

COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS - MAY 2011

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE

From the President



Assalam Alaikum Brothers and Sisters,

As I take charge of our chapter as the president, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Br. Asim for leading the chapter for the past three years and brining us to this level of success. Br. Asim's dedication to establish a chapter in our city and his timely perception to the needs of our community must be commended. Ofcourse it is a joint effort of the CAIR EC members and the staff, and the support of the community without which we would not have come to this level. I pray to Allah Ta'ala to help us continue the work initiated by Br. Asim's dedicated vision.

On March 12th, we hosted a very successful 4th Annual Fundraising Banquet, organized by very dedicated EC members Br. Doni Wulandana and Br. Omar Slater. We were also fortunate to have Dr. Altaf Husain as the keynote speaker, and Baba Ali as the entertainer. The banquet was attended by over 300 people. I would like to thank community members whose generous support allowed us to reach our target fundraising. Insha Allah the funds raised will help us continue doing civil rights advocacy which is our main mission.

With the growth of the chapter the workload expands. In the past year, we have done outreach to the non-Muslims, attended to civil rights complaints which were of varying nature, from discriminations experienced by Muslims in Pittsburgh at workplace, at school, at University etc. In addition we have organized Know Your Rights workshops, to educate our community. I urge you to attend our upcoming workshop to become aware of possible discriminations based on race, color and ethnicity in your workplace, so that you can stand up for your rights and stop the discrimination.

Muslims are going through a difficult time at the present. It becomes your duty to bring to CAIR's notice if FBI contacts you, or you are harassed at the airport or you have been put on no-fly list. We aim to stop the stereotyping of Muslims, and to bridge gaps among different faiths existing due to ignorance of another's culture.

Once again I would like to thank you for your tremendous support during our banquet, specially the volunteers, and the MSA youth, and to all those who pitched in to make the banquet a success. May Allah reward you.

Jazakallah.

Azmat Qayyum
President, CAIR Pittsburgh Chapter.

Executive Council

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Azmat Qayyum

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Ishfaq Ahmad

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Member
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Staff

Communications Coordinator
Zohra Lasania

**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**

4th Annual Fundraising Banquet - Community Gathering

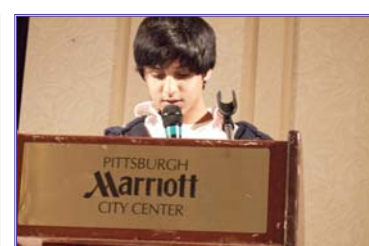
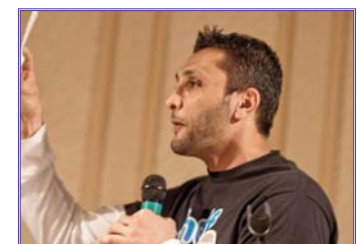
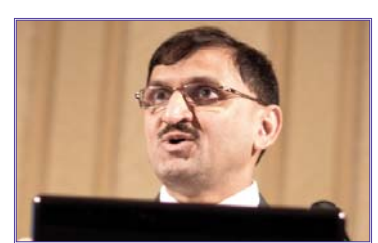


Photo credit: Abeer Saeed.

Abeer Saeed is a graduate from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh (March of 2010). She has a very strong passion for photojournalism. She tries to capture the true essence of the frame by acquiring the true moments in the element when she is behind her camera. She is a freelance photographer residing in Pittsburgh.

On March 12, 2011, CAIR Pittsburgh hosted its 4th Annual Banquet at the Marriott City Center. The event was attended by more than 300 community members. The Keynote speaker Dr. Altaf Husain, helped raised funds for the community, and Baba Ali, the renowned comedian, entertained the audience with his unique style. Past President, Asim Kokan, handed over charge to the incoming President, Azmat Qayyum. The Treasurer, Br. Safdar Khwaja, presented a financial report, and the Vice President, Omar Slater presented a closing remark. Br. Zulfiqar Ahmed was the MC of the event. Faizah Wulandana and Ali Piracha recited the verses from the Qur'an. The MSA youth, and the volunteers pitched in to make the event a very successful evening of community gathering.

