

# URBAN MUSLIMS

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## msanw news

- Officer Additions  
MSAnw is pleased to welcome two new officers:
- Samah Imtiaz (Outreach Coordinator)
  - Mohammad Hammad Ahmad (Communications Director)

MSAnw 2013 Conference  
The 2013 Conference is scheduled for April 6th & 7th and will take place in the new University of Washington HUB.

## get involved

- Are you a web designer? MSAnw needs your help! E-mail us at the address below!
- Have something to offer to the newsletter? We need articles, poems, pictures, and editorial help! E-mail us at newsletter@msanw.org

This is the first issue of the year for *Urban Muslims*. For this issue, we explore the prevalent theme of justice in Islam, and several different concepts of justice. *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

## Income Inequality by Samir Junejo



Two protesters during Occupy Wall Street in October 2011 hold up a sign showing their concern of the direction the economy has been taking. Protests took place throughout the country over growing concerns of the widening gap between the upper class and the rest of the population.

Photo: Jim Kiernan © 2011

When Muslim-Americans discuss politics, the majority of the time they are talking about Middle Eastern or South Asian politics. There seems to be a lack of discussion on domestic politics among Muslim-Americans. It is not only those who were born or grew up in the Middle East or the Indian Subcontinent, but even many Muslims who were born in the United States avoid discussing and paying much attention to domestic issues such as the big one of this past year: income inequality.

Income inequality has been a major issue over the past year, thanks to national and now international protests

that started in New York City advocating against the massive amount of control that a small number of mega-rich Wall Street executives have on U.S. politics. They call themselves Occupy Wall Street, and they have inspired hundreds of protests around the world. Most importantly, they have raised the issue of income inequality. "We are the 99%" is their slogan, a phrase that implies that they are protesting against the richest 1% of the country that own about 24% of all the income in the United States according to the New York Times. It is the lower class and the middle class that are being

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## Parables of Justice by Atia Musazay

An ant was crawling across a vast Persian carpet in a mosque, complaining and lamenting to God about all the bumps, the strange colors, and the foreign patterns that it encountered. The ant assumed that the carpet has been designed this way as a meaningless obstacle course, intended to meaninglessly complicate its trek across the floor. "What a futile thing to have made," the ant thinks of the carpet. However, the carpet-weaver, looking at it from above can see the patterns and the purpose of it; the carpet is perfect and good when it is seen in its entirety.

The ant's complaint, in this tale, told by Jalaludin Rumi, echo's man's frequent uproars and grievances. There is a wisdom and balance behind every perceived difficulty, but it is impossible to appreciate this, because humans are two-dimensionally stationed in the universe in a position akin to the ant in the mosque, inconsequential in the broader scheme of time and space.

No matter how corrupt governments become, nomatter how many bogus laws are established and rightful laws

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## Income Inequality (continued from Page 1)



Protesters attend a rally during Occupy Wall Street. Photo: Pamela Hall © 2011

left out and hurt by the unequal distribution of not only wealth, but also power. Those who have money have power, and when they have power they continue making things better for themselves and not for the rest of the 99%.

I imagine that almost all Muslim-Americans in this country would include themselves in that 99%, and I imagine that they would like to see an American government that makes laws in their interest and not in the interest of corporations. This is an issue that affects 99% of Americans and Muslims are part of that 99%.

Social justice and fair distribution of wealth is a crucial virtue in Islam. Zakat requires Muslims to give a portion of their income to the less fortunate, and one of the reasons Muslims fast for a month is to be able to relate to the poor who cannot eat whenever they want. In the earliest days of Islam, Muslims were told to build a Muslim community that is built on practical compassion, in which all, rich and poor, would be able to prosper.

As Muslims it is our duty to fight for economic justice and compassion for the poor. Hoarding a highly disproportionate amount of cash is against the teachings of Islam, so it is not only in our own self-interest to advocate for more fair distribution of wealth, but it also part of our religion.

