

newsletter by
MSA*nw*

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In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

URBAN MUSLIMS

this issue

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Saturday, April 17th
See inside for more details!

Conference Volunteer
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This issue of *Urban Muslims* focuses on the concept of love and companionship in Islam, science in Islam, and important local and global current events. *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.

- The *Urban Muslims* Editorial Team

Proposal: From an Islamic Perspective by Nora Hayati



Sheikh Hamza Chaudry addresses a crowd of students on the topic of marriage proposals in Islam during a weekly MSA meeting in February. The meeting had the highest attendance of any so far this year.

Photo: Nora Hayati

When an invite for an MSA meeting entitled "How to Propose? The Islamic Way" appeared in the notification boxes of members' Facebooks, an unprecedented 51 people confirmed their attendance, the highest number for a weekly meeting this year. It is hardly a surprise that single 20-somethings would ponder marriage, especially when it bears as much credence as "half your deen."

However, this pursuit is also laden with the presupposed enchanting notions of love, amour, ishq, hubb, or pyaar for today's youth. Flowered with sweet excess nothings, love has been diluted and trampled upon to the extent that it has become alien, and even destructive to the

idea of marriage as it leads to unrealistic desires. Guest speaker Sheikh Hamza Chaudry shed light on this dichotomy, charming the crowd with the Quranic love tale of Safura and Prophet Moses along with the seamlessly effective marriage between the Prophet Muhammad (s) and Khadijah.

"The spouse you are going to have is going to reflect if you did it the wrong or right way; the halal, honorable way," noted the Sheikh. He made it clear that success in both marriage and the steps leading up to it hinge upon whether they are in accordance with Allah's (swt) commands. Furthermore, he emphasized the providing quality of Allah (swt). (Continued on Page 2)

Rising Against Tyranny by Fereshta Noman

The unprecedented events currently taking place in the Middle East and North Africa have kept the world in a state of awe and anxiety, as they wait to see what happens in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and several other countries across the region.

When the little nation of Tunisia hit the media's radar because of a recent uprising in protests and a growing demand for democracy, people all over the world began tuning into the news to see the event unravel, an event that would become a historical mark on Arab politics.

What happened next surprised everyone. The protests in Tunisia spread like wildfire to neighboring Egypt and eventually hit the nations of Libya, Algeria, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan and Iran as well. Other smaller protests, yet still significant, spread to Oman, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. Some scholars believe the recent spread of protests was far overdue. After years of political turmoil, poverty and instability, the time had finally come for ordinary people to rise up against tyrannical leaders, perhaps the most significant, Hosni Mubarak.

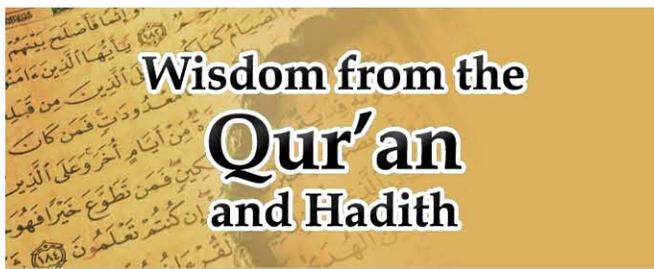
(Continued on Page 3)

Proposal: From an Islamic Perspective (continued from Page 1)

"He will take care of you like He did to generations before you," reassured the Sheikh. The key ingredients in an Islamic marriage proposal are haya, proper behavior, along with family or communal support. He strongly warned the audience against trying to attract attention from the opposite gender, affirming that it's just a wasteful cycle. Though he spoke in a sweeping and general tone for the most part, he did mention that marriage should ideally take place at the age of 18 or younger, which was received with dismay by many members.

