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2015 CAIR PHILADELPHIA

ANNUAL REPORT

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CAIR-PHILADELPHIA

Council on America-Islamic Relations

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A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of CAIR-Philadelphia:

As-salamu Alaikum!

This is the third Annual Report I have helped to assemble for CAIR-Philadelphia since I was hired as the organization's Executive Director in October 2013. Since that time, our donations have increased in each of the last three years, enabling us to greatly expand our services to better protect the civil rights of the Greater Delaware Valley Muslim community, as well as educating the general public about Islam.

Working for CAIR has been, and continues to be, a tremendously fulfilling experience. It is a great honor for me to be CAIR's first Jewish director of one of its thirty chapters, and I am happy to announce that 2015 has been our most productive year to date.

Although the past year has seen an unprecedented display of anti-Muslim bigotry and extremist violence, the good news is that many of the Muslim community's Christian, Jewish, and interfaith allies have been outspoken in denouncing the virulent Islamophobia on the airwaves and online.

There is still plenty of work left to do. Though the wars in Muslim lands still rage, and desperate refugees still drown under Mediterranean waves, I am yet an optimist, believing that the arc of the universe bends toward justice. Each and every time CAIR, with your support and advice, helps to protect and secure the civil rights of a Muslim person, we help bend that arc towards justice.

Salaam,

Jacob Bender

JACOB BENDER
Executive Director

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"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

CAIR-Philadelphia Attorney Ryan Houldin meeting with prospective client.

PROTECTING CIVIL LIBERTIES

Attorney Ryan Houldin joined CAIR-Philadelphia in June 2015. For the past nine months, he has secured numerous victories in upholding the civil rights of Muslims in the Philadelphia area. According to Ryan, "It has been a gift to help empower a community that has been unjustly targeted and ostracized from mainstream America." Following is a description of some of the cases Ryan has worked on since joining CAIR-Philadelphia.

Lawsuit Over Masjid Construction

Last year, CAIR-Philadelphia teamed up with the law firm Storzer & Greene and sued Bensalem Township, challenging their denial of permission to construct a masjid. Last month, the Judge denied Bensalem's request to dismiss the case and ruled that we plausibly alleged that Bensalem has burdened the masjid's religious exercise. We will provide updates about this case as it progresses.

Religious Rights for Prisoners

CAIR-Philadelphia has joined with co-counsel at Post & Schell to represent a Muslim inmate at State Correctional Institution Mahanoy (SCI-Mahanoy). SCI-Mahanoy terminated our client from his job because he performed salat during work hours. The prison upheld its decision based on their policy of only allowing non-ritual prayer during working hours for kitchen workers. Last month we went to trial over this matter and we are awaiting the final determination from the Judge.

Workplace Accommodation

- The Philadelphia Parking Authority (PPA) refused to accommodate a Muslim employee who wanted to wear an ankle-length skirt as part of her uniform. Ryan wrote a letter to the PPA informing them that their policy violated state and federal anti-discrimination laws, and threatened suit if changes were not made. We are happy to report that the PPA had an ankle-length skirt custom-made for her that she is now permitted to wear.

- CAIR-Philadelphia filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), with the intention of filing a federal lawsuit, on behalf of a Muslim brother who was terminated because the employer failed to provide a religious accommodation.

- A Muslim teenager had been afraid to wear her hijab for the first few months while working at Chuck E. Cheese's for fear of discrimination. After summoning the courage to cover, she was immediately told by her boss that she was not permitted to wear her hijab at work. Fortunately, the teenager's parents stood up against such blatant discrimination and questioned her boss' decision. In addition, Ryan contacted Chuck E. Cheese's to inform them that such a demand violated the teenager's civil rights. As a result, Chuck E. Cheese's permitted the teenager to wear her hijab at work.

