

COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS - JAN 2011

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE

Outgoing President's Message

Dear Community Members: Assalaam Alaikum:

On behalf of CAIR Pittsburgh chapter, I would like to wish you and your family a very Happy and Prosperous New Year 2011 and Hijri 1432.

As we leap into the New Year, let us take a look at the chapter's accomplishments in the past year:

We began 2010 on a very positive note when March 6th 2010 was proclaimed by the Pittsburgh City Council as "CAIR Pittsburgh Day." We acquired an office space at the Union Project Building on N. Negley Ave and moved into our own office space. We have organized Know Your Rights workshops. CAIR has been active on PIIN Anti-Racial Profiling Taskforce for the city Police department. We organized an Interfaith Iftar during Ramadan which was very well attended by city's interfaith groups, civic leaders, community members and the chief of police Mr. Harper. We had our first summer intern working with us on projects. She eloquently stood up as the voice of the community on Park 51 controversy with a timely letter to the editor at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. As the Park 51 controversy blazed followed by Quran burning threats by the Florida pastor, CAIR board member Safdar Khwaja was twice invited by KDKA radio to speak on behalf of the Muslim Community. Br. Safdar did a superb job in representing our community. Two board members attended training in Washington DC. CAIR DC is forming an Islamophobia Department, with a special mission to educate and bring awareness to the masses in America.

With so much Islamophobia brewing around the country, our centers received random hate calls, and it became necessary to organize an Interfaith gathering to counter these hate calls. In coordination with MCCGP on the anniversary of 9-11 which coincided with Eid ul Fitir, an interfaith gathering was held. An overwhelming response and a show of solidarity from the interfaith community including a local school restored our belief that in Pittsburgh, it is possible for communities to live in harmony.

However the Islamophobia in America is for real. We receive civil rights cases from different walks of life. Sometimes employees receiving discriminatory treatment, Sometimes students discriminated with their curriculum and sometimes students being misinformed about Islam by their teachers in school. We work hand in hand with ACLU, PA Human Relations Commission, and others to address these issues. We are aware that Islamophobia stems from ignorance about Islam. In Nov 2010, two of our board members were invited by a local retirement community to address the memberships who were eager to learn about Islam. On 2nd October 2010, we were invited by the local interfaith group to represent the Muslim community and speak about similarities between Islam and Gandhi's ideologies.

As we step into 2011, our mission must continue. Our forthcoming projects include Advocacy trainings conducted by experts. **We also have our upcoming annual banquet scheduled for March 12, 2011. Please mark your calendar and we hope to see you there, as we gather together for a good cause.**

Our Chapter is now three years old. Alhamdulillah we have accomplished much and have much to accomplish and grow in future. When we initiated the idea of a CAIR Pittsburgh

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Executive Council

Asim Kokan

President

Azmat Qayyum

Vice President

Ishfaq Ahmad

Executive Secretary

Safdar Khwaja

Treasurer

Omar Slater

Member

Doni Wulandana

Member

Zulfiqar Ahmad

Member

Staff

Zohra Lasania

Communications Coordinator

**To join our mailing list or
file a civil rights complaint,
reach us at:**

cair.pittsburgh@gmail.com

Phone: 412 606 3601

Mail your donations to :

**CAIR PA Pittsburgh Chapter
801 Negley Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206**

Outgoing President's Message

Contd from Page 1 Chapter, we were certain that we would have a dedicated team and the community to support. I must say the team and the community far surpassed our expectations, and together we have come a long way and we are now ready to take the torch forward.

With that said, I am now prepared to pass on the torch to the next president. It has been my experience, working with multiple non-profit organizations, that dynamic and progressive organizations have a systemic process in place to change in leadership at periodic intervals, generally at three years intervals. We are a young dynamic and progressive organization and want to set the precedent by implementing the periodic change in a new leadership. A new leadership is always a healthy sign for any organization.

It is my pleasure to officially announce that as of January 1, 2011, Br. Azmat Qayyum has assumed the leadership position as President of CAIR Pittsburgh Chapter. In spite of his busy physician's schedule, Br. Azmat has been involved in volunteering his time for the Muslim Community. I welcome him and entrust him to lead the chapter, while I will continue to be part of the board and support the chapter.

I would like to thank my team and staff for their dedication and support. My sincere thanks to the community for their faith in me and supporting me and the chapter with their contributions. Last, but not least, my special thanks to my wife, Tayyeba for her support and patience.. Jazakallah.

Asim Kokan

Outgoing President, CAIR Pittsburgh Chapter

INTERFAITH

CAIR Members Enlighten Local Retirement Community About Islam



On Nov 3rd 2010, CAIR Pittsburgh was invited to speak about Islam at Sherwood Oaks Retirement Community at Cranberry Township. Dr. Azmat Qayyum and Br. Zulfiqar Ahmad represented CAIR, and Br. Azmat gave a lively presentation covering basic topics on Islam keeping the audience engaged. The audience asked questions on Hajj, and other topics in a successful dialogue.

