

URBAN MUSLIMS

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important dates

- Eid ul-Fitr

Tuesday, August 30

(As announced by Fiqh Council of North America. Please follow the consensus of your local community for exact Eid date.)

- Muslimah Retreat

Vashon Island, Sept. 3-5

See inside for more details!

get involved

- Get involved with MSA_{nw}, check our website at msanw.org

- Have something to offer to the newsletter? We need articles, poems, pictures, and editorial help!

E-mail us at newsletter@msanw.org

This a special Ramadan and Eid issue of *Urban Muslims*. *Urban Muslims* is a newsletter created by MSA Northwest with the aim of becoming a resource and outlet for Muslim youth across the Northwest to reflect upon relevant issues that are affecting the Muslim society today.

We hope that everyone has enjoyed a blessed month of Ramadan. Eid Mubarak and best wishes for a blessed Eid with peace and harmony among all!

- The *Urban Muslims* Editorial Team

Fast, Pray, Give by Nuha Elkugia



Women and young children try to keep hopes up in a Kenyan refugee camp. Tens of millions of people continue to suffer through the famine in the Horn of Africa during the month of Ramadan. Elsewhere, Muslims across the world are also facing extreme struggles.

Photo: Laura Sheahen/CRS

The holy month of Ramadan that began in the first week of August came at a bittersweet time for Muslims across the world. In the West, the month is usually anticipated for its lavish dinners at the time of fast-breaking and for social gatherings filling the weeks, but this year it comes with the hope of a better global consciousness of people's suffering. The past couple of months have especially been difficult for Muslims in the Middle East and Africa, with peaceful protests turning violent and natural disasters turning into deadly tragedies.

The civilians in the Middle East have long been struggling under corrupt dictatorships and governments, and what began as peaceful resistance has in most if not all the places turned into full blown bloodshed. Most recently in Syria, the first week of Ramadan was met with brutal crackdown on protesters

in the city of Hama killing hundreds of civilians, an eerie reminder of the tens of thousands killed in the very same city in 1982. Everywhere else in the country it has been a cycle of protests and crackdowns and arrests while the people try to maintain somewhat of a normality to their lives during these unsafe and rapidly changing situations. This is the bitterness facing Muslims in countries like Syria especially during this sweet month of Ramadan where patience is tested not only due to abstaining of food and drink but of remaining hopeful of peaceful change during these violent times.

In Libya, hundreds of thousands have fled the country and are continuing to settle on the border and in the major cities of Tunisia. Within the country, the civilians are facing soaring prices of food and gasoline and are

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Too Much on Your Plate with Fasting? by Amina Ramadan

Within our occasionally disharmonious local Muslim community, you will find one topic which is unlikely to be debated: Ramadan, the most anticipated month of our Islamic lunar year. While it might be true that we should try to hold ourselves to a consistent personal spiritual standard, this month is without doubt a most special one, as narrated in the Pickthall translation of the Qur'an: "The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance ... And whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is

sick or on a journey, (let him fast the same) number of other days. Allah desireth for you ease; He desireth not hardship for you; and (He desireth) that ye should complete the period, and that ye should magnify Allah for having guided you, and that peradventure ye may be thankful." [2:185]

Fasting during the month of Ramadan "is prescribed for [us], even as it was prescribed for those before [us], that [we] may ward off (evil)" [2:183].

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Fast, Pray, Give (continued from Page 1)

breaking fast sometimes without running water or electricity. In the refugee camps on the borders of Tunisia the people are facing inadequate medical and food supplies and many are wondering how long their stay will be after months of living in such conditions. The fight for Libya heavily relies on change in the capital of Tripoli where tensions between the opposition and Qaddafi support is the highest. Many are hopeful and looking forward to the 17th day of Ramadan, a day that marks six months of resistance in Libya but also the victory for Muslims during the Battle of Badr for Mecca.

Daily survival is the struggle for people in Somalia and East Africa during this month after the worst drought in more than 60 years hit the region. The crisis was heightened further after militant groups like Al-Shabab placed restrictions on incoming aid leading to the increasing deaths of thousands and risking starvation for the rest of the affected population. Yet again it's a humanitarian crisis intertwined with manipulative and complex political undertones. But isn't it a moral imperative to do what is possible to end unjust human suffering? The issues of safety for humanitarian aid workers and possible diversion of aid to groups like Al-Shabab aren't to be overlooked and should be acknowledged. There is no excuse to standby while history repeats itself and innocent people die.