Pittsburgh Muslim Community Helps Japan

The aftermath of the Japan Tsunami, is ten times more devastating than the Haiti earthquake. Executive Director of ICNA Council for Social Justice, Br. Naeem Baig, is in Japan to monitor **Helping Hand USA's** relief activities. He reached Japan on Monday April 4th, 2011.

The Masjids in Pittsburgh raised money for Japan Relief, on Friday, April 1st, after the Friday Prayers, which will be handed over to Helping Hand, USA, to help Tsunami victims in the worst hit areas who are silently enduring the calamity in total dignity.

Know Your Rights Workshop



On March 3, 2011, Jean Clickner, (photo on left), attorney for the EEOC, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Pittsburgh Office, presented a workshop on Employment rights, at the Union Project at N. Negley Ave. It was attended by community members who gained valuable information on laws that protect individuals against discrimination and harassment at work, based on one's race, or ethnicity.

Upcoming Events:

Know Your Rights in the Workplace

CAIR Pittsburgh & the ICP invite you to
Community Dinner &

Presentation by : Jean Clickner, Esq,
Attorney for

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC),
Pittsburgh Office

Saturday, May 7, 2011; 6:00 p.m.

At the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh (ICP),
4100 Bigelow Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Contact:

CAIR: 412 606 3601 or ICP - 412 682 5555

Learn about:

- Laws enforced by EEOC to protect you at workplace
- Illegal discrimination and harassment
- Categories of discrimination: race, national origin, religion, color, sex, age, and disability
- Types of discrimination: hiring, firing, unfair assignments, reasonable accommodation, pay inequities, and hostile work environment
- Discrimination in the Muslim, Arab, South Asian and Sikh communities.

(You will receive (Spanish, Arabic)
bi-lingual handouts
Special Topic: 9-11 backlash)

Community Events

Universal Academy of Pittsburgh Fundraiser

Saturday, April 30, 2011, 6:00 p.m.

Venue: MCCGP, Monroeville, PA 15146

Reviving Our Identity Retreat

May 6-8, 2011, Keystone State Park

For Young adults and college-aged students

SKW Life for Limb Loss Charitable Foundation Fundraiser

June 4, 2011, 6:00 p.m.

Double Tree Hotel, Monroeville, PA 15146

MCCGP Family Night

May 6, 2011, 7:00 p.m.

Hadith of the Day

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:
"If you are put in a position of authority ... fear God and act with justice."

Know Your Rights And Responsibilities as an American Muslim

If Law Enforcement Contacts You

American Muslims strongly support law enforcement and the protection of our national security. As Americans, we also value civil rights. All Americans have the constitutional right to due process and to be politically active. If you know of any criminal activity taking place in your community, it is both your religious and civic duty to immediately report such activity to local and federal law enforcement agencies. If you are visited by federal law enforcement agencies, remember:

■ *You have the legal right to have a lawyer present when speaking with federal law enforcement agencies. This is true even if you are not a citizen or have been arrested or detained. This is your legal right. Refusing to answer questions cannot be held against you and does not imply that you have something to hide. Answering a question incorrectly can hurt you more than not answering at all. An attorney is best able to protect your rights.*

■ *You do not have to permit any law enforcement officer to enter your home or office if they do not have a warrant. Law enforcement agents must have a search warrant, except in emergency situations, in order to enter your house. If they say they have a warrant, politely ask to see it before allowing them to enter. If they have a warrant, be courteous and polite, but remember that you are under no obligation to answer questions without a lawyer present. You should tell the agents that you do not consent to the search so that they cannot go beyond what the warrant authorizes.*

■ *You should never lie or provide false information to any law enforcement agency. Lying to law enforcement agents under any circumstance is a federal crime.*

■ *Remember to ask any investigator who visits you for a business card so you can give it to your lawyer. At least get the name, contact information and agency of the officer.*



From left: Br. Doni, Br. Omar Slater, Br. Azmat Qayyum, Br. Asim Kokan, Baba Ali, Br. Safdar Khwaja, Dr. Altaf Husain, Br. Zulfiqar Ahmed at the CAIR Annual Banquet held on March 12, 2011 at the Marriott Hotel in Pittsburgh.

