

URBAN MUSLIMS

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important dates

-Nominations for MSA *nw*
officer positions are open.
Submit nominations via
msanw.org.

Deadline - August 1st

-Girls Mihraab Camp
June 24th - 26th
Camp Wallace Falls

-Guys Mihraab Camp
July 1st - 3rd
Camp Rasar

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
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This issue of *Urban Muslims* focuses on how Muslims in America can make a positive change in the world, echoing the theme from MSA *nw* Conference 2011. *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

Who am I to Judge? by Ahmed Brown

One evening last Ramadan, my father and I went to visit a man (for the purpose of this article, we'll call him Tariq). Tariq was an Egyptian physician working in the United States, an old friend of my father's. I had met him when I was very young and recall nothing of him now, but was eager to meet this man whom my father spoke of so highly. And so I did. He wore none of the signs of piety we so typically look for. No massive beard (clean-shaven), no Islamic garb (he wore Western clothes), etc. There was nothing that seemed remarkable about him, nothing that I could point to and declare; "Behold! There walks a righteous man." We broke our fast, sharing a wonderful dinner with him and his family, prayed the evening prayer, and then my father and I departed for home. Perhaps I came away disappointed, expecting something more of Tariq. And then, as we drove home it hit me like a freight train: this

was the man who had helped my father become Muslim, who cried when my father left for Hajj, who receives (God willing) a copy of *every single good deed* my father commits until he dies. Only recently have I realized that I too am indebted to Tariq for my Islam, as well as the rest of my family who became Muslim as the shockwaves of my father's conversion swept over us.

If I've learned anything in my short life, it's that you can't judge people based on their outward characteristics alone. Now, of course it's perfectly natural to make judgments about a person, it is human nature to put a large emphasis on first impressions. We need to know that the people we're interacting with are safe, trustworthy, etc. If you tell me you're a serial killer on the run from the cops, I'll probably judge that it's not in my

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MSA NW Conference 2011 Recap by Fereshta Noman



This year's conference theme was "Change the World" and the speakers gave motivational speeches about how Muslims can change the world by changing themselves and helping the community. Speakers included local scholars as well as scholars from California and Chicago.

Photo: Mosaab Zaki

MSA NW brought back the Islamic conference for this year during the weekend of April 16th at Kane Hall in the University of Washington. The conference included several well-known speakers such as: Mufti Hussain Kamani, Imam Abdullah Madyun, Sheikh Junaid Kharsany, Imam Mohamad Joban, and Sheikh Hamza Chaudhry, some of whom had travelled from California and Chicago. This year's conference theme was "Change the World" and the speakers gave motivational speeches about how Muslims and people in general can change the world by changing themselves and helping the community.

The initial funding for the conference was raised by Sheikh Hamza Chaudhry (Thawr Institute), Sheikh Fazl Hassan (ICOE), Imam Mohamad Joban (MAPS) and the Mihraab Foundation.

The conference raised money for donations through selling tickets, food, vendors and personal donations. Tickets for the event were \$15 general admission and \$10 for students with ID. The group raised a total of \$9,300 over the year through many efforts, all of which went to the conference costs.

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MSA NW Conference Recap (continued from Page 1)

MSA NW wanted to bring awareness about social, spiritual and institutional aspects within the Muslim community.

“MSA NW’s primary goal was to bring the community together, not just the student community but the entire Muslim community. Our main focus was on the families,” said Kinza Zavary, Vice President of MSA NW.

President of MSA NW and a current UW student, Ahmed Brown, worked endlessly with volunteers to organize the conference so that it would reach out and unite Muslims of all backgrounds.

“I think one of the traditional goals of the MSA NW Conference has been to be a source of inspiration for Muslim youth and expose them to modern Muslim scholarship that they can relate to... An unfortunate reality: many Muslims young and old feel out of touch with imams/sheikhs,” he said. “That’s why we carefully selected our speakers to be just that: people we can relate to.”

Hannah Kalinoski, a freshman at UW, was a volunteer and an attendee of the conference. She was very pleased by the event.

“To see students become active in their pursuit of Islam was inspiring,” she said. “It shows that you can seek knowledge at any age and that we are strengthening ourselves and the Ummah through knowledge.”

Meva Beganovic, also a freshman at UW and a volunteer, was very thankful for the conference and spoke words of gratitude and contentment, like many other attendees.