The continuous suffering of people in Afghanistan and Iraq has completely been downplayed by mainstream media while millions of people lack proper water sanitation, medicine and other life essentials. The infrastructures of these countries are deteriorated beyond recognition and the world has become dangerously apathetic about the well-being of these fellow human beings. The decades long hardships facing Palestinians should also be pointed out and recognized because due to Zionistic political agendas their issues are pushed away from mainstream discourse. These brief accounts of difficult situations facing Muslims across the world during this month are by no means exclusive and we hope for the ease of suffering everywhere.

The sad fact is the list of Muslim populations struggling around the world is a long one and unfortunately nothing new to most people living in the West. Most are immigrants from these very countries and have extended family members living through these struggles, so what's the point of mentioning them again? What difference would it make? Well, these are the questions that need to be answered by this rising generation, the young people in the Middle East giving their lives for a belief that they deserve a life of liberty from corrupt governments have given their answer. The local young people raising money for schools back in Pakistan, shoes for kids in Afghanistan, food and clothing for kids in Egypt and Libya have given their answer. And the answers need to keep coming, finding new innovative ways to help, addressing decision makers, and being a collective voice in responding to the needs of people here and abroad is a small list of the positive change our generation can make.

Remember those who are less fortunate in your prayers and give generously to charities such as Islamic Relief (www.islamic-relief.com), Zakat Foundation (www.zakat.org) and Hope International Relief (www.hoperelief.org).

Urban Muslims would like to thank Fereshta Noman for the tireless hours and days she spent working on the newsletter as our Senior Editor over the past year. May Allah (swt) bless her future endeavors with success!

URBAN MUSLIMS

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Too Much on Your Plate with Fasting? (Continued from Page 1)



Long summer days are ensuring that some Muslims will have busy schedules before breaking fast. *Photo: Mosaab Zaki*

So now that we understand the obligation, all that's left to do is to set about fulfilling it. Easy, right? No food or drink? Check. No unsavory thoughts and actions? Check. Dawn to Dusk? Check. Most teenagers and young adults don't treasure their sleep much anyway - nighttime is for Facebook and catching up on the latest season of Vampire Diaries...or Jersey Shore. So it's not much extra effort to simply stay up all night eating, pray Fajr, and then knock out until noon (or later, as long as you manage to catch Dhuhr). From that point there can't be more than seven or so hours left to go without sustenance.... a stretch perhaps, but almost half of what was originally in store! But alas. There is a group of us who aren't allowed such a forgiving schedule... and who are we you might ask? We are... the summer school kids.

That's right. Summer. School. You might think that's an oxymoron... "Silly girl! Summer is for fun!" But no. I am here to wrench from you your blissful childhood perceptions - school, that awful institution, still persists for many of us, while the rest of you are traipsing around in the sun without a care in the world (and without food!). But there's more. A handful of unfortunate young souls actually have to - gasp! - work... yes, at real jobs, in stores, offices, and laboratories, during the summer as well. And further yet, a few of the most wretched, whose life force must have surely been extinguished by the pursuit- will have to both work and be in school during these blessed, but very, very long days.

And what does this mean? Well, first of all, it means no sleeping in. Classes and work demand a timely morning presence- the excuse that you were up all night praying and just had to have breakfast at 4 am just isn't going to fly with your boss or professor. It might mean almost no sleep at all, as by the time we get home from taraweeh, we've only got two or three hours to nap before we must

wake up for suhoor, then another one or two precious ones to doze off until we must be up again to attend to our worldly obligations. From then on, it's at least 12 full hours of dehydration and starvation, and the one thing on your mind all day is that date (the halal kind!) that you will have at exactly 8:34 pm.

As one of the students without the luxury of a lenient Ramadan schedule, but rather one which includes morning and evening classes, I have to admit that it is difficult. It is hard to wake up so early and stay up so late with so little sleep, it is hard to pay attention in class and at work when all you can think about is food and self-control, and it is a challenge to keep calm and collected in trying situations when others have no idea why you are weak, inept, irritable, don't feel like having coffee, or can't go out to lunch. Educating those around you can be rewarding, but can also result in a many confused and awkward pauses. It is a little hard not to feel sorry for yourself or upset for getting yourself in such a situation. You question whether the time you are spending in school or at work could be better spent reading Qur'an and tafsir, doing some extra prayer, or helping your parents around the house like a good son or daughter.