This isn't something I ever thought I would say, but Muslims need to start worrying about themselves. The unfair distribution of wealth in this country is a major issue that affects all Muslims greatly. Many of our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents came to the United States because it is a place where we can climb the social ladder and attain wealth and freedom. We must make sure their struggles and hardships were not in vain.

The Prophet promoted social justice and making sure the rich share money with the poor.

It's important for Muslims to follow the prophet's ways and advocate for a fair economy in which the gap between the rich and the poor is small.

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

*“The Prophet promoted social justice and making sure the rich share money with the poor. It's important for Muslims to follow the prophet's ways and advocate for a fair economy in which the gap between the rich and the poor is small.”*

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**Thanks to all contributing writers!**

**Have something to offer to the newsletter?**

**E-mail us at [newsletter@msanw.org](mailto:newsletter@msanw.org)**

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# MSA NORTHWEST CONFERENCE 2013

6 APRIL & 7 APRIL  
SATURDAY & SUNDAY  
HUB - UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

SAVE THE DATE &  
HELP US PLAN FOR  
NEXT YEAR'S  
CONFERENCE!

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## Parables of Justice (Continued from Page 1)



are broken, and no matter how many innocent people are subject to atrocity there is always a master plan behind it all. The scales on Judgment Day aren't just used to weigh good and evil deeds, but also inevitably balance out so that every soul receives what he or she rightfully deserves.

In Surah al-Kahf, Prophet Moses (AS) seeks the figure of al-Khidr, the guide, because he is told he can attain much wisdom from him. Al-Khidr agrees to let him follow him to learn on the condition that he does not ask any questions, warning him that it is difficult to remain patient with him.

The pair continue on for a ways until Khidr, without explanation, punctures a hole in the bottom of a ship belonging to a large crew of people. Moses becomes outraged and demands an explanation, to which Khidr reminds him that he had pledged not to ask any questions. They proceed and Moses witnesses Khidr kill a young boy. Moses, appalled, lets Khidr know he had committed a capital crime. Again, Khidr refuses to explain. Next, they come upon an impoverished town whose inhabitants implore them for food. Khidr ignores their pleas, much to the dismay of Moses. They then find a collapsing wall, which Khidr rebuilds, without an expectation of recompense.

At this point, Moses considers Khidr to be an

evil being. But then Khidr offers explanations to his seemingly unjust acts. These are the explanations that we rarely see and understand in response to unjust acts because our vision is limited. The ship belonged to poor people who depended on the ship for work; by damaging it, he ensured that the king who seized every ship by force would not take it. The boy he murdered was the son of two believers who would become a disbeliever when he became older; by killing him, he enabled him to go innocent into the next world and also saved his parents much grief. The wall he reconstructed held a hidden treasure saved for two orphan boys by their father; he ensured that this treasure would remain safe. The only certainty God has promised man is that justice, or the balancing of scales will prevail, if not in this life then in the next.

*"He raised the heavens and set up everything in balance, so that you would maintain justice. Therefore, maintain just measures and do not transgress against the Balance" [55:7-9].*

There are moments when sense can't be made of the frequent disregard for justice and like Moses, we are left with no answers to atrocious events. That is when, like what the ants should have done, one can only use of the magnificent mosque carpet we involuntarily tread on to pray.

***"The only certainty God has promised man is that justice, or the balancing of scales will prevail, if not in this life then in the next."***



# Lessons from the Qur'an

## The importance of justice as mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith:

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your relatives, and whether it be against rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both..." (4:135)

"Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition." (16:90)

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah For Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do." (5:8)

"Is not Allah the Best of judges?" (95:8)

According to a saying of the Prophet, Almighty Allah says, "O My slaves, I have forbidden injustice for Myself and forbade it also for you. So avoid being unjust to one another." (Sahih Muslim)

## God Will Give Me Justice by Ozge Dogan

During the summer of 2011, I accepted a job offer in California. In October 2011, I moved from Seattle, motivated by the belief that I would improve my deen and my character. Living away from my safety net in Seattle would allow me to focus on studying Islam and improving myself. In California, I went to Islamic lectures regularly and spent my free time with the Muslim community. Although I kept acquiring valuable knowledge to improve my character, I did not feel complete. I was not surrounded by my loving friends in Seattle. I felt very alone and without a purpose.