“I’m very grateful for having the opportunity to attend the MSA NW conference; it was a very enlightening and inspiring experience.”

Was the MSA NW Conference a success this year? MSA NW President Ahmed Brown and Vice President Kinza Zavary are happy with the results and believe there is always room for improvement.

“From the feedback I heard, people really loved our speakers... I guess that means mission accomplished!” Brown said. “However, there was a lot that could have been done better and we’re eager to pass on the lessons we learned to the next group of officers.”

“Our attendance was low, however, I feel like we did achieve our goal, because the way that all the youth came together to help put this conference together, was amazing,” said Zavary.

Upcoming events for MSA NW include next year’s elections and the next conference for 2012. Visit www.msanw.org for more information.



Just some of the conference’s many amazing and dedicated volunteers.

Photo: Mosaab Zaki

“To see students become active in their pursuit of Islam was inspiring. It shows that you can seek knowledge at any age and that we are strengthening ourselves and the Ummah through knowledge.”

-Hannah Kalinoski

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Have something to offer to the newsletter?

E-mail us at newsletter@msanw.org

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The Effect of Osama Bin Laden's Death by Zakariya Dehlawi



President Obama addressing the world on the death of Osama Bin Laden.

Photo: Brendan Smialowski

When I heard President Obama was going to make a special announcement I was almost as excited as the time George Lucas announced that the Star Wars Sixology would be released on Blu-Ray. We did not know what Obama was going to talk about, but anything that would interrupt Donald Trump's Celebrity Apprentice had to be good. I waited impatiently, with the internet live streams of CNN, MSNBC, and Al-Jazeera all playing at the same time. When the news leaked that Obama was going to announce the death of Osama Bin Laden, I was cautious. Rumors of his death had been disclosed before, but it never really materialized. I just prayed that Bin Laden was not killed in a Predator Drone attack. Inevitably, it would mean that civilians were killed with him and it would further justify the use of the unmanned aircraft in Pakistan, which have already caused considerable collateral damage and at least a thousand civilian deaths.

When Obama finally took the podium an hour late, I had numerous questions in my mind. However, the first words out of his mouth were, "Good evening. Tonight, I can report to the American people and to the world that the United States has conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden..."

His words made me happy because I vividly remember September 11th, when I, and millions of Americans, watched in horror as the Twin Towers fell. No amount of Rambo and Schwarzenegger movies could have desensitized us to the shock that we collectively experienced but at the end of Obama's announcement, I still had questions. How was he killed? Who was with him? Was he really dead? Did we just win the War on Terror?

Facebook and Twitter exploded during Obama's address. My Muslim friends and non-Muslim friends were predominantly pleased by the announcement. Most were thanking God that Bin Laden was no longer a threat. Many expressed hope that the United States could extricate itself from her wars and that military and intelligence operations can be scaled back. Of course, the blind jubilation was tempered by others who cautioned taking joy in a killing.

I had a few friends who actually expressed displeasure over Bin Laden's death. They viewed Bin Laden as a bastion against U.S. Imperialism, the only person standing up to American world hegemony. However, these people forget that Bin Laden is directly, and

indirectly, responsible for tens of thousands of deaths, including the deaths of people he claimed to represent. The ends never justify the means and you can continue to be appalled by the casualties of U.S. activities, while still accepting the fact that Bin Laden's actions were evil.

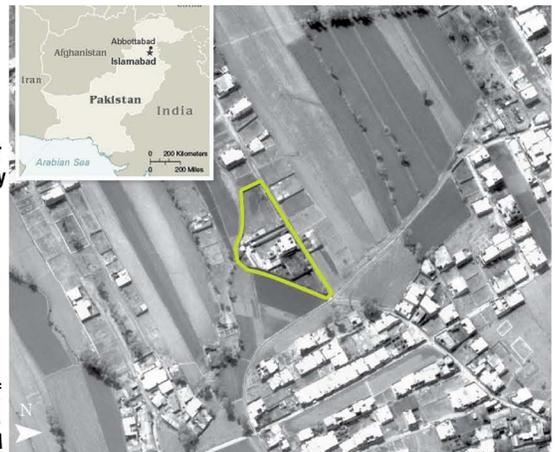
Astonishingly, in the immediate aftermath of Bin Laden's death, hate crimes against Muslims spiked drastically. A mosque was spray-painted with the words "Osama today, Islam tomorrow [sic]." Despite Obama reiterating that the U.S. is not at war with Islam, individuals, and even U.S. lawmakers, fail to grasp this idea, which perpetuates the foreign policies that encourage extremism. Bin Laden's death is at best, a symbolic end to the War on Terror. The actual battles continue in Afghanistan, Pakistan and clandestinely around the world. His death only serves as a moral boost to our side, and perhaps even a rallying cry to the enemy. We still take our shoes off at the airport; we tolerate extra-judicial killings and invasive investigative procedures against our communities and civil rights.