But then you remember something. You remember why you chose to fast. And you remember that Allah (swt) does not desire hardship for you, He desires that you fast so that you may attain discipline and *taqwa* (God-consciousness). And you realize that, if this were really truly a hardship, you quite simply would not be able to do it at all. And yet, here you are, almost halfway through the month, and you've been doing it for this long, Alhamdulillah. You might remember that there are young people all around the world today just like you, who are fasting too, and are also fighting in a rebel army. Or, who are fasting, even though they watched a family member pass away a few months ago from war or

famine or illness. Or, who are fasting, and, when they see the sky take on that beautiful pink and purple hue signaling the arrival of Maghrib, realize that they will have no food to break their fast with.

And you begin to think, that maybe those other young people would sacrifice a lot to be able to say that their biggest challenge while fasting, is being in school or having a job at the same time, or better yet, having a family and a community which is able to support you in your simultaneous pursuit of worldly knowledge and of *taqwa*. Then of course, recalling the stories of the Prophet (s) and his companions and their hardships during fasting might make you feel like you simply have no right at all to complain. But we are human; and we do complain. We make mistakes, we forget. This is a natural and unavoidable occurrence, and while our lives would have far less meaning without error, it is in the interest of young believers to learn from our mistakes and attempt to transform ourselves. Ramadan is about turning ungratefulness into appreciation, turning emptiness of your stomach into a fullness of the heart, turning the extra time you have without food into productive hours well-spent.

Thus, through many different lenses, students and employees can see that their Ramadan situation, no matter how trying, is really not all that bad. In fact, if fasting was easy, would we be getting as much out of it? Would we be learning self-control and patience this month if we weren't being challenged? And perhaps most importantly, the consciousness and qualities we are trying to nurture in ourselves at this time are ones that we hope will serve us all year - but when we are awake, going about our daily lives and business, not when we are fast asleep.

“ You remember why you chose to fast. And you remember that Allah (swt) does not desire hardship for you, He desires that you fast so that you may attain discipline and *taqwa* (God-consciousness).”

Lessons from the Qur'an

On the importance of repentance:

"Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful" (Qur'an, 25:70)

Our duty to contemplate the Qur'an:

"Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, or are there locks upon [their] hearts? (Qur'an, 47:24)

Selected verses to use as *du'a* (supplication):

"Our Lord, let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from You; for You art the Grantor of bounties without measure. Our Lord, surely it is You Who will gather mankind together on the Day about which there is no doubt, for verily, Allah never fails in His promise." (Qur'an, 3:8-9)

"Our Lord, In You (Alone) we put our trust, and to You (Alone) we turn in repentance, and to You (Alone) is (our) final return. Our Lord, make us not a test and a trial for the disbelievers, but forgive us, our Lord, for You are the Exalted in might, the Wise." (Qur'an, 60:4-5)

"Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who came before us into the faith, and leave not, in our hearts, ill feeling against those who have believed. Our Lord, You are indeed full of kindness, most merciful." (Qur'an, 59:10)

Blessing in Disguise: An Unplanned Ramadan Experience

by Ozge Dogan

OUR PROPHET (S) SAID:

“ Verily, if Allah loves a people, He makes them go through trials. Whoever is satisfied, for him is contentment, and whoever is angry upon him is wrath.”

[Tirmidhi]

When I heard the words “We won’t be able to move in until August 10”, I lost my temper with one of my dearest friends. It was Aug. 1 and I had just moved out of my place the day before to move into a new place the next day. I had spent the night at work since I wanted to stay up for the first day of Ramadan and had a lot of studying to do. In the morning, I started to work in the research lab as usual.

When it was time to meet up my friend to move in, I called her and the response she gave utterly shocked me. It caused panic in me for several reasons. For ten days, where would I sleep? Who would host me for ten days? Also, studying for MCATs had taken its toll on me, all my time was divided between my job and studying so I hadn’t seen any of my friends for so long.

“ All my plans seemed to be failing. Suddenly, I realized that I should see this as an answer to my prayer, as an opportunity to understand the blessing this month brings. Once I put my faith into Allah, everything seemed to fall into place.”

