



Women's  
History  
Month

Remember  
to fill out  
the Census  
form



Islamic  
Schools  
compete  
in Science  
Bowl



# Chicago rescent

A PUBLICATION OF THE COUNCIL OF ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS OF GREATER CHICAGO

March 2010 Rabiul-Awwal 1431

## Council distributes more than \$25,000 in funds for Haiti

Since the inception of the Haiti Relief Fund on January 13, the Council has distributed more than \$25,000 in donations to its member organizations to provide relief to those affected by the massive earthquake.

"We would like to thank each and every person who donated for the people of Haiti in their time of need," said Kiran Ansari, interim executive director at the Council. "From large donations from organizations like the Chicagoland Shura Council, Downtown Islamic Center, Syrian American Medical Society to several individual contributions, we take pride in knowing

that you trust the Council will direct funds where they are needed the most."

While speaking to Doctors returning from Haiti, the *Chicago Crescent* learned that the problems are far from over. While food and water is reaching the affected people, medical facilities are still few and far between.

"Even though Haiti may be fading from the headlines, they still need your support and as long as community members donate for Haitians, your Council will see to it that the funds are sent there promptly," Ansari said.

## Council joins refugee coalition

The Council has joined the Golden Gate Coalition, comprising of refugee agencies and faith groups, to advocate for funding for the resettlement of refugees. Working with the Illinois Coalition of Immigrant and Refugee Rights, the Council hopes to distribute fund-

ing to local, Muslim social service agencies that work directly with refugees, the majority of which come from Muslim countries.

Comprehensive re-settlement includes helping them with translation, transportation, finding a job and

▶ *Continued on page 4*

## IMANA team returns from Haiti

Haiti may be disappearing from the front pages of the news, but relief groups from all across the globe are still working very hard to provide aid to the devastated nation. Council-member, The Islamic Medical Association of North America has sent six teams of Doctors and medical personnel to

provide emergency medical care to those affected by the massive earthquake.

"In a country of 9 million people, there are just 2,000 physicians," said Chicagoan, Dr. Imran Qureshi in an interview with the *Chicago Crescent* after returning

▶ *Continued on page 5*



Several times a year, the Council represents Muslims at interfaith and civic engagements in Chicago and beyond. On February 10, Vice-Chair, Tasneem Osmani and former Chairperson, Kareem Irtan, joined leaders from a rainbow of faiths at the Chicago Temple First United Methodist Church to pray for those affected by the massive earthquake in Haiti. Sponsored by the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago and the Chicago Center for Cultural Connections, the event provided each faith group with an opportunity to read from Scripture and join others at a reception following the observance. Representing the Council and the Muslim community in Chicago, Tasneem Osmani quoted verses 155 to 157 from Surah al Baqarah in the Quran. "Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits of your toil, but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere. Who say, when afflicted with calamity: 'To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return.' They are those on whom descend blessings from Allah, and Mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance."

## Chicago Muslim leaders discuss ways to prevent violent extremism

As leaders and members of local organizations streamed in to Islamic Foundation Villa Park on February 13, it was evident that the issue of national security, civil rights and the role of the Muslim community is definitely on the priority list of masjid and schools.

"As *Ummat ul Wasat* (the balanced nation) we need to infuse love for Islam in our children," said Shaykh Abdur Rahman, the resident scholar at the Islamic Foundation. "Our imams need to speak to the youth in a language they understand and always consider the context

in which a teaching is applied."

Council Chair, Dr. Zaher Sahloul, shared the gravity of the situation by presenting facts from recent polls. He said that while the vast majority of Muslim youth condemn extremist acts, even if one college student can lean towards such ide-

ologies, it is the responsibility of the community to consider it to be one too many and provide them with constructive alternatives.

"We need to educate ourselves about the issue of violent extremism among Muslim Americans and the

▶ *Continued on page 5*

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Council's Annual CommUnity Dinner



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## Editorial

# COMBATING OBESITY THE ISLAMIC WAY

By Dr. Zaher Sahloul,

Chairman, The Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago (CIOGC)

We are a fat nation. Modernity combined with long hours of sitting or reclining while watching TV, playing video games and keeping up with our social media networks is taking a toll on us. Snacking on cheap, addictive, high calorie food and lack of regular exercise is increasing our fat cells and boosting our waist and neck sizes.

Obesity increases the risks of cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, sleep apnea, stroke, high cholesterol, certain cancers, osteoarthritis, respiratory problems, liver disease, gallbladder diseases and gynecological problems.

The numbers are staggering at the national level. More than 300,000 people die every year because of complications related to obesity. Illinois has the 27th highest rate of adult obesity in the nation, at 25.9 percent and the 10th highest in overweight youth (ages 10-17) at 34.9 percent, according to a recent report by Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Nearly two third of our adults and one third of our children under 10 in Illinois are overweight or obese.

Economic status and the place we live dictate how fit or obese we will be. External environmental factors, such as access to healthy food and safe opportunities for physical activity, affect our choices of food and our access to exercise. If you are a child growing in the inner city, you are less likely to have access to healthy food and less likely to have access to exercise, which means that you are doomed to become overweight or obese. That is why the 56 percent of publicly insured children in Illinois are overweight or obese, which is the highest prevalence in the nation, and two out of five African-American children are overweight or obese, which is the third highest in the nation.

There are areas in urban centers, including Chicago, that are devoid of healthy choices and designated as food deserts. These are districts with little or no access to foods needed to maintain a healthy diet but often served by plenty of fringe groceries, liquor stores and fast food restaurants. As grocery stores have withdrawn alongside residents that have fled to the suburbs, low income families and senior citizens who remain find healthy foods either unavailable or

inaccessible because of high prices and/or unreachable locations.

Many grocery stores in these areas are owned by people from different ethnic minorities. It is easy to find Korean, Chinese, Greek, Jewish, Muslim or Arab sounding names, selling among other things liquor and junk food, while lacking healthy and fresh alternatives.

The epidemic of obesity has affected Muslim youth and adults too, and sometimes exacerbated by the lack of adequate physical exercise in private Islamic schools and some cultural elements among Muslim immigrants. Some young Muslim girls also develop eating disorders, like bulimia and anorexia, to have a satisfactory body image.

Islam teaches us to be moderate in consumption, make healthy choices, conserve resources, avoid alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, recommended exercise for children and encouraged us to stay strong and fit. He ate a healthy and very lean diet.

Besides connecting us to God, our five daily prayers also clean our spirit, burn calories, stretch muscles and tendons, make joints more flexible and promote healthy postures of sitting and standing. Obesity makes it harder for Muslims to have a good posture during prayer especially during kneeling and prostration.

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is a once a year opportunity to cut down on calorie intake and lose weight. The Prophet did not just reserve fasting for Ramadan, but used to fast on other days throughout the year as well.

Pilgrimage is a hard physical exercise that only can be enjoyed by physically able and fit.

The Prophet peace be upon him encouraged exercise, and asked Muslims to teach their children swimming, archery and horse riding. It was reported that he used to jog and race with his wife Aisha while he was in his late fifties. He encouraged wrestling competitions among youth. He said "The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, while there is good in both."

Most of the companions were physically fit and strong especially Hamza, Omar, Ali, Saad, Kahled, Aisha, Safeyya and Asma and many others, may Allah be pleased with them all. The women also participated in defending the community during different battles. One of the Prophet's companions, Umm Umara, was instrumental in protecting his life

in the battle of Uhud, which indicates that women at the time of the Prophet were exercising regularly and were very fit that they fought side by side with men and sometimes even won in sport competitions.

The Quran describes the physical fitness and strength of many Prophets especially David, Solomon, Moses and Joseph among others.

Public health interventions focusing on healthy eating, and environmental change to support these behaviors have shown to be successful in reducing obesity and promoting healthy weight and physical activity among children and adults. That is why the efforts of First Lady Michele Obama in her "Let us Move" campaign to encourage physical fitness, exercise and healthy eating habits should be commended and promoted.

In our State, Muslim organizations are leading several initiatives to promote physical fitness, healthy diet and exercise.

The Inner City Muslim Action Network, better known as IMAN, has launched the "Muslim Run" campaign to promote health, wellness and healing in the "hood" though improving access to healthier food in "Food Deserts", racial and ethnic healing and alternative business models.

The HEART Women and Girls Project, in conjunction with Altmuslimah, is committed to empowering women and girls from faith-based communities by teaching them to connect a healthy mind, body, and soul to achieve an overall sense of well-being.