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



Scarfed on E. Carson

by Reem Hobeldin

**Trying not to fall
But it doesn't really matter after all
When the stop is reached and there we wait
Passers-by may try to be discrete, but hostility we can taste
The lights hit red, stopping all the cars
Open stares, we are not hallucinating, all because of our scarves?
Should we sympathize because they know no better
Or should we be angry in the coldness and blush and swelter
Are they thinking: dumb or terrorist or oppressed?
When they themselves terrorize and oppress
I would likely chunk them all and commit their same mistake
I am just a girl studying and living in the States
Are they just curious or is there something more?
With ignorance and media at the core
The bus trudges by and in all its heaviness halts
It's going to be a long journey, this is but one of many stops**

New : This page is Yours

Channelize your creativity
on this page.
Community members can
submit poems/articles relating
to current situation of
Muslims in America to:
cair.pittsburgh@gmail.com

A Matter of Perspective

by Nada Quraishi

As my old friend Newton pointed out - the definition of every object is based on a frame of reference. The meaning of things, the understanding of situations, right and wrong - is all a matter of where you are standing. It is a matter of perspective.

I heard about an incident where an Imam was asked what his stand was on the accusation that the women in Islam are backward or oppressed because they are covered from head to toe. He replied that it was all a matter of perspective. How would it be if Muslim women thought that all western women are promiscuous because of the way they dress?

I am not trying to belittle anyone. In fact, I am trying to explain that there are two sides, even three, four, or a bazillion to every argument. What I am trying to do is to take away that injustice that we do to others around us, simply because we do not understand that most things in life cannot be defined or understood only in one way.

I have often been questioned about my hijab or why I cover up, and even ridiculed because I find nothing abnormal in walking on the beach and even into the sea fully dressed. Well, I guess it never struck the person in question that I

I have often been
questioned about my
hijab or why I cover up,
and even ridiculed

may find it equally abnormal that someone would walk around half-naked anywhere at all, much less in a public spot.

What is established and accepted as the norm in one part of the world, or in one section of society may not fly at all in another. Then who decides what is wrong and what is right? Who defines what is ridiculous and what is fashionable?

I have always placed a huge importance on being fair-minded and as I live in various parts of the world, and interact with different societies - I have begun to understand how hard it really is. Take the war in Iraq for instance. On the one hand, I can understand how the mothers of US soldiers, out there fighting and dying, may feel. But I also understand what the Iraqi families whose homes are blown away for no reason are going through.

Wouldn't the perspective of someone who was brought up on one set of beliefs and values be very different from someone from an entirely different sphere of the world? Aren't both justified in their own outlooks?

It all comes back to one's perspective.

I spent my childhood in Jeddah. I know people from other cultures who lived in Jeddah as well. I loved it there. They hated it. It is understandable. I had a wonderful childhood... all the food was halal... and the life-style was Islamic. I once had an American friend try to convince me for an hour how bad a place Jeddah was, how there was no freedom there. But here I am in the land of liberty, and I cannot eat what I want to, and I stick out like a sore thumb most places I go to.

My friend is right in his frame of reference. But I am not wrong in mine.

I am not asking anyone to walk a mile in someone else's shoes. I am merely asking people to recognize that we all wear very different shoes!!

(Nada Quraishi attended engineering school in India, and worked as project manager in the United States. Currently she is a stay-at-home wife and mom, and enjoys writing in her spare time.)

Court backs Ohio Muslim Leader stopped at border

CINCINNATI (AP) — A federal appeals court has sided with an Ohio Muslim leader who is trying to find out why she was detained at a border crossing five years ago.

Julia Shearson is director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations office in Cleveland. She was stopped by U.S. border agents in Buffalo, N.Y., in 2006 as she returned with her daughter from a weekend in Canada.

