



## CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY



**Reflections at the End of 2016**  
by Jacob Bender  
Executive Director  
CAIR-Philadelphia

*To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven...  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance...  
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak...*

*A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.  
[Ecclesiastes 3:1-15, Bible]*

*As-salamu alaykum.* Over a week has passed since the election. I awake each morning hoping against hope that I am dreaming, living through a nightmare from which I will momentarily awake.

Awake I do, but the same poisonous phrases still hover over the nation like an alien invasion waiting to strike: “national registry of Muslims... ban on Muslims entering the U.S.... internment camps... build the wall!”

Think of what 2016 has wrought:

- The destruction of Syria, and the steady stream of refugees risking all to land on Europe’s increasingly unwelcoming doormat...
- Terror attacks in Nice, Brussels, Orlando, Istanbul, Baghdad...
- An outbreak of shootings of

unarmed African American men by police officers...

• A seemingly endless presidential campaign—marked by an unprecedented eruption of public racism, xenophobia, misogyny, Islamophobia, and anti-Semitism—and its shocking conclusion.

Faith teaches us, however, not to give in to hopelessness.

*So lose not heart,  
nor fall into despair,  
for you will be superior  
if you are true in faith.  
[Qur’an 3:139]*

Being “true in faith,” however, does not mean acquiescence to an unjust social order. Indeed, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all give primacy to the pursuit of justice.

*O you who have believed,  
be persistently standing firm in justice,  
witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives.  
[Qur’an 4:135]*

This is the importance of CAIR—both to the Muslim community and to America itself. For as a result of the presidential campaign, and the scapegoating of American Muslims and Islam, this community has now become democracy’s bellwether. How American Muslims are treated by the new administration may well

determine the future of freedom in our beloved nation for both native and foreign-born alike.

But should the new government seek to stigmatize or legally assault the Muslim community, I promise you that CAIR-Philadelphia will remain ever-vigilant in the defense of Muslim civil rights. There is simply no other organization in the U.S. that has CAIR’s breadth of activities, providing free legal services to Muslims facing discrimination and government overreach, engaging with the media to correct its often misleading and simplistic reporting on the Muslim community, and educating thousands of our fellow Americans about the beauty, compassion, and mercy at the heart of Islam.

CAIR’s ability to carry out its mission to defend the Muslim American community, however, depends on your generous donations and your involvement. I hope after reading about all CAIR has accomplished in this past year, you will conclude that CAIR is indeed worthy of your tax-deductible and *zakah*-eligible donation.

The road ahead is surely a frightening one for the American Muslim community, but that is exactly why you need CAIR, **now more than ever.**

*Jacob Bender*

# IN DEFENSE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

The following is a summary of the most important legal cases that CAIR-Philadelphia worked on in 2016.

## FREEDOM OF RELIGION

✦ CAIR-Philadelphia joined forces with the law firm of Post & Schell to represent a Muslim inmate at a PA State Correctional Institution (SCI-Mahanoy). SCI-Mahanoy terminated our client from his job in the prison kitchen because he performed *salat* (Islamic prayers) during work hours. As a result, SCI-Mahanoy was sued for infringing upon the inmate's religious rights. The case went to trial and the judge agreed that the prison's policy unfairly burdened Muslim inmates' right to pray. Because of our successful lawsuit, SCI-Mahanoy is now required to allow all Muslim kitchen workers

Ryan Houldin, CAIR Staff Attorney



the right to perform *salat* during their shifts.

## FREEDOM OF ACCOMMODATION

✦ CAIR-Philadelphia partnered with the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania (ACLU-PA) to help protect the rights of Muslims wishing to visit public pools in Philadelphia. A Muslim mother faced harassment and discrimination when accompanying her children to various Philadelphia public pools. The mother was prohibited from entering several pools in her Islamic attire, and the staff would harass and interrogate her children concerning the appropriateness of their bathing suits.

CAIR-Philadelphia and ACLU PA demanded a change in policy. To the city's credit, they were apologetic and cooperative in adopting a new policy. It is now the policy of the Philadelphia pools to permit a parent, who is accompanying children to the pool, to wear street attire on the pool deck.

