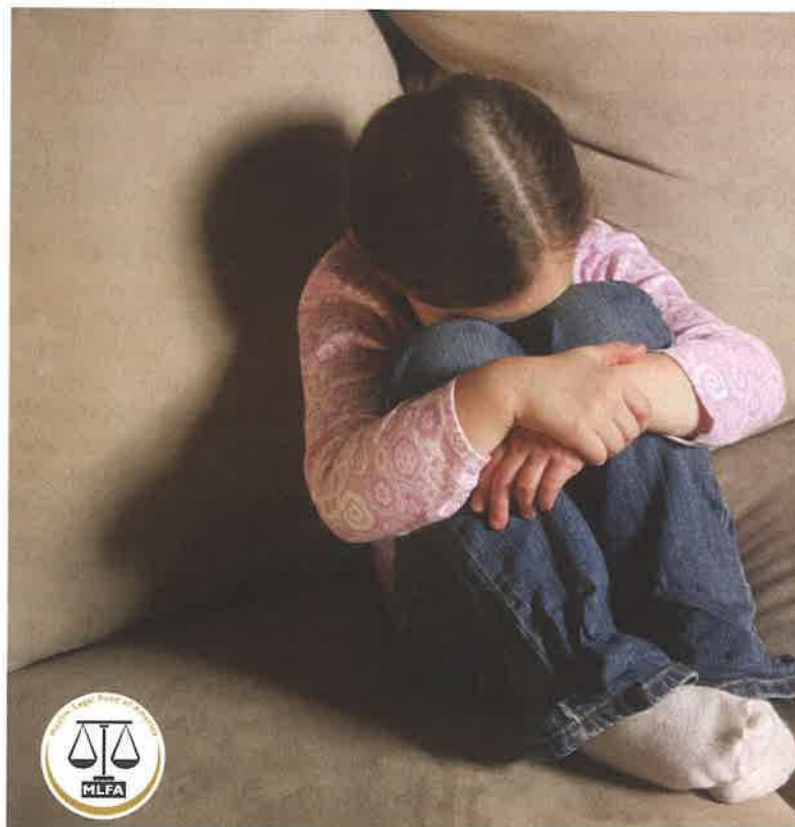
"9/11, for better or worse, was Americans' introduction to Islam, and now there's still an uncomfortable association for Muslim Americans ... every time that anniversary comes around," fellow panelist Zakaria said.

All three panelists emphasized the role of editorial writers, specifically in facilitating the accurate depiction of Muslims to their fellow Americans. Journalists expressed

interest in resources to deepen their knowledge on Islam, where to find definitions of misunderstood terms, and how to look for signs of a healthy Muslim community in their respective neighborhoods nationwide. Othman discussed the trend of mosques promoting civic engagement among their constituents and inviting visitors and interfaith partners into their doors to promote mutual understanding and collaboration.

Moderator Bobby King, religion editor of the Indianapolis Star, echoed these sentiments.


"The best way to learn about Muslims is to go out and talk to a Muslim," King said. ■



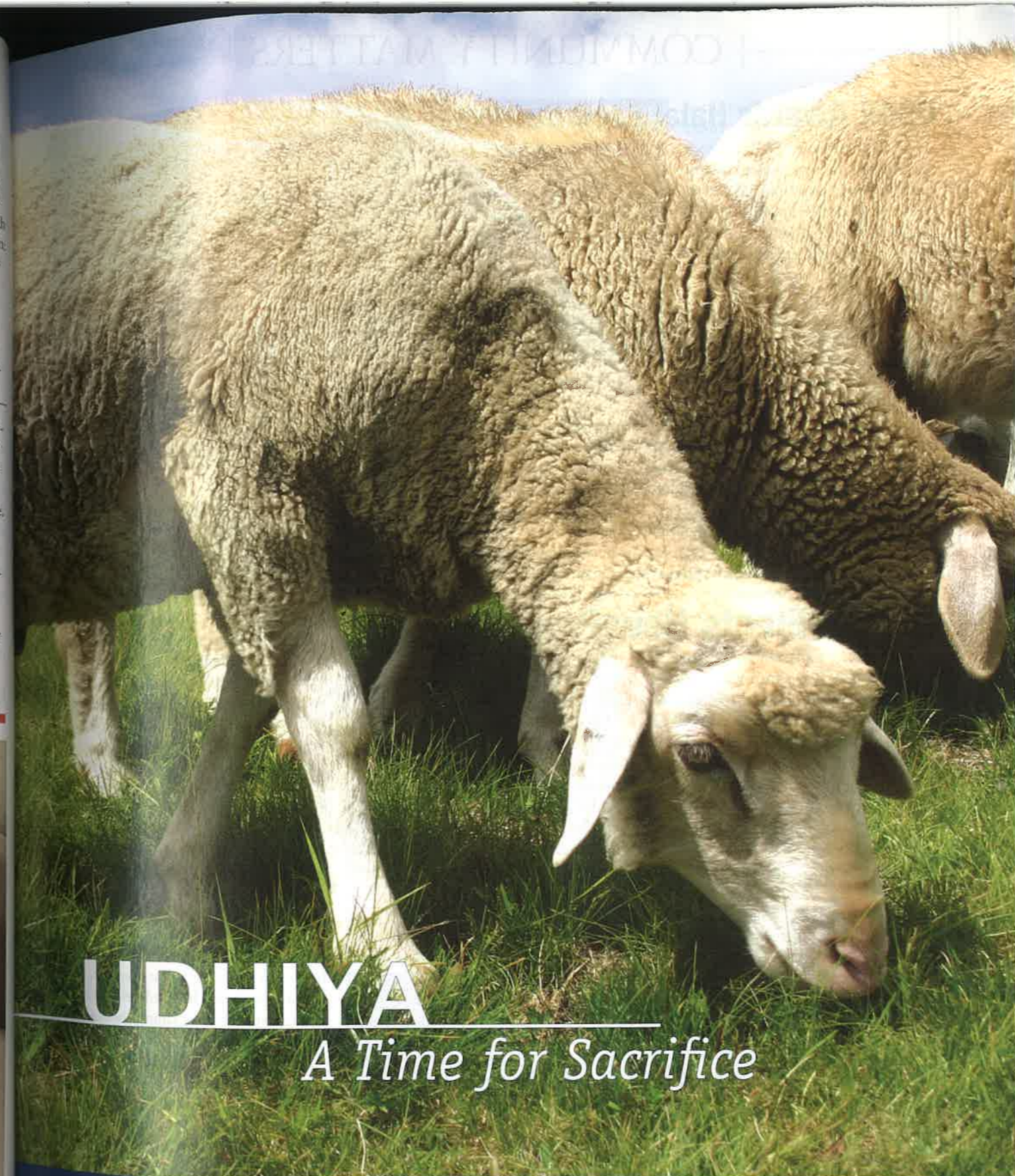
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"Verily, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the Aalameen (mankind, jinns and all that exists)." -6: 162



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USDA Awards Halal Food Company

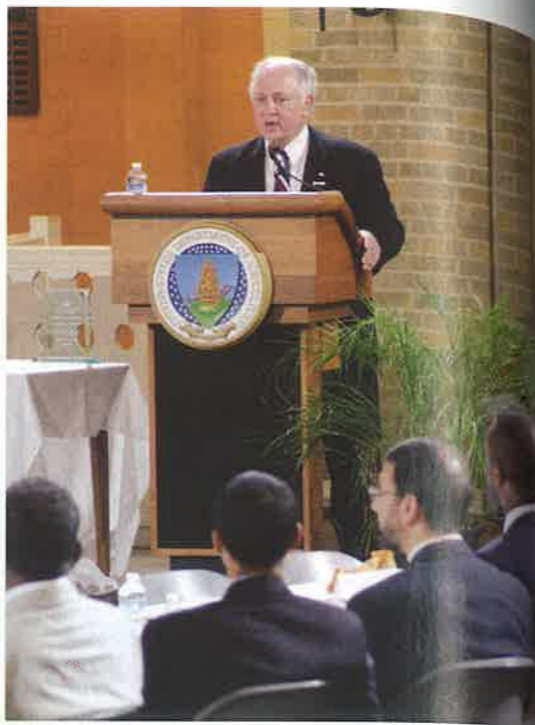
CEDAR RAPIDS, IA.-BASED MIDAMAR Halal Foods became the first American company to receive the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Distinguished Community Service Award, which is given by USDA's Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

The award, which cited Midamar for "exemplary work in providing Halal food options for Muslims in America and around the world," was presented at USDA's annual Iftar in Washington, D.C.

Established in 1974, Midamar was the first American food company to coordinate with USDA in the development of Halal standards and processes in USDA inspected and approved processing facilities. Since then, Midamar has become a globally-recognized halal brand and leading exporter of U.S.-produced halal foods. Midamar supplies

halal products to households, restaurants, franchises, hotels, airlines, schools, prisons, colleges, government agencies and supermarkets in the U.S. and around the world.

In the U.S., Midamar supports shelters, food banks, the USDA summer lunch program, mosques and Islamic centers, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Boy Scouts of America, community outreach programs, schools, internship programs, colleges and universities. Internationally, Midamar participates in food donation efforts to countries experiencing droughts, wars and natural disasters. ■



IMANA Elects New President

DR. MOHAMMAD AL-SHROOF, AN INTERNIST from Warner Robins, Ga., took oath of office as president of the Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA) for 2011-2012 at the 44th Annual Convention and Scientific Assembly held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, July 2011.

IMANA recognized Dr. Shahid Athar for his services with the 2011 Dr. Ahmed El Kadi Award, and Dr. Khursheed Mallick

received IMANA's first ever Lifetime Achievement Award.

During the weeklong convention, members attended informational CME presentations and workshops, group activities and a special IMANA banquet. CME's were led by IMANA executives Drs. Abida Haque, Ayaz Samadani, Khaliq Zahir, Shahid Athar, Ahsruf Sufi and Ismail Mehr, as well as IMANA members Drs. Labiq Syed,

Syed Ahmed, Mohammad Bawani, Kanwal Chaudhry, Mohammad Nadeemullah, and Mohammad Akmal.

Running parallel to the CME lectures were workshops on CPR, skin rejuvenation, and conscious sedation led by Dr. Kanwal Chaudhry, Dr. Mehr and Dr. Zahir.

Haque, in her closing presidential remarks, highlighted IMANA's Relief activities throughout this past year. Awards were also presented to Drs. Chaudhry, Syed, Asif Malik, Zahir and Nadeemullah, and Mehr for their work with IMANA Medical Relief.

In August, IMANA relief director Dr. Mehr, visited Mogadishu to assess crisis conditions in the Somali capital. The anesthesiologist from Hornell, N.Y., is believed to be the first American doctor to enter Somalia to assist with this humanitarian disaster. The famine, which is killing thousands, is a product of the worst drought to hit East Africa in more than 60 years compounded by decades of inadequate economic and human development.

In the last three years, IMANA Relief has dispatched teams of American and Canadian doctors following disasters and conflict in Haiti, Darfur, the Tunisia-Libya border region, Pakistan and the Gaza Strip.

IMANA President Mohammad Al-Shroof said, "Whether here in the U.S. or on the ground in Somalia, we will marshal our resources toward the health and wellbeing of those effected by this drastic calamity." ■

IMANA Relief award winners recognized for their services with the 2010 Sudan SaveSmile surgical mission, and the IMANA Pakistan Flood Relief mission (From left: Dr. Labib Syed, Dr. Kanwal Chaudhry, Dr. Asif Malik, Dr. Mohammad Nadeemullah, Dr. Khaliq Zahir, and Dr. Ismail Mehr)



PHOTO BY KERI SANTRONI

ADAMS Elect New Board

THE FIRST BOARD MEETING OF THE Sterling, Va.-based All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS), after the 2011 board elections, unanimously elected Wael AlKhairo as chairman of the board of trustees. AlKhairo has served ADAMS community for more than a decade as president, board member and chairperson, and member of many committees.

AlKhairo succeeds Omar Ashraf, who served ADAMS as board chairman, board member and chairperson, and member of many committees.

The ADAMS board includes Farooq



Syed, president and board member until May/June 2012; Syed Moktadir, vice president and board member until May/June 2012; Sanobar Yacoob, treasurer and board member until May/June 2012; Awais Sheikh, secretary and board member until

May/June 2012; Wael AlKhairo, chairman of the board, and board member until May/June 2015; Shad Imam, board member until May/June 2015; Abdul Qayyum Jafir, board member until May/June 2015; Syed Akhtar Alam, board member until May/June 2015; Yonus Mirza, board member until May/June 2015; Rizwan Jaka, board member until May/June 2013; and Mir Ali, board member until May/June 2013; Bob Marro, board member until May/June 2013; and Yasminullah, board member until May/June 2013.

The board has resolved that all regular meetings will be open to the public, with at least 30 minutes in each meeting for members' general comments and input. ■

New Jersey appoints Muslim Judge

NEW JERSEY GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE (R-N.J.) appointed Muslim American Sohail Mohammed to the state Superior Court.

Mohammed, 47, who took oath of office July 1, is the second Muslim to serve as a judge in the state.

Christie silenced the judge's detractors. "Ignorance is behind the criticism of Sohail Mohammed," Christie said. "He is an extraordinary American who is an

outstanding lawyer and played an integral role in the post-Sept. 11 period in building bridges between the Muslim



American community in this state and law enforcement."

Judge Mohammed, who was born in Indian-occupied Hyderabad and came to the U.S. at 17, graduated with a degree in electrical engineering in 1988 from the New Jersey Institute of Technology, and obtained his law degree from the Seton Hall University School of Law in Newark, N.J. In 2009, Mohammed was named among the 101 most influential people in New Jersey by the New Jersey Monthly magazine. He was on the New Jersey "Super Lawyer" list six years running from 2006 to 2011. ■

Northwestern Neuroscientist, Team Find ALS Cure

RESEARCHERS AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY say they have discovered a common cause behind the mysterious and deadly affliction of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease, that could open the door to an effective treatment, according to a paper published in the research journal "Nature" (Aug. 22).

The pioneering work of neuroscientist Dr. Teepu Siddique, with Northwestern's Feinberg School of Medicine, on ALS for more than a quarter-century fueled the research team's work. The key to the breakthrough is the discovery of an underlying

disease process for all types of ALS. The discovery provides an opening to finding treatments for ALS and could also pay dividends by showing the way to treatments for other, more common neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's, dementia and Parkinson's. Siddique's team identified the breakdown of cellular recycling systems in the neurons of the spinal cord and brain of ALS patients that results in the nervous system slowly losing its ability to carry brain signals to the body's muscular system.

Without those signals, patients gradually are deprived of the ability to move, talk, swallow and breathe. In 1941, New York Yankee baseball superstar Lou Gehrig died at 37 of the disease that now carries his name. ■



NEWS BRIEFS

THE CITY OF HOUSTON NAMED SENIOR planner Mohdudul Huq of the city's public works and engineering department among the Extra Milers for his outstanding public service. It was noted that Huq's quick and accurate customer service fills his inbox



with compliments. For instance Mary Helen Merzbacher, facilities manager with Family Services of Greater Houston, noted, "You [Huq] are obviously very knowledgeable about the city and the archives kept by Planning and Development. We are lucky to have you as a public employee." ■

THE SANTA CLARA, CALIF.-BASED MUSLIM Community Association formally opened

their 64-ft. tall minaret, which can be spotted along U.S. Highway 101. The minaret is part of the new 9,400-sq. ft. addition to the MCA, costing \$3 million.

The new entrances, foyer, bookstore and the ablution room, complete the final construction phase of the mosque that was an office building when MCA bought it for \$3.5 million. ■

THE SAN RAMON VALLEY ISLAMIC CENTER unveiled its expanded facility on July 29, two days before Ramadan. In November 2009, the Islamic Center purchased two buildings adjacent to its original site. Now, those rooms serve as prayer halls for men and women, respectively. The old building now houses the administrative offices, classes, and serves as a space for social events. SRVIC caters to a community of 500 to 800 people, a community that has grown from 30 families, when they started the center, to 400. ■

BY UNANIMOUS VOTE AUG. 9, HENRICO County, Va.—America's oldest county—approved construction of a mosque on a 3.6-acre lot that had been vacant for 27 years. At the hearing, more than a dozen repre-

sentatives from several local congregations came out in support of the mosque.

The federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act had profound bearing on the vote. The act promulgated in 2002 is designed to protect religious institutions from burdensome zoning-law restrictions on land use.

The 10,500-sq.-ft. facility, proposed in 2008, and rejected 3-2 by the supervisor, gained the county's planning commission approval in July 2011. The center is expected to serve some 5,000 Muslims who live north of the James River, while an estimated 12,000 to 15,000 Muslims live in the greater Richmond area. ■

THE CITY COUNCIL OF LILBURN, Ga., voted 3-1 in favor of allowing the 20,000-sq.-ft. Dar-e-Abbas mosque. The Aug. 10 vote coincided with a Department of Justice investigation into whether Lilburn violated the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act by rejecting zoning applications for the mosque in 2009 and again last year.

The Justice Department has launched RLUIPA probes into 16 contested mosque sites in the U.S. since May 2010. ■

Remembrance and Unity

Interfaith gatherings nationwide remember events of 9/11 and resolve to foster interfaith unity and understanding.

THE MORNING OF SEPT. 11, 2011, MILLIONS OF AMERICANS arose from bed to start their day. Ten years ago, on this very same day, the same exercise was unfolding for the 3,000-plus Americans. However, that day would be their last. It was sudden, it was unexpected, and it ripped at the heart of every American. On the 10th anniversary of that tragic day, Americans across the country were united in remembering those who lost their lives on 9/11 and the thousands more who have lost their lives in acts of terror in all forms since then.

ISNA President Imam Mohamed Magid joined interfaith leaders in D.C. for an interfaith prayer vigil organized by the National Cathedral as "A Call to Compassion." Joining him were representatives from the Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian faiths, including: Dean Samuel T. Lloyd III; Bishop of Washington John Bryson Chane; Rabbi Bruce Lustig, Buddhist nun and incarnate lama Jetsün Khandro Rinpoche of Tibet, and Hindu Priest Dr. D.C. Rao. The faith leaders and interfaith congregation reflected on change and the values we all share as people of faith: compassion, love, justice, and mercy. Magid reflected on mercy, particularly the mercy of God and of humans to each other.

ISNA JOINS 9/11 UNITY WALK

The annual 9/11 Unity Walk, co-sponsored by ISNA, held in D.C. on Sept. 8, brought together a diverse gathering of people. ISNA President Mohamed Magid, Director of Community Outreach Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi, and Majlis member Dr. Altaf Husain also participated in the event. Husain spoke about the importance of interfaith unity. Quoting the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he said, "Because we have inherited this large house, we cannot live apart and must learn to live together."

Husain reiterated the message that we must stand together anytime someone commits an act of violence or of bigotry. To terrorists who use religion to try and justify their actions, he said, "Nothing



ISNA board member Rizwan Jaka (center) accepts the 9/11 Unity Walk's Pioneer Award.

in our teachings will let you do these things in our name." Husain added, "You did not hijack my religion on that day."

ISNA board member Rizwan Jaka was awarded the 9/11 Unity Walk's Pioneer Award for his pioneering and compassionate support of the Walk and interfaith dialogue in the D.C.-metropolitan area. Jaka has been instrumental in the creation and success of the Walk. He has a rich background in community activism, having been heavily involved in organizations including All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center, The Interfaith Council of Metropolitan Washington, and the Boy Scouts of America.

The interfaith coalition Shoulder-to-Shoulder also co-sponsored the event. The Rev. Beau Underwood, Partnership and Outreach Coordinator at Faith in Public Life, spoke on the campaign's behalf. ISNA and more than 26 other faith organizations launched the campaign in an effort to promote tolerance and freedom of religion in America.



Imam Magid addresses the audience at the Shoulder-to-Shoulder 9/11 press conference.



Dr. Elsanousi, Sheikh Hamza Yusuf and others gather at the Unity Walk.

ISNA SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER CALLS FOR TOLERANCE

On Sept. 9, 2011, the Shoulder-to-Shoulder campaign held a press conference attended by faith leaders of more than 26 religious denominations in support of standing together with Muslim neighbors to denounce the prejudice and hostility toward Muslims after 9/11. The leaders addressed various themes of tolerance, mercy, compassion, and building understanding with one another in an atmosphere of fear and division.

"What kind of nation have we become in the aftermath of 9/11?"

Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of the U.S., asked. "To the extent that we've become a fearful nation, a revengeful nation, an intolerant and divided nation—we have given terrorists a victory by creating society in their image."

Imam Magid emphasized the importance of understanding

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God as a God of Mercy. All faith leaders reaffirmed the imperative to stand together against prejudice to progress as a nation with a common fate.

The faith leaders, who are very concerned about rising anti-Muslim sentiment, established a steering committee to discuss next steps for the campaign and suggest practical strategies for moving forward.