I did not think that I could endure all this stress to do my job and to prepare myself for the upcoming test. However, what worried me most of all was the possibility of not being able to experience Ramadan to the fullest. My health problems caused me to stop fasting after a few days last year. All I asked from Allah was to give me enough strength to fast through Ramadan this year in order to ask for His forgiveness and to be close to Him.

All of a sudden, I felt befuddled and started crying. I was going through a moment where I had no idea how to pull through with my human-self. All my plans seemed to be failing. Suddenly, I realized that I should see this as an answer to my prayer, as an opportunity to

understand the blessing this month brings. Once I put my faith into Allah, everything seemed to fall into place. A friend of mine volunteered to host me for the most part. Some nights, I just stayed at work to study over the night anyway. After a couple of days, I managed to establish a routine that suited my plans well. I started to feel grateful to be faced with such hardship.

One morning, I parked my car and started walking to work right after suhoor. I saw a man waking up and rubbing his eyes. When I looked closer, I recognized him as one of the custodians at my work. He woke up with his work clothes on, and then I remembered about my friend’s dad who lived in his car for years to save up enough money to bring his family here. Ramadan makes all of us worry about how to endure the hunger.

We all try to come up with a schedule that would make it easy for us to fast. However, people who are in need do not have this luxury. They are stricken with misfortune and they have to endure their situation without knowing when or how it would end.

Although some of us may have jobs or may have important tests coming up, we still need to do our best to see our difficulties as a blessing and fast during Ramadan as long as we are able.

My hardship provided me with an opportunity to improve my character and to fully understand what people go through everyday to survive. The realization humbled me a lot and made me feel self-satisfied to fulfill my Islamic duty despite everything. I see every hardship during this month as a blessing and as an opportunity to feel closer to Allah.

“ We all try to come up with a schedule that would make it easy for us to fast. However, people who are in need do not have this luxury.”

MAKE A DIFFERENCE DURING TIMES OF NEED

EAST AFRICA CRISIS

More than 13 million people across East Africa are facing the worst drought in 60 years. Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia are among the countries hardest hit by food and water shortages. Crops, livestock and homes have been completely destroyed. People cannot afford the basic food supplies they need to survive.

With malnutrition already over 20% in the region, aid agencies now estimate about \$150 million is needed in aid to begin to alleviate the suffering in the region.



Photo: Islamic Relief



LIBYA HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

Political turmoil has forced hundreds of thousands to flee violence in Libya to neighboring countries. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) called the collective effort “one of the biggest humanitarian evacuations in history.”

Estimates suggest that more than 680,000 Libyans have fled to border regions

YEMEN, SYRIA, PALESTINE, AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, PAKISTAN, AND MANY OTHER COUNTRIES ARE IN NEED OF YOUR SUPPORT!

HOW **YOU** CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Support relief organizations such as Islamic Relief, the Zakat Foundation, Hope International Relief, Global Aid Against Poverty, UNICEF and others.
- Organize a fundraiser and donation box through your local masjid or MSA in partnership with a relief organization.
- Spread awareness to friends and family. Use e-mail, Facebook and Twitter to share.
- Inquire your local masjid about families that are of need locally. There are many Muslim families right here in the Northwest that need basic food and clothing. Start a campaign to “Sponsor a Family”, where one family helps another family of need.
- Don't forget to make *du'a*!

Ramadan

a poem by Hammad Ahmed

So blessed,
The time of the year that one's obsessed,
To do their best,
Oh yes, hold one's body to the test,
No care how long it might last,
Put the desires to rest,
Stop acting a like a pest,
Supporting the MSA Northwest
Now that...that's my kind of FAST!

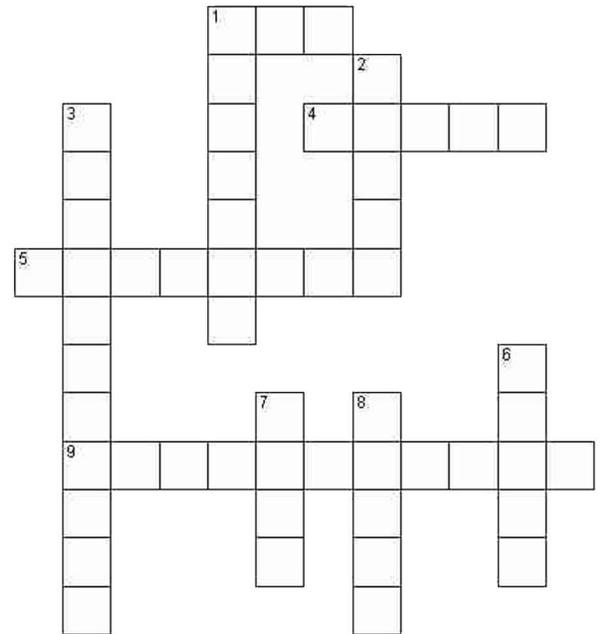
Ramadan,
In it the revelation of the Holy Quran,
Reciting the verses all day long,
At night, in taraweeh, listening to them like a rich song,
That's how we make our Iman strong.