✦ A group of Muslim students were rewarded with a trip to New York City. While en route, their Megabus driver continually accused the children of being too loud and boisterous, despite the fact that none of the children were

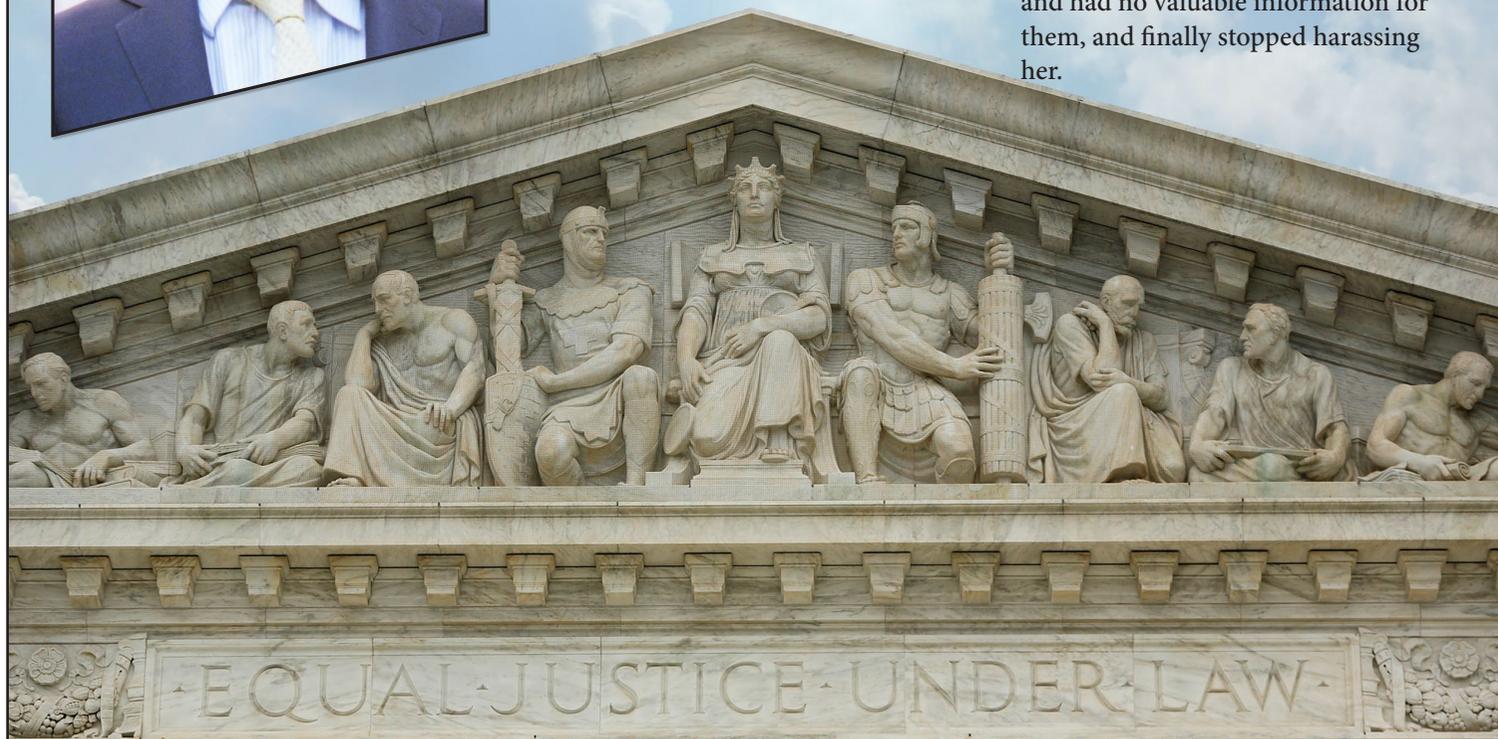
making any noise. The driver went so far as to attempt to photograph several of the children. One chaperone called the police, who met them upon arrival at New York City.

CAIR-Philadelphia wrote a letter to Megabus informing them of the driver's conduct, and highlighted Megabus' own non-discrimination policy. Megabus investigated the incident and reprimanded the driver accordingly, in addition to providing the students with a refund.

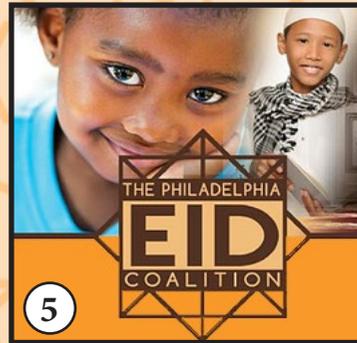
✦ CAIR-Philadelphia filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of a Syrian national whose green card application had been stalled for over three years. As a result of the lawsuit, the United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) finally processed his application.