Several copies of the Quran were distributed. The event was organized by two ladies of the community, Rusty Speitzer and Olive Tiller, as part of the committee on "Focus On The World," which meets once a month with a theme to promote peace among people. Speitzer said, "One Quran went into our library collection." The community consists of mixed members of retired engineers, teachers, and homemakers who thanked Br. Azmat for the lively presentation.

PA Progressive Summit 2011

On Jan 23, 2011 - Br. Omar Slater, CAIR board member, will participate in the panel discussion on "Faith Advocates Roundtable," as CAIR Pittsburgh Board Representative, at the Sheraton, Station Square.

For more info: paprogressivesummit.org

4th Annual Banquet

Save the date: March 12



**CAIR - Pittsburgh Chapter
presents**

4th Annual Banquet

Theme: Social Justice - An Islamic Imperative.

Join us for an Evening with :



**Dr. Altaf Husain - MSW, PHD
(ISNA)**

**and Baba Ali
(renowned comedian
www.ummahfilms.com)**



When : March 12, 2011. 6:00 p.m.

Where: Mariott Hotel, Downtown

122 Washington Place, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Tickets : \$ 50.00

After March 1st \$ 55.00

Student/young adults - \$ 25.00

**Children upto 9 yrs : Baby sitting
available, with entertainment and pizza.**

For Tickets Contact:

Br. Zulfiqar Ahmad: 412 298 8722;

Br. Doni: 412 908 1713;

Br. Omar Slater: 412 720 8561

Br. Azmat Qayyum: 412 378 1010

RSVP: Sr. Zohra: 412 606 3601 or e-mail - cair.pittsburgh@gmail.com

MLK is an Example to American Muslims

By: Nihad Awad,

Like African-Americans who faced far more severe challenges in the 50s and 60s, American Muslims are now the easy targets of unreasoned hate and suspicion. Like Dr. King, American Muslims must respond to hate with love and understanding.

Dr. King accurately noted that, "Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illuminates it." He also said, "Let no man pull you low enough to hate him."

This refusal to let the hatred of others impact one's principles or actions is reflected in the Quran, Islam's revealed text, which states: "Be steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity, and never let the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: (for) that is closest to piety." (The Holy Quran, 5:8)

In his letter from a Birmingham jail cell, Dr. King wrote that, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." This statement clearly indicated that the quest for justice is universal and not limited to a particular time or movement, and that everyone must rise to confront the injustices of his or her own time and place.

As Dr. King wrote: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

These words strengthen American Muslims as we face the twin tests brought on by those few who would falsely claim to commit violence in the name of my faith and by those who seek to exploit fear and mistrust to marginalize an entire minority community.

In his most famous speech, Dr. King said:

"I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.' . . .

"I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

This hope for equality was also expressed by Islam's Prophet Muhammad, who said in his final sermon: "All mankind is from Adam and Eve. . . a white (person) has no superiority over a black (person), nor does a black have any superiority over a white - except by piety and good action."

American Muslims dream the same dream as Dr. King and all those who struggled during the civil rights movement -- that the promise of justice and equality may be fulfilled for all our nation's children.

Dr. King said it best when he noted, "The good neighbor looks beyond the external accidents and discerns those inner qualities that make all men human and, therefore, brothers."

His legacy of civility, hope, perseverance, and optimism is best honored through actions that continue to make his dream our reality.

(Nihad Awad is national executive director for the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation's largest Muslim civil liberties group. He may be contacted at: nawad@cair.com)

Muslim Capitol Day

Racism and prejudice toward the Muslim population is a hot-button issue that the Council on American-Islamic Relations has devoted its time and energy to tackling. CAIR hosted annual Muslim Capitol Day 2011 fundraiser Monday, Jan. 17 on the State Capitol campus in Olympia. Based in Washington D.C., the main focus of CAIR is to get



involved and advocate on issues that effect everyone.

Muslim Capitol Day is not only a fundraiser, but also an opportunity for Muslim residents of this state to come together to address issues relevant to their districts. Those attending will get to speak directly

to their lawmakers, have meaningful discussions, and learn how legislation is enacted. Each registered person is automatically given an appointment to speak with two of their representatives and one senator to lobby for issues such as preventing foreclosure, balanced budget, and preserving basic services.

Participants also had an opportunity to hear from guest Imam Siraj Wahhaj, distinguished public speaker, previous member of the national board of CAIR, and the first Muslim to offer an opening prayer to the U.S. House of Representatives. Wahhaj promotes issues such as abstinence and drug awareness.

Last year, this event was attended by an impressive 500 Muslim people across the state, and was extremely well received.

As American Muslims face the challenge of rising anti-Islam sentiment in American society, we can benefit from the example of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who used the power of truth and justice to peacefully overcome those who promoted fear and its resulting prejudice and intolerance.

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