SUBURBAN CHICAGO MUSLIMS JOIN CHRISTIANS IN MARKING 9/11 ANNIVERSARY

The Mosque Foundation, American Muslims for Palestine and local Muslims joined with the Oak Lawn Clergy & Religious Workers Association to present an event on Sept. 8 marking the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

Under the title, "Commemorating 9/11: Remembrance, Renewal and Hope," members of the Oak Lawn Commemoration Committee came together for several weeks to create the interfaith service that reached out to both the Muslim and Christian communities.

Speakers at the event included: Kifah Mustafa, associate director and imam of the Mosque Foundation; Illinois Institute of Technology student Duhah Hamayel, president of Students for Justice in Palestine as well as a board member of the Muslim Student Association; and Rafeeq Jaber, community businessman and MF board member.

In perhaps the evening's most compelling speech, Duhah Hamayel recounted her experience as a 9-year-old trying to come to terms with the terrorist attacks.

"I struggled to reconcile my faith and the principles that I had been brought up with, with the crimes that had been committed on 9/11. But try as I might, the two would not meet and after a while, I stopped trying," Hamayel said. "I understood my faith to be what it was and still is, a guide to what is good and right. And I came to the conclusion that, even though those responsible for 9/11 called themselves Muslims, my fellow Muslims and I, here in America and around the globe, did not, and could not, identify with them."

Sept. 11 strengthened her faith and inspired her to become a doctor, Hamayel said.

While the evening was one of unity and hope, Imam Mustafa also pointed to the difficulties with which Muslims have lived since 9/11. It's a reality that we have to acknowledge, he said. Yet, he also reached a note of hope because of the way Muslims are integrated in their communities and the interfaith dialogue that exists now between members of diverse religions.

NORTH TEXAS MUSLIMS AND BAPTISTS JOIN TOGETHER

On a Sunday afternoon, a week after the 10th anniversary of 9/11, several buses pulled up at Northwood church in Keller, Tex., and hundreds of traditionally-dressed Muslims exited and headed toward the church to be welcomed at the door by Pastor Bob Roberts with "Assalamu alaykum."

The Muslim-Baptist initiative, Building Bridges with Fellow Texans, held Sept. 18, brought together 2,500 Muslims and Christians, who filled up for the first time all of Northwood Church's worship auditorium.



Muslim and Baptist friends join together in solidarity in Texas.



Standing in back row, from left: Rafeeq Jaber, Oak Lawn Mayor Dave Heilmann, Sh. Kifah Mustafa, Oak Lawn Village Clerk Jane Quinlan, Rev. Nancy Goede, and Rev. Steve Hoerger. Seated in front row, from left: Helen Elayan, Duhah Hamayel, Miriam Sadoun, Kristin Szremski, Rev. Phil Leo and Rev. Peggy McClanahan.

In addition, several religious and civil leaders representing both communities also spoke. ISNA Vice President USA Azhar Azeez passed ISNA's greetings to the Texans, and quoted Martin Luther King, Jr.: "The coward will ask, is it safe? The brave person will ask, is it right?"

Imam Zia commended the audience for attending and gave a detailed reference of how the Quran mentions Jesus and his mother Mary, peace be upon them. He reassured the audience that Muslims in America were not trying to impose Islamic shariah on Americans. "We are happily practicing shariah, by praying five times a day, fasting Ramadan, giving alms, etc.," Zia said.

Concluding the program, Pastor Roberts said: "We, Christians at Northwood Church, we love Muslims."

Dr. Yusuf Ziya Kavacki of Islamic Association of North Texas said: "[It was] the best and most successful interfaith event of DFW area."

The event is the result of years of friendship and mutual trust that Pastor Roberts had built with the other local Christian congregations and Muslim imams. The pastor is well known for his "global ideologies, a belief that what people do locally has an effect globally. Thus, he had started outreach with the Vietnamese, and then with Irving Islamic Center's Imam Zia ul Haque Sheikh, to improve relations between communities. His efforts were mainly in the humanitarian project area until he initiated the Global Faith Forum last November, where he opened interfaith dialogue between the three Abrahamic faiths.

"God must be very happy to see us tonight," Roberts declared to the audience. A well planned program followed with a Vietnamese pastor speaking about how all humans come from one Creator. Then a Muslim woman wearing hijab, sang the Star Spangled Banner, a group of children with hijab-clad girls recited the Pledge of Allegiance, a Muslim man called the Adhan on stage, and a multi-faith children's choir sang "You Are My Sunshine."

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CARING FOR HEARTS AND MINDS



Lt. Col. Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad and ISNA Secretary General Safaa Zarzour chat with a fellow chaplain-endorser at Fort Jackson during the dedication of the Unified Chaplains Training Center for the U.S. Armed Forces. Prior to this center, each branch of the military had its own training system, center and programs.

Muslim chaplains play an indispensable role, but community involvement and support is needed.

BY MEHA AHMAD

WHEN SEEKING ISLAMIC GUIDANCE, most Muslims turn to their local imam. Or perhaps an Islamic studies professor. Or maybe even just a well-read relative. But in recent years, more and more institutions—like the University of Michigan, who recently announced that they’re looking to hire the university’s first Islamic chaplain—are seeking the help of Muslim chaplains to serve the spiritual needs of Muslims in a way that an imam may not always be able to.

“It is immensely rewarding to nurture the next generation and it gives me a lot of hope,” Princeton University chaplain Sohaib Sultan says.

Chaplains are trained professionals who offer spiritual advice and counseling in institutional settings, such as colleges/universities, prisons, the military and hospitals. A chaplain is not an imam (though an imam can be certified to be a chaplain). Their main duty is to serve the religious needs of all individuals in the institution they serve. A Muslim chaplain would have a special knowledge of Islam, compared to other chaplains, but still be expected to accommodate individuals of all faiths and backgrounds.

WHERE CHAPLAINS SERVE YOU

Hospitals

In a hospital, a patient expects physical care: diagnoses, treatment, cures. But what about spiritual care? Though it's not as "tangible," chaplains trained to provide spiritual counseling and comfort play a vital role in the health care of patients and their families.

"The role of the chaplain is largely that of the listener. Talk therapy is a form of compassion—just being there to share someone's pain," says Maryam Mostoufi, a hospital chaplain as well as a rotating chaplain for the



Prison chaplain Mumina Kowalski.

Illinois State Senate. "You act as a sounding board for them to talk through some of the existential questions they have. Like 'Why me? Why would God let this happen?' And you help them through it."

Hospital staff also rely on chaplains to guide them in properly serving a patient's needs.

"As a chaplain, your role is not just to the patient or to their family, but also to the medical staff, because they have to understand certain practices and beliefs of the patient to be able to serve them," Mostoufi, the Muslim woman to be admitted into the Association of Professional Chaplains.

This includes having a rudimentary knowledge of the diversity of the local Muslim community, according to Dr. Amr Padela, an Islamic bioethics researcher at the University of Michigan.

"Muslim chaplain should be a cultural expert for Muslims," Padela, who has conducted several studies on the needs of Muslim patients, says. "They might be able to answer about behaviors of Muslim patients. They are seen by the hospital system as someone who can deal with the patient side and the hospital care side."

However, Padela says, when it comes to Muslim chaplains, many hospitals still "don't know what they're getting," due to the fact that Muslim chaplaincy is still relatively new compared to its counterpart in Christianity. There needs to be a more solid, established definition for what Muslim chaplains do and don't provide, Padela says.

Kamal Abu-Shamsieh, a hospital chaplain and director of the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno, Calif., says a hospital chaplain is part of the treatment team of the patient.

"When we [hospital chaplains] visit Muslim patients, we conduct a spiritual assessment," Abu-Shamsieh says. "This kind of information complements the medical attention the patient receives from the hospital staff. [...] We are a trusted source of treatment for the patient."

When it comes to chaplaincy in the hospital setting, for some, working with the sick and dying can take its toll. But according to Rabia Terri Harris, who has been a hospital chaplain for more than eight years and now trains would-be chaplains, there is nothing more rewarding.

"It can be stressful, but it's also very beautiful," Harris says. "It's not really depressing or serious. The worst reality is better than the best fantasy."

Muslim chaplains also serve to put wary and guarded patients at ease.

Abu-Shamsieh, who is currently conducting clinical research on the barrier of spiritual care among Muslim patients, says



Princeton University chaplain Sohaib Sultan

that he has observed a significant number of Muslim patients not releasing their religious affiliation; in fact, they often register themselves as having no religious preference.

This is sometimes because of the impact of 9/11, leaving some Muslim patients to worry about whether they will have the same treatment as a non-Muslim patient, unaware

that the hospital asks about religious preference in order to provide spiritual care services, not to withhold treatment.

According to Mostoufi, this is not at all uncommon. She recalls one case where a patient and his family, from Kosovo, hid their faith out of fear that the hospital would withhold treatment from their father. It wasn't until, four days after being admitted, a hospital staffer noticed a Quran hidden underneath the clothes of one of the family members that Mostoufi was notified and asked to counsel the family.

"By talking with the family, I was able to translate to them that their father would receive the same level of care as any patient," Mostoufi says. "And I was able to explain to the hospital their fears and concerns. The staff said they never thought a person's personal history would make them feel so threatened."

According to Mostoufi, the growing field of Muslim chaplaincy in hospitals has provided an additional benefit to the community.

"With more Muslims becoming visible within chaplaincy, other chaplains have become more sensitized to the needs of

Where to Train Muslim Chaplaincy programs are opening new horizons.

BY ZAHRA CHEEMA

HARTFORD SEMINARY

THE ISLAMIC CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM AT HARTFORD Seminary provides students with academic study as well as practical training in chaplaincy. It is a 72-credit program that consists of a 48-credit Master of Arts degree with a concentration in Islamic studies and Christian-Muslim relations, and a 24-credit Graduate Certificate in Islamic chaplaincy. For those who have already completed a M.A. or have an equivalent of a M.A., they can apply directly for the Graduate Certificate in Islamic chaplaincy.

Program director Timur Yuskaev says that it is the only certified Islamic chaplaincy program in the country at this time.

"We prepare students to enter the field of chaplaincy and have full credentials so that they can work [...] within the field of university chaplaincy, hospital chaplaincy, military and prison chaplaincy," Yuskaev says.

Students receive instruction in a multi-faith environment.

"We make sure that people who graduate from our program have a knowledge of other traditions, can work as colleagues with

people of other traditions, and that begins in a classroom experience where they are enrolled in the classes together with their Christian and Jewish colleagues," Yuskaev says.

He says that every year the number of students enrolled in the program increases and those students enter the program with more nuanced understanding of chaplaincy.

"A chaplain is a unique professional," Yuskaev says. "They need to be equally at home in the Muslim community and [...] recognized as authorities in the Muslim community, and they have to be equally at home in the larger society and the institutions they serve."

THE FAIRFAX INSTITUTE

In collaboration with Hartford Seminary, the Herndon, Va.-based Fairfax Institute offers a Graduate Certificate for Imams and Community Leadership. Offered as part of this certificate are several courses related to chaplaincy training. Dr. Iqbal Unus, director of The Fairfax Institute, says that these courses offer students a chance to pursue further studies in chaplaincy at Hartford Seminary.



"It could be a stepping stone towards the chaplaincy certificate," Unus says.

Unus says that all the credits earned through the Graduate Certificate for Imams and Community Leadership are transferable to Hartford.

Though The Fairfax Institute does not currently offer a program in chaplaincy, Unus says that he is exploring the possibility of offering it in the future.

ECUMENICAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

This September marked the beginning of a two-year pilot program,

the Muslim Chaplaincy Program at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary (ETS), in Detroit. The program, which is part of the seminary's Urban Ministry Diploma program, will prepare students in chaplaincy. The first year of the program focuses on academic studies and the second will focus on practical experience. Students must have a high school diploma or G.E.D. to enter the program.

The program is a collaborative partnership

between ETS and local Muslim community leaders in response to the community's growing need for chaplaincy training. The program was designed by Urias Beverly, its current director and coordinator of the Doctor of Ministry Program at ETS, and Mustapha Elturk, imam and president of the Islamic Organization of North America.

According to Beverly, the program currently has 10 to 12 students, and includes imams, a business professional and a retired physician who is seeking her second profession as a chaplain. All the students are from Michigan; however, that may soon change as Beverly receives inquiries about the program from people in other parts of the country.

Beverly is hopeful about the program's future.

"Once we began to get the word out, we've had a lot of response," he says. "We cannot imagine that it [the program] will not continue."

Beverly says that though he knows that everyone will not be excited about the partnership between ETS and the Muslim community on the Muslim Chaplaincy Program, he is confident about the direction the program has taken.

"I believe that this is where we need to be, that this is what we're called to do," he says. "We need to be partners with each other; we need to be hospitable to each other. We cannot draw boundaries on love, and goodwill and hope and grief and suffering."

For Beverly, the experience of partnering with others strengthens his own beliefs.

"I do not think that working with a person of a different faith weakens either person's faith, but has the opposite effect; it strengthens the faith of both persons or both communities working together," Beverly says. ■

Muslim patients. It's a wonderful opportunity to do *da'wah* in terms of showing a different side of Islam; it's an incredible teaching opportunity," Mostoufi says.

Prison

Mumina Kowalski, the first Muslim woman to serve as a chaplain in the largest women's prison in Pennsylvania, has studied the difference between chaplaincies in the four main fields (hospitals, military, colleges and prisons) and says the duties of a chaplain don't vary too much. A chaplain serves the spiritual needs of those in the institution in which they serve, and in the prison system, the main difference is simply in the limited movements of a chaplain's congregation.

In the prison, Kowalski's duties included: conducting formal Islamic services; counseling inmates on personal and religious needs; visiting inmates in the infirmary, conducting group religious counseling, and performing any other chaplaincy services reasonably expected of a Muslim chaplain.

In the prison system, it is especially important for chaplains to be able to serve the inmates because they are often one of the few sources, if not the only source, of spiritual guidance and counseling.

"Prisons want chaplains to lead religious services, not inmates, because inmate leadership has been shown to be a factor in inmate radicalization," Kowalski says.

Universities

Sohaib Sultan says his parents raised him to serve his religion and community. So the question for him as he grew older was simply, how? Now, as a full-time chaplain at Princeton University, Sultan serves as a counselor and mentor to Muslim students (as well as students of other faiths), and also educates and engages the campus in what he calls, "thoughtful learning about Islam and Muslim cultures."

However, Sultan says that Muslim chaplaincy at the university level is still very new and changes and development are yet to come. In fact, he laughs at the idea of a "typical" day in the office—his role changes by the hour.

"Everyday requires wearing different

hats—one hour I'm a spiritual counselor, the next I'm busy with an administrative task, and the next hour I'm sitting on a committee meeting to address a campus issue," Sultan says. "Never a boring day."

The best thing about being a chaplain at a university, according to Sultan, rather than a hospital or in the military, is the ability to help shape the hearts and minds of young people.

"It is immensely rewarding to nurture the next generation and it gives me a lot of hope," Sultan says, despite it being more than a full-time job.

Military

Lt. Col. Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad was the first Muslim chaplain in the U.S. Armed Forces. A veritable trailblazer for other Muslim religious leaders in the military,



Chaplain Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad is promoted to lieutenant colonel in a 2009 ceremony. Muhammad was the first Muslim chaplain in the armed forces. Also pictured are his wife Saleemah and Brig. Gen. Donald Rutherford, deputy chief of chaplains. (Courtesy of the U.S. Army)

Muhammad has served in the military for more than three decades, and has served as a chaplain for 18 years so far. Currently stationed in Maryland, he was affirmed in the U.S. Army in December 1993, marking the first time Muslim soldiers have had religious leadership available to them in the army.

"Prior to Muslim chaplains being in

the military, the Department of Defense did not have representatives in uniform to represent the Islamic religion," Muhammad says. "There was a big gap between what their needs were and what we had in terms of personnel assets available—not only in the military, but in the civilian world. We had to answer a host of different questions but also represent, in uniform, Muslim soldiers."

He warns, however, that chaplains who are considering venturing into the military field should have a strong and broad familiarity with the needs of soldiers of different backgrounds and faiths—more so than in other arenas.

"Muslim chaplains have to balance being a Muslim, serving the religious needs of non-Muslims, and knowing how to recognize the nuances of people from different backgrounds. The army is the most diverse employer in the world. And you never know

who you are going to encounter," Muhammad says.

However, while other fields allow for Muslim women to be chaplains, the U.S. military does not. The military defines a chaplain as one who can lead the religious services or prayers of that religion's followers, a definition that has left Muslim women in the military out in the cold, something Lt. Col. Shareeda Hosein knows all too well.

Though Hosein has served in the military for more than 32 years, the Army rejected her application to become a military chaplain when she applied in 2003—even though she already

had chaplain experience in the university setting—on the grounds that Islam doesn't allow for women to lead men in prayer. When she tried to reapply in 2005, Hosein says that the recruiters "wouldn't even talk to me."

But that hasn't stopped her from doing what she can. Hosein is a lay leader, one of many in the military who are endorsed

by ISNA, who seeks to provide for the spiritual care of soldiers, even if that means arranging for a local imam to come and lead Friday prayer.

Hosein hopes that she can help pave the way for Muslim women to be military chaplains in the future, even if that doesn't include her. The cut-off age for military chaplaincy is 50, the age Hosein turned this year.

"But if the Muslim voice is strong in the community, we can request a change in policy," Hosein says, who is ready to petition the government if that's what it takes for a Muslim woman to be a military chaplain.

"I feel like I've been fighting the gender issue my entire life and my soul will not rest in peace until I have a victory and this would be a victory for us. Us, because I need the entire Muslim community."

THE ROAD TO CHAPLAINCY

When Kifah Shukair first saw a pamphlet on chaplaincy, she didn't know much about what it entailed, but was intrigued enough to find out more. After her first internship during the summer of 2010 turned out to be what she called "a great experience," the mother of two decided to pursue her certification as a hospital chaplain at a nearby Christian seminary.

"As a Muslim, I felt this was a place to be: visiting the sick, lending support and prayer," Shukair, from Bridgeview, Ill., says.

Shukair is currently seeking her Masters in Divinity, and is doing her chaplain residency at Christ Hospital. She said that, of all the chaplaincy fields, she was drawn to hospital chaplaincy the most.

A typical day during her residency can include counseling a sick patient or their family on the rehab cardiology floor, providing a patient with a Bible, requesting halal meals for observing Muslim patients, helping someone come to terms with their illness, giving a baby blessing in the maternity ward, among a laundry list of other duties.

Remembering a hadith about God being with the sick, Shukair says she was so affected by it that it has colored how she views working in the hospital. Her studies and work as a chaplain has brought her one step closer to God, she says.

"Life is so temporary, but it's how we make use of this life that is important," Shukair says. "Maybe there are things we can do in the hospital that we can't do in a masjid. And our community needs this spiritual care [in the hospital]."

Do Chaplains Need to be Endorsed?

BY MEHA AHMAD

AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE chaplaincy world is the endorser. A chaplain's endorsing agent can give them more credibility and higher standing. But only at the federal level does the law require having an endorsing agent. A chaplain in the military, as opposed to other fields, cannot work without an endorsing agent.

But no matter what field you choose to chaplain in, having an endorser can boost your standing and set you apart from other applicants.

"The endorsement is to show that the person has good character, values and Islamic knowledge, will lead the prayer with integrity and that the members of the community will respect him," according to Lt. Col. Shareeda Hosein, who chaplained at Tufts University and is currently a lay leader in the U.S. Army.

The endorser is responsible for making sure the chaplains are in good standing within the religious community, according to Lt. Col. Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad.

"Endorsers make sure [the chaplains they endorse] are trained and qualified to conduct the religious services of all faith groups," Muhammad says. "They're also required to follow up and provide training periodically throughout the career of a chaplain. The endorser is required by law to tell the government whether this individual is qualified to represent their faith group for your organization."

While there are few different endorsing agents, the most popular one is ISNA.



HOW TO BE ENDORSED BY ISNA:

ISNA offers endorsement for chaplains, chaplain candidates and lay leaders in hospitals, the military, prisons and universities.

To be endorsed, applicants must:

- fill out an application, found on ISNA's website
- submit an essay
- complete an interview
- provide references and transcripts to the Leadership Department

The Chaplains Board will then review the person's file and, based on the interview, will determine if the applicant is capable of performing their duty. If they approve, they will present a letter of endorsement to the applicant.

The endorsed chaplain will then be entered into ISNA's records of chaplains, and will benefit from the organization's yearly training, including workshops focused on enhancing a chaplain's skills in their field.

And if you're looking for job tips, ISNA can help their endorsed chaplains with that, too, according to Diane Hummeid, administrative assistant for ISNA's Chaplaincy/Leadership Development Center.

"If I hear of something that might be of interest to [our chaplains], I will usually send out a message to the ones we endorse—for instance, if there is a seminar I think they might be interested in, open positions they might want to know of, etc.," Hummeid says of the courtesy. ■

"The role of the chaplain is largely that of the listener. Talk therapy is a form of compassion—just being there to share someone's pain," says hospital chaplain Maryam Mostoufi.