Shelina Zahra Janmohamed underwent a tumultuous quest in trying to find her own Muslim Mr. Darcy and passionately documented it in her book "Love in a Headscarf." From online dating to speed dating to suitor meetings arranged by aunts, Janmohamed experienced every facet of halal matchmaking possible. In a very honest and empowering account, Janmohamed experiences disillusionment after a few unsuccessful encounters but learns a lesson. She must reform from within before looking to the outer world. It is once she preoccupies herself with love for the divine that the flourishing of human love occurs.

Ofcourse, even as Muslims we have our own ideas on morals of finding a spouse. With that in mind, I'll leave you with a verse from the Quran. "And one of His signs is that He created pairs for you from amongst yourselves, so that you find peace in each other, and He puts love and mercy between you. In this are signs for those who reflect." (Holy Quran 30:21)



"The most perfect of believers is the best of you in character; and the best of you are those among you who are best to their wives."

(Tirmidhi)

"O children of Adam, We have provided you with garments to cover your bodies, as well as for luxury. But the best garment is the garment of righteousness. These are some of God's signs, that they may take heed." (Holy Qur'an 7:26)

"A man came to the Prophet (s) and asked him "O Allah's Messenger, tell me of something I do to win Allah's love and people's love". The Prophet answered "Do not love this world, Allah would love you and do not have a longing for whatever people have, people would love you". (Ibn-Majah)

“And one of His signs is that He created pairs for you from amongst yourselves, so that you find peace in each other, and He puts love and mercy between you. In this are signs for those who reflect.”

(Holy Quran 30:21)

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Rising Against Tyranny (continued from Page 1)



Christians protecting Muslims during prayer in Egypt.
Photo: Nevine Zaki

When Egyptian ex-President Mubarak gave his first speech in response to the Tahrir Square protests, the entire world was at a stand-still, waiting for him to gracefully step down before things got more violent. However, this was not the case. In fact, Mubarak seemed to have a lack of sympathy for his citizens because more than 600 people had already died as a result of his stalling, and many more throughout his thirty year regime. As eight million Egyptians marched the streets, from Alexandria to Cairo, media outlets all over Egypt were censored and many, shut down. International journalists were segregated, harassed and forbidden to report and Egyptian reporters suffered a much darker fate. Soon after, human rights organizations from all over vocalized against the outrageous violations committed by the Mubarak regime. His regime failed to prevent the countless inspiring images being circulated all over the internet, all over the world, from the coexistence between Christians and Muslims, to the crying soldiers trying to protect the protesters, to the massive prayers taking place amid all the chaos. The multimedia, images, videos, tweets and articles that came out of Egypt made their way across the globe and helped trigger even more massive outrage and tension among people across the region. The tensions and anger spilled over to fellow North African country, Libya.

Muammar Gaddafi, infamous for his cruelty, refused to step down from power, even after thousands of Libyans took to the streets in Tripoli. In contrast to the two weeks that it took to kill 600 Egyptians, it took only one week to kill over 1,000 Libyans. This cruel regime has been merciless to its citizens and because of technological advancements and brave journalists, the entire world can witness the tragic events occurring in Libya, as well as the rest of the Near East. Gaddafi continues to defy the demands of the Libyan people as observers, along with politicians and Arab citizens watch to see when Gaddafi, if ever, will finally dissolve power, though his name will remain in Libyan and world history for years to come.

It is not known why exactly the protests have spread or how they started but some speculations say; it was only a matter of time for people to rise up against oppression, Tunisia triggered it, an underground movement is responsible and finally, it is nearing the Day of Judgment. Regardless of what people believe, one thing remains constant; the true power of the people. We have witnessed the overthrow of two very powerful dictators by regular people of all demographics and economic backgrounds who had many differences but who also had one thing in common; the thirst for freedom. Although some leaders seem to believe that Arabs and minorities do not need a democracy, the rest of the world is in support of freedom and justice for all people, including those of the Middle East and North Africa.