Moreover, my new job turned out to be quite different from what I had anticipated. It was mostly due to the overly ambitious work environment. People did not treat each other with respect due to work stress and feelings of superiority. I knew life here had become unbearable but I also knew that I would not return to Seattle until my life started to go in a direction that gave me satisfaction.

**“Never feel hopeless and pray for patience. Be happy during your trials and think about how much Allah will reward you for all your troubles endured while you were seeking Him.”**

I attended a Friday lecture at the Muslim Community Association in Santa Clara, Calif. The speaker told us about the story of Uma Habiba, one of the wives of Muhammed (pbuh). Umm Habiba and her first husband, Ubaydullah ibn Jahsh, were among the first who first accepted Islam in Mecca. The couple migrated to Abyssinia with their daughter in order to escape persecution. Ubaydullah felt isolated by the society because Abyssinia was predominately Christian. In order to assimilate, he left Islam and embraced Christianity. Umm Habiba felt helpless in this situation. She had left her home in Mecca in order to practice Islam without fear. Now, her husband had abandoned their faith. Umm Habiba had to tolerate him when he was drunk and did not treat her respectfully. He did not come home for days sometimes. She felt very embarrassed and alone. Moreover, she had to raise their little daughter by herself in great poverty. One day, he disappeared. Scholars debate whether he died or left his wife and his daughter. Regardless, Umm Habiba became a widow in a strange land, without protection or support. She could not return home, because people could not return home until they were allowed to do so by Muhammad (pbuh). She entered a state of depression and constant

crying. Hearing of her troubles, our prophet thought about how he could help her. He proposed to her. The ceremony took place without the prophet and she did not meet him until a few years later, when she was granted permission to return. However, she was saved from her hopeless situation.

I felt that I could relate to her story although I do not know how she felt at the time. Shortly after, I hit my lowest point at work. I had been trying to smooth out communication among people. This caused me to get blamed for any mistakes in our projects. It was always implied that I had something to do with it.

One day, I could not take it anymore. I remember sitting at my desk, contemplating moving to Turkey right away. I had a serious talk with everyone at work, asking them to stop finding faults in each other. Moreover, I took it upon myself to directly work with

someone who was facing much difficulty due to the unpleasant people in our project. Since he realized that I was showing him common courtesy and decency, he started turning in our data much faster.

Shortly after, I started making friends in the Muslim community and started feeling purposeful again. It was mercy and respect for strangers that changed my situation. Since I was always surrounded by so many friends in Seattle, I never had to go out of my way to understand and comfort a stranger. The moment I made a stranger's life easier, Allah made mine much better. The community here realized that I was a stranger and tried to make me feel at home. There is great justice in this world. Allah always rewards a follower generously who goes through His trials and tests patiently. Like Ustadh Usama Canon from Ta'leef Collective in Fremont, Calif. said: "We all have our trials, our tests. We don't necessarily understand each others' trials. Never say 'I know how you feel'. Say 'I can imagine how that can be difficult for you.'" Never feel hopeless and pray for patience. Be happy during your trials and think about how much Allah will reward you for all your troubles endured while you were seeking Him.

# MAKE A DIFFERENCE DURING TIMES OF NEED

## WEST AFRICA CRISIS

West Africa is experiencing a drought which has devastated crops and livestock and left 13 million people at risk of severe food shortages.

West Africa is experiencing a food crisis, just two years since a severe nutrition crisis hit the region in 2010. 20 million people live in the areas affected to the food crisis and over five million Nigerians –one third of the population- are currently food insecure. This food crisis is also affecting three million Malians and many others across the region.



Photo: Islamic Relief

Photo: Islamic Relief



## SYRIA CRISIS

In Syria, entire towns and neighborhoods have been isolated since an uprising began in the country in 2011. In many communities, people have been forced to remain in their homes because of the violence. They cannot commute to work, school and other places of business, or get supplies or medical care. This makes life unbearable for people who already have little access to food, water, medical care and electricity.