4 OUT OF 5 CHAPLAINS ARE MEN

According to a 2010 survey by Kowalski, men fill about four out of five chaplaincy jobs, even though the criteria to be an effective chaplain are genderless. The low enrollment from women can be attributed to: the overwhelming number of male prison inmates (where a male prison chaplain would be more prudent); the more extensive educational requirements for professional hospital chaplains in comparison to other chaplaincy jobs; and the fact that the military has yet to recognize Muslim women as chaplains.

University settings tend to be more open to female chaplains, since about two out of six chaplaincy jobs in universities are fulfilled by a woman.



Kamal Abu-Shamsieh (left) is a hospital chaplain and the director of the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno in California. On the right, New York University chaplain Khalid Latif.

However, in the other three settings, there is an ever-growing need for Muslim women chaplains. But the intense training needed for hospital chaplains, and the military's stance on not allowing Muslim women chaplains to be certified to serve in the military, combined with a lack of education in Muslim communities as to just what a chaplain is, has nearly put the breaks on Muslim women seeing chaplaincy as a realistic career option.

And many women who are already working in the chaplaincy field aren't getting their dues anyway, according to Harris. She says women chaplains are vastly underappreciated.

"There is a serious discrimination issue in terms of community support," Harris says. "People don't really quite understand the difference between chaplain and imam, so women chaplains are frequently overlooked."

Abu-Shamsieh, who is also the director of an Islamic center in Fresno, Calif., agrees that the misconception in Muslim communities that chaplains also serve as imams is part of why there are so few Muslim women in the chaplaincy field.

"Culturally, people are still thinking that only males should be leading this kind of service," Abu-Shamsieh says. "But a female would not be an imam of the community by being a chaplain. She can do all the tasks of a chaplain without breaking any aspects of the norms agreed upon so far in the community. We need to encourage more of our sisters to be in this field and offer their kind of services."

MAKING A CAREER AS A CHAPLAIN

Chaplains work in several capacities: volunteer, part-time/stipend, or full-time staff.

Like in any field, a career in chaplaincy is a ladder. One may start out as a volunteer, and then, after gaining more on-the-job



training, move up to full-time work. The more education/training and experienced one is, the more likely they will be able to snag the more well-paying, full-time chaplaincy jobs.

And the pay can be comfortable. A full-time hospital chaplain, for example, can make about \$30,000 to \$45,000.

"But if that person wants to take three more years in their education and then apply for a hospital supervisor, that figure can double," Harris says.

The military may be the most financially secure area in which to be a chaplain. While a prison, hospital, or university chaplain may be volunteer or part-time, a military chaplain is a ranking officer, and receives a salary befitting that rank.

"A chaplain is an officer. When you work in the government as a military chaplain, you are a professional and you get paid a professional in your rank," Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad says. "Most chaps make more money in the military than if they were serving in a church."

Prison and university chaplains are more likely to be volunteer or part-time, but look

out. Chaplaincy on the university level is a growing market, as more and more are taking the initiative to hire full-time Muslim chaplains to serve Muslim students on campus.

However, while a comfortable salary is an ideal, would-be chaplains are warned about getting hung up on dollars and cents.

"I think that if someone wants to be a chaplain, they need to have a really good sense of why they want to be a chaplain, a good sense of who they are," Muhammad says. "They shouldn't be doing it at all for the money."

MOVING FORWARD

While the world of Muslim chaplaincy continues to grow and take shape, there is still a long way to go. Muslim chaplaincy is just coming out of its infancy.

One thing most chaplains can agree on: their Muslim communities need to get more involved in supporting Muslim chaplains and becoming educated as to what the role of Muslim chaplains is.

"The overwhelming majority of people I talk to in my research think that a chaplain cannot be Muslim, that a chaplain must be a priest or Christian," Abu-Shamsieh says. "We need more Muslims to consider chaplaincy, especially female students."

Harris says she would like to see stronger accreditation practices for Muslim chaplaincy, as well as more acceptance and recognition from the community.

"I would like to see the field become more organized and welcoming to people of various backgrounds," Harris says. "Take Muslim chaplains seriously as necessary servants in the Ummah. Embrace us, recognize us and take advantage of what we have to offer."

Veteran chaplain Muhammad said he would like to see a more robust educational process through our Islamic community and endorses, focusing on working in a pluralistic environment.

"As a chaplain, you never know what the needs might be of those you encounter regarding religious, cultural backgrounds. You really have to be trained to be able to help people that could come from potentially so many different backgrounds and I think we need more training in order to be able to do that better," Muhammad says. "This is very new to us. So it's going to take time and we're taking small bites in this big elephant."

Meha Ahmad is a the copyeditor of Islamic Horizons.

Healthy Guidance

Study finds that imams play key role in health decisions of Muslim Americans.

BY AMAL KILLAWI

A 2010 STUDY FOUND THAT IMAMS HAVE A SIGNIFICANT influence in the health decisions of Muslim Americans, yet few imams are in hospital chaplaincy programs. Given limited research on this subject, this study sheds an important light on the roles of imams in the health of their congregation and outlines the responsibilities of the Muslim community toward their religious leaders.

Conducted through the University of Michigan (UM) Health System, the study was led by Dr. Aasim Padel, who is now an Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Chicago. Dr. Padel, also a health services researcher and bioethicist, focuses his scholarship on the intersection of minority health and bioethics.

"Imams play key roles in the health of the Muslim American community," Padel says. "Partnerships with imams can be a means to improve community health and deliver culturally-sensitive, high quality care to Muslim Americans."

Padel and his colleagues utilized a community-based participatory research model by collaborating with four key Southeast Michigan community organizations: the Council of Islamic Organizations in Michigan (CIOM) and the Islamic Shura Council of Michigan (ISCOC)—both umbrella organizations that represent more than 35 Muslim organizations—the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU)—an American Muslim policy institute—and the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS), a community health organization.

Representatives from these organizations, along with an interdisciplinary investigative team, formed part of a steering committee that guided all phases of the project. To understand the imam's role in community health, Padel's team interviewed 12 Muslim community leaders, including two imams. The focus group represented a variety of countries of origin and held various positions in the Muslim American community.

The study found that imams primarily play four central roles in the health of Muslim Americans:

- Imams encourage healthy behaviors

through scripture-based messages in sermons. For example, during Friday prayers and community lectures, imams may use health messages from the Quran and prophetic traditions to encourage moderation in eating and to taking care of health. Imams may also help congregants to cope with illness and maintain hope in the Divine by framing disease and healing as part of God's plan.

- Imams perform religious rituals around life events and illnesses. Such as blessing births, visiting the sick and overseeing burial services. Imams may also serve a more direct therapeutic role as counselors and alternative mental health providers.

- Imams advocate for Muslim patients and deliver cultural sensitivity training in hospitals. Imams can also take on larger roles within the hospital and healthcare system. They may serve as advocates for the needs of Muslim patients, as well as cultural brokers, educating staff about Muslim beliefs. Respondents noted that few imams have formal hospital appointments, and thus many patients are surprised to learn that there is an imam on staff to visit them, take care of them, and ensure that their beliefs are respected.

- When difficult healthcare decisions must be made, imams often play an integral role in this process, both within hospital and mosque settings. Muslim patients may seek their religious advice, often involving them in family meetings with physicians. At times, imams may also serve as religious consults for Muslim healthcare providers, helping them to make decisions in line with Islamic law and ethics.

- Despite these important roles, the study also found that compared to priests and rabbis, few imams are included in hospital chaplaincy programs and health system partnerships with religious leaders. According to the researchers, some of the barriers preventing partnerships between imams and healthcare systems may be the required chaplaincy credentials of hospitals (which imams often lack) and imams' limited availability.

The Muslim community can help in addressing these challenges by advocating for greater flexibility in hospital protocols around who can offer chaplaincy and spiritual care services. Muslim health professionals can partner with imams to take advantage of their leadership roles and utilize their sermons for education on health prevention and intervention methods. By hiring additional service staff at the mosque and allocating financial resources, community members can also offer institutional support to imams, increasing their accessibility to healthcare institutions and to Muslim patients. Building and strengthening partnerships with imams has the potential to facilitate best quality care to Muslim patients and to improve the health of the Muslim American community. ■

Amal Killawi, LLMSW, is qualitative data analyst, Department of Family Medicine, University of Michigan-School of Social Work.



Building and strengthening partnerships with imams has the potential to facilitate best quality care to Muslim patients and to improve the health of the Muslim American community.

The Phantoms Fueling the Anti-Shariah Campaign

Muslim Americans need to raise awareness about the handful of hate-mongers who hijacked the civil discourse and are heightening Islamophobia.

BY ISLAMIC HORIZONS STAFF

ON JULY 22, A 32-YEAR-OLD blond-haired and blue-eyed Norwegian named Anders Breivik man planted a bomb in an Oslo government building that killed eight people. A few hours after the explosion, he shot and killed 68 people—mostly teenagers—at a Labor Party youth camp on Norway's Utoya Island.

By midday, pundits were speculating as to who had perpetrated the greatest massacre in Norwegian history since World War II. Numerous mainstream media outlets, including "The New York Times," "The Washington Post," and "The Atlantic," speculated about an Al Qaeda connection and a "jihadist" motivation behind the attacks. But by the next morning, it was clear that

the attacker was not a Muslim, but rather a self-described Christian conservative.

On July 26, Breivik told the court that violence was "necessary" to save Europe from Marxism and "Muslimization." In his 1,500-page manifesto, which meticulously details his attack methods and aims to inspire others to extremist violence, Breivik vows "brutal and breathtaking operations which will result in casualties" to fight the alleged "ongoing Islamic colonization of Europe."

Breivik's manifesto contains numerous references to American bloggers and pundits, quoting them as experts on Islam's "war against the West." This small group of anti-Muslim organizations and individuals, obscure to most Americans, wields great influence in shaping the national and international political debate.

Breivik cited Robert Spencer, one of the

anti-Muslim misinformation scholars profile in this report, and his blog, *Islam Watch*, 162 times in his manifesto. Spencer, Geller, Spencer's frequent collaborator, and her blog, *Atlas Shrugs*, was mentioned 11 times. Geller and Spencer co-founded the organization Stop Islamization of America, a group whose actions and rhetoric the American Defamation League said "promotes a conspiratorial anti-Muslim agenda under the guise of fighting radical Islam."

Former CIA officer and terrorism consultant Marc Sageman says just as religious extremism "is the infrastructure from which Al Qaeda emerged," the writings of these anti-Muslim misinformation experts are "the infrastructure from which Breivik emerged." Sageman adds that their rhetoric "is not cost-free."

Breivik's manifesto also cites think tanks including the Center for Security Policy, the Middle East Forum, and the Investigative Project on Terrorism—three other organizations profiled by the Center for American Progress report: "Fear, Inc.: The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America," which was released on Aug. 26.

This network of hate is not a new presence in the U.S. Indeed, its ability to organize, coordinate, and disseminate its ideology through grassroots organizations



increased dramatically over the past 10 years. Furthermore, its ability to influence politicians' talking points and wedge issues for the upcoming 2012 elections has mainstreamed what was once considered fringe, extremist rhetoric.

And it all starts with the money flowing from a select group of foundations.

A small group of foundations and wealthy donors are the lifeblood of the Islamophobia network in America, providing critical funding to a clutch of right-wing think tanks that peddle hate and fear of Muslims and Islam—in the form of books, reports, websites, blogs, and carefully crafted talking points that anti-Islam grassroots organizations and some right-wing religious groups use as propaganda for their constituency.

The top seven contributors to promoting Islamophobia in the U.S.:

- Donors Capital Fund
- Richard Mellon Scaife foundations
- Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation
- Newton D. & Rochelle F. Becker foundations and charitable trust

- Russell Berrie Foundation
- Anchorage Charitable Fund and William Rosenwald Family Fund
- Fairbrook Foundation

Altogether, these seven charitable groups provided \$42.6 million to Islamophobia

Much of the propaganda gets churned into fundraising appeals by grassroots and religious right groups. The money they raise then enters the political process and helps fund ads supporting politicians who echo alarmist warnings and sponsor anti-Muslim attacks.

think tanks between 2001 and 2009—funding that supports the scholars and experts. And what does this money fund?

Well, here's one of many cases in point: last July, former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich warned a conservative audience at the American Enterprise Institute that Shariah was "a mortal threat to the survival of freedom in the United States and in the world as we know it." Gingrich went on to claim that "Sharia in its natural form has principles and punishments totally abhorrent to the Western world." In his remarks that day, Gingrich mimicked the language of conservative analyst Andrew McCarthy, who co-wrote a report calling Shariah "the preeminent totalitarian threat of our time."

Such similarities in language are no accident. Look no further than the organization that released McCarthy's anti-Shariah report: the Center for Security Policy, a central hub of the anti-Muslim network and an active promoter of anti-Shariah messaging and anti-Muslim rhetoric. In fact, CSP is a key source for right-wing politicians,



pundits and grassroots organizations, providing them with a steady stream of reports mischaracterizing Islam and warnings about its dangers. Operating under the leadership of Frank Gaffney, the organization is funded by a small number of foundations and donors with a deep understanding of how to influence U.S. politics by promoting highly alarming threats to national security. CSP is joined by other anti-Muslim organizations in this lucrative business, such as Stop Islamization of America and the Society of Americans for National Existence.

Many of the leaders of these organizations are well-schooled in the art of getting attention in the press, particularly Fox News, "The Washington Times," and a variety of right-wing websites and radio outlets.

Misinformation experts, like Gaffney, consult and work with such right-wing grassroots organizations as ACT! for America and the Eagle Forum, as well as religious right groups such as the Faith and Freedom Coalition and American Family Association, to spread their message. Speaking at their conferences, writing on their websites, and appearing on their radio shows, these experts rail against Islam and cast suspicion on Muslims Americans. Much of their propaganda gets churned into fundraising appeals by grassroots and religious right groups. The money they raise then enters the political process and helps fund ads supporting politicians who echo alarmist warnings and sponsor anti-Muslim attacks.

The Brookings/PRRI (Public Religion Research Institute) study, released Sept. 6, shows the funders of the Shariah panic industry are getting their money's worth. Although two-thirds of Americans say that Muslims are not trying to establish Shariah law in the U.S., "[o]ver the last eight months, agreement with this question has increased by 7 points, from 23 percent in February 2011 to 30 percent today." The number of Republicans who buy that Muslims are trying to establish Shariah law in the U.S. is up 14 points since August 2011, from 31 percent to 45 percent.

This report shines a light on the Islamophobia network of so-called experts, academics, institutions, grassroots

organizations, media outlets, and donors who manufacture, produce, distribute and mainstream an irrational fear of Islam and Muslims.

The report's authors state that in order to safeguard national security and uphold America's core values, the nation must return to a fact-based civil discourse regarding the challenges we face as a nation and world. This discourse must be frank and honest, but also consistent with American values of religious liberty, equal justice under the law, and respect for pluralism. A first step toward the goal of honest, civil discourse is to expose—and marginalize—the influence of the individuals and groups who make up the Islamophobia network in America by actively working to divide Americans against one another through misinformation.

Faiz Shakir, vice president at the Center for American Progress and one of the authors



Faiz Shakir

of "Fear, Inc.," points out that, while there is no evidence that any of these groups violated any laws, this is a fight that will be fought in every public arena, including the courts.

"What this report does is put the funders on notice that their money is being directed towards anti-Muslim hate campaigns," Shakir, who also serves as the editor-in-chief of ThinkProgress.org, says. "We believe that, given this information, the funders must now clarify their own position: are they supportive of these hate campaigns or are they against it?"

Asked about ways of getting knowledge such as the Fear report wider coverage, Shakir says, "Muslims should heed the Quranic admonition: 'O mankind, We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another' (49:13). Muslims

should open the doors of their mosques everywhere. Invite non-Muslims to learn in on a Friday sermon. Host interfaith community service events, or even interfaith sporting events. Muslims should also organize as groups and go visit their fellow Christian churches, Hindu temples, Jewish synagogues and so on. Lastly, get politically active. Ask your local, state, and federal representatives for a meeting to discuss Muslim concerns."

Besides making it available online, the Center for American Progress can supply any number of copies of the report to anyone who requests them.

According to Shakir, if Muslims were as far as presenting copies of the report in their local media, it may make a significant difference.

"Most local media are unaware that there is a coordinated Islamophobia campaign

working to spread messages in their communities," Shakir says. "Whenever a member of the network is in their town, journalists need to know the anti-Muslim record and agenda of that individual."

The "Fear Inc." report should be considered one part of a massive education campaign, according to Shakir.

"We hope people are spurred into action, because every little effort helps," Shakir says. "The only way our report is going to be effective in combating Islamophobia is if

people who agree with the substance of our analysis take the time to spread the word to others."

As far as the possibility of exposing other anti-Muslim campaigns, Shakir says he is not sure what the Center for American Progress' next move will be. However, he is hoping that the media will do their part.

"We're hopeful that media outlets will be held more accountable whenever they want to give the Islamophobia network a voice," Shakir says. "We also want to try to help our partners in Europe and elsewhere who are battling a similar network of xenophobic elements in their societies. And we want to continue to applaud conservatives like New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie who are standing up to the 'crazies' in their own party and rejecting the Islamophobia network's propaganda." ■

The Criminalization of Free Speech

Case of the Irvine 11 demonstrates the fragility of the First Amendment—for some.

BY HADEER SOLIMAN

IN A VERDICT THAT SHOCKED THOSE in the courtroom as well as many across the nation, 10 University of California, Irvine (UCI) and University of California, Riverside students who protested the university-sponsored speech of Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren at UCI in February 2010 were convicted of misdemeanor and found guilty of conspiracy to disrupt and of disrupting the speech.

After the jury announced its guilty verdict, Judge Peter J. Wilson explained that, because the students' actions were motivated by their beliefs and because of their clear records, he sentenced each of them to 56 hours of community service, a fine, and an informal, three-year probation.

Many groups, including civil rights organizations, interfaith communities, and other supporters, have expressed their disappointment in the verdict and have called the students "true American heroes."

Executive Director of the Islamic Shura Council Shakeel Ahmed described the guilty verdict as the "death of democracy in our country." According to him, the verdict points to a "growing malaise of Islamophobia" in the U.S.

"They peacefully and courageously stood up against injustice, and they defended our collective freedom of speech. No topic should be off limits and no public official in our country should be above criticism," said Hani Ayloush, executive director of the Council on American Islamic Relations of the Greater Los Angeles area.

At Ambassador Michael Oren's speech last year, each of the 10 students stood up, made a statement, and walked toward the police officers who arrested them. Their statements criticized the Ambassador for involvement in war crimes. One student was arrested while protesting at the trial and was removed from the case about two months before the trial.

Throughout the trial, defense attorneys

presented evidence that this peaceful form of protest fit the students' goal of expressing their dissent with and disapproval of the Ambassador's direct involvement in Operation Cast Lead in Gaza.

"I intend to continue my activism to give a voice to the voiceless, including my cousins who died during the Gaza massacre," said one of the students, Shaheen Nassar, in a press conference outside of the courthouse after the verdict was announced.

Because this was a peaceful protest similar to many others on university campuses, the Irvine 11's case was one of selective prosecution, especially considering that the students had already been disciplined by the university. To spend taxpayer money



PHOTO CREDIT: SARA JANWAH

on the prosecution of a student protest has been seen as both irresponsible and a sign that the content of some speech is more acceptable than others.

"You can heckle the president, you can heckle high-ranking government officials, but if you heckle an Israeli diplomat, you will be prosecuted. These are Americans exercising their freedoms. This is a democracy, not a dictatorship," said Salam Al-Marayati, president of the Muslim Public Affairs Council.

According to an article in the "Orange County Register," by Erwin Chemerinsky, the dean and distinguished professor at the UCI School of Law, district attorneys have prosecutorial discretion that they exercise on a regular basis. Regardless of whether the protest was lawful, district attorney Tony Rackauckas's choice to prosecute

these students, Chemerinsky said, shows that "he failed in his most important duty: to do justice."

The defense attorneys say their clients plan to appeal the verdict.

"You cannot convict people in this country based on the content of their speech," said Dan Stormer, one of the attorneys for the students, at a press conference. "That's one of the basic principles of our society."

"Today is a tragic and disgraceful day in the history of Orange County," said the Reverend Wilfredo Benitez, Rector of Saint Anselm of Canterbury Episcopal Church. "Making a career on the back of persecution sends the wrong message from the District Attorney's office."

Although disappointed by the guilty verdict, the students' spirits remain high. They plan to continue to exercise their right to free speech, and they hope to see justice prevail at home and across the globe.

"We're upset about what the verdict was, and we hope to do something in the near future about it, but we're OK," Mohamed Abdelgany, one of the students, said at a town hall meeting at the Islamic Institute of Orange County last week. "If

we don't stand by our principles, our lives are hollow shells."