I do believe Bin Laden deserved to be killed but the United States lost an opportunity to demonstrate to the world that we are a nation of justice. Capturing him, placing him on trial, and then executing him under the due process of U.S. or International Law would have been a decisive move for American integrity as well as an intelligence win, far greater than sifting through Bin Laden's old USB thumb drives, computers, and video tapes.

Regardless, now that the Bin Laden boogeyman has been eliminated, perhaps we can all strive for a little more sanity, and a lot less fear.



Left: The 38,000 square foot Abbottabad compound that Osama Bin Laden had been hiding out in. Bin Laden was reported to have evaded capture living in this house for at least five years, hiding away from the public, who were unaware of his presence. Photo: Sajjad Ali Qureshi



Right: Satellite aerial view of the compound from the east. Photo: CIA

Big Brother/Big Sister Interview with Mihraab Foundation

What is the main purpose of this program?

The main purpose of this program is to help local Muslim youth attain their full potential through beneficial and inspirational guidance with one-on-one relationships formed with dedicated and supportive Muslim mentors who are able to have a positive Islamic impact on them.

Where did your inspiration come from?

As an organization we have always valued the concept of one-on-one mentoring and the potential social and psychological benefits associated with it.

What age groups are targeted?

Mentees should be: 14-21

Mentors should be: 23+

What support/activities are being held? Academic? Counseling?

The concept of this program is to offer youth a chance to spend time with a role model -- the Big Brother or Big Sister. The Big Brother/Big Sister will meet with their little brother/sister twice a month and do fun & exciting activities with them.

Who qualifies for the program? / What security measures are being taken?

Any youth in the age range of 14-21 who, along with their parents, has filled out an application and has gone through an interview with our BB/BS Oversight Committee. In order to be a Big Brother or Big Sister you have to be an upstanding Muslim and have to go through a WA state official background check. In addition, you have to fill out an application and go through an interview with the Oversight Committee.

Is this program state supported?

No. It's officially a Mihraab Foundation program.

What are the future plans for big brothers/sisters?

Mihraab's BB/BS program is still in its pilot stage.

However, once the program starts we hope to offer the community one-on-one mentoring that will connect the youth with amazing role models in our community. The program should officially begin by 2012.

Is there anything that the community can help you with?

Inshallah, once the program begins, we will be seeking adult mentors as well as youth who want to join the program.

Check out our website for more information:

www.mihraab.com or email us at
info@mihraab.com

Preserving Cultural Identity: Safeguarding our First Line of Defense

by Khaled Zaki

Culture is such a broad topic that I would be doing it an injustice to try and explore every aspect of the subject in such a limited space. This article is meant to serve as a conversation starter and something which will provoke readers to delve deeper into on their own.

Globalization is a word that we hear quite often these days, it is now possible for those living in one end of the world to experience and indulge in a culture that comes from the opposite end of the globe. Sounds revolutionary, right? Many visionaries and scholars in their polemic, however, are sounding alarms at the rate of "homogenization" of a once beautiful mosaic of cultures across the world. Many beautiful cultures are being unceremoniously dumped from the landscape.

A sad fact is that the loss of cultural values came to the Muslim world much earlier via colonization. Globalization has now exacerbated this loss and normalized what was once considered a foreign culture. Conquered nations tend to follow the ways of the conquerors. For example, Queen Victoria reportedly was the first woman to wear a white gown for her wedding. The next time you attend a Middle Eastern wedding, observe whose culture is being followed. Do we even remember what the ethnic bridal dress in the Middle East is anymore? Also, as graduation day approaches, observe the graduates wearing the gown (robe) and a cap with a tassel. This of course has its roots in the a'bayas (long flowing robes) and i'mamas (turbans) adorned by learned Muslim men of Medieval Islam. From this we can see the dangers of losing our culture, and in effect, our identity as members of a distinct, original community. Enough said.