On April 22, in our annual Muslim Action Day, more than 700 members of the Muslim Community led by the Council will gather in our State capitol advocating to support, among other issues, the recommendations of the Illinois Marketing Task Force of creating a Fresh Food Fund, now being discussed by the General Assembly to support local supermarket development projects in low-to-moderate-income neighborhoods.

We have to deal with this disease at the community level in addition to the leadership level. If we put the same energy that we are putting to address the disease of terrorism, we can easily address this societal disease that kills many more lives than have been taken by terrorism, war and drugs combined. ■

## Vision of the Council

Our vision is to be the unifying federation of Islamic organizations of Greater Chicago the leading advocate of Muslim community interests, and a catalyst for enriching the American society.

### Chicago Crescent Team

<b>Editor:</b>	Kiran Ansari Rasul
<b>Copy Editor:</b>	Omar Jaleel, Esq.
<b>Editorial Team:</b>	Samana Siddiqui Meha Ahmed Tayyaba Syed
<b>Photos:</b>	Kiran Ansari Rasul
<b>Events:</b>	Rita Sutton
<b>Advertising:</b>	Team
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Chicago Crescent is a publication of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago (CIOGC). The Council is a 14-year-old federation of more than 50 Chicago area mosques and other community organizations serving 400,000 Muslims and their neighbors.

Offices: 231 S. State Street, Suite 300, Chicago, IL 60604  
Phone: (312) 431-0038, Fax: (312) 506-0077  
Toll-Free for services: (800) 678-0753  
info@ciogc.org, crescent@ciogc.org  
[www.ciogc.org](http://www.ciogc.org)

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## Chicago Muslim leaders discuss national security and the role of youth

impact of our Government policies on our civil liberties," said Dr. Sahloul. "It is imperative to focus on addressing preventive measures and long term strategy to fight this issue by adopting a plan of action,"

Dr. Sahloul also briefed the community about the meeting with the Department of Homeland Security where he represented the Chicago Muslim community. He said that if the general cultural competency about Islam is low, it becomes the

community's responsibility to fight the battle from within and disseminate accurate information. He told the audience that DHS Secretary Napolitano did state that in times of crisis, it is critical for the government to strengthen partnerships with faith- and community-based groups. This will enable better information sharing and coordination in assessing threats.

Some of the solutions offered included formation of the Islamic Scholars Council of Illinois to address the issue from a religious perspective and capitalizing on the proliferation of social media avenues to reach out to more youth, young professionals and "unmosqued" Muslims.

Dr. Abdul Malik Mujahid, former chair of the Council and President of SoundVision, shared that a Gallup poll revealed that Muslim youth were the angriest as compared to peers from other faith groups. He attributed the anger to the discrimination they see and hear. He said that with 500,000 Muslims interviewed by the FBI and 30,000 detained, there is a strong need for the community to become better at organizing so that government officials know what the Muslim community has gone through.

He stressed that is important for the Muslim community to know who and what people are listening to and reading when they are look-

ing for information about Islam.

"I was surprised to find that Anwar al-Awlaki has a deeper reach among Muslim youth than even Shaykh Hamza Yusuf," said Mujahid. "Awlaki's material is less expensive and very easily available. The top selling books on Islam on Amazon are by Islamophobes like Robert Spencer and Ayaan Hirsi Ali."

A committee was formed that will draft resolutions for the Council's House of Representatives to vote on. Once approved, work on youth development, educating our neighbors and community organizing can begin promptly.

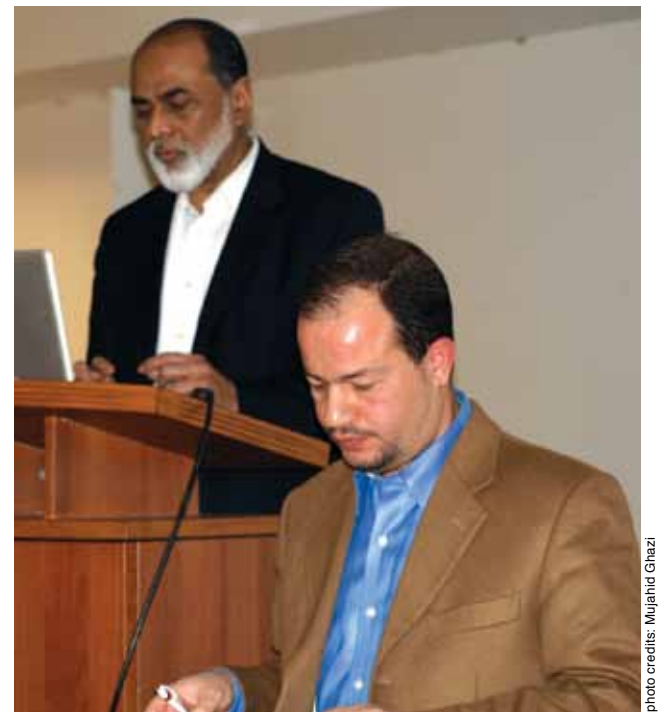


Photo credits: Mujahid Ghazi



### Highlights from the presentations: By the numbers

- Nearly two-to-one (63%-32%) Muslim Americans do not see a conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society.
- Roughly two-thirds (65%) of adult Muslims in the United States were born elsewhere. Among native-born Muslims, roughly half are African American (20% of U.S. Muslims overall), many

of whom are converts to Islam

- 53% say it has become more difficult to be a Muslim in the United States since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Most also believe that the government "singles out" Muslims for increased surveillance and monitoring.
- 30% of Muslims fall in the 18-29 year age group in contrast to 21 percent nationwide
- Wages of Muslims have dropped by 10%
- 50% of Arab American men show signs of clinical mental depression

## Council raises awareness about Census 2010

### Come to ISNS Rolling Meadows on Sunday, March 28 for FREE food and fun!

The Census takes place once every ten years but its results can make a significant impact on our lives. Unless every person is counted accurately, how can the government know how many classrooms, parks or state representatives we need?

The Council is working closely with the Asian American Institute to raise awareness about the importance of the Census. Look out for Council volunteers passing out fliers, bags and other Census freebies at ma-

sajid and Islamic Schools all through March.

"It is crucial for people to fill out the forms that arrive in the mail in March," said Sharmeen Mahmood, who is leading the Council's Census awareness project. "If you don't mail in the form, a Census worker will need to come to your home to collect the data."

According to a recent Parade report, the Census 2010 will cost the government \$14 billion. "The price of the Census is in the hands of the American people," reads the report. "The more people who return their questionnaires, the cheaper the Census will be."

In addition to the promotional materials the Council

is helping distribute in the Muslim community, a big Census event is planned for Sunday, March 28 at the Islamic Society of Northwest Suburbs.

"Volunteers will be on hand to help with any questions people have about the forms," said Kiran Ansari, interim executive director at the Council. "The event is open to everyone. Families will enjoy "counting games" to reinforce the importance of being counted in the Census and I am sure the free food and prizes will make this a fun family event for an important cause."

the way through World War II starting from the Revolutionary War. Many of the Muslim Veterans still alive today served in the Korean Conflict, Vietnam, and all of the Conflicts and Wars since then.

The current military lists over 4,500 declared Muslims among their rank. The Muslim American Veterans Association was established and certified in 1997 and has since then spread to include Chicago and many other cities.

If you have information on the service record of Muslim Veterans or if you have questions about your disability claim, contact [mavaspeaks@yahoo.com](mailto:mavaspeaks@yahoo.com) or MAVA SPEAKS P.O. Box 2223 Country Club Hills, Illinois 60478. We want to let the world know that Muslims served with honor and dignity in all branches of the Military

## Honoring Muslim Veterans

By Daniel B. Habeel

Many Muslims have served in the United States Military in all branches and at all levels. When America called, Muslims came. Amir Muhammad in his book, "Muslim Veterans" has documented soldiers with Muslim last names all

## Want 10 good reasons to fill out your 2010 Census questionnaire?

### 2010 Census Information is needed to:

1. Direct services to children and adults with limited English language proficiency.
2. Determine areas eligible for housing assistance.
3. Attract new businesses to state and local areas.
4. Develop adult education programs.
5. Plan budgets for government at all levels.
6. Plan for hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, and locations of other health services.
7. Direct fund for people in poverty.
8. Develop assistance programs for low-income families.
9. Create maps to speed emergency services to households in need of assistance.
10. Make decisions at all levels of government.

For the other 40 reasons, go to <http://2010.census.gov/partners/pdf/cocGuide.pdf> to view the Complete Count Committee Guide. See page 20.