Many advocacy groups have expressed their support of the students, saying that their protest will go down in history, along with legendary American civil rights heroes like Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and Rosa Parks. With the guilty verdict just announced and the upcoming appeal planned for the near future, Asaad Traina, another one of the students, quoted Martin Luther King Jr.

"Ordinarily, a person leaving a courtroom with a conviction behind him would wear a somber face," Traina said. "But I left with a smile. I knew that I was a convicted criminal, but I was proud of my crime." ■

Hadeer Soliman is a 2011 graduate of the University of California, Irvine.

Nurturing Interest-Free Finance

Muslims need to develop the concept of interest-free finance in a world dominated by conventional monetary practices.

BY SUSAN LABADI

IT'S AT A FEVER PITCH: NEWS OF SKYROCKETING GOLD, MARKET VOLATILITY, unemployment, foreclosures, banking failures and the demise of fiat currencies. There is much speculation and anxiety about the U.S. economy and its future. In fact, many nations are in turmoil as well, politically and economically seeking stability. Meanwhile, the middle class is disappearing, as a rich minority seizes wealth while the poor grow larger and deeper in debt. Debt is the enemy, but behind it lay greed, deception and ignorant complacency. A prescription for debt relief is in order, and interest-free banking and investment may be an option to consider.

Intuitively, we've known it all along, that *riba*, commonly translated as "interest" or "usury," is problematic for a healthy economic environment. It is the renting of money in order to yield gain that puts the wealthy in a position to exploit the needy.

Yet, much of the world has acclimated to its presence and participates willingly in its practice because lending on its basis was made appealing and profitable for the designers of these models. Increasingly, we are starting to see some options to using

"interest-free" or *riba*-free banking and investment opportunities, but the transaction models need to be developed, globally-synched, and regulated to ensure a common ground of implementation, disclosure and CSR—corporate social responsibility for sustainability.

In the past, a country's wealth hinged on a tangible standard of true equity, a gold standard,

whereby currency was backed up by real commodities. All that changed with the Bretton Woods Agreement post-WWII, and the subsequent Nixon Shock of 1971 when the dollar's link to gold. From that time, the international monetary system has been subject to creative money-making strategies that have been like smoke and mirrors. Even our value system has been skewed toward consumption and acquiring money through whatever means necessary. Take the case of the family who falls victim to an unscrupulous account executive who exploits their needs to enrich himself without regard for what is in their best interest. Money has been made out of money, rather than tangible real assets that are part of the real economy.

Dr. Yahia Abdul-Rahman, CEO of LARIBA American Finance House and author of "The Art of Islamic Banking and Finance: Tools and Techniques for Community Based Banking," described his frustration at seeing well-meaning, pious Muslims living long-term in rented apartments and housing because they were not able to find alternatives to interest-based financing. His story of creating LARIBA to serve his community articulates the core value of using money towards economic viability through

investment and community support in order to provide comfortable living, not making money for the sake of money. This is the nuance of difference between interest-free financing and conventional models, and it is the nuance that all Abrahamic religions have forbidden the use of "renting money."

Abdul-Rahman relates the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam) who traded with caravans through several communities. Each community had a staple commodity, such as wheat, barley, or dates, or the commodity could be valued against gold or silver. The point being, if something was loaned, the returned commodity had to be the same or of equivalent value of another commodity. Anything extra was considered prohibited. This established indexes for trade and fostered development.

Today, we are subjected to the fallout of the conventional banking system, and cannot change the world. However, we can focus on the critical elements of responsible investment and financing. This means earnings should be based on value, whether in service or product, and that asset-backed financing is in line with economic instruments. Wealth-building implies social responsibility. This ethic of building wealth is apparent today.

"Gulf Capital & Islamic Finance: The Role of the New Global Players" by Aamir A. Rahman lends reference to many Arabian families and business entities who are building wealth through acquisition and development of critical industries that are conducive to community development. They are promoting agriculture, education, medical, infrastructure, tourism, private investment houses and even bailing out financial institutions that have been hurt by the global economic stresses and bubble economy. Many other countries outside the Gulf are also active participants in socially-responsible investing, but the oil producing countries have liquidity to a greater extent and are notably holding reserves. This leads to hope for further growth in interest-free financing.



Yet, the road is not always clearly demarcated between what is acceptable in our increasingly complex world. Some conventional banks have opened Islamic Finance windows to their businesses, and consumers are increasingly requesting interest-free options for banking, investment and financing. With the transition, there are some ideological potholes to be traversed. As conventional instruments

As conventional instruments have been the norm, some have attempted to retrofit them using Islamic terms, and there is room for further inquiry and scholarship.

have been the norm, some have attempted to retrofit them using Islamic terms, and there is room for further inquiry and scholarship.

Dinar Standard, a specialized business media, research and advisory firm, researched six Islamic Finance programs and 11 schools providing Islamic Finance courses within leading business schools in the OIC*. Dinar Standard plans an update to this list in 2012. In Malaysia, INCEIF, the only Global University of Islamic Finance, was set up by the central bank, Bank Negara Malaysia. There is a definite interest in exploring this discipline because its basis provides a healthy economy and financial development, and even the Vatican and U.S.-based finance entities are supportive for this reason.

At the World Halal Forum in Malaysia in April, the SAMI Halal Food Index (Socially Acceptable Market Investments) was unveiled. The index

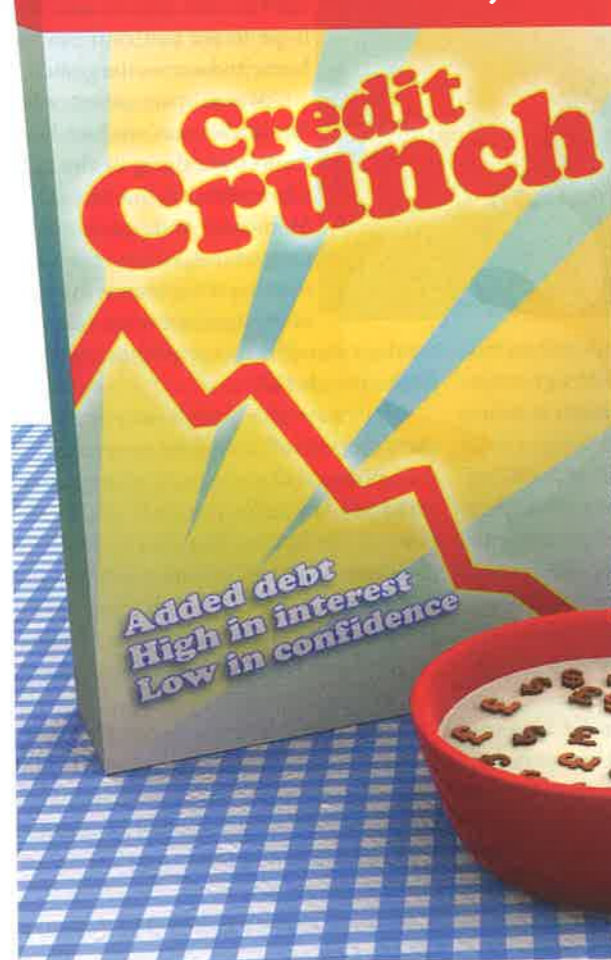
is comprised of 15 Muslim countries representing 270-plus companies in the halal food processing, distribution, fishing, and farming industries with market capitalization of \$114 billion. This allows consumers to further their commitment to a halal concept as investors. They share the risks and potential reward of an emerging global market niche. This is the means to building a real economy once more.

The challenges to widen consumer options for finance and investment are present. It is anticipated that the necessity of interest-free practices will become increasingly attractive as a means to building economic strength and a healthier global economy. Regulation will need to be designed and established, but cooperation between the public and private sector is what brought integrity to the American system. Now we hope it will extend to the world. ■

*OIC-57 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation member countries

Susan Labadi is project coordinator of the American Halal Association and editor of HalalConnect Magazine.

Now with 5% Inflation, FREE!



Spaces of Equality

On the road to Mecca

BY TAMMY GABER

IT SEEMS STRANGE TO THINK THAT hajj, the most sacred ritual for Muslims, could be a different experience for a woman than a man. It seems strange only because this ritual is a requirement of all able-bodied Muslims, and each is accountable regardless of gender.

There is an expectation, however, that the experience would be different for women and men only because most mosques in the world, in the Middle East and elsewhere,

have through time and culture, developed distinctly gender-segregated spaces that often affect and undermine the experience of a Muslim woman in worship.

I performed the hajj in 2010. We arrived in Medina first, given the chance to recover from travel and to enjoy the sublime beauty and peace of the Prophet Muhammad's (*salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) city and resting place. The mosque, throughout history, has been expanded several times and in

its current form is a massive horizontal space kept in impeccable condition. The mosque is divided, with wooden lattice screens separating the men's and women's area and with separate entrances for each. The lattice screens allow the first few rows of women near-complete visual access to the main space and allows for the receding rows of women complete privacy. The space for women is quite large, an expanse that roughly covers one-third of the mosque, which although not at parity, is ample considering the sheer size of the mosque. The space for women is vast, complete with the same architectural quality and finish as the rest of the mosque, which creates a sense of inclusiveness. The architectural division of the space is through the use of open wooden lattice screens.

More than one fatwa decrees that the impairment of visual and audible connection to the imam constitutes a *bida* (innovation) that has no religious precedent. The thousands of mosques all over the world that subjugate its female constituents to basement spaces, separate rooms and far-removed balconies, all break the basic requirements for access to the main space. The basic right to have visual and audible access to the main space is twofold. The first is that every member of the community, who chooses to go the mosque to pray, should have access to what is being said and be able to follow appropriately. Second, the mosque is more than a place of worship, but is a center for the community; thus all members should have unrestricted ability to participate in that community.

Regardless of gender, all members of the Muslim community are equal; there are ample hadith demonstrating the sensitivity of the Prophet to congregants including women and children. However, there are always a group of women who prefer some sort of privacy when in the mosque, often because they use the mosque to rest between prayers. Therefore, it is ideal to have some sort of organizational division of space in the mosque, but one that is visually and audibly permeable, allowing those who want complete access to the main space and allowing others to recede for privacy.

At the Medina mosque, the experience was completely peaceful. Praying in the women's section did allow complete access to the main space, and privacy when resting and reading between prayers. The ample space with the thousands of Muslims gathered did not at all seem crowded. It was overwhelming to see the multitude of different ethnicities and our ability to minimally communicate and negotiate the straightening of prayer lines at the sharing of *zamzam* water provided in coolers throughout the mosque.

Access to the *Rawda*—the Prophet's resting grave—was divided by time, with women having access at certain times of the day and night. The allotted women did seem much smaller than that allotted to men, but with the massive crowding to get in and to pray I was thankful it was just women.

Surrounding the mosque, this year for the first time, were dozens of large-scale convertible umbrellas that covered the plaza spaces. Previously, over a decade ago, smaller umbrellas were added to the mosque courtyard spaces to provide shade during the day and lighting during the evening. The outdoor spaces, with the overhead coverings, became a natural extension of the interiors and allowed for a larger number of congregants to pray. Outside, there was not as much of the strict segregation of gender, with general groups of people of the same gender coming together yet not rigidly divided. The sense of praying in the midst of thousands of people, literally of all colors, was a wonderful experience and a prelude of what was to come in Mecca.

In the vicinity of Medina, we traveled to and prayed at the site of the first mosque in Islam, the Qubba mosque; and the mosque where the Qibla was changed from Jerusalem to Mecca, the Qiblatain mosque; and the Miqat mosque—all three of these structures are contemporary ones, with no remnants of the original historical forms. In all three, there was various forms of communication, with the first two having separate spaces, and the Miqat mosque having a separate room for women. It was surprising in all three mosques not to have

visual access to the main space or to feel part of the larger congregation. Contemporary additions and structures in the places of worship on this journey demonstrated the variety of possibilities, from enabling community such as at Medina, to separating it such as at Qubba and Qiblatain. The contemporary additional structures that expanded the Haram al Sharif surrounding the Ka'aba were brilliantly enabling, allowing for complete access and inclusion.

Mecca is the most amazing of place on earth. Circumambulating the Ka'aba among millions of followers is an overwhelming and

or segregation between the pilgrims. There was an overwhelming sense of humanity of the immense variety of ethnicities who are all in unison in this primal act of worship. With the expanded floors, there seemed to be ample room for everyone to walk in their own space, with the crush of crowding only in the immediate vicinity of the Ka'aba.

The journey of Hajj continued with the Mina camps, naturally having separate tents for men and women, but allowed for the building of community through the lectures and discussion groups periodically held to remind and educate the pilgrims of their

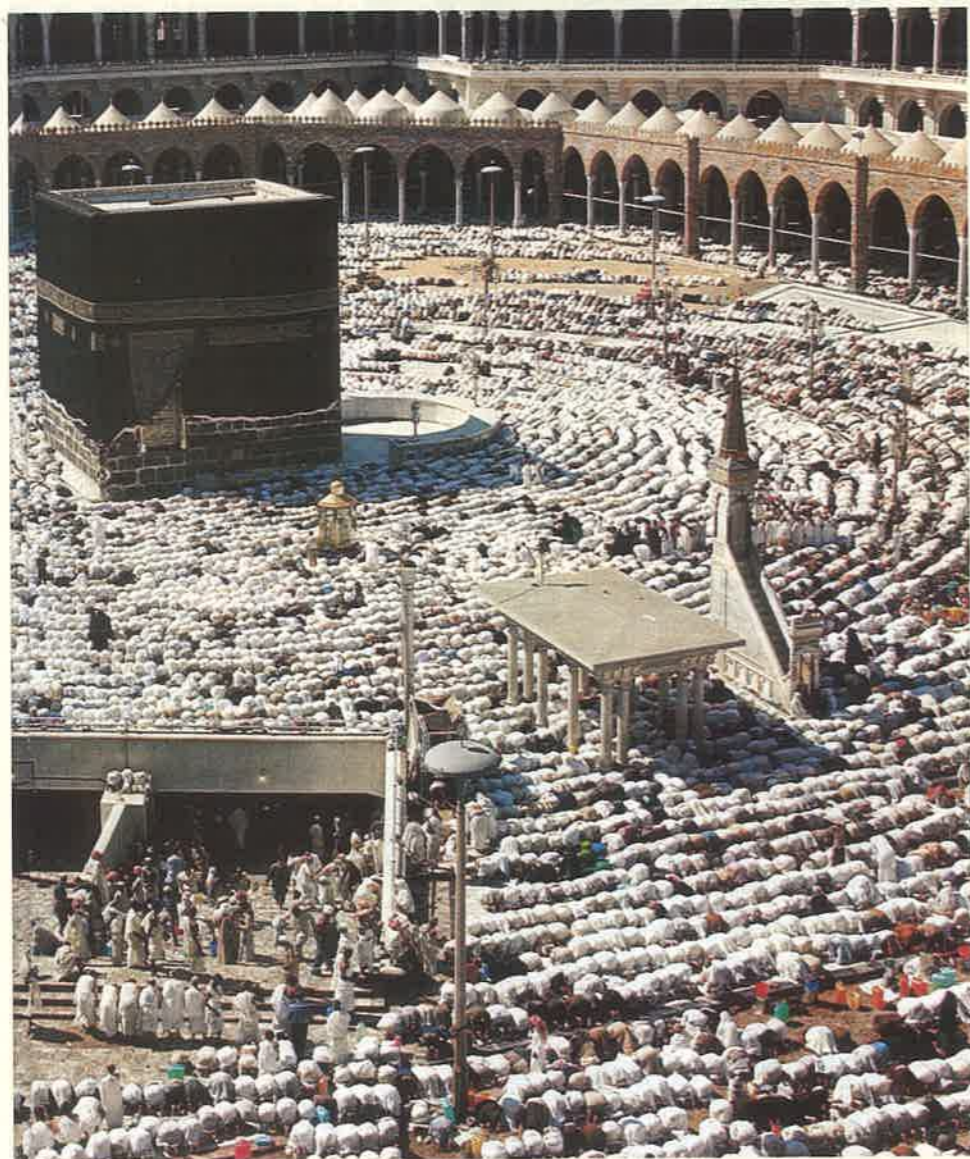
spiritual journey. The day spent at Arafat was even more humbling with minimal facilities and the focus on worship and religious contemplation. There was never a moment when I thought about gender access or my experience as a woman at Arafat, because the experience was about being a Muslim in a larger community of Muslims.

This overarching sense of religious contemplation continued when we went to Muzdalifa to rest and pray upon our return to Mina, where we threw *jamarat*. Like many of the expansions and developments previously discussed, the new building (often called a "bridge") allowed for easier access of the millions of pilgrims to this ritual. At five stories high, with escalators, this structure allowed for immediate and streamlined access to the three pillars, each of which which pilgrims throw seven stones at. During this ritual, like many of the others, was about the essential quality of being a Muslim.

After our stay in Mina, we returned to Mecca to complete our hajj and to spend a few extra days in prayer and contemplation. It was a joy to pray each

prayer in the Haram al-Sharif and to make *tawaf* at different times of the day and evening. This unique experience of equality, unison, will remain with me forever, as wholly singular in my lifetime of experiences of religious segregation during worship. ■

Tammy Gaber, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering at British University in Egypt.



Circumambulating the Ka'aba among millions of followers is an overwhelming and enlightening experience. Whether on the rooftop building surrounding the precinct or on one of the middle levels or on the ground space immediately surrounding the Ka'aba, the sheer sense of unity within multiplicity is life-changing.

enlightening experience. Whether on the rooftop building surrounding the precinct or on one of the middle levels or on the ground space immediately surrounding the Ka'aba, the sheer sense of unity within multiplicity is life-changing. When we were walking around the Ka'aba or pacing the *sai'a* space between the mounts of Safa and Marwa, there was never any sense of gender division

Hajj: The Investment of a Lifetime

BY TAYYABA SYED

ATTAINING GOD'S PLEASURE and acceptance is the aspiration of every practicing Muslim. And opportunities to reach this goal lie in the five basic pillars of Islam. Prof. Omer Mozaffer, an instructor at the University of Chicago and Loyola University, compares the five pillars to the aspect of time. First and foremost, declaring our faith takes only a moment's time when we say the *shahada*. Then daily, we must pray and prostrate to our Lord at least five times in *salah*. The next pillar, fasting, is prescribed over a month's time in Ramadan. *Zakat* (alms-giving) is an obligation that must be fulfilled once a year. Then there is the one pillar in Islam that is allowed a lifetime to accomplish: hajj.

But with the cost of hajj increasing every year, it may just take an individual a lifetime to make it happen. For those who have yet to complete this last pillar, when and how is the right time to start saving for hajj? No matter what age you decide to perform hajj, you need to research hajj groups ahead of time and start preparing yourself physically, mentally, spiritually and financially—years in advance. Prophet Muhammad (*Salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) reminded his people in his farewell sermon to "perform Hajj if you can afford to." Being able to afford the sacred journey plays a big factor in when one can perform it.

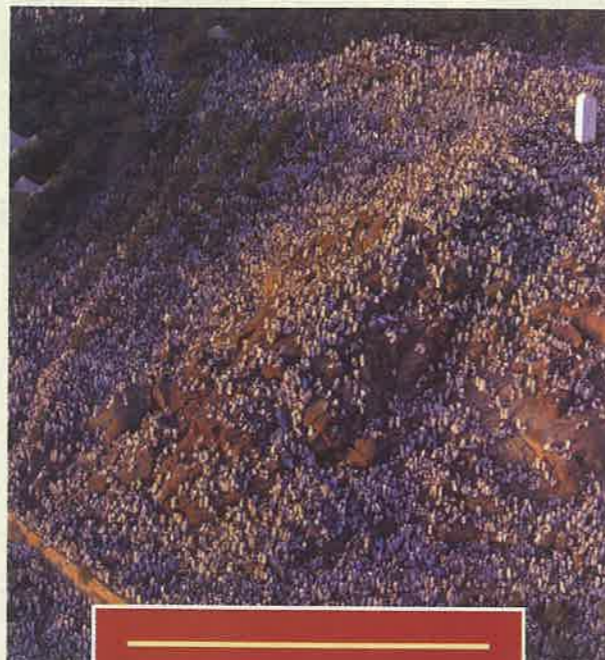
Saturna Capital, through the Amana Funds, offers investment plans for those who are planning to do hajj later, but want to start saving now. The hajj calculator on their website can help determine how much you will need to save, keeping inflation in mind.

Saturna's director and vice president of Islamic Financing, Monem Salam, suggests investing in an Amana mutual fund.

"If you are planning to do hajj after five years or more, you can either invest in a Roth IRA account or a regular investment

account," Salem says. "There is also something called a Universal Transfer to a Minor Account (UTMA) also known as a 'custodial account' you can open in your child's name but act as a custodian. It has a very low tax rate."

Those who want to perform hajj sooner rather than later have the option of opening a halal savings account, which University Islamic Financial offers.



Whether you plan to embark on this sacred journey next year, or within the next 10 years, fiscally responsible foresight will help you take the best trip possible without fretting about your finances.