Reflecting,
Counting the countless hours we waste,
Scared... Praying,
"Ya Allah! Protect us from the fire,
so we may not be among those who taste!"
Tears dripping, cause reality just hit,
soon coming that Day, we all will have to face.
The whole year, to the dunya we've been giving chase...
Not one time to do the righteous commands did we make haste...
So now let's not hesitate,
Cuz it's the month of forgiveness,
so seek and place your trust in your Lord,
for he forgives at an unimaginable pace!

Forgiveness,
For that you have come to the right place,
Clock says 2 am, on the ground is your face
Your eyes so swelled, looks like you were hit with a can of mace,
Heart beating at a fast pace,
It's just you and Him, nothing in between, no space,
So Repent! Ya Allah! Forgive my sins, leave no trace,
through Your Mercy and Your Grace!

So lets' remember to say Alhamdulillah
for these blessed days and nights,
In which He revealed the source for all light,
From which our hearts shine bright,
For good is what we shall incite,
And evil we shall fight,
Refrain from all that He may spite,
Do what is right,
So we may take as much from this month and please Him,
the One with all the Might.

ramadan and eid crossword puzzle



ACROSS:

1. It is Sunnah to fast ___ days in the month following Ramadan.
4. Muslims look for this when determining the beginning and end of Islamic months.
5. The penalty that occurs when one intentionally breaks the fast.
9. The second ten days of Ramadan are of _____.

DOWN:

1. Eid ul-Fitr falls on the 1st day of this month.
2. Compensation for missing a fast, for those unable to, or wrongly practicing it.
3. This charity is due before the Eid prayer.
6. This begins when the first light of dawn becomes visible.
7. This Arabic word means 'breaking (the fast).'
8. The first ten days of Ramadan are of _____.

Health in the Holy Month by Mohammed Jamal

Each year, Muslims aim to use the month of Ramadan as a form of self-reformation on a spiritual, mental and physical level. Fasting places an emphasis on spiritual reform by gaining mastery over natural appetites and desires. This month is also a time where some people find an opportunity to stop smoking, overeating, and starting exercise regimes.

When fasting in the summer, the stresses on the body are more extreme. The smaller number of hours at night means there is less time for eating, praying and sleeping. It also means tasks during the day are more difficult due to heat and lack of hydration. Unfortunately, many Muslims abuse their bodies in the month of Ramadan, often times unknowingly. This is done by eating unhealthy foods, overeating, and/or by eliminating all exercise due to fasting and time constraints. Factored in with less sleep, this leads to weight gain, muscle loss, illness, and a lack of energy. However, it is possible to start, maintain, and improve eating and workout habits during the month of Ramadan with careful planning.

A plan should incorporate both exercise and nutrition. To begin, one needs to have a proper frame of mind that the primary function of food is for energy. Everything we eat should provide our body with the energy it needs. There are definitely personal preferences towards eating that we each need to accommodate for, but these should not be allowed to override the consideration of healthy eating. Exercise in the month of Ramadan should include strength training to help minimize muscle loss due to fasting.

This applies to men and women of all ages, as strength training helps maintain bone density, increases metabolism, and improves body shape. Aerobic or cardio exercises are vital to help maintain a well functioning circulatory system to burning excess calories.

Staying in shape while you're fasting is tricky. But there's no need to abandon your exercise regime during Ramadan. It simply needs to be adapted so you use your energy wisely and being careful not to overexert yourself!