The concepts of "authentic" culture are slowly degrading away. A sure sign of the downfall of a nation is the loss of its cultural identity. The originality of cultures and customs are what differentiates people and this is completely acceptable. This is, after all, how we identify with one another. If the world were to be of one race, and in effect, one culture, life would be boring. Allah (swt) has created us in different shapes, colors, and temperaments and made this world a diverse place. This mirrors the verse in Surah Al-Hujurat that plainly attests, "...and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other)..." (Quran 49:13).

“...and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other)...”

(Quran 49:13)

I would also like to discuss the issue of guarding our culture by preserving our dress and adornment (*libaas*). When Allah (swt) revealed in the verse that the husband and wife are a "*libaas* for each other", *mufasssireen* gave "protecting each other's flaws" as one of the meanings of being a *libaas* for one another. Many of us might not give it a second thought, but the way we choose to dress is a fundamental component of our cultural identity. The minute we choose to forego it, no matter how you look at it, we are in effect replacing our clothes with that of another culture. With that being said, it really falls back onto the individual; the basic unit of a community.

Mufti Nawwalur-rahman, Amir of the Shariah Board of North America, once explained the importance of maintaining our Muslim culture by this example: Out of curiosity, he once asked a doctor why does a burn victim die when all their vital organs (heart, lungs, brain, kidneys, etc.) are intact? The doctor explained, skin is the first-line of defense against opportunistic pathogens and bacteria. With the loss of skin, seemingly insignificant, the body succumbs to the infections, and it is the infections that destroy the vital organs and takes the life away. Similarly our Islamic culture is our first line of defense. Once we choose to turn away from wearing sunnah-inspired clothing, we become vulnerable to the myriad of influences. He further said, much of the slow-creeping *irtidaad* (apostasy) enters through this least suspected door.

Ethnic clothing originating in Muslim-majority countries retain the spirit of modesty and sunnah of the Prophet (s) and the practices of the sahabah. If we are unable to adorn ourselves with sunnah-inspired clothing in our daily lives, we should *at least* proudly display our true colors at our religious holidays and important social functions. Keeping this in mind, wherever we may live as a minority community or, unfortunately these days, even in Muslim-majority countries, we should strive to preserve our *libaas*-the first line of defense.

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Who am I to Judge? (continued from Page 1)

best interest to hang out with you. However, a problem arises when we attempt to ascertain an individual's inward piety solely by their outward, superficial behavior and unfortunately sometimes this is *exactly* what we do.

Let's look at a common example: A woman who does not wear the hijab. I've noticed a tendency for people to draw immediate and sometimes inaccurate conclusions when they encounter such a sister but few consider her reasons for doing so. Stepping out the door onto non-Muslim lands, a woman adorned with the hijab becomes an instant badge of Islam amongst Americans. Along with this honor come stares and comments, sometimes even harassment and violence. Shortly after 9/11, my mother was pushed by two cowardly men into the path of an oncoming bus. (Thank God the bus stopped in time and that I wasn't present to confront the perpetrators!) Her head was of course beautifully clothed in hijab, undoubtedly the reason she was targeted (despite this incident, she continues to wear

the hijab when out and about). It's not difficult to find similar or worse stories from other sisters. Besides threats of harassment, sometimes a sister may want to wear the hijab but be under intense pressure from her family not to do so (but that's another discussion entirely). My point with the above examples? Don't jump to conclusions about a person's actions, especially when you don't know the full story. My fellow brothers, if you're unconvinced about the social and societal pressures hijabi sisters face, put on a thobe/shalwar qamees and kufi/topi/turban; wear them everywhere for a few weeks and let me know how it goes. I have one friend my age who does this and I greatly admire him.