From the desk of the  
Council's Interim Executive  
Director

## Pro-Muslim movie rakes in big money

By Kiran Ansari

Muslims the world over are praising the Indian movie, "My Name is Khan", as it has tried to tell the story about Muslim Americans in a post-September 11 world in a more balanced way than any of its predecessors.

Bollywood movies are not a tiny market. This Indian film industry produces more than 1,000 movies annually with a worldwide audience of 3 billion. In contrast, Hollywood produces 500 films per year. Around 15 million Indians live in different parts of the world and account for over 65 percent of Bollywood's earnings. Apparently, it is not just the two million Indian expats living in the United States that have seen the movie, but their friends, neighbors and co-workers have shelled out \$10 at the local AMC theater too. "My Name is Khan" grossed \$1.86 million at the box office in its first weekend and has broken the record for the largest opening weekend ever for a Hindi film in North America.

The movie's stars rang the opening bell at the NASDAQ stock exchange and media from the New York Times to the BBC have all compared the movie to the astounding success of Slumdog Millionaire.

"My Name is Khan" jerks tears with ease, while teaching lessons about Islam and tolerance," said the New York Times review.

So what is the hoopla around another three-hour Indian movie with singing and dancing? Is it how it shows a Muslim child being bullied in school because of his last name and how a Muslim with a form of Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, dispels myths about terrorism? Or is it how it helps put a face on the thousands of people interrogated at airports or looked at suspiciously by their neighbors?

Like Hollywood, Bollywood does not have a good track record when it comes to portraying Muslims in a positive—or even neutral—light. In the last year alone, "New York" and "Kurban" have both focused on the theme of Muslims and terrorism, but both movies defeat the purpose by showing how a Camry-driving, beard and hijab wearing family does have a bomb making facility in the basement of their suburban New York cookie cutter home.

Watching Indian movies is not just entertainment for the South Asian community, especially in America. The quality of the sub-titles has improved so much reflecting the varied audience. If the movie dialogs refer to Sachin Tendulkar and Lata Mangeshkar (Indian cricket and singing sensations respectively), the sub-titles will say Mohamed Ali and Michael Jackson to provide non-Hindi

speaking viewers the context of the message.

Of course we know movie makers fund projects that will help their bottom line. As Will Smith once said, "The execs don't care what color you are. They care about how much money you make. Hollywood is not black or white, it's green."

The fact that this movie broke records for the largest opening weekend hopefully shows that you need not sling mud at Muslims to be a cinematic success.

I understand that movies need villains and if at one time all Russians were the bad guys and at another time, Germans bore the brunt, it is unfortunately time for the Muslims to be cast in negative roles. However, I hope that movie makers and movie goers advocate intelligent choices that while someone has to be the bad guy for the good guy to triumph, it should be just that: a person who has done a bad deed - not a bad nation, ethnicity or religion.

While we hope that, like with other groups in the past, this Islamophobic phase passes out, I would not want to see Islam handing over the baton to any other minority group. Just as we would never want to see Muslims generalized, we would not want any other faith or country to go through the same stigma ever again.

## Illinois Muslim Action Day 2010 planning in full swing



Make a difference by joining your  
Council on April 22

Building on the success of the first Muslim Action Day last year, the Council has started planning months in advance so that this annual advocacy event is bigger and better in 2010.

"Last year, everyone who participated felt empowered," said Chairperson, Dr. Zaher Sahloul. "Our youth had the chance to interact with our community leaders for the first time and experienced a sense of community at its best."

This year, the Council is reserving 20 buses so that you and your family can join other Muslims to travel to Springfield on April 22.

Muslims will be advocating for:

1. Better opportunities for our students in public schools
2. Healthy food choices for our brothers and sisters in the inner city
3. Preventing foreclosure for struggling families
4. Empowering immigrants and preventing deportation by local police

YOU are invited to participate in this great civic event. Make sure that your weekend and full time schools are on board as well. For the latest information, please visit [www.ciogc.org](http://www.ciogc.org) or email [IMAD@ciogc.org](mailto:IMAD@ciogc.org)



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### Council joins refugee coalition

ensuring that they remain connected to the Muslim community.

If the funding comes through, the Council plans to distribute it to the Hamdard Center, Arab American Family Services, Refugee Assistance Programs and other organizations that are working with Iraqi, Palestinian, Somali and other refugees in the Chicago area.

## A CALL FOR NEWS FROM YOU

The Council is eager to publish your news and events.

A cross-pollination of ideas and know-how is vital to growing stronger as a community. Please send us news of important goings-on in your masjid or Islamic Center.

Email us at [crescent@ciogc.org](mailto:crescent@ciogc.org).



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### IMANA team returns from Haiti

from a week on the ground in Port-au-Prince. "I led IMANA team 5 in setting up a mobile medical facility out of an amusement park where we saw between 500 and 800 patients a day."

This is not Dr. Qureshi's first medical relief trip. He also volunteered in Gaza last year. From pediatric dehydration and broken bones to infections and headaches, IMANA and other medical teams have to address a myriad of needs with limited resources.

"Gaza already had some sort of medical infrastruc-

ture, even though it was poor," Qureshi said. "In Haiti, they had nothing. We had to invent a medical facility and set up and OR from scratch."

Janet Jasper, a nurse, who joined the IMANA team, said that helping the Haitians was the most gratifying experience of her life.

"Although my family was a little concerned about my safety, I knew I had to go," Jasper told the *Chicago Crescent*. "As an Emergency Room nurse, this was the best use of my education and experience."

From 8am to sunset every day that she was there, Jasper saw to scores of dressings on partial amputations and wounds as well as helped patients with hy-

pertension or high blood sugar. The team slept in tents and basically lived on power bars, dry fruit and lunch of Haitian rice and a piece of fish.

"The day one of the Doctors brought us pizza and fresh mango slices was a real treat," Jasper said.

Although preliminary aid has reached Haiti, IMANA urges people to keep on giving as it will take several months, if not more, for the nation to get back on its feet.

"I especially worry about the upcoming rainy season," said Dr. Qureshi. "What will happen to all the people in stick tents?"

To donate or learn more about IMANA's Haiti mission, visit: [www.imana-haiti.com](http://www.imana-haiti.com)



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# 112 students compete in inter-Islamic School Science Bowl

Each year, Principals of the Islamic Schools of Greater Chicago, and occasionally Indiana and Wisconsin, gather to create opportunities for their schools and students to collaboratively participate in academic and Islamic knowledge competitions.


This year the College Preparatory School of America in Lombard hosted the Science Bowl on February 11. Each of the ten participating schools selected students from 2nd through 8th grade to represent them.

From chemistry experiments to scientific inventions, 112 students from Al-Huda Academy, Aqsa School, CPSA, Furqaan Academy, Hadi School of Excellence, ICC, ICCI, Islamic Foundation, MCC, and Universal School had a great experience.

"The Inter-Islamic School Science Bowl is an event that encourages students from the region's Islamic schools to prove their mettle," said Farhat Siddiqui, principal at CPSA. "Its aim is to promote healthy competition between schools as well as

foster cooperative learning among the students. Hands-on activity stations encouraged participants to think critically while working with group members from different schools and ages."

It was a very special day for Al-Huda Academy as their students won three prizes even though it was their first time participating. The Schaumburg school took pride in seeing its students walk home with the second and third place prize as well as an honorary award for "Knowledge of Science."




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## Principal's Corner

### Testing Tips

It is that time of the year again! Students across the nation are going to be taking standardized tests administered by their schools. These tests are important because teachers use them to measure a student's level of mastery in the subject, his or her ability to learn and in some circumstances whether a child can pass to the next grade level.

Here are some common test-taking strategies to help your child do well:

- Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep and wakes up on time to enjoy a pleasant, stress-free experience before school.
- Make sure your child eats a wholesome breakfast and gets to school on time.
- Remind your child that the test is important. Encourage him to listen carefully to directions and ask questions if something is unclear.
- Encourage your child to answer every question. Students are given timed tests and may find they do not have enough time to finish reading and answering every question. Students should gauge their time and in the last few minutes they should use their time to fill in an answer for all the rest of the questions as most tests given in elementary and high school do not deduct points for wrong answers.
- If a child gets stuck on a question, they should use the process of elimination to strike out obvious wrong answers and then choose between the remaining choices.
- Because students must mark their answers on a separate piece of paper, they might accidentally skip a line or mark two answers on one line and throw off all the remaining answers. Avoid this by using a ruler or an extra pencil to place under the line of the question they are answering and move it down a line as they answer each question.
- Tell your child to stay focused on the test. Even if other students finish early they should not get distracted.
- Send a small snack with your child on test days. Often schools will allow students a small snack between tests.