## GOVERNMENT OVER-REACH

✦ A Philadelphia Muslim woman was harassed by Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) agents, who repeatedly called her and showed up at her workplace, demanding an interview. Fortunately, the woman knew her rights and refused to speak with the FBI without a lawyer present. Staff attorney Ryan Houldin accompanied the woman while she met with the agents. The agents quickly learned that this woman had done nothing wrong and had no valuable information for them, and finally stopped harassing her.



# CAIR-PHILADELPHIA 2016 HIGHLIGHTS



# CAIR-PHILADELPHIA 2016 HIGHLIGHTS



9

10

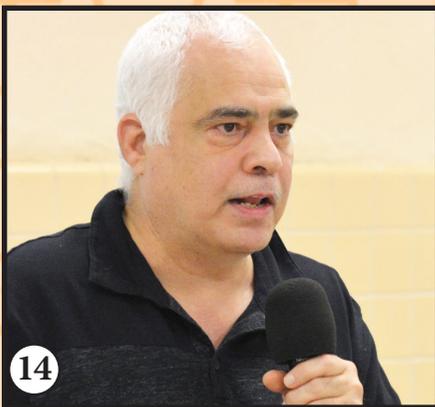
ORLANDO MASSACRE  
Jacob Bender  
COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS  
6:07 78°



11

12

13



14



15

## PHOTO CAPTIONS

- 1) Pennsylvania Muslim leaders meet with Gov. Tom Wolf in Harrisburg in October during **Muslim Capitol Day**.
- 2) Congressman Keith Ellison [2] and CAIR National Executive Director Nihad Awad [3] address **CAIR's Town Hall Meeting Against Islamophobia** in July.
- 4) Rabiya Khan, CAIR Advisory Board, and Gov. Wolf at the Governor's Mansion for a **Ramadan Iftar Dinner**.
- 5) CAIR was part of the **Philadelphia Eid Coalition** that secured recognition of the Two Eids as official holidays in all of the city's public schools.
- 6) Rabbi Nancy Fuchs Kreimer of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College speaking at

- 7) Iftekhar Hussain, CAIR-Philadelphia VP, speaking at **Open Mosque Day** at the Islamic Center of Greater Harrisburg in January.
- 8) Asheq Fazlullah, CAIR-Philadelphia Executive Committee, conducting one of the many **"Know Your Rights"** workshops he did for both adults and children during the year.
- 9) **Interfaith Press Conference** after the Orlando Massacre; L-R: Rue Landau (Executive Director, Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations); Imam Salaam Muhsin (Masjidullah); Jacob Bender (Executive Director, CAIR-Philadelphia); Shan Cretin (General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee); Rabbi Linda Holtzman (Tikkun Olam Havurah); Rev. Robin

- Hynicka (Arch Street Methodist Church); and Mark Segal (Publisher, Philadelphia Gay News).
- 10) Jacob Bender during a **TV interview** following the Orlando Massacre.
- 11) Donna Auston (Doctoral Candidate in Anthropology at Rutgers University) and 12) Dr. Sarah Sayeed (Project Facilitator, Women in Islam, Inc), speaking at
- 13) CAIR's symposium on **"Muslim Women in Sacred Spaces"** in January.
- 14) Osama al-Qasem (CAIR-Philadelphia President) speaking at a meeting of the **Greater Delaware Valley Muslim Leadership Forum** in October.
- 15) Philadelphia City Council Member Curtis Jones speaking at **CAIR's Tenth Annual Banquet**

# THE ROAD AHEAD

## DIVERSITY TRAINING AT PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Recently CAIR-Philadelphia was invited to help educators better understand the faith and circumstances of their Muslim American students. CAIR-Philadelphia Advisory Board member Margarita Miriam Abuawadeh facilitated the program, which was held on Tuesday November 8th, Election Day, in North Philadelphia.

While polling lines snaked around outside, CAIR-Philadelphia's Civil Rights Attorney Ryan Houldin and CAIR-Philadelphia Executive Committee member Asheq Fazlullah were busy inside delivering a workshop for the Multilingual Family Support Department.

The presentation focused on explaining Islamophobia and defining the civil rights of public school students. This is the first in a series of workshops within the School District of Philadelphia to educate faculty, staff and administrators regarding Islamophobia and cultural sensitivity.