All that being said, when you see an area of spirituality or Islamic practice that your friend could stand to improve upon, you *should* advise them. Not passing judgment on people doesn't mean letting everything and anything go. As a friend and brother/sister in Islam, it's your job to correct your peers when they're doing something incorrectly. The manner in

which you do so is critical. If you're not acquainted with the person, consider befriending and getting to know them first so you have a better idea of where they are coming from. Not everyone takes well to the advice of utter strangers. You're trying to encourage a person to elevate themselves spiritually, so advise them in the best of words and actions. Be gentle and firm according to their personality. Above all, don't think of yourself to be better than the person you're advising, no matter their sins or mistakes. You know not your own status before Allah, nor do you know theirs, and even if you are greater in standing at the moment, the day may well come when they shall surpass you in rank with Allah. I have witnessed many a person with outward blemish later come to demonstrate their unshakeable belief and purity of faith in words and actions, and it was like a slap in the face to those who used to mentally belittle them. "How did I ever dare to have thought so little of this person?" Give people time and they may come to surprise you, *inshaAllah*.

Obama vs. Osama

a poem by Dawood Ayub and Selma Elgabalawy



Obama: I was born in Hawaii, my birth certificate will show

Osama: I was born in Saudi with a lot of dough

Obama: I was born Muslim but I no longer practice

Osama: I was born Muslim but I cause malice

Obama: I graduated from the best school, top of my class

Osama: Hate the West, laying low so no one can find my ass

Obama: Michelle, my one and only

Osama: Had one wife, but I still felt lonely

Obama: American national security is my concern

Osama: The Soviets attacked, to Afghanistan, my return

Obama: I praised you for leading the war on land

Osama: It hurt me to see my Afghan brother's blood fall on the sand

Obama: I provided you with weapons and cash

Osama: You were my sugar daddy so I kissed your ass

Obama: We left quickly after the Soviet defeat

Osama: I gathered what was left and got up on my feet

Obama: I didn't care about the civil aftermath

Osama: I guess that's what you are good at, creating a blood bath

You had no reason to invade Afghanistan so you blew up 2 towers

Obama: You were responsible for our worst attack you coward

Osama: And how did building 7 fall on its own

Obama: Three thousand of my citizens died, and to this day their families mourn

Osama: You placed propaganda about Islam in people's minds

Obama: Islam wants war with America, don't be blind

Osama: Chillin in these caves, your GPS will read error

Obama: We announced a war on terror

Osama: Messing with the wrong guy, you gave birth to this beast

Obama: It's important that we control the power in the Middle East

Osama: You couldn't find me for 10 years, no stress

Obama: We have the best military technology and no one can mess

Osama: You attacked school children again, got the entire community mad

Obama: I could've sworn that was an Al Qaeda hideout, my bad

Osama: The color of your skin changed, but your foreign policy did not

Obama: You are the face of terrorism, you need to get shot

Osama: Living in caves doesn't cut it, time to upgrade to my mansion

Obama: I searched all over the world, 25 million was your ransom

Osama: Thanks to the Pakistani government, I'm living in peace, sippin on mango lassi's

Obama: I finally got a chance to go to Pakistan to get rid of this living disease

Osama: I hear the infidels walking up my steps as I chill with my wife

Obama: We found his crib, MTV-Raided it, time to take his life

Osama: My wife ran, risked her life for my protection

Obama: No he turned his wife in front of him like a mirror for reflection

Osama: I was unarmed cuz I don't fear death

Obama: He was armed and deadly to succeed we had to be stealth

Osama: All I hear is two gun shots, one to the head

Obama: We shot him until his brain blew out on his bed

Osama: Keep posted for a video releases shot at my tanker

Obama: Then we took him to the sea and dropped him like an anchor

Osama: Look out for it in two weeks, I'm still ALIVE

Obama: Killin a symbol doesn't kill the threat, the movement still survives

TRAUMATIC MUSLIM CHILDHOOD

by Haris Ahmad

- You start off life being given a name that will forever be misspelled or mispronounced. The REALLY unlucky ones will be given names that will live on to be synonymous with body parts. I'm among these few REALLY unlucky ones, though I will leave the body part up to the reader's imagination.

- As you grow up, you realize how different you are. A prime example is Halloween. You wonder; "Why won't my family let me go trick-or-treating? Why can't I just be normal?" As if it's normal to dress up in a crazy outfit and go around door-to-door asking for payment in the form of candy. I'm pretty sure in adult terms this is pretty close to prostitution. But since everyone is doing it, it's ok right?

- Remember the first time you had to explain to your friends why you don't celebrate Christmas?

- As you enter High School, many young Muslims begin to fast for Ramadan. The interesting part is trying to explain to your friends how this works. The common assumption is that Muslims don't eat or drink anything for 30 days straight. That's right friends, in the month of Ramadan Muslims everywhere become cyborgs that require no sustenance at all.