"We have money market accounts that can be used to save for hajj. You can set aside some money every month in the account," says Amjad Quadri, UIF vice president of business development. "The advantage of saving with UIF is that you will get a small halal profit on your account every month and it will help you reach your goal quicker."

Once you are near your financial goal, finding a suitable hajj group is very important. There are many groups offering packages at various price ranges. Sacred Hajj, an Illinois-based not-for-profit hajj operator, now in its third year of operation, offer reasonably-priced packages keeping both quality and affordability in mind.

"We know there may be groups that offer less expensive packages," says Sacred Hajj co-founder and group leader Hafiz Sayman Shariff. "However, our mission is to provide good quality service at a good quality rate."

They do this by keeping the group size to a minimum of 10 people and maintaining a "family feel" before, during, and after hajj.

"Since most of the hajjaj are first-timers, we tend to keep the group close together with the leaders and scholars throughout the entire trip," Shariff says. "This helps prevent confusion and getting lost as well as gives the group accessibility to the religious advisors any questions they may have during the trip."

Quadri, who performed the hajj in 2006 with the Nawawi Foundation and its resident scholar Dr. Umar Farooq Abd-Allah, has fond memories of his trip and group mates.

"It felt like a blessed hajj for us [group members]," Quadri says. "It was like we were with a trusted group of friends and family, though we all did not know each other."

Whether you plan to embark on this sacred journey next year, or within the next 10 years, fiscally responsible foresight will help you take the best trip possible without fretting about your finances. ■

For more information check out:
www.amanafunds.com
www.universityislamicfinancial.com
www.sacredhajj.com
www.nawawi.org

Tayyaba Syed is a freelance writer and teacher who lives in Illinois with her husband and two children.



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Muslim Across America

Two men embark on a coast-to-coast road trip, praying in mosques en route.

BY RASHEED AL RABBI AND RASHED AL JUNAYED



On their way to Las Vegas, Rabbi strolls in Joshua Forest.

IN THE EARLY 1900S, WHEN A LEBANESE immigrant embarked for America, the captain told him that there were no mosques there. Things have changed a bit since then. Today, there are more than 1,200 mosques in America and the number continues to grow. The story of this immigrant inspired us to undertake the 11-day, coast-to-coast "Muslim Across America" road trip. In an attempt to get an accurate picture of the Muslim presence across America, we set out to see if we could pray every obligatory prayer in a mosque, while on the road.

This was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. Rather, the actual longing was looming for a while. I went to school in Minnesota, a few years prior to 9/11, when hostility toward Islam had not been exploited to the present extent. In such a quiet and friendly environment, and despite being "a crazy liberal Muslim" at the time, I couldn't ignore a significant compromise of core Islamic values by some Muslims to assimilate into Western culture. Muslims themselves, like some non-Muslim Americans, lacked a sense of belonging. I could accept neither.

When I moved to Northern Virginia

in 2004, I saw a more promising picture of Muslim Americans. However, I lacked the knowledge to address faith issues that agitated my mind. In order to further my knowledge, I took courses at the Fairfax Institute, the Graduate School of Social Sciences, the Virginia Theological Seminary and Hartford Seminary. I was fortunate to

Though we only visited 18 mosques, this small sample helped us identify some distinctive patterns of mosque involvement in the communities and their approach to address other faiths.

connect to the International Institute of Islamic Thought, which opened the door to unlimited access to Islamic resources. I was also able to meet people with piety and knowledge who could provide me some direction. Before Ramadan in 2009, during a discussion with Dr. Iqbal Unus, the director of IIIT, we came up with the idea of a coast-to-coast trip. I was fascinated with discovering a holistic picture of the Muslim presence in America.

Obtaining several weeks off from work was a challenge, which delayed the trip by about two years, but allowed me to prepare myself to view different perspectives through various sociological lenses. But just this last May, I had an unexpected break from work, and decided to take advantage of this opportunity by undertaking the long overdue trip. Rashed Al Junayed, a high school friend, was available to join me as a travel companion. A cousin helped me search the mosques located along the highway route I-40. It took a few days to determine stops at the westbound mosques, and we decided our eastbound mosques while on the road.

IIIT lent us their audio and video recorders. An extra day was spent to prepare the skeleton of the website, MuslimAcrossAmerica.net, before we departed on May 24.

Due to the lack of time, we had failed to inform the mosques of our plans ahead of time, yet our unannounced presence didn't make them less amiable. A humbling warm welcome made us feel at home in every mosque; such welcomes based on their practice of peace and brotherhood left a deep impression upon us. They shared their local stories and discussed their struggle to preserve their faith. Their optimism and hospitality gave us the courage to continue the trip. Their supplications for our success and personal outreach allowed us to remain connected with our original intention to get on the road.

THE MOST DIFFICULT MOMENTS

I agree my planning was naive and the preparation was inadequate, but my intention was good. Perhaps that's why I found God's favor all along my trip. We envisioned obstacles in finding mosques on I-40 crossing Oklahoma and Texas toward New Mexico initially, but it was quite easy in reality. Our original mosque address in New Mexico was wrong, but after checking with the local library, we found the Islamic Center of New Mexico.

On our way back, finding a mosque on



Al Junayed (L) and Rabbi (R) stop over in Las Vegas.

I-15 as it merged to I-70, crossing Utah toward Colorado, was difficult. We found some online resources on the Islamic Center of Saint George, Utah. However, we couldn't find an address; not even from the local libraries. We searched for a halal restaurant in the same area, without luck. We saw no signs of a mosque for hundreds of miles until we reached Denver. This was the only time in our tour that we couldn't offer our prayers in a mosque, which was a bit disappointing, but such a feeling failed to deter us from our original pursuit.

The success of this expedition surpassed our expectations. Every mosque we visited has a plan for the future. Their primary motivation is their genuine devotion to Islam and prayer, and to educate their children on



Islamic teachings. They are trying to involve the community and foster dialogue with neighbors and undertake interfaith activities. However, youth involvement remains an unconquered challenge for mosque leadership overall. These mosques are intensely cultivating a culture of charity. Every mosque is solely dependent on donations from its community; yet amazingly this financial commitment has been met without interrup-



tion year after year. None of them reported any significant challenges in collecting donations during construction or expansion.

This journey was as educational as it was remarkable; I couldn't anticipate its actual depth when I started driving. Though we only visited 18 mosques, this small sample helped us identify some distinctive patterns of mosque involvement in the communities and their approach to address other faiths, to promote mosque leadership, and to utilize the endless potential of the Internet for community outreach. These patterns can be beneficial resources for other mosques to make appropriate use of their community dynamics.

The primary concern that prompted me to embark upon this voyage was relieved;

East Bound Mosques

1. IIIT, Herndon, Va., Mosque
2. Wilmington Islamic Learning Center, Wilmington, Del.
3. Islamic Society of Gastonia, Gastonia, N.C.
4. Annoor Academy of Knoxville, Tenn.
5. Islamic Center of Nashville, Nashville, Tenn.
6. Muslim Society of Memphis, Memphis, Tenn.
7. Islamic Center of Little Rock, Little Rock, Ark.
8. Islamic Center of Fort Smith, Fort Smith, Ark.
9. Islamic Center of Greater Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, Okla.
10. Islamic Center of Amarillo, Texas.
11. Islamic Center of New Mexico, Albuquerque, N.M.
12. Gallup Islamic Center, Gallup, N.M.
13. Muslim Student Association, Flagstaff, Ariz.
14. Masjid-e-Ibrahim, Kingman, Ariz.
15. Masjid Granada Hills, Los Angeles, Calif.

West Bound Mosques

1. Masjid Al Noor, Las Vegas, Nev.
2. Colorado Muslim Society, Denver, Colo.
3. Islamic Center of Topeka, Kans.
4. Northwest Islamic Center, St Louis, Mo.
5. Islamic Society of North America, Plainfield, Ind.
6. Islamic Center of Columbus, Columbus, Ohio.
7. ADAMS Center, Sterling, Va.

rather it reinforced my long-held belief that we don't have to make any compromises to be American. There are millions of devout Muslims who are raising their American children. They don't suffer from the lack of belonging; instead, they find their lives more meaningful in the path of Islam.

God knows what the future holds. Our next venture could take us coast-to-coast, on a ride north to south on I-95. ■

Rasheed Al Rabbi, an IT professional, is pursuing a doctoral degree in software engineering at George Mason University. Rashed Al Junayed is a New York City-based social worker.



Prostrating Atop Denali

The story of one mountain climber's mission to pray atop the highest peak in North America.

BY MOHAMMED SULTAN IDLIBI

FEW HAVE MADE *SUJOOD* ATOP Mount McKinley, the highest mountain peak in North America, with a summit elevation of more than 20,000 feet above sea level. I was one of those fortunate to have made this journey.

I committed to Denali more than five years ago, when I climbed Mount Baker in Washington state's Cascade Range. I have also climbed Mount Elbrus and now Denali through Fred Hutchinson Center's fundraising division, Climb to Fight Breast Cancer. I've climbed all over the world, including Africa, Europe, South America and North America.

This last summer gave me an opportunity to battle my way up this massive peak. This expedition was slow, cold and long; the roundtrip took 27 days.

Mount McKinley or Denali (Athabaskan

for "The High One") is located in Alaska, the centerpiece of Denali National Park and Preserve. It sits in between Mount Hunter and Mount Foraker, two peaks that would be giants in any North American mountain range. Arriving in Anchorage, I quickly found a place to stash my gear and rented a mountain bike. I tracked down a mosque, which was under construction. From there, I traveled to Talkeetna, home to 500 residents, many of whom are world-class climbers from all over the world. The weather had stalled some teams but, with luck, we found a flight the same day to the glacier. There were a dozen teams on the lower Kahiltna glacier when we landed at the 7,200-ft. base camp.

We traveled slowly, carrying food and gear from camp to camp, and back. I had 120 pounds of food and gear, half of which was in my pack, and half on a sled. Being roped

to climbing partners slows one down, but ensures survival in these harsh conditions of extreme glacier travel. Crevasses in the central Alaskan range are very large, and at any point one can suffer a fatal fall. On the lower glacier we traveled at night, the coldest part of the day, when the glacier would be in its most solid state. I observed my prayers daily.

My guide, Lhakpa Gelu Sherpa, a Nepalese mountain guide, holds a record for the fastest time to ascend Mt. Everest: 10 hours and 56 minutes. Lhakpa taught me Nepalese. I learned that the first names of Nepalese are the same as the day on which they are born. Lhakpa means Wednesday. I quickly translated Saturday to Pemba, and from then on I went by the name Pemba Sultan.

By Day 12, we had double carried all of our food and gear to Camp 2 (11,200 feet) and made an attempt to reach Camp 3. Upon reaching Windy Corner, our team of seven men was forced to bivouac in brutally cold, hurricane-like conditions. We dug half a snow cave, and pitched one tent before frostbite could get to our fingers and toes, and waited out a storm for nearly 23 hours, by far the most challenging part of our expedition. Our food and fuel were cached at our next camp, thus we were left with no food or fuel to melt snow with for a day. I

remembered all those around the world who face hardship every day. I, too, felt miserable, cold, dehydrated and hungry.

Later, we reached Camp 3 (14,200 feet), and after waiting three days for good weather to break, we climbed up the West Buttress route to Camp 4 (17,200 feet), and again waited for good weather. The waiting helped my body acclimate to the high altitude, where the oxygen level can be less than 50 percent of what it is at sea level. After four days at high camp, not being able to eat or sleep properly, and battling harsh, cold conditions of minus 10 degrees inside our tents, our team made the decision to turn around. The mountain was going nowhere. We could always take a month off from work and the family, and come back to climb again another year.

We descended in harsh conditions, with snow falling several inches per hour, and

was heading back up Denali and making a second attempt at the summit.

On Day 21, we rested another day at Camp 3, and made sure we had enough provisions to climb up Denali and wait out a storm should one come across our path. We ate a lot of food, often eating half to a whole stick of butter to keep our calorie intake high. This day we had canned turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, gravy and cranberry sauce. But despite all of this gorging, we all lost weight—muscle and fat. The weather this day was perfect, but we knew it would be impossible to continue climbing after carrying a very heavy load up to Camp 4.

Day 23 was lost to bad weather, so we rested and ate as much as possible.

On Day 24, the weather wasn't perfect, but we made a run for it. It would be critical to stay moving, and wear all of our clothing

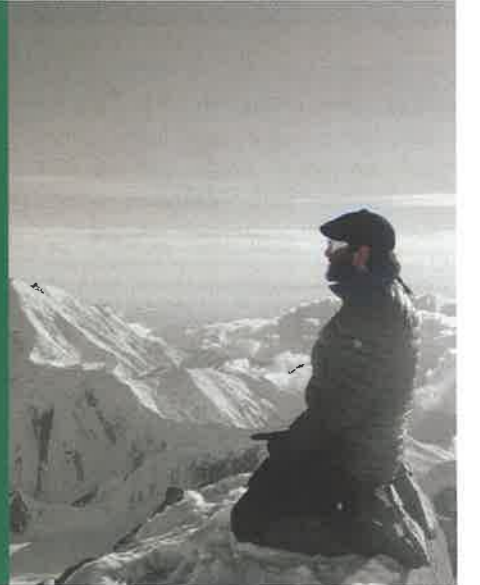
Camp 2. Our plan was to continue all night to the airstrip and fly off this mountain after 25 days. But that didn't happen.

When we reached Camp 1, we noticed the glacier ice turn into slush. It was 3 a.m., and perhaps 50 degrees warmer than only a day ago on the summit. Temperatures hovered right at freezing. We knew that there would be another five and a half miles to the airstrip, and that the glacier was crumbling. Snow bridges and fragile crevasses would crumble below our snowshoes. It was too risky to continue, so we set up camp and slept for the night. We did this again for two more nights because the weather was too warm. The mountain would not loosen its grip.

On Day 27, we took off at 3 a.m. There were eight other climbing teams, all bottlenecked with us. Six people, all on different teams, popped into crevasses, some falling



After nine-and-a-half hours of continuous climbing up what is called the Autobahn—where most of the deaths on Denali occur—and all the way up to Denali Ridge, we reached the summit at 5:30 p.m.



several feet of snowdrift whipped with the wind, creating whiteout conditions. Luckily, our descent included fixed lines, which guided us through a sea of snow that I floated on, attached only to a fixed line with my ascender. After a few close calls, we all made it back safely to Camp 3. But none of us were in any shape to continue, so we pitched our tents to rest for a few hours in the night.

The next morning, Day 20, I learned that another expedition was making an attempt to climb to the summit. A few days before, after losing a few teammates to exhaustion, they had turned around. They needed another healthy climber. I bid farewell to my old teammates and wished them a safe descent down the lower glacier. I

to avoid frostbite. After nine-and-a-half hours of continuous climbing up what is called the Autobahn—where most of the deaths on Denali occur—and all the way up to Denali Ridge, we reached the summit at 5:30 p.m. The sky was perfect, but we had 10 mph winds, which can be a problem at 20,320 feet. We were the second team to summit, with about eight other teams behind us—I prostrated in thankfulness.

We knew that making it to the top is only halfway there; we still needed to make it down and out, alive and healthy. We descended to Camp 4 and slept for the night.

The next day, we left at 10 a.m. and descended to Camp 3, which was again a challenge. We passed Windy Corner and

more than 30 feet only to be saved by the rope attached to their rope-mates. When we made it to the airstrip, we were told we had to climb another 400 vertical feet to reach the upper airstrip because the snow planes did not feel safe landing on the crumbling glacier at those elevations. On July 11, I boarded a Canadian Otter snow plane and flew back to Talkeetna, seeing green for the first time in 27 days.

Having briefly tasted life in harsh conditions, I'm reminded of an Islamic saying: "Live a rough life because the favors are not going to last." ■

Mohammed Sultan Idlibi works and lives in the Appalachian Mountains of Western North Carolina, and loves to explore the amazing world.

The Spirit of Brotherhood

Muslims Without Borders supports life-sustaining projects at a Mexican orphanage that is serving to rebuild lives.

BY SALMA ABUGIDIERI

I KNEW IT THAT I WOULD BE BENEFICIARY when Muslims Without Borders (MWB) invited me to join their first group of student volunteers on a trip to Tashirat, a family-style orphanage nestled in the beautiful mountains of Tepoztlan, Mexico, as "Enrichment Halaqah Leader." Still, I could not have anticipated the deep impact the trip would have on me and the nine young women with me. We continue to savor the memories.



Based on my experiences working with severely abused or neglected children, I was prepared for the stories I expected to hear about the children's stories of childhood abuse and neglect. I imagined that they would probably have serious psychological issues, and might have behavioral problems. Everything defied assumptions.

My appreciation for MWB and its founder, Shafi Khan, was growing by the minute. Here we witnessed the development of life-sustaining projects that would eventually help this orphanage to become self-sufficient. The vital rainwater-capturing project allows them to store their only source of water, and

then recycle used water for irrigation. The fast-growing chicken project will eventually provide enough eggs for all residents. And the greenhouse project nearly provides all the tomatoes and pepinos (cucumbers) that they need, with some extra to sell in the city. Since the children and staff are vegetarian, these food supplies are staples in their diet.

Our group's projects for the week included helping to clear land for a planned avocado orchard, painting La Cancha (the children's

soccer field that was actually a concrete structure), and tutoring the children in the orphanage and at the attached Ixaya school.

It was an incredible feeling for all of us to discover abilities in ourselves that we had not

Rather than feel sorry for the children at the orphanage, as I had anticipated before arriving, I wished that all the children in this world could have such good care.

used before. I was already impressed with all the young women's spirits of eagerness to help in any way that was required, their quick engagement with the staff and children, and their adjustment to living much simpler lives than what they were used to in America, not to mention dealing with the occasional scorpion or small raccoon-like animal that managed to get in the bedrooms. We were all amazed at the productivity and accomplishments that can occur when there is a team effort. While some of us had experience with painting, none of us had wielded a machete before. We discovered some hidden talents, brute strength, and sheer will to cut down brush and even large trees on the land. Despite the fact that the task itself was daunting, especially with the hot afternoon sun, we managed to clear the land, leaving it ready for the saplings to be planted after the refuse was hauled away.

More rewarding than these accomplishments and contributions that we were able to make were the connections we made with the children, who typically did not interact with other volunteer groups at the orphanage. It is difficult to describe the model that unfolded for us over the next few days. The children we met with were loving, affectionate, extremely respectful and well behaved. It was clear that they were well cared for and loved. Their caretakers are true "parents," providing a sense of security and belonging, clear guidelines for appropriate behavior, strong values and spirituality. These adults were models of commitment and dedication, several of them leaving their lives behind to create a "family" for the children whose own families had abandoned them. The children live in family-style bungalows, not in an institutional setting. The goals—to strengthen their mind, body and spirit—are achieved through vegetarian diet, homeopathic treatment, unconditional love, clear boundaries, education and meditation. Rather than feel sorry for them, as I had anticipated before arriving, I wished that all the children in this world could have such good care.



The young visitors soon become master machete handlers clearing thicket for the avocado plantation.

The staff allowed their five teenagers—three of whom are biological siblings—to spend much of their time with us, missing their usual school routine to engage in a type of "cultural exchange" with us. We were continuously touched by them during our stay. In addition to being unusually respectful, they went out of their way to help us. During outings to the local market, they made sure we were not cheated as tourists, translated and even helped some of us indulge our cravings for churros by chasing down a street vendor. They were modest and reflected a very conscientious upbringing with high moral standards. They adhered to their vegetarian and sugar-free diet, abstaining when we offered to share our meals and desserts with them. This was a switch from what is often our experience as Muslims, having to decline food that doesn't comply with our diet. They excused themselves from socializing with us to complete their chores, which included cooking and cleaning.

What struck me the most was their initiative and openness to learning about Islam. When the two girls asked to join our nightly halaqah, which focused on the themes of *shukr* (gratitude) and *tawakkul* (reliance on God), we were touched and surprised

that they expressed gratitude for our presence. The next day, the three teen boys, who had heard all the details from their sisters, respectfully asked if they could join, too.

Unprepared for having non-Muslims join our halaqah, it was the perfect opportunity to practice the *tawakkul* we had been dis-



Volunteers also taught classes at the orphanage.

cussing, leaving it up to God to benefit us and them as He saw fit. By the end of the week, we had an unanticipated dilemma. The boys wanted to join us for Maghrib prayer. Where would they stand? Obviously, none of them could lead the prayer, and we were all women. We agreed that we would spread out a towel—our makeshift prayer rug—for them next to us with a small space separating our row from theirs. After making wudu

per some of the girls' instructions, the boys realized their desire to join us had created a bit of a commotion, so they decided to observe instead of joining us.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what made this trip so inspirational. Several of the young women in our group noted that they felt their prayers were better in the beautiful, natural surroundings we were in. Being unplugged for the week, along with the simplicity and slower pace of life, facilitated a feeling of strong connection: to the other volunteers, to nature, and to the children and staff at the orphanage. The subsequent feelings of gratitude to God made all those connections more meaningful, especially the connection to Him. Of course it was also refreshing to encounter people who had no preconceptions about Islam and Muslims.