Resisting the urge to overeat at iftar is no easy task, especially when attending catered iftars. *Photo: Mosaab Zaki*

Suhoor

For suhoor, it is imperative to drink plenty of water, eat a good blend of protein, carbohydrates, and essential fat, "good fats" have many fat-burning and muscle-building properties, and their importance is even greater during Ramadan. Some good suhoor foods include:

- Egg whites (1 yolk)
- Chicken breast
- Oatmeal
- Cream of wheat
- Protein shake
- Bananas
- Honey
- Raisins or dates
- Fibrous vegetables
- All natural peanut butter
- Olive oil
- Plenty of water

Iftar

- Three Dates
- Meal replacement Shake or lean meat
- Plenty of water
- Small snacks and meals after iftar every 2 to 3 hours

Workout

The best time to work out during Ramadan is after taraweeh prayers at night. This will ensure that you will have several meals and plenty of water in your system before working out. This will also allow you to consume your all-important post workout meal or shake which is essential to muscle growth and leads to fat loss. If this is too late then the next best time to weight train is about 1 hour after iftar, before taraweeh prayer for a short but intense 30 minute workout.

The best time to do cardio work for maximum fat loss is before suhur. If this is out of the question for you, then the next best time to do cardio is approximately 30-45 minutes after a "light" iftar.

Following these simple workout and nutrition tips can really help you make great gains during this blessed month.

May Allah (swt) help give us the patience and strength needed in this month to be successful throughout the year - mentally, internally, spiritually, and physically.

(Selected food data from SuhaibWebb.com)

MUSLIMAH RETREAT

Vashon Island, September 3-5

\$110 per person, Details and Registration:

<https://sites.google.com/site/muslimahretreat/home>

A New Future of Muslim Leaders by Samir Junejo



Over 60 people attended the opening day leadership symposium at Seattle City Hall.

Photo: Faisal Aminy

Today's Muslim-American young adults are growing up in an environment breeding an unprecedented amount of anti-Muslim sentiment. It's a world where presidential candidates make comments comparing Muslims to Nazi's and Communists, and where the media blindly blames tragic terrorist attacks on Muslims, regardless of the facts. Many young Muslim-Americans who are experiencing these attacks on their religion feel a need to take action and change the way the public sphere is discussing Muslims and Islam.

When wanting to bring change, the most important and effective way is putting one's self in the positions of power and influence. If you cannot change the way politicians and people in the media think, then why not just become politicians or members of the media? This is why I helped organize the Muslim Youth Leadership Program (MYLP). Held earlier this summer from July 10-14 and organized by the Washington state chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-WA), it was a program designed specifically to help young Muslims get into careers of media, law, politics, philanthropy, non-profit organizations, and other influential fields in which Muslims are generally underrepresented.

On the first day of the program, approximately 60-70 people attended a leadership symposium at Seattle City Hall. The day included workshops on civic engagement, media relations, and knowing one's rights. It also featured two very warmly received speeches, by Dean of UW School of Law Kellye Testy and KING 5 reporter Allen Schaufli. Out of that 60-70 young Muslims, about 16 Muslim males and females, ranging from high school students to college graduates, proceeded to visits executives in the fields mentioned above over the course of four days. Some of the places and people we visited included Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn, King

County Executive Dow Constantine, KCTS 9, The Seattle Times, Perkins Coie Law Firm, UW School of Law, and many others.

Talking with people who are in these fields and asking them questions in person helped everyone greatly in not only getting information about these careers but also getting specific career path advice from the executives. It also made for a great opportunity to network with people in high places, something very important for success in careers like these.

Not only did the program help young Muslims deciding on their future careers, but it also was an amazing bonding experience with other fellow Muslims. Every single one of the students made a whole group of new friends. Many Muslims who have backgrounds from the Middle East or the Indian Sub-Continent have grown up with the idea that they must choose a career that will potentially provide a flow of a high and consistent income. That's because their parents or grandparents came to this country largely because they wanted to improve their financial situations.

There is now a new generation of Muslims. Due to the hard work of their parents and grandparents they have grown up in this country with much a much greater financial foundation and they now have an opportunity to make real change in their communities. This is the second year in a row CAIR-WA has organized a MYLP with executive office visits. I was a student in last year's program and it impacted and inspired me greatly, so much so that I was compelled to help organize this year's program.

I'm sure many of the MYLP participants this year will agree that the program made them think about what they wanted to do in their lives, not just in terms of money, but in terms of how much of an impact they can make on their communities.

NORTHWEST



at a glance

a photo presentation by Mosaab Zaki
Fundraising Iftar for Palestine (Aug 14)