- Eid-ul-Fitr = "Muslim Christmas"

- Eid-ul-Adha = "Muslim...Easter?"

- "Hey dude...who are you taking to prom?" You can't answer this question without being awkward. I believe my answer was "what if just us guys go?" This did not bode well for me.

Most of this applies to my generation (90's kids rule). This will serve as a nostalgic sentiment for them and something to look forward to for the younger population. I have to admit, these problems made for some interesting stories. However, the younger generations will most likely deal with these problems and then some. I was lucky to grow up in a time when Islam was not under such a critical eye. Heck, the term "traumatic" is an understatement for describing the childhoods that are being lived in Muslim nations in turmoil. My hope is that the next generation will be able to appreciate the lives that they have been blessed with in America, that they will be able to deal with the above issues with grace and perhaps one day look back on their "traumatic" Muslim childhoods with a smile.

This piece does not represent the views of Urban Muslims.

Obama caricature: Grant Pominville | Osama caricature: Amrit Vatsa

Political Cynicism by Samir Junejo

All minorities always have many in their group who feel disenfranchised and left without a meaningful voice. It's a universal issue for all minority groups because by definition they will have lower representation in the government than the majority. However, there are some minority groups that are better than others at getting what they want from government and are very influential in making sure their voice is heard in the public sphere.

Muslims are very much a minority in this country, and it is probably safe to say we are not where we would like to be in terms of our influence on American policy-making. One of the major reasons, and arguably the primary reason, for this dilemma is the political cynicism spewing from the minds and mouths of so many Muslim-Americans.

My simple definition of political cynicism in this case is feeling excessively untrustworthy of the government and all its actions. If a person constantly comes up with conspiracy theories or believes that none of the political candidates in elections will do anything for them, then they are likely engaging in

a form of political cynicism.

I am not advocating that everyone should always believe everything the government says. There is a difference between skepticism and cynicism. Skepticism is questioning the information being given to you, while cynicism is waving it off as untrue without even taking a look at it.

Cynicism is a type of pessimism that will only lead to Muslims constantly being left out of the political discourse in this country, and that will only lead to more of the same. People who do feel this way about the government will never have the motivation to go out and be a part of the government, engage in dialogue, or even vote in elections.

In a time when we have more Muslim organizations promoting civic engagement than ever before, this type of cynicism will only hurt those causes.

It only takes initiative to start looking to actually find reasons to be optimistic. For example, a person watches the news and sees a report about a deadly car crash. Instead of

saying to him or herself that the road is such a dangerous place, it is best for that person to be happy that they live in a society in which deadly car crashes are still newsworthy events and don't happen so much that the news deems them as an everyday event unworthy of the evening broadcast.

This positive outlook on life will not only help people get through life as more satisfied individuals, but if many Muslims adopt this optimism it will help Muslim civic engagement in this country increase. People will then realize that the world is not such a cruel and horrid place that is out to get them and their families.

We are living in a country that was built on the principle of fairness and the rejection of tyrannical rule from the majority. Unlike many other countries, the framers of the constitution made sure that every branch of the government is held in check by the other branches and no one group or person can have unlimited power.

If there is a majority in Congress that decides to pass a law banning the wearing of the hijab, the President can veto it. Even if the President signs it into law, the Supreme Court will be there to strike it down as unconstitutional, which it surely would do.

The political and legal system in this country is not always used to doing great things, but it is more than capable of doing so. Thurgood Marshall was a man who believed that you didn't have to disobey the law to send a message, but that the law could be used as a weapon. With that philosophy he helped end racial segregation in schools and also became the first African-American to sit on the Supreme Court.

If a person were to start feeling cynical again, I would urge them to recall the following story: I was once at a dinner party with many older Muslim men who started talking about this African-American man named Barack Hussein Obama who was running for President. Almost all of them remarked that he had no chance of winning because the system we had in place would never let someone from a minority group become President. On November 4th, 2008 when Obama was indeed elected to the Presidency of this country, I couldn't help but think back about how wrong those cynics were.

CAIR WASHINGTON INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

CAIR-WA seeks highly motivated volunteer activists who have a passion for CAIR's work of defending civil liberties, fighting bigotry, empowering the American Muslim community, creating mutual understanding and building coalitions. In addition to the positions listed, we may also custom-craft a position that fits your interests. All positions are unpaid. College, school, or community service credit can be arranged during first week of academic term.