Shearson later sued for records about her case from the departments of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection.

She also wanted to pursue claims against the government for alleged violations of privacy laws, a move rejected by a federal judge.

The federal appeals court in Cincinnati overturned that decision

Thursday and sent the case back to the lower court.

The Justice Department declined to comment.

Inside Islam: A window Into the Hearts & Minds of Ordinary Muslims Across the World

By: Rugiatu Conteh, Outreach & Communications Director (CAIR-Philadelphia)

On February 9th, nearly forty-five people of all faiths came together to watch and discuss the documentary film, *Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think* at the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia.

Inside Islam seeks to debunk common stereotypes of Islam and Muslims based on hard facts. Experts in the film discuss controversial issues highlighted by the world-wide Muslim public opinion poll conducted by the Gallup organization. Respondents from more than thirty-five Muslim majority countries as well as American Muslims reveal how they feel about terrorism, democracy and women's rights. The results were shocking to some.

Respondents of the poll spoke highly of freedom of speech and women's rights. The majority categorically condemned terrorism and terrorist acts. Many respondents quoted verses directly from the Koran to denounce the killing of innocent civilians.

***'Too many mosques' is a good thing
Muslims who attend mosque turn into productive
citizens, not terrorists***

By: Zohra Lasania, Post Gazette - 'Monday, March 14, 2011

U.S. Rep. Peter King, who chaired his first congressional hearing last week on "the radicalization of American Muslims," has revealed his Islamophobic mindset with such statements as "there are too many mosques in this country."

According to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, there are about 335,000 religious congregations in the United States. All but 12,000 are Christian. Of these, only 1,200 are Muslim.

But even if there were half as many mosques as churches, so what, Mr. King? What are you afraid of? And what do you know of mosques? Do you know what mosques are and who goes to them?

Let's take a look. I can speak for my own city.

Greater Pittsburgh has about 10 mosques, including ones in Oakland, Monroeville and Ambridge.

Each of these mosques came into being as a Friday prayer group, then developed into a Sunday school for children and then into a community center, where families gather to celebrate festivals and mourn when calamities befall them.

These centers have raised funds for victims of the Indonesian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and the earthquake in Haiti, and their young people work in soup kitchens to feed the homeless. They serve all of humanity.

These mosques keep their doors open to people of all faiths and participate in interfaith dialogues. They educate their members to vote, and they invite FBI and law enforcement authorities to their mosques to forge good relationships with them.

These mosques send goodwill gifts to their neighbors and live in harmony among them. Some of their members work for anti-smoking causes and teach young people to stay away from alcohol and drugs with programs funded by government grants.

The people who attend mosques are ordinary people, just like Tom and Mary next door. They work at hospitals, universities and corporate offices -- just about any place other Americans work -- or run their own businesses.

Muslim women raise children, drive, shop and cook, in addition to working outside their homes. Their children attend public schools and private schools. Some are home schooled.

Yes, praying and teaching children how to pray is a big part of their daily routine. Is there anything threatening about families staying together by maintaining their religious traditions? I can't think of anything.

So what is Mr. King afraid of? How can he marginalize American Muslims for having "too many mosques"? It's like punishing someone for being good.

Without these mosques, many Muslims would have been lost souls, undisciplined, bereft of community support, easily picking up the vices that abound around them.

Far from turning into terrorists, Muslims who attend mosque in Pittsburgh or anywhere in America are more likely to stay away from alcohol, drugs and street violence

and thus become productive citizens of this country. If any of these mosques were breeding grounds for terrorists, how come we are not aware of them?

Mr. King's fear is a result of his deep ignorance -- ignorance of another's culture, another's traditions. What outcome is it that he desires from his hearings?

The most obvious one is that they will go down in the annals of history as proof of the prevailing Islamophobia in this country in the year 2011.

(Zohra Lasania is a freelance writer and communications coordinator for the Pittsburgh chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (zlasania@cair.com)).