Most students are nervous before a test. Often, this energy helps students perform better, although for a few students it can have the opposite effect. Reassure your child that you will be happy as long as they tried their best. No matter what your child's test scores are, use them as a positive tool in identifying their strengths and weaknesses.

*By Linda Said, Principal, Islamic Community Center of Illinois School*

The Weekend School at the American Islamic Association in Frankfort held the Final Round of its annual Quran Recitation & Adhan Competition on Feb. 14. About 80 students were judged on their fluency, delivery and tajweed (proper pronunciation of the Quran). All three judges, Khaja Basheeruddin, Br Syed Shah Ali Hussaini and Shaikh Abdussalam were not affiliated with the School. "There was a large turnout of students and parents," said Khalid Mozaffar. "Everyone present was inspired by the dedication of the youth to improve the way they recite the Holy Quran."



## Rohina dispels myths at famous theater

### Take your neighbors and co-workers with you

One year after her acclaimed play, "Unveiled" sold out in Berwyn, playwright and performer, Rohina is going to enthrall audiences again this month. Her play runs from March 24 to April 4 at the Tony Award Winning Victory Gardens Theater.

"Tickets are selling like hotcakes," said Rohina who received a standing ovation at the Council's Annual Dinner in November. "A lot of people are interested in what a Muslim female playwright has to say."

Her new play, "Yasmina's Necklace" is currently being considered by the prestigious Goodman Theater. Don't miss this mesmerizing solo performance about how the lives of five Muslim women changed after September 11, 2001.

Buy tickets at: <http://victorygardens.org/content/node/1447>



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## Fiqh Council advises pat down instead of airport body scanners

In a statement released on February 9, the Fiqh Council of North America expressed grave concern about the proliferation of body scanners at airports across the nation.

"FCNA fully supports the necessary measures for the safety and protection of all passengers," read the statement. "It is, however, deeply concerned about the use of full-body scanners for this purpose."

FCNA recommends that instead of producing and displaying a picture of the body, software should be designed to produce only the picture of questionable materials on an outline of the body. Further, other technologies could be used that detect the presence of explosives without infringing on modesty.

The *Chicago Crescent* reported last month how the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups have also voiced opposition to such measures that are similar to profiling. The Fiqh Council's main concern was that because the scanners reveal images close to that of a naked body, it is considered to be against the teachings of modesty in Islam and other faiths.

## Illinois Muslim owns NFL team

Soon after the Super Bowl frenzy, Muslims were excited to learn that a Pakistani American from Urbana, Ill. is purchasing 60 percent of the St. Louis Rams. Businessman Shahid Khan apparently loves football and has the buying power to go with it.

According to the Chicago Tribune, the Rams are estimated to be worth between

\$725 and \$950 million. Khan's car parts manufacturing company, Flex-N-Gate, reported a revenue of \$2.14 billion in 2009. Khan came to the United States from Pakistan when he was a child. Along with his wife, they have a foundation that funds professorships at the University of Illinois.

## Autopsy report: Imam Luqman shot 21 times

By Shahzad Chaudhary

Questions abound following the release of the initially suppressed autopsy report of Imam Luqman Amin Abdullah, who was gunned down at a warehouse in Dearborn, Mich. by FBI agents on October 28, 2009, when agents attempted to arrest him and 10 other men on charges of conspiracy to commit federal crimes.

The FBI also accused Abdullah of seeking to establish a "separate Sharia-law governed state within the United States" and espousing the "use of violence against law enforcement."

According to the report, Abdullah was shot 21 times including once in the back. More than half of the gun shots were below the waist. The Imam also suffered lacerations to the face and palms, which some say may have been caused by an FBI K-9 officer that was sent in by the agents before the shooting began. An investigator from the medical examiner's office found Abdullah at the scene of the shooting lying in the back of a semi-truck with his wrists handcuffed behind him.

U.S. Rep. John Conyers along with many civil rights organizations are calling for an independent investigation into the matter, suggesting that the force used in the raid was excessive.

"Why would he be shot in the back and then handcuffed -- shot 21 times and then handcuffed?" asked a perplexed Dawud Walid, executive director of the Council on American Islamic Relations of Michigan, in an interview with Fox News.

The FBI claims that it acted properly saying, "Abdullah did not surrender and fired his weapon."

However, friends of the Imam say he was a respected and loved member of the community and they question the validity of the accusations made by the FBI.

"I knew him as a great humanitarian and a person that worked tirelessly in the community," said Imam Abdullah El-Amin of The Muslim Center in Detroit.

But many questions remain unanswered about what took place on the evening of October 28. When and why the handcuffs were placed on him and why were so many shots necessary?

CAIR-Michigan has filed a Freedom of Information Act requests to obtain video, if it exists, from the warehouse where the shooting took place in hopes of getting answers to these questions. The Dearborn police department is also conducting an investigation into the incident.

## World's tallest building has Chicago connection

Chicago and tall buildings have a long history. Even though the former Sears Tower was outdone years ago, Burj Khalifa, the 160-storey building in Dubai is also designed by a Chicago firm. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill where Fazlur Rahman Khan designed the now-called Willis Tower in 1974 has another architectural feather in its cap.

Standing at 2,717 feet tall, it cost over \$1.5 billion to build Burj Khalifa, which

is taller than the Chrysler Building put on top of the Empire State Building. In 1956, Frank Lloyd Wright had proposed such a similar pencil-like building overlooking Lake Michigan, but the project never materialized in Chicago. It is estimated that more than 12,000 people can occupy the six million square feet of space including a Giorgio Armani world class hotel. The 54 elevators will be shuttling people around at a speed of 40 miles per hour.

Chicagoans had a mixed reaction to the tallest building in a Muslim country.

"It is ironic that Dubai is touting to have the highest masjid in the world on the 158<sup>th</sup> floor," said Nida Khan, of Park Ridge, who lived in Dubai for 18 years. "What's the point of the highest masjid when there are several night clubs with dancing and drinking a few floors below?"

Others hope that this new attraction will help Dubai recover from its economic

blues. It is reported that 90 percent of the property has already been sold.

"Everyone knows the tower was renamed Burj Khalifa as a tribute to wealthy Abu Dhabi's \$10 billion bailout to Dubai," said Shariq Khawar of Northbrook. "Let's hope this is the start of the upturn in Dubai's tourism recovery after the real estate bubble burst."



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## Jewels from the past

### Umm Ayman

By Samana Siddiqui

Few people in Islamic history were as close to Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon, from the time of his birth until his death, as Umm Ayman. Acknowledging this, the Prophet once described her as my “mother after my own mother. She is the rest of my family.”

Umm Ayman managed the household of Abdullah and Amina, the parents of the Prophet. It was Umm Ayman who slept at the foot of Amina’s bed and comforted her when, just weeks after her wedding, her husband was instructed to leave for Syria from where he never returned. Umm Ayman cared for Amina during her pregnancy and consoled her after her husband’s death.

Then, when the Prophet was six, as she lay dying of illness, Amina instructed Umm Ayman to “be a mother to him, Barakah. And don’t ever leave him,” she said. Umm Ayman remained faithful to this instruction until the Prophet’s death.

As the Prophet faced tragedy upon tragedy, from losing his mother to facing the death of his beloved grandfather Abdul Muttalib, Umm Ayman was there for him. It was only after he married Khadija that Umm Ayman chose to marry, upon their insistence. She married Ubayd ibn Zayd, and had a son named Ayman, thus the name Umm Ayman.

Umm Ayman was among the first Muslims, and like the others, she bravely faced persecution for choosing Islam. She risked her life by ferreting out the plots and conspiracies against the Prophet. In the Battle of Uhud, she distributed water to soldiers and

nursed the wounded. She also accompanied the Prophet on some expeditions. She was committed to the success of the faith. The Prophet once asked her: “Ya Ummi! Are you well?” and she would reply: “I am well, O Messenger of Allah so long as Islam is.”

Umm Ayman trekked across the burning desert on foot through sandstorms during the migration from Makkah to Madinah. She was given good news when she arrived, swollen feet, dust-covered face and all. The Prophet said, “Ya Umm Ayman! Ya Ummi! (O Umm Ayman! O my mother!) Indeed for you is a place in Paradise!”

After Umm Ayman’s husband died and she was in her 50’s, the Prophet, while speaking to some of his Companions, recommended, “Should one of you desire to marry a woman from the people of Paradise, let him marry Umm Ayman.”