Nearly 41% of refugees registered in Syria have illnesses or physical ailments that require special attention. More than 80,000 Syrians recently estimated to be taking refuge in Jordan.

EAST AFRICA, YEMEN, LIBYA, PALESTINE, AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, PAKISTAN, AND MANY OTHER PLACES 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*!

# You Call This Justice?

a poem by Mohammad Hammad Ahmed

In regards to piety, lets discuss what's up with this society.  
 Got all the wealth, but still believe to them has been done a great travesty,  
 Desperate for attention, causing oh so many calamities. What a catastrophe.  
 Honestly, can you call this **JUSTICE** to the one and only Sovereignty!

Freedom bells been ringing, but all I hear is the cries of the people, singing,  
 how could this nation be dimming!  
 Top of the world, now steadily trimming,  
 To the bottom, it be slipping.  
 Why?

Given all the pleasures, by the One who assures that in the end to Him we  
 will return,  
 Blinded by this life, that no thanks have been said and so from His love we  
 should expect to be shun,  
 But no! He still sends blessings, while instead of glorifying, we be  
 faultfinding,  
 How Kind and Merciful can one be, to let us ingrates be so successful,  
 Raving about all the injustices, while showing no love to the One who  
 deserves this so called **JUSTICE**.  
 Realization can be so hard, but in the end, all this can be solved, if the  
**TRUTH** is what we Practice.



## Justice and Interfaith by Nuha Elkugia

On January 8th, 2012 I found myself on a ferry riding to Bainbridge Island for my second speaking event at a Unitarian Universalist Church. As a volunteer with the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), I have had the opportunity to attend church services that aim to understand the common ground they share with Islam through conversations on social justice.

Unitarian Universalism is interesting due to the diversity of their congregation and the seven principles they believe in. All of their principles focus on justice in some degree and as Unitarians they draw from several teachings including Jewish, Christian, and Islamic beliefs. Alongside other representatives from CAIR-WA and the Muslim Association of Puget Sound we presented the Islamic response to all 7 principles. In Islam we know that justice is a concept that's demonstrated several times throughout the Holy Quran, Allah (swt) says:

*"We sent aforetime our messengers with clear signs and sent with them the book and the balance that man stand forth in justice". [57:25]*

So in addition to the message of tawheed, or the oneness of God, all the messengers were sent down to bring more justice to the nations they were sent to.

And this is an important reminder for Muslims across the world, as we saw in the Middle East and North Africa people were becoming



Nuha Elkugia delivers a speech during an interfaith event at a Unitarian Universalist Church. Photo: CAIR-Washington

restless with the injustice they have endured in their countries so they risked their lives and continue to risk their lives for a more just and fair society.

The Prophet Muhammed said "There are seven categories of people whom Allah will shelter under His shade on the day where will be no shade except His. One will be a just leader" (Muslim) so it's quite unfortunate that despite the fact that most of these countries are largely Muslim and are ruled by Muslim leaders that corruption and injustice are a common theme.

But the message isn't simply to stand up for justice when Muslims are affected. It's the duty of Muslims everywhere to represent and fight for justice wherever they find themselves

to be. Allah (swt) says:

*"O mankind we have indeed created you as male and female, and made you as nations and tribes that you may come to know one another". [49:13]*

It's important to focus on the word 'know' because it's very easy to judge and misinterpret anything including an entire group of people if we don't know what they believe in or what they're going through, so it's imperative that we seek knowledge of the communities we reside in and to learn and work with each other. Words from Martin Luther King still ring true decades later, "Justice denied anywhere diminishes justice everywhere."

### Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

- 1) The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- 2) Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations
- 3) Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
- 4) A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- 5) The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
- 6) The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
- 7) Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are part

Interfaith attendees join in prayer during the event on January 8, 2012.

Photo: CAIR-Washington



# NORTHWEST

 *at a glance*

A PHOTO PRESENTATION BY MOSAAB ZAKI  
MSA-UW FASTATHON 2012

