

COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS - NOV 2010

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE

Assalam Alaikum Brothers and Sisters,

CAIR Pittsburgh Chapter is pleased to update you with our progress in this thriving city of active Muslim brothers and sisters, who have inspired us to be at their service. Much has been happening in the city and the nation in particular; and around the world in general. There is no dearth of work that needs to be accomplished in the present scenario. Every precious drop will go a long way in creating a liveable presence for Muslims in America, creating goodwill with people of all faiths, empowering the Muslim community and upholding these values with justice guaranteed in the constitution of America, Insha Allah. This is the mission of Council on American-Islamic Relations at large. Our Pittsburgh chapter is geared to keep up the work began two years ago.

To increase our efficiency, we expanded our team recently. Br. Zulfiqar is our newest addition. We would like to welcome Br. Zulfiqar Ahmed aboard, who will be a great asset to the team Insha Allah, with his talent and experience in the field of training. Br. Safdar Khwaja and Br. Omar Slater have done good jobs as media spokespersons; while Br. Azmat Qayyum and Br. Doni Wulandana will be involved in outreach work. Br. Ishfaq Ahmad is a multi-tasker, and a great asset to the team with his invaluable organizational skills. Civil rights cases are coordinated by our part time staff in total communication with the team internally and through members of other chapters. Our summer intern, Nimra Azmi, gained valuable exposure while adding her touch of talent during her short stint. Sr. Loretta's presence is missed, and we hope to add a couple of sisters on the team for their valuable input. Please let us know if you are interested to be a part of this wonderful chapter that is making a difference in the lives of the community members.

During Ramadan 2010, our annual Interfaith Iftar was attended by a sizeable audience from across all faith groups in the city. Br. Rashad Birdsong graced the occasion as the chief guest, and the presence of Nathan Harper, the police chief, brought a message of community feeling to the event. Our relentless work for the community cannot be accomplished without the support of community and law enforcement leaders.

The joint Interfaith event with the Muslim Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh (MCCGP), with Yusuf Estes as the speaker, on Sept 11, once again drew an overwhelming Interfaith audience that demonstrated solidarity with the Muslim community while the nation was undergoing Qur'an burning threats, and the uproar over Park 51 mosque construction. We are indeed blessed to be amidst very supportive faith groups that value peace and harmony first and foremost.

There is much work to be done, and we hope to hold workshop/training sessions to address the topic of Islamophobia that every once so often raises its ugly head. Education and awareness will Insha Allah eradicate the ignorance of the few.

Please do not forget to exercise your vote on Nov 2nd, as your voice is a barometer that places the right people at the helm of power. I would like to make the announcement that March 12th, 2011 has been scheduled for CAIR annual fundraising day, with Br. Altaf Husain as the keynote speaker. Please stay tuned for further information.

Jazakallah,

Asim Kokan, President, CAIR Pittsburgh Chapter



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Asim Kokan

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Communications Coordinator

ABOUT CAIR

CAIR is America's largest Islamic civil liberties group, with regional offices nationwide and in Canada. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding. The national headquarters is located on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. (www.cair.com)

Since its establishment in 1994, CAIR has worked to promote a positive image of Islam and Muslims in America. Through media relations, lobbying, education and advocacy, CAIR puts forth an Islamic perspective to ensure the Muslim voice is represented. In offering this perspective, CAIR seeks to empower the American Muslim community and encourage their participation in political and social activism.

CAIR-PA is a nonprofit 501(c)(3), grassroots civil rights and advocacy group, organized under 501(c)(3) with EIN: 54-2174614 - pa.cair.com

Mail your donations to :

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file a civil rights complaint,
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CAIR Interfaith Iftar 2010



CAIR Pittsburgh Activity Report

CAIR Annual Interfaith Iftar 2010

Pittsburgh CAIR chapter annually hosts an Interfaith Iftar to foster understanding with people of all faiths. This year, the Keynote speaker, Rashad Birdsong, founder of The Community Empowerment Association (CEA), quoted Quranic verses in his speech that spoke of justice system in society, and the wonderful benefits of fasting that fosters self control of mind, spirit and body. The police chief, Nathan Harper lauded the gathering of such multi-ethnic communities, that brings people together 'so that they may know each other.'

Nimra Azmi, a CAIR summer intern, a history major, born and raised in the U.S., regaled the audience with her experience of growing up in America, as a practicing Muslim, when her friends often quizzed her with numerous questions during the month of Ramadan. She explained the meaning of Iftar, fast breaking, or breaking bread together that made one humble towards God.

It is important that we understand each other's cultures and traditions, for peace and unity to prevail. Thankfully, Pittsburgh Interfaith communities have very similar goals, and hence the work of CAIR gets easier.

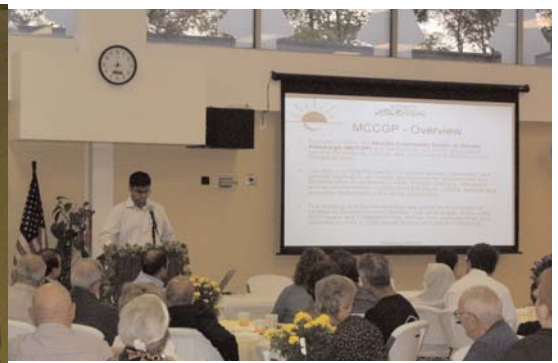
The Iftar was a joint work of CAIR officials and community volunteers, who worked hard to make the event happen. Special thanks to the ladies, the youth volunteers and the community members for making the event a success. CAIR would also like to extend its thanks to the Union Project employees and tenants who pitched in to make the event a pleasant experience.