These events have not only revealed the support of people from all over the world, including the West, but unfortunately it also unraveled the hypocrisy of Western Foreign Policy towards the Middle East. The reality is

that everyone wants rights, freedom, justice and peace but not everyone is fortunate enough to have them. In the US, we get to elect our leadership every four years. In Egypt, they haven't had a real presidential election for more than 30 years and yet this military dictator has been supported and aided by the US. Nonetheless, the actions of the US towards this possible democratic movement in the Near East and North Africa will be closely monitored by the rest of the world. After all, the US now has a chance to become better allies with the new leaders in the region and possibly even develop much better relations. What step the US will take is unknown but it will be a very important step to take that will affect the outcome of global politics in the future.

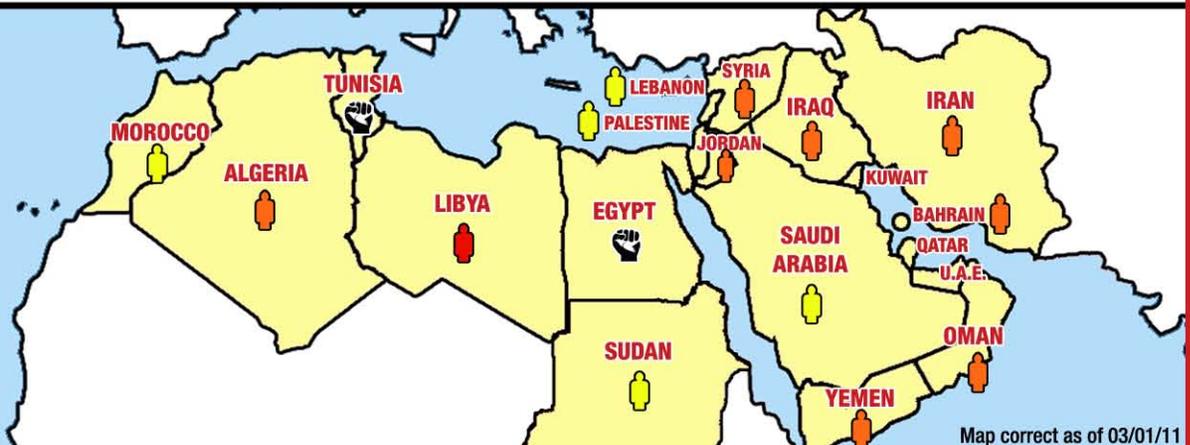
What the world has seen in the Middle East and North Africa over these past few months is chaos, turmoil, suffering, and deaths but they have also witnessed the true beauty of determination, unity, compassion, and justice. We are witnessing the uprising of a new generation that wants equality, justice, opportunities, and most importantly, progress. For too long, these countries have been paused in time. Now these nations are trying to move forward, and they feel the best way to do that will be to start from changing old leaderships and unifying their community in support of a single cause, whatever that cause may be.



Demonstrators at a Seattle rally for Libya.
Photo: Marwa Abdurrahman

REGION IN FOCUS

-  Minor Protests
-  Major Protests
-  Uprising
-  Revolution



Map correct as of 03/01/11

Success at UW Fast-a-Thon 2011

by Kinza Zavary



Students attending the Fast-a-Thon at UW.

Photo: Romaisa Asif Pasha

In January, the MSA of University of Washington held a hunger awareness event called "Fast-a-Thon." The premise of Fast-a-Thon, an event held nationwide across MSA's, is to get as many students to fast for one day, and then to donate a certain amount of money for each person fasting to charity. The proceeds from this event were donated to Northwest Harvest, a relief agency in Washington state that provides nutritious, healthy food to the hungry in the state.

"The purpose of Fast-a-Thon was to present the Muslim community in a good light. Additionally, since the funds we raise from sponsors go to charity, and not necessarily an Islamic charity, it's an opportunity for us as youth to give sadaqah (charity) and build connections within the community," said Amina Ramadan, Vice President of MSA UW.