Young Zayd bin Harithah agreed to marry this woman of *Jannah*. They had a son named Usamah who was described as “the beloved son of the beloved.” In other words, the Prophet loved both he and his father. Umm Ayman was alive when the Prophet died. But as much as she loved him, it was not for him that she wept. She said, “By Allah, I knew that the Messenger of Allah would die but I cry now because the revelation from on high has come to an end for us.”

Umm Ayman died when Uthman ibn Affan was leader of the Muslim community.

*Information in this article is based on the account of Umm Ayman’s life in the book Companions of the Prophet by Abdul Wahid Hamid*

### Umm Salamah

By Meha Ahmad

There are countless women in Islamic history from whom we can learn and whose examples we can apply to our lives today. One such woman is Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her, a Mother of the Believers, and a wife of the Prophet.

Umm Salamah—whose name was Hind bint Abi Umayya—taught us what it means to be patient in the face of calamity and to never fear that Allah will always replace what He takes from a believer with something better. Possessing one of the greatest characters of her time, Umm Salamah and her first husband Abd-Allah ibn Abd-al-Asad were among the first to convert to Islam. When they were persecuted for their conversion, they did not fall into despair. When they lost their wealth, social status, and connections, they remained unwavering in their faith.

When the couple’s clans tore Umm Salamah from her husband and infant son while on migration to Madinah, and she found herself alone in the space of a few moments, Umm Salamah did not forget to turn to Allah. When she spent the next year awaiting her husband’s return, crying every day until night fell, yet maintaining her faith, Allah rewarded her immense patience by allowing her to be reunited with her infant boy.

When she took her son and began her 300-mile journey to Madinah on foot, armed with nothing but her faith in Allah, she was rewarded with safe travel and a happy reunion with her husband. Allah blessed their family with several more chil-

dren. When her husband died in the Battle of Uhud, heart-broken Umm Salamah immediately turned to Allah making continued *dua* to have her difficulties alleviated. When she asked Allah to replace her beloved husband with someone better, all the time thinking, “Who is better than Abu Salamah?” Allah answered her prayer with one who was better: our beloved Prophet.

Her immense patience gained her the blessed position of a Mother of the Believers. This is further proof of Allah’s promise: that the reward for the Muslim who practices patience (at the first stroke of calamity) is so great, that it is not measurable.

Umm Salamah narrated 387 hadith on behalf of the Prophet and was the most the second most prolific narrator after Aisha, may Allah be pleased with them all. Having memorized the entire Quran, Umm Salamah acted as a scholar to the Companions and their students. Living until 87 years old, she was the last of the Mothers of the Believers to die.

Umm Salamah’s story speaks volumes of the rewards Allah gives to patient believers, particularly those who trust that He will replace whatever is taken away from the believer with something better. She left us a legacy of struggling and striving in the cause of Allah, and trusting in Him to always answer the supplication of the believing servant.

# March is National Women’s History Month

Women’s History Month is celebrated every March in the United States to honor the contributions of women to the country. The commemoration began in 1978, in Sonoma County, California, during Women’s Equality Week, and in 1987, the event became a month-long celebration as Women’s History Month.

The celebration emerged in the context of the civil rights movement. At the time, many activists felt American history was exclusively focused on political events by and for white men. Women’s lives were ignored because of their long-standing contributions to society and public life.

Women in the United States were not allowed to vote until the early 1920s. For many years or so, a married American woman, could not own property, sign contracts, or receive wages. Culturally, women were expected to remain exclusively focused on raising children. Higher education and a career were not valued.

Women’s history month is celebrated with library displays, art exhibits, and events that focus on women’s contributions in fields outside the domestic realm, from science and business to education.

In honor of this month, the Chicago Crescent is highlighting some great women and some notable Muslim women in the Chicago community. Read about Professor Amina McCloud, Dr. Shakeela Hassan and Mary Ali on Page 11.

Chicago Crescent at: [http://www.ciogc.org/images/cc\\_pdf/M](http://www.ciogc.org/images/cc_pdf/M)

## Gallup: 81 percent Americans still think Islam oppresses women

By Meha Ahmad

A recent Gallup survey showed that 81 percent of Americans believed Islam does not give men and women equal rights. Talk to someone who has studied Islam and they say this claim could not be more false. Islam gave women rights 14 centuries ago, something no other country or faith offered.

In honor of Women’s History Month, there is no better time to clear up some common misconceptions and questions many people—both Muslim and non-Muslim—have about gender equality in Islam.

**1. Are women considered the property of men in Islam?**

No. Every human being, whether male or female, is considered to be created by God and given equal spiritual importance; neither gender is superior to the other. While some governments, cultures and faiths considered women to be the property of their fathers or husbands, Islam forbade this practice among its followers.

**2. What kind of rights did Islam give women?**

Muslim women have had basic civil, economic and social rights for 14 centuries. For example, women had the right to accept or reject any marriage prospect; the right to divorce; to an education; to vote; to property ownership and to inherit. Most, if not all, of these rights were relatively unheard of for women in many parts of the world at the time, particularly the West, where women’s rights and legal status would remain practically nonexistent for at least another millennium.

**3. Why do women have to wear hijab and men do not?**

Islam teaches us that women are to be respected and protected. To do this, Muslims adopt a code of modesty. For women, it means to cover their bodies and head. However, Muslim men do have their own Islamic duty of hijab too, requiring them to also lower their gaze and to dress and behave modestly as well.

**4. If they have so many rights and are considered “equals,” then why are Muslim women being treated so badly in other countries?**

Women are treated badly in both Muslim AND non-Muslim countries. Islam is not the source of the problem. The treatment of women globally is dependent on many factors, including: culture; country; education rates; social and economic development and individual and family circumstances.

While there are some Muslim men or regions that do not treat their women as they ought to, their misogynistic attitudes and practices do not exist *because* of Islamic ruling but in spite of it. However, it is without doubt that those men and regions are deserting the commands of the Quran and the examples in the Hadith.

**5. So are men and women equal in Islam?**

Yes. A man and a woman are equally accountable to God. Muslim men and women were given the same rights and the same level of importance to God. Their roles however can be different. The man is primarily responsible for providing for his family while the woman’s first priority is caring for the household. However, if necessary, the roles can be modified within the guidelines of Islam.



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## Chicago Scholar on "Famous Women in Islam"

If you would like to learn more about notable women in Islamic history, the Nawawi Foundation has a great Audio CD set that is sure to inspire you. Dr. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah focuses on famous women from the era of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him to more recent times. In 14 CD's, Dr. Umar teaches about women from a variety of areas ranging from scholarship, mysticism, and poetry to social patronage, war, and politics.

He notes that perhaps one of the greatest disparities when comparing the time of the Prophet and the modern Muslim world is how the Prophetic society was more open and less patriarchal. Fourteen hundred years ago, Muslim women enjoyed greater freedom and a more conspicuous role within the matrix of social and civic life.

The CD set comes in a travel case with class notes and can make interesting listening for men and non-Muslims too. The set is available at [www.islamicbookstore.com](http://www.islamicbookstore.com) for \$53.90.



### ITEDAL SHALABI

For Itedal Shalabi, executive director at Arab American Family Services, her work is a personal and spiritual calling. She believes that if God has blessed someone with a talent, he or she will be answerable for it.

"I will not be asked if I drove a Chevy or a Lexus or if I had a million dollar home," Shalabi said. "But I will be asked if I was able to help others."

Armed with a Masters degree in Social Work, Shalabi and her partner Nareman Taha have sacrificed on several fronts to make AAFS strong enough to help more than 120 people each day. From a non-existing budget, they now have 26 full time staff, eight interns and nine departments including mental health and domestic violence. She believes that if a teacher calls her up that one boy from the Arab or Muslim community does not respect women or if one schizophrenic mom wants to hurt her child, that is one too many.

Both women often hear people say, "Let's see what two women can do" or "Where are the men in charge here?" when they walk into their office. However, with faith, time and a lot of hard work they have shown exactly what two determined women can do.

"We do not ask the community for money as we believe the money is out there and since we pay taxes we are entitled to state and federal funding," Shalabi said.

Shalabi believes that there are so many Muslim women role models to aspire to be like.

"Khadijah, may God be pleased with her, believed in the Prophet at his most uncertain times and pushed him to the next level. Aisha, captured his teachings to enrich the *sunnah* we have today, so women should never underestimate themselves," she said. "If you are doing something that will not displease God, then you should not be afraid of doing it."

So how do they juggle work and family?