CAIR Executives Speak to Media

The month of Ramadan was a hard time for Muslims across the world, as the U.S. became center of focus with controversies over Park 51 mosque project and the Florida pastor's threats of burning the Quran. The media was interested to know the reaction of city Muslims, and once again, CAIR officials handled it tactfully in true Islamic spirit. Safdar Khwaja was interviewed by Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, and the Pintek Show on KDKA. He represented the community with much intelligence. The trials came to an end, when New York City decided in favor of Park 51 mosque project and the Florida pastor backed off his plans to burn the Qur'ans on Sept 11. The spirit of Ramadan greatly helped the Muslims to put to practice patience and forbearance in true Quranic spirit.

MCCGP-CAIR host 'Islam is Peace' Day

Once again, on Sept 11, a day after Eid celebrations, the Interfaith communities showed solidarity with the Muslim community with their presence at The Muslim Community of Greater Pittsburgh (MCCGP), to hear a renowned speaker Yusuf Estes speak about how the Quran respects and recognizes the previous scriptures revealed to earlier Prophets by God. The PIIN (Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network) and the congregations, the PAJC (Pittsburgh Area Jewish Committee), and the various groups that attended the event were supportive to the Muslim community. Free copies of Quran translations were available for those interested. CAIR strives to work with masjids in town to help dispel Islamophobia which is a collective responsibility of all.



Sheikh Yusuf Estes addresses the Interfaith audience in Pittsburgh on Sept 11, 2010, at the MCCGP, to dispel misconceptions about Islam and answer questions pertaining to the content of the Qur'an in a light hearted manner that brought smiles on the faces of the audience. Sheikh Estes is a former Christian preacher. The event was a joint coordination of CAIR Pittsburgh and the MCCGP.

EID 2010 CELEBRATIONS



Eid was celebrated by the Pittsburgh community jointly at two venues in town - Schenley Park and the MCCGP. Seen on the left - Eid celebrations at the MCCGP.

In The News

NPR fired Juan Williams for violating ethics

Juan Williams, news analyst, was fired recently from NPR for comments he made about Muslims.

"When I get on the plane, I got to tell you, if I see people who are in Muslim garb and I think, you know, they are identifying themselves first and foremost as Muslims, I get worried. I get nervous," Williams said on Bill O'Reilly's FOX News program.

Such brazen statements put Muslims all over the country on defensive mode, facing questions whether it was right or wrong to fire Williams. Safdar Khwaja of CAIR Pittsburgh Chapter was invited by KDKA radio to answer questions by Robert Mangino as to CAIR's stand on this topic. Br. Khwaja did an excellent job representing the CAIR chapter and putting forth a rational point of view in defense of Muslims who are constantly at the receiving end ever since 9-11.

CAIR'S National Communications Director, Ibrahim Hooper recently faced FOX anchor Megyn Kelly to debate this topic and eloquently defended the decision of NPR to fire Williams. The debate can be viewed at this site: <http://www.youtube.com/user/CAIRtv#p/u/4/OABrebBXQmE>

Ibrahim Hooper said: It is the job of CAIR to challenge racial profiling, when it is being legitimized by people like Juan Williams. He said: We have a right to defend ourselves.

NPR chief executive, Vivian Schiller said to the New York Times, "It was not the product of political or financial pressures. The reason that we terminated his contract is because of our news ethics guidelines. If someone keeps not following your guidance, you have to make a break. And that's what we did." She added, "This is not a First Amendment issue. We terminated his contract according to the terms of his contract." Ms. Schiller said, "he had several times in the past violated our news code of ethics with things that he had said on other people's air. We called him on it, we had a discussion, we asked him not to do it again." NPR's ethics code states that journalists "should not express views" in other outlets, like TV shows, that "they would not air in their role as an NPR journalist."

Jason Linkins, Huffington Post reporter aptly sums it up, "NPR took a step that had hitherto never been considered an offense in media circles: defaming Muslims. Up until now, you could lose your job for saying intemperate things about Jews and about Christians and about Matt Drudge. You could even lose a job for failing to defame Muslims. But we seem to be in undiscovered country at the moment."

Muslim Community bids farewell to Sr. Loretta



Sr. Loretta Riggs was given a warm farewell by the Muslim community at India Garden restaurant and presented with a trophy for her dedicated service to the community - as principal of UAP, CAIR EC board member, volunteer teacher at the MCCGP Islamic Sunday School, and for her various involvement in community work. May she have a bright and successful future in her new job in Houston. May Allah be with her. Ameen.

CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE CITY

CAIR Pittsburgh Chapter constantly receives complaints from Pittsburgh Muslim community of incidences that imply discrimination directly or indirectly at work place, educational institutions and in every day life. In addition, there have been some hate messages that were reported. CAIR diligently strives to help the victims, who face discriminations due to intolerance, misconception or ignorance about Islam. We strive to rectify the problem by addressing to the authorities concerned, and pointing to them a way to resolve issues through understanding and education of another's culture and ethnicity. Certain cases that warrant legal help are guided how to go about it. At the present time, CAIR is in the process of helping an International student who is visually impaired fight a discrimination case at his university, (details not disclosed due to confidentiality). CAIR Pittsburgh works hand in hand with civil rights groups like ACLU, Human Relations Commission, among many others. Our aim is to stand for justice and fairness in all walks of life, for Muslims who call America their home.

Why Support CAIR-Pittsburgh?

Since our establishment in 2008, CAIR-Pittsburgh Chapter has worked actively to empower the American Muslim community at the local level and encourage participation in political and social activism. CAIR Pittsburgh seeks to promote a positive image of Islam and Muslims in America through media relations, advocacy, and education.