MSA's across the U.S. and Canada continues to facilitate Fast-a-Thon with over 200 schools that raise over \$20,000 for charity. At UW's MSA, 150 people attended; out of those 100 were non-Muslims. "This year we were not shy about presenting ourselves as Muslims first and foremost, but we were also not there to proselytize to anyone or to push any points, we simply invited them to come and learn, experience something new and to help out a good cause. And consequently, our attendees largely felt comfortable and satisfied with the experience that we provided them," said Ramadan. This may just have been one of the most professional Fast-A-Thons UW has seen, leaving next year's MSA UW students with high standards to break.

The Love of Animals in Islam by Alice Noman

The treatment of animals is often a concept that is overlooked or misunderstood by Muslims. However, within the Qur'an, there are clear guidelines that outline the importance of treating animals humanely. The Qur'an also explains the innocence they emanate, character traits that extend to all living things on Earth. Islam covers the treatment of animals as pets, as passersby and as permissible or non-permissible food.

In the Qur'an, the following verse in *Surah al-Anaam* shows that animals are in fact members of a greater community and the Family of God:

"There is no creature crawling on the earth or flying creature, flying on its wings, who are not communities just like yourselves – We have not omitted anything from the Book – then they will be gathered to their Lord." (6:38)

Looking closely at this verse, it is important to see that animals are in fact a special creation of Allah's, one that should be treated with kindness, mercy, and compassion. This unique stature of animals among the creatures of Allah (swt) seen further in the following verse from *Surah an-Nur*, which explains that all creatures have their own form of supplication towards the Creator:

"Do you not see that everyone in the heavens and earth glorifies Allah, as do the birds with their outspread wings? Each one knows its prayer and glorification. Allah knows what they do." (24:41)

Across the hadith, there are numerous words of wisdom from the Prophet (s) stating the importance of fair treatment of animals.

"God will not be affectionate to that man who is not affectionate to God's creatures." (Abu Daud & Tirmidhi)

With all these reminders, it is easy to see why

any form of neglect or abuse towards animals is strictly forbidden. Even the prescribed method of slaughter in Islam is one that acknowledges the deep bond between living things and the Creator. It becomes something more than simply a list of laws and requirements, but is an entire attitude to raising and harvesting animals. Within some corners of Sufism, the concept and discussion of vegetarianism is one that is not unfamiliar. The underlying point of respect however, remains the same across Islam, no matter what one's personal preference is in regards to diet.

Having pets is another dilemma many Muslims find themselves facing in today's modern animal loving world. Looking back to the Prophet's time though, it is not unusual to find hadith stating his fondness towards animals as pets. Cats were known to be especially beloved to the Prophet, who had a cat as a pet. To Muslims today, most domestic pets are considered acceptable, both religiously and culturally. Dogs as pets, on the other hand, are frowned upon by most. The primary reason is the fact that a dog's saliva is an impurity that breaks one's wudhu. Whether one chooses to keep a dog as a pet or not, Islamic teachings are firm in the fact that dogs must be treated with the respect and kindness that all animals are entitled to.

Pets and vegetarianism are topics of a more trivial nature and come down to personal preferences, lifestyle choices, and interpretation of faith. The concept of animal rights in Islam is something that is not only undeniable, but also an obligation to all Muslims. Following these divine instructions is something that will help get rid of any arrogance that may lie in our hearts. In life and death, animals are creatures of Allah, and that is a fact that we should always remember.