Imagine not having to defend or react, but simply to answer questions coming out of pure and genuine curiosity. The purity of the children and staff's lives illustrated the *fitrah* that God creates each of us with. And finally, there was the opportunity to serve in a community where there seemed to be a true spirit of brotherhood. ■

Salma Elkadi Abugidieri is a licensed professional counselor and co-director of Peaceful Families Project.

Shedding the Minority Mentality

Tariq Ramadan: Muslims must think beyond integration and focus on contributions to society.

BY LEEN JABER

THERE IS NO DENYING IT: MUSLIMS IN AMERICA HAVE excelled professionally and are growing to an unforeseen potential. Every day, Muslim Americans can be found saving lives in the operating room, investing millions on Wall Street, and winning high-profile cases in the courtroom. But aren't they capable of accomplishing even more?

Ramadan shares his thoughts and concerns about how Muslims can participate in Western society without sacrificing their faith and values.

Islamic Horizons: *What do you think are the challenges, if any, Muslims face attempting to get more involved in various sectors of Western society?*

Tariq Ramadan: Muslims should be involved in the mainstream and never talk about themselves as minorities. As citizens, they are not a minority. As a people bearing values, they are not a minority. They share the majority values in the West, in the U.S. as well as in Europe. One of the main missions is not only to remain Muslims but to change the society for the better. So they have to be involved. But there are challenges and dangers. You are going to work with people who sometimes forget God and the essentials and ethics. They are driven sometimes by the love of power or money and no ethical behavior. The challenge is to be equipped, and to remember that when you do get involved in this society, don't go alone, don't go without knowledge of your religion. Know exactly what you want to do and try to get a sense of the priorities in your life. Whatever it is you are doing, don't forget God, and don't forget yourself.

IH: *What areas do you think are most pressing for Muslims to be involved in today, and why?*

TR: We are reaching the "contribution phase," especially in the U.S. and Canada and some European countries.

"I would tell them to stop talking about integrating. They should feel at home and have a sense of belonging. However, they should be very careful not to get lost in the common society."

This is where it is important to start from. Our spirituality is our philosophy of life. Everything for us has a meaning and an objective. It's important for our contribution to show how much Islam is a spiritual way. It is based on ethics and values and respecting human beings, men and women. Secondly, we should be much more involved with education. That is, be more involved in the public school system as teachers, students and parents. The third area Muslims should be more involved in is civil rights: to know the civil rights and civil justice, and not only for Muslims, but for all people—black and white, men and women. We have to struggle for our rights and the rights of the poor and the marginalized, and

we have to act against racism. The fourth area is the environment. Muslims are not present enough in respecting nature, the environment, global warming. Also, Muslims should be more involved in art and entertainment. Muslims should be a lot more creative. And finally, Muslims today need to be much more involved in gender issues. Muslim women in society today, within the family, in the universities, in the job market are doing much better than men and are the driving force behind a potential positive reform in the future.

IH: *How do you feel about Muslims being more involved in entertainment or in pop culture, especially in the areas that many Muslims think are forbidden (such as music, acting, comedy and the arts)?*



TR: We need to apply Islamic ethics in that field. We need to have bright Muslims involved in this dimension: culture, music, movies with a very deep creativity and profound sense of responsibility toward arts that should be married with elevation, not with destruction and not with only emotions. It should be spiritual and ethical. You can have very nice songs that are completely Islamic but don't [necessarily] mention Islam. It should just reflect the universal values that we cherish. You can write anything on any topic related to life. It is going to be Islamic by the substance and not by the name.

IH: *Many Muslims think that if they get too integrated into Western society that they may lose their Muslim identities. What kind of advice would you give them?*

TR: I would tell them to stop talking about integrating. They should feel at home and have a sense of belonging. However, they should be very careful not to get lost in the common society. They should go in with a vision. This is why we are told you have to always come back to the Quran, the hadiths, and the Prophet's life (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam). There has to be a daily practice of your religion, especially when you are involved in these activities in society. Who are your companions? Who are the people that are always with you? Are you surrounded by people who have no ethics, no morality? Then you are going to be lost. You have to choose your brothers and sisters in humanity. And not just Muslims. It's also about others, non-Muslims as well.

IH: *Compared to the years past, have you seen Muslims transitioning more into mainstream society or do you see them shrinking away?*

TR: I think there are many trends and some are contradictory trends. We have some groups who never open up. They maintain

their isolation; unwilling to deal with the society. And at the end of the day, they are not obliged. Now, you have other trends of groups who are completely open. They are so open that you cannot see the center of gravity of their world. Finally, there are some who were so open and then came back. So, I don't think we have one mainstream trend we can explain. But still, after 9/11, we saw so many Muslims being much more involved to show that Islam is not violent and not radical. And the figures are worrying. Directly after 9/11, 60 to 70 percent of Americans thought that these attacks were done by a minority of Muslims who are not representative of Islam. But today, 10 years later, almost 70 percent of Americans have a problem with Islam. And they think that Islam is a problem. We have been open and explaining and yet the perception is exactly the opposite. Why is the negative perception of Muslims growing while we are being so open? Does that mean we have to isolate ourselves? No, we have to keep carrying on. It's going to be a very long struggle.

IH: *What role do you think Muslim NPO's, Islamic schools, and mosques play in getting their communities more involved?*

TR: I think that the leaders should come with a better understanding. A leader should know two things. One: they need to have a very deep understanding of the Islamic tradition; and two, a very deep understanding of American history and American narrative. You need both. That is why African Americans and Native Americans should be involved in our discussions and not just second-class citizens or Muslims in our communities. Also, women should be much more involved in leadership. We also need to institutionalize our presence. We need institutions that train imams, students, and scholars and intellectuals. There is no power if you don't get the knowledge of the law and of the language and concepts of the country. All of this should be taught. It's a multilateral strategy with a vision. We need to get a sense of our priorities. It's clear that one of our priorities is to sit down to try and get our priorities right. Instead, we are always just acting and always under pressure. And under pressure, we don't think. We just react. And this is where we are weak. And the people are keeping us busy with this weakness. And we can't just get a sense of what we have to do.

IH: *Finally, is there anything else you would like to add regarding this topic or about integration in general?*

TR: Muslims today, Muslim Americans, should be involved in many dimensions. They should be involved in the spiritual trends, interfaith dialogue, politics, and get it right as well. Domestic issues should be tackled beyond just the Muslim presence. We should be speaking about social justice, healthcare for all. And the second dimension is not to forget that you have something to give to this country. You should say to the U.S. that it can't just be democracy at home and support for dictatorships outside. Abroad you have to be consistent. So we are not choosing to be Americans to help only Americans and forget about the Africans, the Palestinians, and the oppressed people around the world. We are here to stand by our principles. And our principles are that what we want for ourselves, we also want for the others. Finally, again I repeat, we should be intellectually, financially, and spiritually independent. And most importantly, Muslims need to be courageous. Because if there is one dimension or one feature that we have to stress and highlight when it comes to the Prophet and to the Companions is that the Prophet was really courageous. And this is why he was able to change the world. And if we want to do something for the U.S., it is to change it for the better. ■

Weaving Behind a Legacy

D.C.'s Textile Museum offers a glimpse into Muslim contributions to textiles.

BY ZAHRA CHEEMA

SILKS, VELVETS, COLORS, SHAPES and designs come together to form unique pieces showcased at the world-renowned Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. Boasting a collection of over 18,000 textiles dating from 3000 BC to the present, the museum specializes in exhibiting, studying and conserving textiles from across Asia, areas of Africa and from the indigenous cultures of the Americas. This includes a large collection of Islamic textiles composed of garments, rugs and tapestries made in past and present Islamic societies.

George Hewitt Myers, an avid textile

collector, recognized the artistic value of the world's textiles when he founded the museum in 1925. According to Sumru Krody, the museum's senior curator of Eastern Hemisphere Collections and expert on Islamic textiles, textiles tell the stories of the people who created them.

"Textiles are material expressions of people's needs, desires, beliefs, creativity and traditions," Krody says. "Thinking about the many roles that textiles play may lead us to broader understandings of lifestyles, traditions, economies and environments of the peoples around the world and across time who make and use textiles."

THE EXHIBIT: RECYCLING PRECIOUS TEXTILES

Several pieces from the museum's Islamic collection are currently on display now until Jan. 8, 2012 as part of the "Second Lives: The Age-Old Art of Recycling Textiles" exhibit. "[The exhibit] discusses the recycling of textiles, which is an age-old tradition, especially in cultures where making textiles takes lots of time and effort and resources," Krody says. "Textiles are valued very much and they are never thrown away but rather recycled into other objects."

Pictured here is a 19th-century ikat panel from Uzbekistan that was recycled from a robe. Ikat refers to the unique way of decorating fabric in which the pattern is dyed onto the thread before it is woven.

Recycled textiles can carry interesting histories with them, like the two intricately embroidered tent panels pictured here. Originating in 16th century Persia, the panels made their way to the Ottoman Empire, most likely in the form of a gift to the empire's sultan at the time, Suleyman the Magnificent, where they adorned his



Hanging or cover, Afghanistan, 20th century. TM 1995.2.1. Gift of James W. Lankton.



Panel, Uzbekistan, second half of the 19th century. TM 2005.36.39. The Megalli Collection.

tent. Later, the panels found their way to Poland and were incorporated into a noble family's sled blanket.

Other recycled textiles display a collage of diverse fabrics, such as a large 20th-century patchwork hanging from Afghanistan (pictured here). Printed cottons from Russia, silk shats, and locally-produced striped fabrics are stitched together to form a new piece.

ROOTS OF THE COLLECTION

Though Myers's collection makes up the museum's core collection, many acquisitions after his death in 1957 have come through generous donations, according to Krody.

"There comes a certain time in [people's] lives that they want to see the collection or the piece protected by a museum or shared with the public," she says.



Tent panel, Iran, Safavid, 16th century. TM 3.315. Acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1952.

THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

LOCATION

2320 S Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20008

MUSEUM HOURS

Tues.-Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.;
Sun. 1 to 5 p.m.
Closed Mondays and federal holidays

ADMISSION

Suggested donation for
non-members: \$8

HIGHLIGHTS TOURS are offered
every Saturday and Sunday at 1:30
p.m. No reservations are required.

Katy Clune, the museum's communications and marketing manager, says that she frequently receives email messages from people around the world who own textiles and want to donate them.

"It's amazing," Clune says. "Almost every day there [are] people writing us, asking questions: 'What is this textile I have?' or 'Would you like my grandmother's quilt?'"

If the piece does not fit the scope of the museum's collection, then Clune makes referrals to other museums that may be interested in their pieces. Contemporary American and most European textiles fall outside the scope of the museum's collection.

"Myers believed that European and contemporary American textiles were all derivative of the examples that were made before, around the world," Clune says. "So his thinking was, why look at a Victorian shawl when you can look at the original source from Persia."

With a growing collection, Clune is looking forward to the increased space the collection will have when it joins George Washington University to become part of a new museum scheduled to open in mid-2014. In addition to the new museum, the university will construct a conservation and resource center for the study and care of The Textile Museum's collection, along with the university's collection. ■

For more information about the museum visit www.textilemuseum.com. If you have questions on your textiles or have textiles that you are interested in donating to the museum, send an e-mail to info@textilemuseum.org.

Zahra Cheema, a freelance writer, resides in Maryland.

A God-given Gift

Hilal Kazan, a contemporary female master of the pen, combines classical learning with modern education.

BY VALERIE BEHIERY



Hilal Kazan with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his wife at the calligraphy exhibit which was a part of the international symposium on women calligraphers held in Istanbul in June 2010.

HILAL KAZAN LIVES IN KARTAL, a busy suburb of Istanbul overlooking the Marmara Sea but grew up in Istanbul. On a class trip with her school to the Suleymaniye Mosque, the young Kazan looked up at the ceiling of its majestic dome. Smitten by what she saw, the teenager was of course unaware of how this upward glance presaged the course of her life. It was not the architectural prowess of the dome that impressed her but the beauty of the cursive calligraphy adorning it. Kazan was in effect captivated by the monumental radiating gold letters measuring up to 68 centimeters each.

"How did the craftsmen manage to write the inscription?" the inquisitive student asked.

The teacher was undoubtedly aware, as are all Istanbulites, that the second largest mosque in Istanbul had been built in the 16th century by the master architect Sinan for the sultan at the time, Suleiman the Magnificent. However, he did not seem to know that the inscriptions had been designed by famous Ottoman calligrapher Ahmed Karahisari and his student Hasan Çelebi, or how these had

been executed. He told Kazan that a court calligrapher had managed to pen the Quranic verse so beautifully by dipping a large pen into an even larger bowl of ink and writing the text freehand with utmost spontaneity. The answer, although erroneous, only further left the young girl awestruck. The image allowed the future master calligrapher's imagination to take flight and triggered a lifelong interest in the art of *khatt*, or calligraphy.

Hilal Kazan, having trained in both modern academic and traditional apprenticeship systems of education, is unique in the world.

Kazan finished high school and went on to obtain a bachelor's degree in Turkish language and literature from the University of Istanbul. Recognizing her ability to write a comely Ottoman hand, her friends, family, and professors — particularly Dr. Ali Alparslan — encouraged her to undertake, in addition to her university studies, training in calligraphy. They also found Kazan her first teacher: Musharraf Çelebi, the great granddaughter of well-known calligrapher Ahmed Kutsi Efendi. Having studied with master calligrapher Mustafa Halim Ozyazici, Çelebi went on to become a specialist and teacher of the *naskh* script in her own right.

Seasoned and well respected, she gave Kazan the encouragement she so needed. It was not only Çelebi's mastery of *khatt* and pleasant manner that inspired the hundreds of students that flocked to her door, but also the example of how she lived her life. Kazan's first mentor was known for being a very pious woman. When her first child died while only a month old, Çelebi was inspired to commit the entire Quran to memory to outwit the unbearable sadness. Within three years, she became, by sleeping little and praying much, a *hafiza*, receiving her diploma at the Suleymaniye Mosque, the same mosque that had so impressed Kazan as a young girl.

Çelebi, who actively read and studied the holy text in addition to her practice of calligraphy, opened up the young woman's eyes to the fact that calligraphy was a vocation more than a job and effectively a lifelong quest. It was not only about fashioning beautiful, well-proportioned and regular letters but also about cultivating the necessary personality traits like humility, patience and perseverance that begot them and allowed them to flourish. And as any student who has not been able to resist the attractive but daunting challenge of the art knows, mastering the self requires as much ardor as mastering the pen.

Armed with this knowledge and witnessing the failing health of Musharraf Çelebi, Kazan presented herself to Hasan Çelebi in spring 1994. In order to understand the courage she had to muster up for such a meeting, one needs to know that Hasan Çelebi was a nationally celebrated Turkish calligrapher, and a master and teacher of many scripts. Çelebi garnered attention beyond Turkey throughout the whole of the Muslim world in 1983 with his successful restoration of the calligraphic inscriptions at the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. More than 20 years later, his reputation had become international; the

Top left: Hilal Kazan, 2010, Opening pages of the Quran (al-Fatiha and beginning of Surah al-Baqarah), 60 X 40 cm.

Top right: Hilal Kazan, 2010, Last verses of Surah al-Qalam (68:51-52), 28 X 32 cm.

Bottom left: Hilal Kazan, 2010, Asma' Allah al-Husna, 45 X 60 cm.

Bottom center: Hilal Kazan, 2010, Surah al-Falaq and Surah al-Nas, 28 X 35 cm.

Bottom right: Hilal Kazan, 2011, The Names of Mohammed (Asma' Muhammad), 45 X 60 cm.



British Museum devoted an entire exhibition to him in 2005. "Making of the Master: The Art of Arabic Calligraphy," as the title indicates, focused on the transmission of calligraphic knowledge and therefore works by his students, including one by Kazan and one by Ali bin Nayef of Jordan formed part of the show. Çelebi is however best known here in North America as the teacher of Mohammad Zakariya, the American Muslim calligrapher behind the beautiful Eid stamp of 2001. Though Kazan's two instructors carry the same last name, the two Çelebis are unrelated.)

To this day, Kazan considers having been accepted as one of Çelebi's students a real honor. Known for being a rigorous and effective teacher, her training with him, as with all his students, meant starting the learning process over again from square one. Often bearing the phrase of encouragement "You have done well," the many corrections in red ink testify to the golden patience necessary to mastering the Islamic art of *khatt*. Çelebi imparts to his students that they must practice 30 hours a day, but he also tells them that "the first requirement is to love the art" and that this "love comes before skill."

In 2000, after six years of study, Kazan received a diploma in the *thuluth* and *naskh* scripts. She is one of only three out of approximately 300 female students to have obtained a diploma from the modern Turkish master. The stunning work that earned her professional certification displays the 99 names of God. The diploma not only constitutes an approbation of a calligrapher's worth and degree of skill but also allows calligraphers to sign their work and take on students of their own, thus continuing a tradition now dating

back over a thousand years. In this particular case, it also places Kazan into a long lineage of illustrious calligraphers.

Hasan Çelebi was Kazan's mentor in more ways than one. It was he who encouraged her to pursue graduate studies in a related field, and Kazan effectively finished her Ph.D thesis on Ottoman court patronage in 2007. That she has been trained in both modern academic and traditional apprenticeship systems of education makes her, as David Simonowitz observes in the only scholarly English article devoted to Kazan, unique in the world. Since graduating from the University of Marmara,



Top: Hilal Kazan (right) with Mr. Kadir Topbas, the Mayor of Istanbul. Bottom: Hilal Kazan presenting her book to the Prince of Medina.

the calligrapher continues to practice her art as well as pursue her research, author works, and present papers at international conferences. In June 2010, she organized an international symposium on women calligraphers in Istanbul. The pioneering event included workshops, a ceremony for 26 new female master calligraphers, as well as an exhibit of the work of 45 women calligraphers from Turkey, Iran, Spain, England, Syria and the U.A.E.

Kazan also wrote the accompanying book "Female Calligraphers Past and Present" published by the Istanbul Culture Foundation. The bilingual Turkish and English illustrated publication forms a modern version of a bibliographical dictionary, compiling a history of female calligraphers. While some women named in Islamic historical sources are missing, the book fills an important gap in scholarship on both historical and contemporary Muslim women calligraphers.

The most moving historical female calligrapher is, however, no doubt Bi-dest. Born in 12th century Egypt without hands, she created instead calligraphic masterpieces with her foot. After her celebrated skills were ascertained by the vizier, she was offered a position which both granted her public honor and ensured her financial independence.

As a woman, Kazan, who considers her skill a gift from God, is also a part of this original and talented female lineage. We can only look forward to seeing more of her art as well as that of other contemporary female masters of the pen, all of whom constitute vital links in this open-ended chain of transmission. ■

Valerie Behiery, a Ph.D. in art history, lectures and writes on Islam-related arts, both historical and contemporary.

A Simple Wish

The MAIA Project focuses on bringing clean drinking water to Gaza's children.

BY TASBEEH HERWEES

WHEN REPRESENTATIVES OF the Middle Eastern Children's Alliance (MECA) visited a boy's refugee school in Gaza in 2009, they asked children what they wanted most for their school. The boys organized a vote.

"We were thinking they'll want computers or they'll want soccer balls," says Deborah Agare, MECA's development director. "They said, we want to come to school and have a clean glass of water to drink."

That's where the Maia Project comes in. MECA, based in Berkeley, Calif., decided

to dedicate their next project to bringing clean water to Gaza. Launched in September 2009, they called it "Maia," the Arabic word for water.

"The way MECA operates is that it directly responds to the needs of the people," says Leena Al-Arian, MECA's program and communications director. "They don't go and try to implement whatever project they have in mind."

A clean glass of water seems like a simple thing to deliver, but, in Gaza, a water crisis has made it a precious resource. Gaza's sole aquifer suffers from poor infrastructure, allowing sewage to seep into the city's water supply. The aquifer has also been subject to over-extraction over the years—resulting in water that's as salty as seawater, says Sahar El Abbadi, a MECA volunteer and environmental engineering graduate from University of California, Berkeley.

"The water in the Gaza coastal aquifer is brackish water and it also has really high levels of nitrate, which is really poisonous," El Abbadi says. "It could be fatal to infants."

A clean glass of water seems like a simple thing to deliver, but, in Gaza, a water crisis has made it a precious resource.

In 2009, Amnesty International found that 90 percent of the water samples taken from Gaza were significantly high in nitrate, which, if consumed in large doses by young children, could result in a blood-related disorder called methemoglobinemia, leading to a high amount of hemoglobin to build up in the blood. The environmental damage, according to the United Nations, could "take centuries to reverse." Maia hasn't been able to do that just yet, but it has given Palestinian children one thing they're after: clean water.