Shalabi suggests writing everything down. Just like weight loss programs ask people to keep a diary of everything they eat, she wrote down everything she did for a few weeks and then prioritized. She had to sacrifice some chit-chat sessions but once she prioritized faith, family and work, in that order, she felt she had more control over her life as a single mom with three children.

"There is no such thing as a perfect family. Sure, we may fight and the kids may get C's, but that's a normal family," she says. "If the woman is happy, the whole world is happy."

Whether it is a holiday gift drive, sponsoring new families or mulching all across Lake Shore on National Service Day, AAFS and its dynamic duo are always at the forefront when it comes to giving back.

"It is not enough to say that I am a Muslim. We need to walk the walk and live Islam," Shalabi said. "In social work, we may not be rich, but we are happy."

## Inspiring Chicago Muslim women

By Kiran Ansari



### AYESHA K. MUSTAFAA

Twenty years as Editor of a weekly newspaper is no small feat. Ayesha Mustafaa carries on the legacy of Imam Warith Deen Mohamed by seeing to it that 20,000 copies of the *Muslim Journal* newspaper are published every Friday.

As a woman, she believes being an Editor is the perfect fit for her as she is supervising the publication and not always on the forefront. Her 'behind the scenes' position has allowed her to work the night shift "when the phones stop ringing and one can actually get some work done."

Over the course of the past two decades, Mustafaa has helped *Muslim Journal* grow in to a larger subscription based paper and has 10 full time people working from the Homewood office.

"Praise be to Allah, the *Muslim Journal*, like many Muslim businesses is family oriented and as long as I get my work done, I don't have to worry about punching the clock at 9am," said Mustafaa.

She has raised four children while working at the paper and planned her day in such a manner that she took time off to pick the kids up from school, took care of meals and homework and then returned to the office.

Between the indigenous and immigrant Muslim communities, women are playing an integral role in a myriad of fields. If there is one arena where Mustafaa feels Muslim women still need to find a firm footing, it is holding elected offices in the political sphere.

She believes journalism is an opinion molding industry and the only one protected by the Bills of Rights. If there is ever a coup in a country, the first think that is taken over is the media.

"We are not in journalism for Pulitzer Prizes or tearing down public officials and uncovering dirt," Mustafaa said. "Journalism is a calling as we are obligated to deliver the truth and present stories on behalf of the public."

Her tips for women who want to make a difference: pace yourself and write down your goals. You will feel more confident and happier as you achieve them, but do not chase a dream at the expense of other priorities.

"It took decades of sacrifices for us to get where we are today; as African Americans and as women," Mustafaa said. "Now it is our job to protect those rights. We are not working to compete with men or to cause a conflict; we are simply utilizing the intellectual talents Allah has blessed us with."



### HUMA MURAD

Huma Murad's earliest memories are of seeing her mother serving the needy and learning more about Islam. When Karachi's streets used to get flooded, she remembers her family coordinating food and other supplies for those affected. She hopes this is a legacy she can leave for her children as well.

As an active member of the Islamic Circle of North America's Sisters Wing and its Why Islam outreach project, Murad believes 15 years with ICNA has taught her a lot about time management and made her realize her potential in avenues she might not have thought of entering on her own.

"You can never know how you will do something unless you try," Murad said. "ICNA provides many opportunities to receive and impart training for self development, *dawah* and social service."

Currently, she is a part of the core team of ICNA's "Usratul Mariya" group for English speaking sisters and new reverts to Islam. They have weekly classes via conference call on Saturday mornings. Women from several states call in to discuss Quran, Hadith and current events.

So how does she juggle a full time teaching job, raising three children, interfaith projects with the Mosque Foundation and ICNA?

"First and foremost, this has only been possible with Allah's help," says Murad. "After that, I give credit to my supportive husband and helpful daughters. Finally, I believe proper planning and managing my time helps me achieve my goals."

ICNA has a monthly report system which members are required to submit to their area leader as a self-evaluation tool to keep themselves on track. For each day, they enter how much Quran they read and pondered upon, if they memorized any new verses, if they helped someone in need and so on. ICNA's buddy system also motivates its members to keep in touch through thick and thin with others who might be new to the city, to Islam or to the organization.

Murad also finds great solace in participating in an active interfaith group. Instead of meeting ceremoniously once a year, the group of Muslim women from Mosque Foundation and St. Fabian Church meet every month. They discuss issues like women's rights, holidays, different schools of thought in Islam and different denominations in Christianity. They also work on three service projects throughout the year where they cook and serve meals at a homeless shelter.

Her tips for other women: Show your children from an early age how everyone can contribute to society. If they see it when they are young, it comes more naturally as they grow older. Ask for *barakah* (blessings) in your time. Pray for a spouse that shares your vision and spend time equipping yourself with accurate knowledge to be great ambassadors of faith.

"Women are more compassionate and nurturing and there is definitely a surge in women in prominent positions in the Chicago area," she says. "However, we need to make sure that while we serve our religion, *haya* (modesty) is not put on the backburner as it is an integral part of our faith."



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## Are Muslim youth ready for the new world?

By Abdul Malik Mujahid

As I sat listening to U. S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, at the Council on Foreign Relations headquarters in New York, last July, I could not stop thinking about what it means for the future generations of Americans who will be growing up in a globalized and interconnected world. It was the first time a Secretary of State was formally recognizing that we live in a multi-polar world.

"President Obama has led us to think outside the usual boundaries. He has launched a new era of engagement based on common interests, shared values, and mutual respect," said Secretary Clinton. "Going forward, capitalizing on America's unique strengths, we must advance those interests through partnership, and promote universal values through the power of our example and the empowerment of people."

If Americans adopt this statement and implement it through our behavior towards the rest of the world, we are bound to take advantage of diverse human assets.

"We are living through the third great power shift in modern history," Fareed Zakaria describes in his, "the Rise of the Rest" proposition. The twenty five companies most likely to be the world's next great multinationals are four each from Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, and Taiwan; and three or less from In-

dia, China, Argentina, Chile, Malaysia, and South Africa. And the largest investment fund on the planet is in Abu Dhabi.

The world is already defined by many faiths, cultures, and nations. It is important to remember that people from all these nations, cultures and faith communities, are found right here in the United States. We are a microcosm of the world. America is "officially" no longer the uni-polar power of the world. It leads in nanotechnology, biotechnology, and many other high-tech fields; but guess who is leading America in these fields? "Foreign students and immigrants account for almost 50 percent of all science researchers in the country." This year, "75 percent of all science Ph.Ds in this country will be awarded to foreign students." America is helping the world catch up with us.

One can dismiss President Obama's approach towards the world as nice rhetoric but one must realize that it is grounded in the realities of the future. The United States owes a part of its \$12 trillion debt to foreign countries; it is fighting two wars; it has 865 military facilities in more than 40 countries, and U.S. minorities will be the majority by 2042, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In view of these statistics and future demographics, the statements of the Obama administration are a wise and thoughtful strategy for future success. It should not be dismissed as rhetoric.

Muslim Americans exemplify diversity according to the Gallup Organization. Unlike other faith communities Muslim Americans are almost one third African-Americans, one third South Asians, one third Arabs and other groups. Muslim Americans have the highest proportion of young adults in the 18 to 29 age range as compared to other faith communities. More than a third of Muslims (36 percent), versus 18 percent of Americans are

in this age group. With 65 percent of all American Muslims born outside the country, they have cultural knowledge and understanding of more than 50 countries in the world.

Language skills are in great demand in today's increasingly global economy where American companies breaking into new markets are looking for foreign language and cultural expertise. Americans fluent in Chinese, Arabic, Urdu, Persian, Dari and other languages are already earning close to \$150,000 yearly while many with law and computer science degrees are struggling to find employment. Helping Muslim students build on their multilingual background is an instant advantage.

By relating to people of all backgrounds, Muslim Americans have a greater understanding of how different cultures operate, thereby benefiting from greater success in global business and diplomacy as a result. Muslim students can sharpen their knowledge of world geography, history, politics as well as the street-smarts of Muslim cultures. No wonder USAID and the State Department are desperately looking for Americans who feel comfortable in both American and Muslim contexts.

The Muslim community's diversity will also become advantageous if we learn right here in America how to deal with racial differences and stereotyping "the other". A multi-polar world will need workers with a global understanding of cultural nuances to develop new solutions to difficult problems at the government, as well as business level.

Let us help America by tapping into our own diversity. Diversity is our strength. It will help us deal with the current challenges and future opportunities.