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Confession by Sobia Sheikh

Face to face, eye to eye, sparks in my heart
Eyes became shadows that followed me
Knocking off the doors to my soul apart
Not knowing how this could possibly be

How could I tell thee that My heart is thines
Without ruining our relation! O thee!
Thee lit the fire in my heart that Now shines
Burning me in thoughts of us yet to be

Lost against bravery; bent down to bow
In this unbeautiful reality
Living in these fantasies that allow
Dreams to last only in mentality

My confessions to you have been spoken
Hope this truth does not get my heart broken



Infinite Miles Apart by Fereshta Noman

You have marked your territory on my heart
Though we are seemingly infinite miles apart

For your guidance, I yearn
To your path, I turn

My soul is like a garden with growing flowers of you
My mind, like a seashell awaiting for reunion with the waves of you

What did I do in my past life to be deprived of your presence?
For I am suffering greatly from the simple absence of your essence

My only will to breathe, is dreaming of my reunion with a lost love
your existence brings me to life like peace is brought to a dove.

Only to you I submit with all of my heart
Though we are seemingly infinite miles apart



My Name is Khan: From the Epiglottis by Kinza Zavary

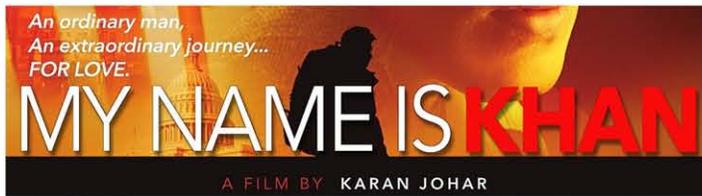


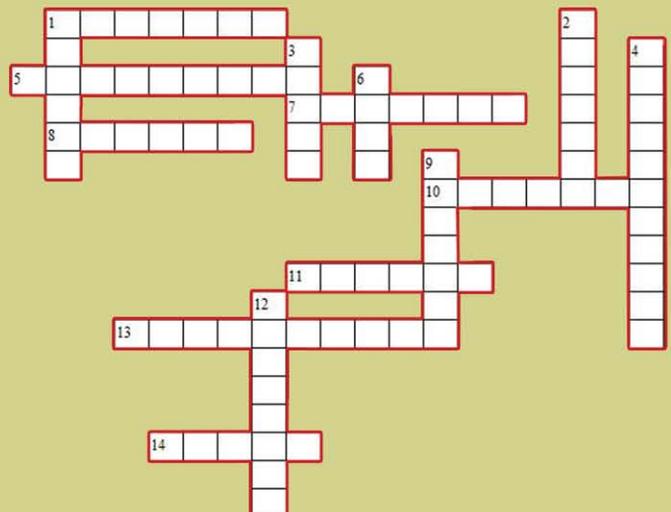
Photo: Dharma Productions

On February 24, the MSA of Shoreline Community College held a social event where they played the Bollywood movie, *My Name is Khan*. Overall 40 people attended, including high school students, non-Muslims and students from other neighboring colleges. In only two weeks, the members of MSA-SCC arranged this event, and got SCC's Multicultural advisor to give extra credit to whomever, showed up. When asked why they chose this particular movie, MSA-SCC President, Sonia Tariq, said, "*My Name is Khan* was a movie that had all the perks of entertainment, and yet dealt with important issues such as terrorism, stereotyping and Aspergers syndrome."

The main purpose of this event was to bring more people into the MSA. "MSA-SCC used to be a huge MSA in the community, and now it has reduced to about 10 people that come to the meetings regularly, even with a huge Muslim community such as Shoreline. This event brought us all a lot closer as an MSA and introduced our MSA to many new faces at the same time," said Tariq.

My Name is Khan is a movie about the struggles of an American Muslim living in post 9/11 era with Aspergers syndrome. Rizwaan Khan, played by the famous Shah Rukh Khan, is a Muslim with Aspergers syndrome, who travels across the states to tell President Barrack Obama, "My Name is Khan, and I am not a terrorist." *My name is Khan* is one of the handfuls of movies about Muslims living in a paranoid, post 9/11 era, and actually addresses Islam and tolerance. It is definitely a must watch.