"We add these desalination units, which are relatively small-scale as far as desalination goes, to elementary schools," El Abbadi says.

The desalination units are made in Gaza by a local company that acquires 85 percent of the materials used to make them from



(top) An elementary school student in Khan Younis Refugee Camp, Gaza drinks clean water at his school. (right) A kindergartener in Rafah, Gaza enjoying a glass of clean drinking water.

within Gaza as well, says El Abbadi. One large unit costs \$11,500, and a smaller unit costs \$4,000. MECA's fundraising is all grassroots, so they rely on the efforts of volunteers and organizers of "Maia circles."

"These circles develop in any city where a group of people decide that they want to help build a water unit, or want to increase awareness of water rights in Palestine or water apartheid and what Israel is doing to prevent Palestinians from a basic human right," Al-Arian, whose job is to manage these circles nationwide, says.

Fundraising, however, is a task made more difficult for an organization that proudly bills itself as pro-Palestinian, says Agare, who has worked with MECA for eight years. When people think Palestine, she says, they automatically think "terrorism."

"I think in the Arab American community, people are, since 9/11, nervous of giving money or getting involved in this issue because people have been targeted and organizations have been targeted," Agare says.

MECA is no exception. About four years ago, according to Agare, the IRS began an audit of the charity.

"We talked to a lawyer who specialized in the nonprofit section of the IRS. Now his specialty is what he calls 'politically-motivated audits,'" Agare says. "He took one look at the paperwork we got from the IRS and he said this is clearly politically-motivated."

More recently, a Palestinian art exhibit related to be displayed at Oakland's MOCHA

Children's Museum this past September was scrapped by the board of directors under pressure from pro-Israeli groups who deemed the artwork "propaganda." The MECA-sponsored exhibit, "A Child's View From Gaza," featured art pieces by Gazan children that depicted what daily life is like in the Occupied Territories.

"MOCHA's Board President Hilmon Sorey [cited] community concerns about the 'violent' nature of the images," read a MECA press release. "However, the images depicted in the art exhibit drawn by Palestinian children in fact decry the use of violence against a defenseless civilian population."

In an open letter posted on MOCHA's website, Sorey says, "It is important to note this was not a judgment of the art itself or

related to any political opinions. The board determined that MOCHA simply did not have the space or staffing to accommodate the exhibit in a way that both respected the gravity of the material and our mission to serve all children."

Sorey went on to say that MOCHA was reacting to "concerns raised by parents, caregivers and educators who did not wish for their children to encounter graphically violent and sensitive works during their use of our facility."

Agare says that despite the obstacles that come with working with a pro-Palestinian charity, the work is very gratifying.



"I feel really committed to this work because people will say, 'Well there's bad things happening to children all over the world,'" Agare says. "Well, Israel is the No. 1 recipient of aid and I feel like, if my government's putting my tax money to hurt these children, I wanna do something to help them." ■

Tasbeeh Herwees is a Libyan American journalist living in Southern California.

A group of kindergarteners in Rafah, Gaza gather around the newly installed water purification and desalination unit purchased with funds from the Madison-Rafah Sister-City Project.



PHOTO CREDIT: MECA

Seeking an Imam

Islamic Society of Triplex, Beaumont, Texas is looking for an Imam.

The Imam should be fluent in English and be able to communicate with our youth. We will offer a great package including handsome salary with housing and health insurance.

Please contact Dr. Shahid Rafiq at Srafiq68@hotmail.com or call him at (409) 659-0897

The Palestinian Composure

Dignity in the Occupied Territories

BY SAMI KISHAWI



Many homes in Gaza such as this have not been repaired due to the scarcity of building materials.

OUR DRIVER SLOWED HIS CAR and pointed at what appeared to be a set of walls made entirely of rusted metal scraps, thick mismatched curtains and very little concrete.

"This house belongs to the Abed Rabbo family," our driver announced. "At one point, this land was used to grow vegetables and to build homes, but that's all in the past. They were among the first families to experience the full impact of Israel's invasion. They lost it all, but they still make do."

I already knew the background of the story but seeing it in person was an entirely different experience. The Gaza Strip — pounded at every hour for 22 days by American-manufactured, Israeli-piloted F-16s, isolated from its neighbors far and wide by a naval blockade, illuminated by bright orange blasts, surrounded by plugged checkpoints — sounds like a menacing place where none but the most substandard of humans live. There is no reason to thrive. The mainstream media frames the Gaza Strip as

a sinkhole where people are accustomed to inhumanity and are consequently backwards and aggressive. No image has ever been so distorted.

The driver stopped the vehicle when a man, maybe in his late twenties, emerged from the curtain walls, waving us down. He spotted my bulky camera, assumed I was reporting on northern Gaza's current condition, and asked if I was willing to hear his story.

Closing the car door behind me, the young man led me toward the makeshift home and introduced me to his family. Besides the washroom, there were no other



rooms — just one large space with plastic chairs, a small table, and various household items. Sitting around a *taboun*, a traditional oven for bread-making, were four older women. The man's mother patted fresh dough onto the oventop and welcomed me inside.

Realizing the driver and accompanying passengers were waiting for me, the young man quickly led me back to the front of the home and gave me a brief but stark glimpse of the reality of war, dating back to the invasion of Gaza, which had taken place nearly three years ago.

Twenty-two days of bombardment. More than 1,300 dead; more than 5,000 wounded, according to Amnesty International.

He watched Israeli tanks ravage his family's trees. He saw the glowing tails of missiles and tracer bullets, heard the thunderous noises that succeeded them, and felt the impact of the blasts as his home fell to the ground. Without vegetables to sell, he lost his family's main source of income. Three years later, the vegetables still haven't grown back.

And as I later learned, all his family had was dough for bread.

He left me standing underneath the hot Gazan sun, enraged by his struggles and pitying his family's seemingly abject state of living.

I returned to the vehicle but not before hearing him call for my attention. There he was, running behind me with handfuls of his mother's fresh bread — quite possibly the only thing left for him to put on his family's table.

"Here, take this," and he doled out loaf after loaf.

This is a man who watched his life desaturate in the cold shade of humanitarian abuses. Three years ago, he went from making a living to finding a living in a span of three tense weeks. He had no underground shelter to escape to, no Iron Dome defense system to engage, no guarantee that he'd be compensated for any damages.

This is a man, who lost everything — everything except his dignity. Owning nothing and offering everything, the man even made room for us to stay.

I've heard stories of Palestinian refugees and victims of the assault on Gaza offer the only water they could afford to the participants of the Viva Palestine convoys who had the opportunity to visit the scene almost immediately after the invasion. Experiencing firsthand this same generosity and



The elderly exemplify the faith of the people, and the youth exemplify the hope. The elderly embody strength of faith and the youth reflect hope and resolve.

willingness to overcome revealed a highly underreported, underrated, and underappreciated detail of the Palestinian identity.

It is entirely reasonable to assert that global understanding of the Palestinian people falls under the assumption that they are indeed the ones who suffer because they choose to do so, that they refuse to stand tall as an excuse to elicit international pity, that they play the victim card far too often.

For clarification's sake, there is only one victim of any occupation: the occupied. This premise of "understanding" is wrong.

Then there are those who give credit where credit is due — the ones who recognize the endurance of the Palestinian people regardless of whether or not they condemn the violence that regularly befalls a people enclosed behind walls, gates, and wires. Still, this is wrong.

Reality has shown me that the people of Palestine, not just the Gazans but the entire diaspora, do more than to simply endure. They overcome, and since traveling to Gaza in the summer of 2011, this has ultimately become my catchphrase.

It soon became evident that the man from the Abed Rabbo family is a prime example of the Palestinian composure. It can be found everywhere.

In a Khan Younis refugee camp, I smiled at the sight of six stalks of corn growing in a small enclosure behind a resident's home. Another family nearby grew apples and when I visited for a few short minutes, the sweet nectar of freshly-cut apples prepared for my visit lingered like the taste of royalty so noticeably absent in this impoverished camp.

Just a few short miles away, on the other side of Gaza, I sat in a coffee shop with three locals and asked for their opinions on the Flotilla expected to come ashore. They were more concerned with the Flotilla as a progressive movement to nonviolently challenge Israel's siege rather than as a convoy delivering humanitarian aid.

Even though Gazans still require the construction material banned by Israel to physically rebuild the territory's infrastructure, the population never set its sights on the Flotilla as a potential bearer of the ever-so-necessary material. Iron rods, they told me, would be shaped from damaged metal scraps. Cement would be manufactured from the rubble of homes that once stood. Essentially, if anything was missing or hard to come by, the people of Gaza found a way to make it appear. The Flotilla was thus viewed not as a materialist endeavor but of a bold statement of solidarity, and that made complete sense to me.

It is their humble dignity that keeps the Palestinian people composed and standing tall. Even when it becomes so easy — maybe even necessary — to capitalize on the well-intentioned generosity of others, the idea



is entirely frowned upon. This is a land of giving, not taking.

Nevertheless, the concept of the Palestinian composure should not be limited to a single definition involving the ability to give when there is nothing to give from, nor should it be misunderstood or mistranslated as a stubborn yet resolute resiliency to be taken only at face-value.

The people of Gaza are determined to make ends meet, not just to attain sustenance but to defy the occupation. After speaking to the locals in the coffeeshop, I witnessed with my own eyes the factories powered by the rubble that once covered Gaza's streets. I encountered fishermen who defiantly faced Israeli Navy gunships as they reeled in their catches for the day. I met with homegrown solidarity activists who raised funds for starving people elsewhere. I found myself embedded within a self-sufficient society resisting the occupation with its ingenuity and generosity.

Though we only witness the impoverished aspects of life in Gaza, the trials, the scarcity of goods, the looming threat of destruction, we cannot stop simply at feeling pity. We must look deeper to see the brave, dignified composure of a people determined to work, study, contribute, and grow. We must see a people determined to live.

Such determination thrives in families like the Abed Rabbos. If only every story like theirs, thousands of which exist, could be told. ■

Sami Kishawi is an undergraduate student at the University of Chicago where he aspires to become a humanitarian physician stationed in Palestine. He maintains a blog, Sixteen Minutes to Palestine, at smpalestine.com



Fighting the Famine

Muslim American organizations reach out to Somalia's drought victims.

BY ZEEBA ANARWALA

THE SCENES ARE HORRENDOUS AND HEARTBREAKING: A SEVERELY MALNOURISHED 13-year-old boy writhing in pain; a mother without the energy to even weep over the loss of her children; animal carcasses lying on parched earth. The ongoing drought and famine in the Horn of Africa have affected approximately 9 million people, according to Islamic Relief. Experts have called the crisis—which affects Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia—the worst in the area in 60 years.

Three Islamic aid groups that have helped in the crisis are Islamic Relief, Zakat Foundation and the Islamic Medical Association of North America.

"I met one mother who lost a child every day that week. Imagine losing one child. Now imagine three—one each night," says

Dr. Ismail Mehr, vice president and chair of IMANA's relief section.

Mehr accompanied Islamic Relief's vice president of programs, Adnan Ansari, to Africa for a close-up of the situation on the ground.

"My task was to assess the situation

and determine a plan of action on how [...] IMANA could assist in providing much needed health care. I visited Dadaab, Kenya and then went by myself to Mogadishu," Mehr says.

Many of the famine victims have fled to Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, the world's largest refugee camp even before this

Due to U.S. sanctions, relief organizations are not transferring any direct funds but rather will be purchasing supplies and transporting them to Mogadishu.



disaster. Refugees at the camp are in need of food, water and medicine. Malnourishment and cholera are rampant.

If the medical community does not respond to the health care crisis, cholera may kill off entire generations, Mehr says.

Several Islamic charities bolstered their collection and aid efforts and thankfully received extra help in the form of donations this Ramadan.

IMANA's first team of five physicians arrived in Mogadishu on Sept. 10.

"Our plan is to establish field hospitals in multiple IDP [internally displaced persons] camps while also focusing on strengthening the local health care system," Mehr says of what they plan to be a one-year project.

Thanks to a Ramadan boost, IMANA collected \$65,000 in donations in about a month.

"There are many needs and the list is long, but the priority (in no order) is food/water, sanitation and health care," Mehr says. "The first need is being focused upon as many agencies are mobilizing. Unfortunately, many focus on the food and water and forget the innocent who have succumbed to the conditions and are dying day by day."

Mehr urged people to donate and physicians to volunteer. In fact, he traveled to Somalia to make sure volunteers wouldn't face any security issues. He isn't worried about security being a problem and added that generous logistical help from Islamic Relief will help keep things running smoothly.

However, Somalia is under sanctions from the U.S., thus restricting how funds can be transferred.

"We take this very seriously. We are not transferring any direct funds but rather will be purchasing supplies and transporting them to Mogadishu," Mehr says.

Illinois-based charity Zakat Foundation has taken a long-term approach to the problems in Somalia.

"What we pride ourselves on is establishing a connection with the communities we serve. We've been in the region year-round, and our focus is making a deep impact outside of emergency relief campaigns," says Feras Abdelrahman, communications coordinator at Zakat Foundation. "That model of work has paid dividends as we've been able to operate in countries that are not so keen on foreign agencies."

The organization has worked in east Africa since 2006, aiding in refugee camps as well as setting up sustainable development projects.

Recently, Zakat Foundation has purchased 1,000 cattle to distribute Udhiya in the region.

Although, so much progress is being made, Abdelrahman emphasizes this is an ongoing effort, with no end in sight. Regular donations are important because this is a long-term problem.

"It would be dishonest to tell you that people's lives are improving drastically," Abdelrahman says. "People find hope in survival, and our work as well as our partners and colleagues' work have planted the seed of hope."

Additionally, Zakat Foundation recently

mobilized to help refugees fleeing Libya by establishing a camp in neighboring Tunisia and collecting blankets, clothes, toys, wheelchairs and other goods. The group also provided food and medical supplies by sea to blocked-off cities.

Both Mehr and Abdelrahman agreed to stay hopeful and pray amid the reality.

"It is expected that this year's rainy season will once again not yield any rains, only worsening the famine," Mehr says. "I think we often forget the most important thing which is dua. They need our heartfelt prayers first and foremost."

Abdelrahman warned of the human tendency to forget about the issue once the hoopla dies down.

"We need to keep this discourse alive," Abdelrahman says. "Too often in this country we galvanize around an issue for a month



or two and then forget about it. The Somali crisis will not end when the conversations end. There will still be refugees. There will still be hunger. There will still be a crisis." ■

For more information, or to donate, visit these websites:

www.irusa.org/emergencies/east-africa-crisis/
<http://www.imana.org/>
<http://www.zakat.org/>

Zeeba Anarwala is a freelance journalist based in North Carolina.

Forging a New Democracy

National Transition Council member
AbdulRaheem El-Keib's take on a new Libya.

BY SUMIAH M. ADUIB

IF YOU WATCHED THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION from your TV, you would think the country was liberated from a 43-year brutal regime by teens and old men in slippers, makeshift armored trucks and randomly devised military tactics.

And in some ways, that's true.

But what cannot be seen through the television and computer screen is the sheer determination that National Transition Council (NTC) member AbdulRaheem El-Keib says was literally the fuel that kept the revolution going for six steady months.

"I was here in Libya in January and at that time there were rumors of a revolution, a Facebook-rooted revolution, but it seemed like that was already being put down by Gaddafi," Keib says as he makes his way to yet another day of NTC meetings in the Libyan capital, Tripoli.

El-Keib, a Libyan national, lived abroad in the U.S. as well as the United Arab Emirates where he worked as a professor for the Petroleum Institute. However, when the revolution began, he along with countless other academics, doctors, businessmen, housewives and even students, dropped everything and returned back to their country to aid in the liberation of its people.

"I never thought it would happen," El-Keib says. "I thought the people were scared and the regime was too brutal."

El-Keib serves as a member of the transitional government that declared itself as the "only legitimate body representing the Libyan people" on March 5, 2011. Its initial base was Benghazi, the eastern city where the revolution first began on Feb. 15 and, just as late as early Sept., was moved to the de jure capital, Tripoli.

So far, 85 countries have recognized the NTC to be the legitimate governing author-

ity until an interim government is in place. France was the first country to recognize the NTC, merely five days after its creation. It started with 33 members, with representatives from each area of the country, but has since ballooned significantly with no official number.

"I am one of 11 members representing Tripoli," El-Keib says. He explains that there



is no official roster; many members are anonymous due to security concerns for family members living in Gaddafi-controlled areas.

Interestingly enough, NTC Chairman, Mustafa Abdul Jalil has stated that none of the NTC members will be involved in the democratically elected interim government. He has also assured the Libyan people that any individual who served the Gaddafi regime in any formal capacity must stand trial and answer for their service. He included himself in this statement as he had previously held an official government post for four years prior to the revolution. Statements like these allow Abdul Jalil to stand out in a new era of leadership that has not graced Libyan soil for nearly three generations.

"You walk in the streets and you sense the change and the freedom and the hope people have for what the future holds," El-Keib says.

In his first public address on Sept. 12 in Tripoli's Martyrs Square (previously named the Green Square by Gaddafi), Abdul Jalil said that, "Islam will be the main source of legislation in the post-Gaddafi Libya."

El-Keib reiterates this notion saying that the unshakable faith the revolutionaries had in God to lead them to victory was what gave them the courage to fight down the oldest standing dictatorship in the world.

"I was skeptical, just like a lot of us were. It seemed almost impossible, but these youth, they owned the revolution," El-Keib says. "They had enough of the brutality and were willing to lay everything on the line for this chance at freedom."

As he shares this, he holds back tears.

"I'm sorry, this is a sensitive subject for me," El-Keib says.

And understandably so.

As of September 2011, the current health minister Naji Barakat, reports that at least 30,000 people were killed and 50,000 were

wounded in the six-month war. Estimates are expected to increase because thousands of people remain unaccounted for. Secret graves of Gaddafi detainees are still being discovered around Tripoli and hastily buried dead are now being exhumed for identification. Barakat also has requested that citizens report the number of dead, missing and injured to their local mosques in order to get an accurate figure.

To El-Keib's disgust and surprise, evidence and documentation being discovered in government offices around Tripoli are uncovering an extreme level of brutality difficult to fathom.

"It's even worse than what we expected," El-Keib says.

He believes the revolution was not only fueled by the youth as well as the victories in neighboring Egypt and Tunisia, but says the new future of the country lies in their realization that, with the fall of Bab Al-Aziziyah—Gaddafi's heavily protected compound and home—came a new drive and passion for a hopeful future.

"The youth own this revolution. I am amazed at their level of dedication," El-Keib says. "They are serious. They will forge a democratic country. That's it, there is no going back." ■

Sumiah M. Aduib, a second-generation Libyan American journalist, currently lives in Los Angeles.

Institutionalized Abuse

Human Rights abuses are exacerbated in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen.

BY MEHRUNISA QAYYUM



THE ARAB SPRING HAS SEEN varied success in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Unfortunately, human rights abuses continue throughout the revolutionary period in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen. One is a small, oil-rich economy; the other two are not as wealthy. Though the term "Arab Spring" does not conjure up memories of the institutionalized human rights abuses, the mantra of achieving human dignity ties all six nations together.

In his Sept. 12 "New York Times" editorial, Prince Turki al-Faisal, Saudi Arabia's former director of intelligence services, discussed his country's role in Bahrain and Yemen, which contrasts with its role in Syria. It is a study in contradictions—a policy based on the Saudi distrust of Iran.

Human right abuses are not limited to physical brutality and forced disappearances. Human rights abuses encompass the freedom from fear. As such, human rights watchdogs and reporting outlets offer some checks and balances. Of course, often such watchdogs serve as policy outlets of certain powers; thus, Israel is never held accountable for its abusive acts.

Human rights abuses take all forms of physical and societal abuse. For example,

Syria has expelled foreign media and watchdog groups. Meanwhile, Bahrain's reporting community operates with restricted freedoms, repressing individuals as well as institutions that observe the repression of those individuals.

In fact, human rights abuses have become institutionalized. The tragedy is not only that numerous people are unaccounted for by Syrian, Bahraini, and Yemeni regimes, but that the called-for reforms of their "institutions" have never materialized. Furthermore, regimes, like Assad have hired anti-protest groups, like the "Shabiha," who were active in the July attacks of both the American and French embassies.

More than 3,000 people—the majority of them civilians—have been killed in 112 Syrian towns and cities, according to Radwan Ziadeh, head of the Washington-based Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies in Syria. This estimate includes the 123 victims under the age of 18 and cited in his contribution to the report for Federation for Human Rights, which listed violations ranging from basic freedoms, the torture of children and collective punishment of communities in military operations. Yet, Syrian

President Bashar al-Assad maintains that his forces are battling "armed terrorist gangs."

In Homs, Syrian protesters call for international protection. The mutilated body of Dr. Sakher Halak was discovered in a ditch 20 miles from Aleppo. Halak's family told the New York Times that he went missing after returning from a medical conference in the U.S. in May. Along with Halak, an estimated 3,000 Syrians have been killed since March 15, representing the larger dilemma of human rights abuses coloring Syria's last 40 years.