*Abdul Malik Mujahid is President of Sound Vision, executive producer of Radio Islam and former chair of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago.*

## Islam most negatively viewed faith in U.S.

By Samana Siddiqui

When the Al-Farooq Mosque in Nashville, Tenn. was vandalized on February 10, 2010, with the message "Muslims go home" and crosses spray-painted on its exterior, neighbors of various faiths responded immediately. They painted over the hateful slogan and expressed disgust for the crime.

This incident reflects a number of attitudes towards Islam and Muslims as documented in "Religious Perceptions in America." The nationwide survey was released on January 21, by the Gallup organization's Center for Muslim Studies. It explores Americans' opinions of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism and their followers. It also highlights the respondents' self-reported prejudice towards members of those religions.

The poll found that Islam is the most negatively viewed faith in the United States. Americans are more than twice as likely to hold unfavorable feelings towards Muslims as they are towards other faiths. In addition, over 40 percent say they are at least "a little" prejudiced towards Muslims. Less than 20 percent

expressed the same for Buddhists, Christians or Jews.

"As a peaceful American Muslim woman from a peaceful family and community, it is very painful to see that a large section of the American population has a negative view of Islam and Muslims," said Saima Mozaffar, an Orland-Park based interfaith activist. "It is a very slanted view of Islam because the six to eight million Muslims living in the United States are for the most part very responsible, productive citizens and contributing members of society. And the 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide are a very large, diverse group, who for the most part are more concerned about regular, everyday things such as finding jobs, making sure their families have food and clothing, that their kids get an education, etc."

Another finding was that those who attend a religious service once a week or more are twice as likely to express no prejudice towards Muslims. That may explain the community support after the vandalism of Al-Farooq Mosque. A separate Gallup poll in 2006 found that 58 percent of Tennesseans attend church or synagogue

at least once a week. That's higher than the national average of 42 percent.

"It's just amazing that so many of our neighbors still think positively about Islam and Muslims despite years of biased media, terrorism and wars," said Abdul Malik Mujahid, chair of the Council for a Parliament for the World's Religions, an international interfaith organization and former chair of the Council. "If Muslims individually and collectively continue to work for the common good in coalitions with these millions of positive thinking non-Muslims, our society will move forward."

Another finding was the level of ignorance of Islam. Two-thirds of Americans say they have little or no knowledge of the faith.

This is something many communities have tried to make up for by holding open houses and providing access to accurate literature about Islam.

Read the full study at <http://www.muslimwestfacts.com/mwff/125315/Religious-Perceptions-America.aspx>

## College student handcuffed for carrying Arabic flash cards

The American Civil Liberties Union has filed a lawsuit against FBI agents and police on behalf of a 22-year old student who was detained and "abusively" interrogated at Philadelphia International Airport because he was carrying Arabic flashcards.

The lawsuit details that Nicholas George was detained for around five hours at the airport because he had flashcards with Arabic words on one side and English on the other. He has

been studying Arabic since his first year at college and has spent a semester studying in Jordan. He was also carrying a copy of "Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions," by Clyde Prestowitz, a book that criticizes U.S. foreign policy.

George said that a TSA supervisor interrogated him about his views on the September 11, 2001 attacks and asked whether he knew "who did 9/11." He was handcuffed in a locked cell

for two hours before two FBI agents interrogated him. All this while, he was never read his rights or informed why he was being held.

"George was handcuffed, locked in a cell for hours and questioned about 9/11 simply because he has chosen to study Arabic, a language that is spoken by hundreds of millions of people around the world," Ben Wizner, ACLU staff attorney told reporters. "This sort of harassment of innocent travelers is a waste of time and a violation of the Constitution."

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# Modest swimsuit options

When Kelly Alsharif and Zeena Altalib did not find swimwear that was modest, comfortable and safe, they didn't just throw their hands up in the air and watch their family from the sidelines – they took it upon themselves to make sure stylish yet covered swimwear is easily available.

Necessity is the mother of invention may be clichéd but, in this case, it could not be truer.

Investing in a good quality modest swimsuit enables you to exercise and join in the family fun without having to compromise on your religious beliefs.

"It's not just Muslim women who buy swimsuits from us," said Kelly Alsharif of Alsharifa.com, the makers of the "Veilkini". "Women from other faith groups who choose to dress conservatively think our line is the perfect solution to maintain an active lifestyle in comfort."

"What makes a swimsuit is the material it is made of and the design of the garment not that it must offer body exposure," agrees Zeena Altalib of PrimoModa.com. "Full coverage swim suits are actually healthier for the skin and can prevent disease."

Both companies have specifically designed the swimwear keeping Islamic clothing guidelines in mind. They are not makeshift swimsuits with track pants and long t-shirts which women have had to resort to in the past. Swimsuits from both companies come in two pieces that tie together to prevent the shirt from riding up in wa-



ter. Select styles also come with a drawstring near the ankles so the pant leg stays in place too.

"Our name is more than a business," said Kelly Alsharif. "Sharaf is a verb in Arabic that means honesty, modesty and honor and we hope that by sticking to the highest code of ethics, Al Sharifa will translate in to the honorable woman."

Pool attendants have a responsibility to make sure that people are not at risk while swimming because of what they are wearing.

"Make-do swim suits can be a drowning hazard," said Altalib. "If a Muslim girl or woman explains that the full swimsuit is made of 100% swimming material and the design has been tested in pools, lifeguards should have no problem."

"I loved how I could go on even the most adventurous water park ride and still not have to worry



that my hijab will fly off," said Haleema Shaikh who tested Al Sharifa's Veilkini for the *Chicago Crescent*. "As the hood is attached to the suit, it stayed put all day."

The Al Sharifa products have a 4-way stretch as opposed to 100 percent polyester which makes them comfortable and modest in and out of water. The fabric they have chosen is coated to resist chlorine, bacteria and water absorption as can be seen on their website. Primo Moda's line also has quick-dry technology and low water absorbency.

"I loved the floral design and the removable zipper hood on the swimsuit," said Tina Hasany who tested the Primo Moda for the *Chicago Crescent*. "I have worn it to a water park and two different pools and not one life guard has had an issue with it."

Both companies are offering our readers a special discount. Enter or mention code CRESCENT10 at [www.alsharifa.com](http://www.alsharifa.com) and code pc1 at [www.primomoda.com](http://www.primomoda.com) to get 10% off your order and FREE shipping on swimwear!

## Women-only pool and swim lessons at Aqsa School

Swimming is one of the best forms of exercise. It builds endurance, muscle strength and cardiovascular fitness but public and coed pools are not exactly known for being Islamically appropriate environments, particularly for Muslim women. The only place in the entire Chicagoland area where Muslim women can feel

comfortable swimming is at Aqsa School's indoor pool in Bridgeview. Their Olympic-size pool is available year round to all ages, private parties and lessons and it provides all-women swim days.

**Where:** 7361 W. 92<sup>nd</sup> St., Bridgeview

**How much:** Open swim admission: \$5 per person (toddlers younger than 2 are free)

**Private swim lessons:** \$15 per person, for 30 minutes. Groups of 3 or more get a discount.

Private pool parties: hourly rental is \$75; minimum 2 hours and a maximum of 4 hours.

**When:** Winter: every Friday from 5:30 p.m. until 9 p.m. is open for women. Summer: Monday, Wednesday, Friday evenings are open for women

**What:** Fully functional shower rooms, kick boards, life jackets and much more.

**Info:** Call (708)-598-2707 or visit [www.aqsapool.com](http://www.aqsapool.com)

## Splash into Spring Break

### Muslim family style

Spring Break is often synonymous with beaches, warm weather and no homework. For many Chicagoans, the first two factors are hard to come by in March, but there is no reason to sulk. Thanks to heated indoor water parks, you can still enjoy the water close to home.

If you think water parks are only for the men in the Muslim family, think again. With great options in modest swimwear for women, there is no excuse to exercise at the local pool or join the family in an adrenaline-pumping water ride at a park.

The Wilderness resort in Wisconsin Dells is one such place where you can get fun in the sun anytime of the year. With three indoor water parks spread over the vast property, guests are not crowded in one area. Each of the indoor parks, including the Wild Water Dome which has the nation's largest indoor wave pool, has different rides to suit every age and thrill level in your clan.

The Wilderness also offers a variety of lodging options



over a span of 600 acres. From a cozy hotel room to a 5-bedroom log cabin and chalet in a woods setting, there is something to suit every taste and budget.

"The best ride was the Hurricane," said 8-year old Yaseen Shah from Chicago. "My parents and I went spinning inside this brightly lit, funnel-like ride (see photo) before we splashed into the pool."