2011 mideast/north africa protests crossword puzzle



ACROSS:

1. This country's 2011 protests were the first to topple it's government's leader.
5. Gaddafi assumed power in Libya in 19__.
7. Thousands of peaceful protesters mobilized on Feb 20 across various cities in this North African country.
8. _____ Square, the venue for the mass protests in Cairo.
10. This country's government has vowed to end the emergency law that has stood for 19 years.
11. This kingdom installed a new cabinet in response to the political protests across the Middle East and North Africa.
13. The exercise of power in an unjust manner, something that Muslims are obligated to stop in Islam.
14. The president of this country has ruled for over 20 years and faces charges of genocide.

DOWN:

1. Hosni Mubarak's reign in Egypt lasted __ years.
2. This social media site has become central to mobilizing mass protests across the Middle East and North Africa.
3. On Feb 2, the president of this country said he would not run for re-election in 2013 and that he would not pass power to his son.
4. This major kingdom has vowed to make political reforms in response to the political unrest in the region.
6. The protests in this country are partially a continuation of the protests from it's 2009-10 elections and current protests in the neighboring region.
9. The Sunni minority rules in this small gulf state.
12. On Feb 18, demonstrators took control of much of this Libyan city, the 2nd largest in the

The Decline and Potential Revival of the Sciences in the Muslim World by Ozge C. Dogan

During the seventh and 13th centuries, the Islamic Empire globalized knowledge, trade, and economy by uniting small regions and allowing Muslims and non-Muslims to share knowledge writes economist, John Hobson, in the Cambridge University Press. Muslim and non-Muslim scholars advanced in many branches of science including physics, medicine, and chemistry. This era is termed the Islamic Golden Age due to many extraordinary achievements. What happened next caused the existing education system and renovation possibilities to be lost. The Crusades in the 11th century along with the Mongol and the Turkish invasions during the 13th century destroyed and destabilized the Islamic Empire. Until the 17th century, Mongols and Turks fought against and within each other. A result of excluding sciences in the formal education system and an unstable living environment, scientific progress in the Muslim world declined.

Although scientific advancement was at the apex during the Islamic Golden Age, the consequences of constant warfare from the Crusades, Mongols and Turks discouraged Muslims from seeking ways to recover and pursue scientific knowledge. According to Muhammad Gill's article, Decline of Science in the Muslim World, some of the influential people at the time interpreted the fall of the

Islamic Empire as a punishment from God). Muslims did not invent sciences such as medicine or philosophy. Gill adds that they came across these subjects through Greeks, therefore, some scholars at the time labeled these subjects as "innovations in Islam." Instead of focusing on advancement in scientific knowledge and education, they geared to seek enlightenment in religion as a way to strengthen their spiritual side alone. They tried to explain "every thing in religious terms" and abandoned the pursuit of scientific knowledge. This created layers of censorship which prevented individuals from freely gaining knowledge. These barriers were introduced despite the inherent compatibility of the laws of science and the laws of Allah (swt).

Despite the fall of the Islamic Golden Age, Muslims still hope to advance in the scientific field, especially with efforts made by the Muslim scientists and scholars today who are aiming to revive their successful history of scientific achievements. There are numerous examples of individual Muslims reaching new frontiers in the modern scientific and academic world. In 1999, Egyptian-born Ahmed Zewail of the California Institute of Technology won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. A Turkish novelist, Orhan Pamuk, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2006. Editor of

Science and Technology Foundation (ASTF) has been working towards establishing grants for the regions' researchers and working to "build scientific capacity across the entire family of Muslim nations."