In the Persian Gulf, both rich and poor in Yemen and Bahrain experience the backlash of political opposition in the name of national security. In Yemen, Amnesty International documents that at least 100 people have been killed during peaceful demonstrations in various cities since early February 2011.

The Al-Khalifa family rules Bahrain, a small kingdom with a literacy rate of 90.8 percent. King Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa presides over a population of about 800,000 people, largely Shia. Although Bahrain differs socioeconomically from Syria and Yemen, abuses occur on various levels. In 2009, Bahrain established the National Human Rights Institution in an effort to create a more responsible regime. However, in September 2010, the board's president resigned in protest when 23 of the 25 accused political opposition activists stood trial without access to lawyers. According to an Amnesty International Country Report, Bahrain's National Security Agency held all 25 activists incommunicado where their the state extracted confessions under duress.

Furthermore, Bahraini citizens' freedom of expression transformed into a risk, rather than a right, as websites and political newsletters were shut down or revoked printing rights. Law enforcement follow the Press and Publications Law, which prescribes prison terms for those criticizing the king or "inciting hatred of the regime." According to the Bahrain Press Association, Bahraini authorities have arrested, interrogated or tortured about 120 media figures and reporters. Reuters reporter Hamad Iqbal, was attacked by Bahraini security.

The acts of civil disobedience of the Bahrainis, Yemenis and Syrians have made strides in the right direction; only time will tell how much progress these societies have truly made. ■

Mehrunisa Qayyum, an international development consultant, has written for the GAO, Middle East Institute, Altmuslimah, Goatmilk and Kabobfest. She is the founder of the political economy blog www.pitapolicy.com.

Children of the Book

"Koran by Heart" highlights the miracle of the Quran through the journeys of three children.

BY MARWA ABED

MANY MUSLIM CHILDREN recall spending summers stuffed away inside the basement of a local mosque as part of Quran camp their parents put them in. The rooms, often unaired and smelling of falafel and Pinesol, always held that one kid who cried the entire summer session. Children in these camps would spend summers memorizing the holy Quran, complaining, wreaking havoc, and learning all the while.

Such classes are a diluted form of some of the madrasas around the world, which teach a rigorous curriculum promoting memorization of the entire Quran.

"Koran by Heart" is an HBO documentary film follows the lives of three young children—Rifdha, a girl from the Maldives; Nabiollah, a boy from Tajikistan; and Djamil, a boy from Senegal—who have dedicated a great deal of their young lives to memorizing the Quran. All three children are non-Arabic speaking, but wow the judges, and the audience, with their amazing recitation. Directed by filmmaker Greg Barker, the film follows the children as they travel from their home countries to Cairo, where they participate in the International Holy Quran Competition. There, they face 110 reciters from 70 countries who flocked to the capital to compete.

The film, while being a beautifully touching story of faith, devotion and the sheer brilliance of children's capabilities, also highlights important questions of gender, extremism and modernity.

Rifdha is one of the few female competitors in the competition. On a broader scale, in many Quran competitions around the world, women are discouraged or even banned from attending. The story follows Rifdha's relationship with her father. Whereas Rifdha, an extremely

intelligent young girl, dreams of becoming an ocean explorer and studying biology, her father (who strongly supports her religious education) finds her



The documentary highlights the next generation of young Muslims around the world, and provides a platform for these children to tell their own stories.



most fitting role to be within the home: a housewife. The relationship between Rifdha and her father—a self-proclaimed religious devotee—sheds light on the contradictions that often occur when cultural practices mix with religious teachings.

Moving down the line, we also meet contestant Nabiollah, the 10-year-old from Tajikistan. The young boy's rural madrasa is shut down by the government due to fear of extremism. The question is subtly raised, of the connection between madrasas—religious schools—and fundamentalism. Is the 1400-year-old, Islamically-mandated tradition of memorizing the Quran an attempt to turn back the clock and put a halt on modernity?

The film does not answer all questions regarding religious extremism, but it does positively shed light on Nabiollah, an encouraging product of the madrasa system. Barker's intention may have been to allow individuals to display their own narratives, rather than allowing broad generalizations about Islamic traditions and teaching methods to dominate the discourse.

The film further follows Djamil as he travels from Senegal to Egypt. Djamil is a brilliant young boy, but does not do well in the competition. He is inspired by the vastness of Cairo, and returns home, a local hero, with renewed ambitions.

The movie, not entirely about politics—or even so much about Islamic teachings—exposes the world to a human story of children and faith. The movie could have easily been about Hinduism or Christianity, but the film was made special because it allowed viewers to break down their misconceptions of Islam and accept the poignant stories of these three children. The documentary highlights the next generation of young Muslims around the world, and provides a platform for these children to tell their own stories. The film exposes the crossroads between faith and modernity, and both the harmony and tension that it can create. ■

Marwa Abed is a graduate of DePaul University in Chicago, embarking on a career in politics, education and journalism.

Abraham's Vision Realized

BY RANIA BARAZI

IN 2005, SELF-PROCLAIMED "CONFLICT transformation organization" Abraham's Vision established the Unity Program for Muslim and Jewish high school students. Students in the year-long Unity Program develop their Muslim and Jewish identities while exploring their similarities and differences.

"Abraham's Vision" chronicles the 2010 graduation day hosted at the University of San Francisco, where students, faculty, and Vision's executive co-directors Aaron Hahn Tapper and Huda Abu Arqoub shared their experiences.

Tapper described Unity for the parents in his audience. Unity students meet weekly in Muslim and Jewish spaces. Students enjoy guest speakers and field trips, but Unity hinges upon the "group process" sessions.

"Students are encouraged and have the space to talk about any idea that they want to, and it was in that time that many of the transformations within and between these students took place," Tapper explains.

The graduates tried to capture this transformation, expressing the frustration, chagrin and empowerment that Unity discussions inspired over the year.

"Although many times these discussions were very heated and I wondered how the evening would end, it was this exact aspect that stimulated my own internal growth," says Muslim student Maimona Afzal, smiling. "It empowered me to reflect and further develop my own personal perspective and even challenge my own thinking."

All the students agreed that they had become more aware of their power and agency—their ability to promote change.

"I believe change begins within oneself," student Zahida Mubeen says. "If you do not truly understand yourself, then you will not be able to comprehend others. Abraham's Vision has been a self-transforming experience for me. Our identity has a lot to do with how we think and what we say."

Zahida, like many youth, had absorbed the ideas of parents and teachers without investigating the route to their conclusions. During Unity sessions, she learned to think critically and meaningfully about common assumptions. Many Unity graduates came to

the program with misconceptions that were later dispelled after visits to local mosques and synagogues to see ablutions and prayer or Torah recitations.



Aaron Hahn Tapper



Huda Abu Arqoub

Vision urges students to experience each other as individuals, rather than as representatives of their communities or parts of a larger monolith, as that erroneous thinking has hindered dialogue in the past.

University of San Francisco President Stephen Privett lauded the graduates for challenging themselves.

"I salute your courage in stepping out

of your comfort zones and risking what is perhaps our deepest and most cherished part, our personal, often unconscious convictions, in order to engage some of humanity's most stubborn and subtle prejudices," Privett says.

Unity's leaders demonstrate the cooperation that they encourage in students. Both Muslim teachers and Jewish teachers run Unity, and they have seen 175 students graduate from the program.

Tapper addressed the graduates with this heartening message for the future.

"What we hope is that this is the beginning, that through a lifelong commitment to this type of work, intercommunal work, not only will each of you become the leaders in these communities, but you will shape the next generations to come."

Abraham's Vision runs Unity in San Francisco and New York City. They also organize study abroad in the Balkans, Israel and Palestine. ■

Rania Barazi is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

Family Learning on Board

BY SAMANA SIDDIQUI

THIS MEMORY GAME WITH AN Islamic flavor is an ideal candidate for family board game night, as well as Islamic and weekend school quiz competitions.

But it's a step ahead of merely matching pictures or facts. Rather, players are expected to match the question cards to the answer cards, making it more challenging than the usual memory game. While younger players (it's recommended for ages 8 and up) may initially find it somewhat frustrating, once the first successful match is made, enthusiasm picks up.

Players set up the game by shuffling the question and answer cards, then placing them face down in any order. The youngest player begins round one, choosing a question card, then seeking the right answer card. The issue is not only matching the right pair, but also knowing the right answer (a reference

sheet is available with answers to each question). Players keep the correctly matched cards and follow that up with another turn. Whoever collects the most pairs wins.

The questions are surprisingly not as easy as you'd expect from a typical game for kids. While some are what you'd expect

("What is the holy book received by Prophet Dawud?"), others are more complex ("How many Surahs in the Quran are named after prophets?").

This makes it ideal for older kids, as well as parents looking to learn a little more than the basics they usually know already.

Allah's Prophets-Islamic Match Game is a great addition to your family library's board game collection, as well as Islamic classrooms' resource materials. Combining Islamic education and bonding time, it's also an ideal way to spend those cold, winter Saturday nights. ■

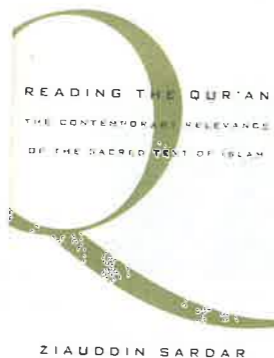


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Ziauddin Sardar

SARDAR SAYS THAT FOR FAR too many Muslims, the Quran he had learned in his mother's lap has become a stick used for ensuring conformity and suppressing dissenting views. He argues for a more open, less doctrinaire approach to reading the Quran, which he states, is not fixed in stone for all time, but a dynamic text which every generation must encounter anew, and whose relevance and implications for our time we have yet to fully discover. Sardar explores the Quran from a variety of perspectives, drawing fresh and contemporary lessons from the Sacred Text. He also examines what the Quran says about such contemporary topics.



A HANDBOOK OF ISLAMIC BANKING

Mohamed Ariff and Munawar Iqbal

Edward Elgar, Northampton, MA

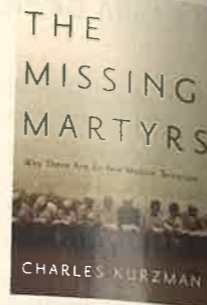
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The
Foundations
of
Islamic Banking
Theory, Practice and Education

by
Mohamed Ariff
Munawar Iqbal

The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists

Kurzman, striving to reduce the panic about "Islamist terrorism", rejects the allegation that Muslims are especially prone to violent extremism. Offering facts, figures, and anecdotes, he claims, for example, that global terrorists have succeeded in recruiting only a miniscule number of Muslims. He warns against conflating anti-Americanism with actual willingness to engage in terrorism.



Sitting on America's Endless War on Terror and the Paths to Peace
BAYONETS

2011. pp. 426. PB. \$16.



WRAP-UP ON WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON
AND WHAT COULD DO MUCH BETTER

Keith Spivey

However, he clouds any claim to be taken seriously, when, talking about "reforms" in Islam, identifies, what he calls "brave new Muslim voices," Irshad Manji, a self-declared lesbian, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and Taslima Nasrin, both self-declared non-Muslims.

Dr. Sheikh Abdul Rahman

A collection of essays intended to inspire and advise fellow Muslims about their unique roles and responsibilities in the U.S. Some describe practical actions Muslims should take to show their commitment to America, like service projects and scholarships that every community can ask the community to look inward and ask when the core practices of worship are empty rituals, or when Muslims violate C in domestic violence. ■



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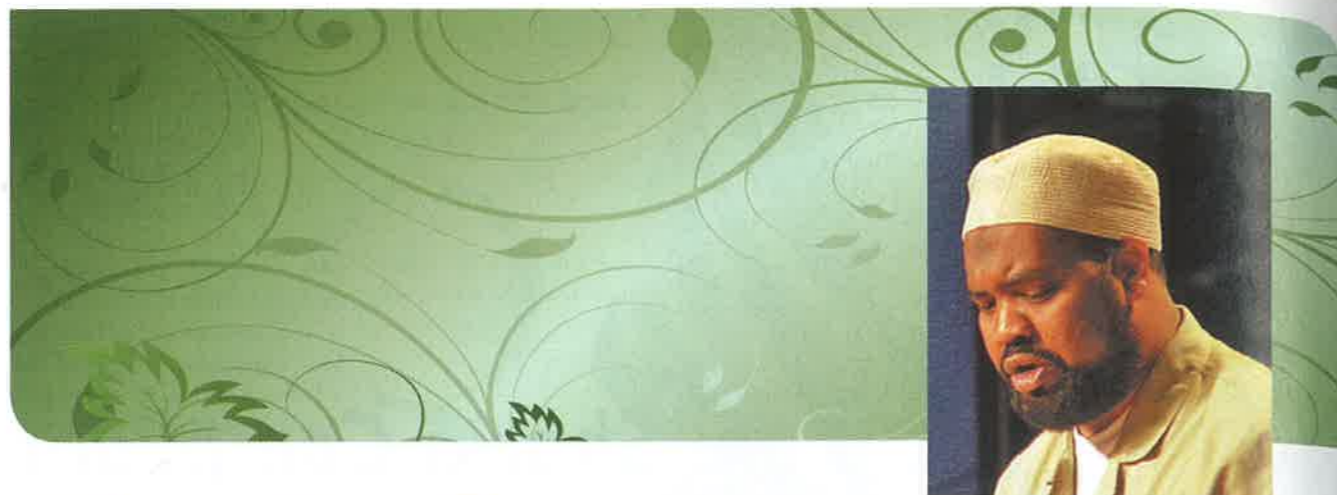
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The Path to Certainty

Understanding the difference between believing and knowing

BY IMAM MUHAMMAD MAGID AND SAM ROSS

ENGLISH IS A WONDERFUL LANGUAGE. However, when it comes to talking about our convictions, it can be a bit of a handicap. Consider two of the most commonly used words: "faith" and "belief." "Faith," according to Merriam Webster, means to trust in something, often for which there is no proof. One hears phrases like "blind faith" or "you can't know for sure; you just have to take it on faith." Thus, the moment one says, "I adhere to the Islamic faith," one has already implied that one might not have good reasons for doing so.

The word "belief" is equally problematic because it can be used with statements that are false. One might say, "My uncle believes that the world is flat," even though, of course, it's not. So when we say "I believe in God," the implication is that we confess we might be mistaken.

As Muslims, we are privileged to be free from such hindrances, for our theological vocabulary has been chosen for us by God and conveys a much more confident worldview. The Quranic word most commonly translated as "faith" or "belief" is *iman*, which means something akin to *acknowledging* that

something is true. But one can only *acknowledge* something to be true if one has certainty of it being true. For example, one might have faith an underdog will win, but until the final play, one cannot acknowledge their victory. Moreover, one can only acknowledge something to be true if it is in itself true. One might believe that $2 + 2 = 5$, but one can never acknowledge it. As Muslims, we believe that deep down inside us, if we are humble enough to look, is an awareness that the Divine is real.

It is upon this epistemological confidence that our religion is based, and among the greatest virtues in Islam is *yaqin*, or certainty. Indeed a hadith (Al-Bayhaqi. Shu'ab al-Iman) records that the Prophet Muhammad said, "patience is half of *iman* and *yaqin* is all of it." If we are certain of God's existence, certain of the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa salam), certain of the revelation of the Quran, and certain of our accountability before God, our whole religious life is transformed. Our prayers go from tentative calls into the void to intimate conversation. We become more diligent, conscientious, patient and generous. What can we do to achieve the certainty of one early

Muslim who said, "Were the veil [between me and God] to be removed, I would not increase in certainty?"

Our spiritual forebears bequeathed us numerous counsels. One is simply to know that having questions, or even doubts, is common, especially in our day in age. Even a luminary as great as Imam al-Ghazali describes having wrestled earlier in life with the question of why he was Muslim, and if it was merely because his parents were Muslim. Today, when the Muslim world is struggling and the television, newsstand and bookstore are filled with attacks on Islam, it can be difficult not to be affected.

A second is to recognize that strong certainty is an organic achievement built from many things: deep reflection on the natural world; getting to know Prophet Muhammad, through his character and miracles; connecting with and pondering over the Quran; spending time with the righteous and observing their states; calling upon God, and seeking to connect with Him through worship. Taken together, their cumulative effect – with God's help – is a conviction not dependent upon any one proof or miracle. Through additional devotion and spiritual purification, Imam al-Ghazali notes, the eye of the heart begins to behold spiritual realities just as the eye perceives physical realities, which yields an even higher level of certainty. May we be among those of such states!

Let us quickly explore a few of these paths. **Reflection:** The natural world is replete with God's signs. He promises in the Quran, "We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, until it is clear to them that it is the truth" (41:53). How amazing, for example, is it that a single cell the size of a pinhead can divide a trillion times,

become a fully-grown human being with differentiated organs and tissues all working harmoniously together in ways medicine still struggles to understand? Why, did the universe "spontaneously" explode into existence 13.7 billion years ago as the Big Bang theory holds? Why does the universe just happen to obey mathematical laws that scientists routinely call "elegant" and "beautiful?" Why are these laws simple enough for our minds to appreciate when there is no apparent reason for being so?

There are numerous books that do a wonderful job contemplating God's signs, such as the national bestsellers, "The Language of God" by Francis Collins and "God: The Evidence" by Patrick Glynn. For a believing Muslim, the observations in such books can be a powerful reminder of God and increase our *yaqin*.

Seerah: Another way is to get to know the Prophet's life and teachings. After all, how else can we know with certainty the reality of his prophethood unless we know him intimately? Many who doubt him simply do not know him well enough. There are numerous biographies and collections of his teachings that we can read. After an intimate immersion, let us ask ourselves if the person who appears to us could have been anything other than a prophet sent from God. If we have concerns about the reliability of the reports we read, we must seek out a religious

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scholar or class on hadith criticism to help us with our assessment. To do otherwise would be ingratitude to the extraordinary efforts of our forebears who toiled for generations so that we could know what was reliable with confidence.

Quran: Another essential path is connecting with the Quran, which God says is sufficient all by itself: "Is it not enough for them that We have revealed to you the Book which is recited to them?" (29:51). Here He points to the Quran's amazing ability to stir the human spirit both in its profundity and force. Is there any other book in human history so voluminously commented upon? Moreover, as any visitor to the Muslim world knows, passing by shops and homes where the Quran plays all day, just the sound of the Quran moves hearts. Is there any other book that has elicited such a flood of love

which can even overcome linguistic barriers, reaching millions who don't even know the language of its text?

In the subtleties of its phrasing, the aforementioned *ayah* points the way to how we can connect with the Quran. The verse uses the imperfect form of the verb "to recite" rather than the perfect, implying a regularity in reciting. That is, God says the self-sufficient sign of the Quran is apparent when it is read *regularly*. We should strive to have a daily relationship with the Quran through a *wird* — a minimum amount we strive to always read and to take the time to contemplate its meanings, reading a translation when we need one.

Finally, we must recognize that certainty is ultimately a divine secret, beyond the ability of limited human language to express. Those who—through reflection, devotion and God's favor—reach the highest stations of certainty attain states that no words can convey. In the Quranic language, they have attained from the certainty of knowledge (102:5) to the certainty of witnessing (102:7).

Ibn 'Ata Allah—one of our great pious forebears—famously asked, "When did God become hidden such that He needed to be proved?" For him, God was as obviously real as this page of paper. May God accept our efforts and grant us the highest levels of certainty in Him, that our entire lives be transformed. Ameen. ■

In the name of Allah the most Beneficent, the most Merciful

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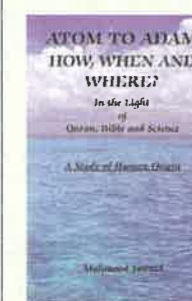
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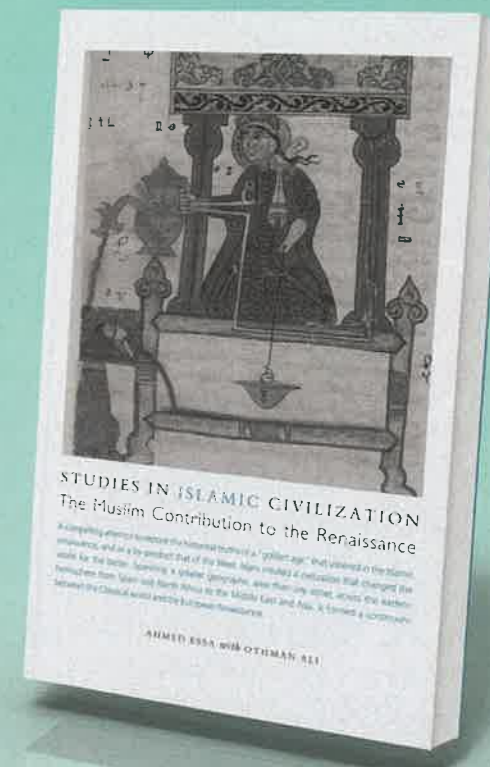
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