"The Hurricane might be the tallest family raft ride in the Midwest, but my vote goes to the Hot Springs where you could relax in a hot tub while it was gently snowing outside," said mom, Tasmiya. "The best part was that because I was wearing a completely covered swimsuit, I could join in the family fun in a safe and modest way."

The only thing the Shahs would change the next time they go would be to book

a room close to the water parks. While they chose to stay at the cabins to be a little away from the hustle and bustle of the main resort and there was a covered skyway to and from the water parks, they felt walking with wet clothes and tired kids are not the perfect vacation combination.

If a Spring Break trip is not on the agenda, you can even try Wilderness in the summer.

"In addition to three outdoor water parks, we also offer zip lining and go karts, which are all very popular with our guests so we are just as busy in summer as we are in winter," said Joe Eck, general manager for Wilderness Resorts. "In summer, most people save the indoor water parks for cold or rainy days. It's a great way to ensure a weather-proof vacation!"

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SSU members enjoy a halaqa around a campfire after a fun-filled day of apple-picking.

## France *burka* ban raises questions

A committee in the French Parliament recently released a report that advocates for a ban on the *burka* (full head-to-toe covering including the face) in hospitals, schools and on public transport. The 200-page report has received a mixed reaction. While some ministers in France believe that anyone found wearing a *burka* should be fined on-the-spot like a speeding ticket others feel such a move will stigmatize the Muslim community further.

According to the Interior Ministry, only 1,900 women

cover their face out of the 5 million reported Muslims in France.

"Foreigners who come to live in France should sign a contract recognizing that wearing the full Islamic veil is banned" said France Families Minister Nadine Morano.

Ban supporters say that such attire goes against France's secular system and that even their President, Nicolas Sarkozy, believes the *burka* prevents women to enjoy equal rights. The authors of the report recommend that while the ban should apply to public plac-

es, the Parliament should, as a nation, vote to reject the full veil. It also encourages more educational programs to reduce radicalization of Muslims by promoting French values as mandatory learning for new immigrants.

France has the largest Muslim minority in Europe with close to 2,000 masajid and prayer centers. Although the ban was not passed in the Parliament, this report has opened up the discussion and may take several months to come to an agreement.

## Sisters Steppin' Up

by Tayyaba Syed

If you are looking for an outlet for young girls in their "tweens" and teens to develop a strong connection with Allah, other young Muslims and the community at large, look no further. Over the last year, the youth group Sisters Steppin' Up has been helping many young Muslim women in Chicago to develop confidence in their faith and who they are with new and refreshing activities in Islamic gatherings.

The group's activities have ranged from ice-skating to apple-picking to *qiyam-ul-layl* (voluntary prayers at night). SSU members have a variety of ways to build special bonds with each other while affirming their Muslim identity. The girls are divided into two groups consisting of a junior chapter of ages 8-12 and then a senior chapter for ages 13-19. The name of the group was chosen by the young members themselves. It reflects what they aspire from the group: to step up and face the world as proud Muslimahs.

This type of positive outlet is what Sarah Kadir, co-founder of SSU, wanted for her own daughter. With the help of her sister Faizah Syed and a "favorite-among-the-youth" elementary school teacher Fatima Quadri, SSU took off in April 2009.

"I was not looking for just a social club for my daughter," explained Kadir. "I wanted a youth group for her that had Islamic morals and values and had character-building coupled with it."

The first SSU meeting had a great turn out and Kadir realized she was not alone. Other mothers had the same concerns and wants for their daughters as well. They all felt there was a definite need for such a group for young girls.

Huda Biabani, 20, is part of the SSU senior chapter and agreed the community has lacked this kind of youth group in the past.

"I wish there was such an outlet for me when I was growing up. SSU offers fun activities within the boundaries of an Islamic environment. This is not only ideal for the youth but the parents too. I am glad now I have the opportunity to support such an organization," Biabani said.

Maintaining a healthy balance between fun and faith is Fatima Quadri's job. According to Kadir and Syed, Quadri has an amazing connection with the girls spiritually and practically. Through *halaqas* (study circles) before or after the activities, Quadri incorporates open discussions on challenges that arise in these young girls' lives on a day-to-day basis. They have covered topics such as gossiping, backbiting, not being judgmental, importance of sisterhood and body image to name a few.

"We also want the girls to develop love for the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and help incorporate his teachings into their lives," Quadri said. "This way we set a precedent for them."

SSU is definitely making a name for itself, and the number of members is growing with each event. At their last event, 70 girls and 10 mothers joined in on the fun.

"We do not turn any new members away at the door," noted Syed. "People know what we are about and enjoy our events."

"SSU is a great way for me to reconnect with my old friends and make new Muslim friends," said 12-year old member, Afreen Ahmed. "It is a chance to get together and learn about our *deen* while having fun."

<http://sisterssteppinup.weebly.com/index.html>

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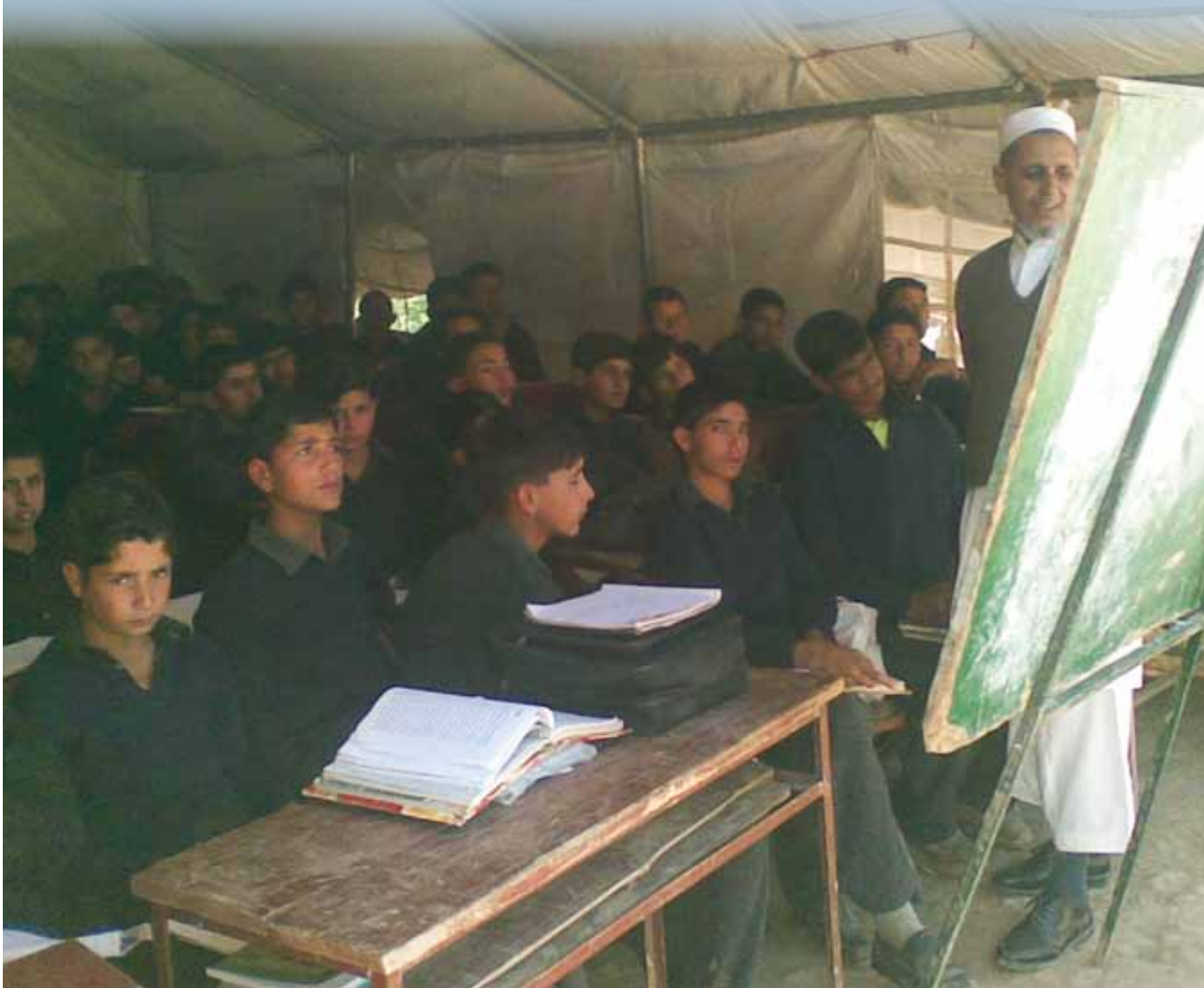


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


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