Nevertheless there are a few danger signs that could cause history to repeat itself. One of the biggest reasons why scientific achievements came to a halt after the Islamic Golden age was the exclusion of the systematic scientific teaching method. Formal education systems focused on religious studies and left other subjects at the individual's discretion. The extraordinary achievements of Orhan Pamuk and Ahmed Zewail are very important to the Muslim community. Orhan Pamuk wrote incredible novels because of his pure ingenuity. His achievements are not the result of the quality of the Turkish education system. Ahmed Zewail received his award due to his achievements in the United States. These achievements, although very remarkable, are due to the individuals' own extraordinary God-given capacity and efforts alone, and not because of the support of Muslim leadership. For these achievements to become a consistent aspect of educated Muslims, subjects in the field of technology, science, literature and history must become a part of the formal school curriculum. Moreover, unfounded censorship laws in Muslim countries need to be relaxed in order to allow scientists to seek knowledge in their homeland without the fear of persecution. Lastly, Muslim leadership needs to provide scientists with economic incentives to pursue their research at home in order to avoid "brain drain" in their countries. If all these conditions are met, Muslim scientists and intellectuals will find resources to help their skills prosper in their motherland. In addition, the economic consequences of the achievements will benefit their country in turn. Muslim leaders and their subjects must learn to work together to advance in sciences and to secure their future financially. If Muslim countries do not take these necessary steps to improve their nation, even the little achievements we see now may perish very soon. Bright Muslim scholars may choose to live in western countries to seek freedom of education and better living conditions. With such abandonment, Muslim countries may regress back to the times when improvement in sciences was at the lowest.



Photo: millatfacebook.co.cc

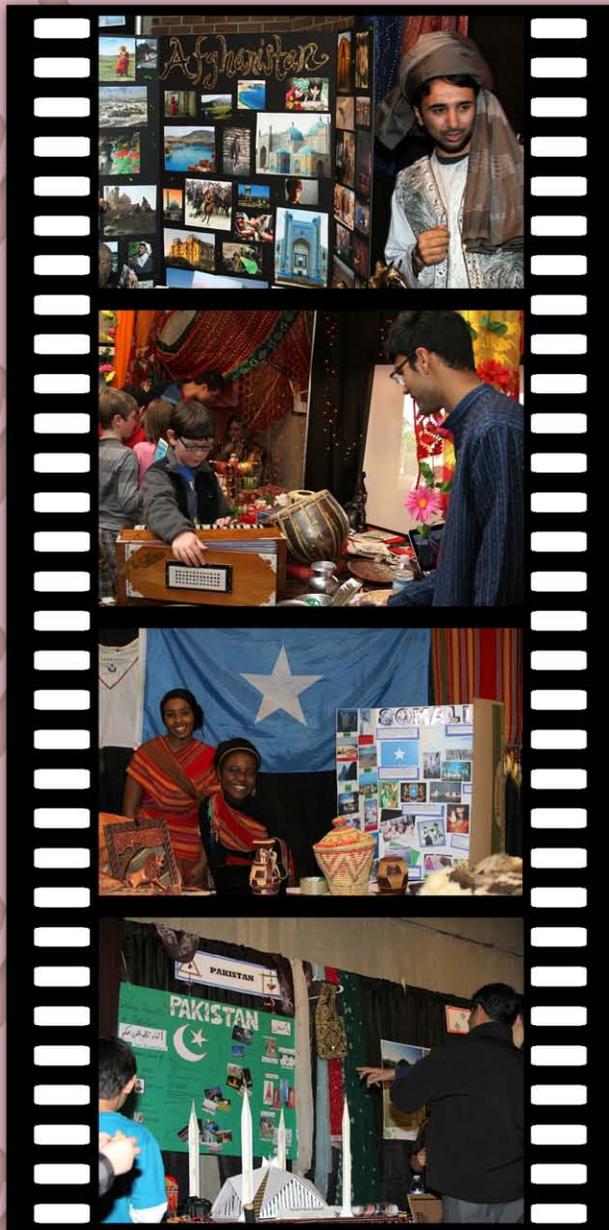
Praise be to Allah, Who hath created the heavens and the earth, and hath appointed darkness and light. Yet those who disbelieve ascribe rivals unto their Lord. (Qur'an 6:1)

NORTHWEST



at a glance

a photo presentation by Mosaab Zaki
FIUTS Culturefest 2011



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