Please call CAIR-Philadelphia to setup a program to educate teachers and administrators in your child's school. If your child or a child you know encounters Islamophobia please document and report to CAIR-Philadelphia at 267.515.6710 or email at [info@philadelphia.cair.com](mailto:info@philadelphia.cair.com).



## ONE-DAY SEMINAR ON HOW TO BUILD HEALTHY, HAPPY FAMILIES

### PEACE AT HOME

SATURDAY, DEC. 17, 2016

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM (LUNCH PROVIDED)

MASJIDULLAH / 7401 LIMEKILN PIKE, PHILADELPHIA, PA

#### TOPICS TO BE COVERED:

Becoming a better parent / Enhancing child-parent connections / Building a spousal relationship foundation / Managing family members' behavioral issues

In addition to the above new and innovative programs, CAIR plans to continue and expand our already existing projects: Free Legal Services / Parent or Student Anti-Bullying Workshops / Islam 101 Programs / Understanding Islam 10-Part Courses / Interfaith Educational Presentations / "Out of Cordoba" Screenings / Contemporary Issues: Faith and Extremism (Workshops or Presentations) / Know Your Rights Workshops / Muslim Capital Day / Delaware Valley Muslim Community Forum / Friday Khotbas by Our Scholar-in-Residence.

## SAVE THE DATE !

March 11, 2017  
Saturday Night

CAIR-PHILADELPHIA'S

11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BANQUET

SPRINGFIELD COUNTRY CLUB  
SPRINGFIELD, PA

Linda Sarsour

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Amr Zahr

ENTERTAINMENT



To donate to CAIR-Philadelphia, go to:

[pa.cair.com/donate](http://pa.cair.com/donate).

All donations are tax-deductible and zakah-eligible.

# WORDS OF SOLIDARITY

Dear Shams,  
Just for the record. We will stand with you against any move like the "Muslim Registry." While we may not see eye to eye on some issues, like Israel/Palestine, we will stand shoulder to shoulder with you on this. We will not let what happened to Jews in 1933 Germany happen to you in 2016 America.

**Rabbi Greg Marx**  
Congregation Beth Or

Dear Jacob,  
Your comments are helpful, bring comfort, and always teach me something! We will stand with you and CAIR. We're going to stand by each other and for each other. We will be the bridge, the love, the reason, the human wall that will protect you.

This is not an empty promise.  
Shalom, Salaam, Peace,  
**Pastor Laurie Sweigard**  
Central Baptist Church

Dear Jacob,  
I'm a student at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. I want to say that I stand with the Muslim community during this time and would love to know more about how I can support your work in the coming days and years. It is so vitally important that we stand together against the bigotry and xenophobia of the incoming administration.

**Marley Weiner**

السلام  
عليكم

Dear CAIR Local Leaders:  
I know this is an incredibly painful and challenging time for our Muslim friends and neighbors, so I wanted to reach out and offer a note of solidarity from the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. We are committed to protecting human rights and supporting community efforts against discrimination.

In any way we can be a support and partner in these challenging times ahead of us, please know we are there.

Warm regards,  
**Hannah Hafter**  
Senior Program Leader for  
Activism  
Unitarian Universalist Service  
Committee

THANK YOU for coming to Harrisburg for Muslim Capitol Day. I'm so terribly sorry that CAIR had to carry the signs and make the pronouncements that you did. It's not my place to apologize for all the awful people here, and around the country, that make doing so a necessity but it's worth saying that I'm sorry. What you all did today was so completely "American" and I'm embarrassed and angry that you needed to also make clear that you are not enemies of this country.

**Brian Kendall Sims**  
PA State Representative

To the CAIR Community:  
In the Torah's version of the family story about Abraham, Hagar, Ishmael, Sarah, and Isaac, Ishmael and Isaac are reunited after years of estrangement, when they come together to bury their Father Abraham. Then Isaac goes to live at Ishmael's wellspring, the Well of the Living One Who Sees Me. President George Washington, the Father of our country, wrote a famous letter to a synagogue promising all the Children of Abraham, "To bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance!" Yet today we face the danger of a President so hostile to the Constitution and to human decency that he has threatened to require American Muslims to register. If he tries to carry out that immoral act, Jews and Christians can go to live at Ishmael's wellspring by registering as Muslims. And we will. Already many rabbis have pledged to do just that, and to urge their congregants to do the same. We have, and we will.

**Rabbi Arthur Waskow**  
**Rabbi Phyllis Berman**  
The Shalom Center