Learn more at: www.cairseattle.org

HOW TO APPLY

Please contact us via e-mail at info@cairseattle.org and, in the subject line, please clearly indicate the title of the internship(s) in which you are interested. If you are applying for more than one position (up to three positions), please list in order of preference. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

NOTE to Summer internship applicants:

We are pleased to announce our Summer Internship Program with a shorter commitment of 3-4 months. In lieu of the 6-month commitment required of regular interns, Summer interns will be required to commit to a minimum of 20 hours per week instead of the usual minimum of 12 hours per week.

Available internship positions include:

- Bookkeeping
- Case Intake Counselor
- Communications
- Event Planning
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A Review of *Unwelcome: The Muslims Next Door*

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In March of 2011, CNN released the documentary “Unwelcome: The Muslims Next Door” by Soledad O’Brien as part of their “In America” series. This 40-minute film shows the importance of Muslims advocating for their rights in their communities and examines the place of Muslims in America. The documentary shows the tension that had started between the Muslim community and their opponents in Murfreesboro, Tennessee because of the state approval of a plan to build an Islamic Community Center. Local Muslim community members legally purchased a large piece of land to build a facility for the over 200 Muslim families living in the area. The small town already has a one-bedroom mosque, which is now unable to adequately cater to the Muslims living in the area.

However, the idea of having a full fledged Islamic facility stirred an unrest 10 years after 9/11 in this “welcoming” town, as described by Lema Sbentay, a 19 year-old local Muslim resident. She described this swift shift in attitude towards Muslims as a surprise. “I’ve lived here for so long and I’ve never seen this side of anyone before. Sometimes I still wake up and I’m like, is this really happening?” she said.

Kevin Fisher, a corrections officer and a long time member of the community, describes his feelings for the center; “I was outraged something of this nature was being shoved down our throats and we didn’t know anything about it”. A month later residents of Murfreesboro flooded the normally quiet County Commission Meeting in order to overturn their decision for the approval of the plan. A few conveyed their complaints about the lack of notice for the building. However, the rest talked about the threat of Islam in their community. One of the residents even said, “Everybody knows that he is trying to kill us. It’s like we can’t even say it”. At the end of the meeting, the local officials refused to overturn their unanimous approval of the plan.

Next, led by Fisher, opponents of the plan organized protests, signed petitions, and

talked to the Commissioners again. Local politicians seized on the issue, one of them saying that “we feel concerned because it’s not the Christians, it’s not the Jews that flew their airplanes into buildings”. Pat Robertson, the host of the 700 Club, brought up the issue during his show and warned his audience that the center would increase the Muslim population in the area and would take over the “city counsel” one day. When all these efforts proved to be futile, he opened a lawsuit to stop the mosque plan with Sally Wall, a prominent Murfreesboro resident. During the lawsuit, the prosecutor Joe Brandon brought up issues such as possible traffic increase and damage to water quality due to Islamic burial practices. However, he based most of his argument on the facility providing a foothold for radical Islamists and Islamic law.

The judicial system of Murfreesboro dismissed the case at the end. This success for the Muslim community did not ease the resentment felt about them. Unfortunately, local Muslims did not seem to make many attempts to make their identity known in their hometown until a problem of this magnitude arose. When asked whether Wall met any of the Muslims in the area, she simply replied; “You know, I have not. They have made no effort to get in touch with me, and I have made no effort to get in touch with them.” In this post 9/11 world, the Western media often depicts Islam as a backwards religion, showing Muslims as uneducated and brutal people. Murfreesboro residents who knew Muslims personally, educated themselves on the issue and defended the rights of their Muslim citizens.

Muslims still need to do a better job of reaching out to the larger community in order to fight the growing ignorance about the religion. Volunteering in local food banks, public schools, hospitals, and even churches or synagogues would allow the community to become a strong and positive component of the American fabric. Attempts such as these would open up lines of communication and would allow non-Muslims to realize that Islam will not threaten their community in any way. It is vital that the Muslim American community leaves a positive and lasting image before people’s impressions of Muslims are shaped by misinformation and fear. Muslims will feel the full backing of the American community when these measures are taken.

NORTHWEST at a glance

a photo presentation by Mosaab Zaki
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