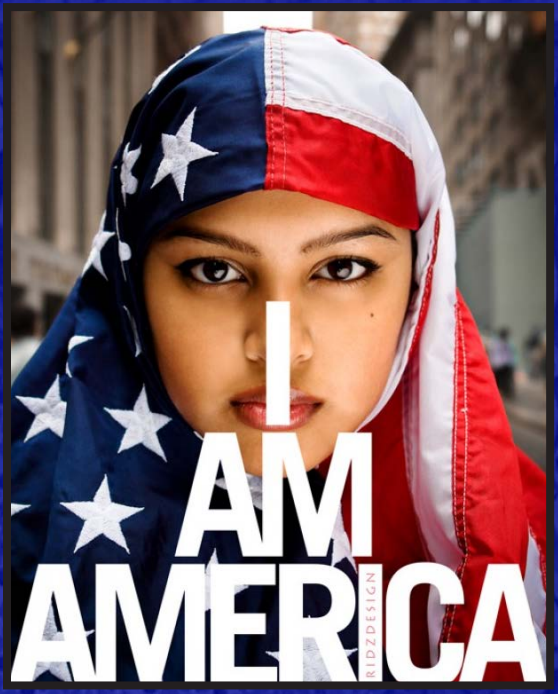
- When a Muslim employee asked her boss for time off to make hajj, the employer required her to obtain a letter from a Muslim leader in the community verifying that hajj is a religious requirement. Ryan contacted the employer and informed them that such a request is illegal. We are happy to report that the employee was granted time off and made hajj.

Immigration

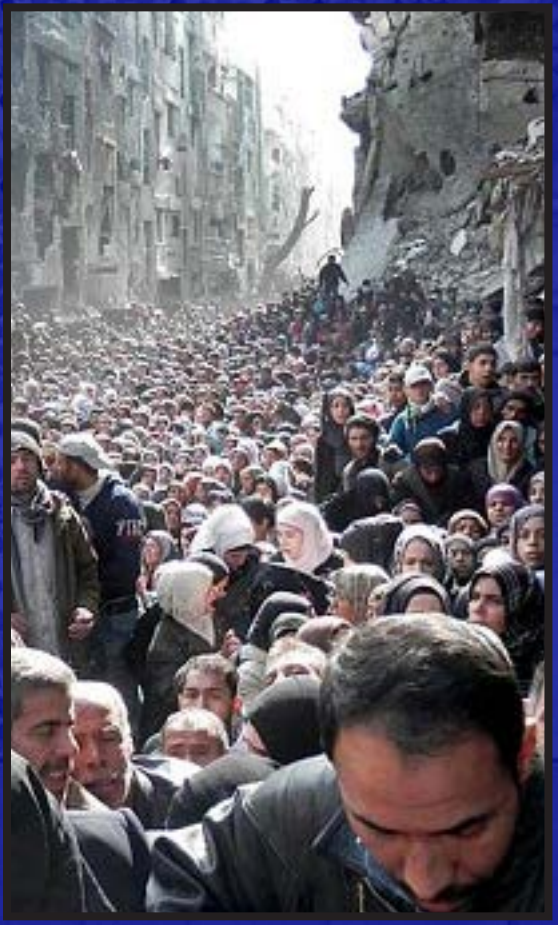
A Syrian national applied for a green card with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) over a year and a half ago. To date, he has not gotten a response. Ryan filed a federal Writ of Mandamus, challenging this unreasonable delay, and asked the Judge to order that the government render a decision. Our client has since been interviewed by USCIS and we are expecting a decision in his case any day now.

Interactions with the FBI

The FBI repeatedly contacted an American Muslim woman living and working in Philadelphia, in an attempt to question her. Fortunately, she contacted CAIR-Philadelphia to better understand her constitutional rights and Mr. Houldin advised her of her rights. Additionally, he set up an appointment with the FBI at the client's request and accompanied her to the meeting. As a result, the FBI has ceased their efforts to contact her.



CAIR works to protect the constitutional right of American Muslim women to wear the hijab in the workplace, and for resettlement of desperate Syrian refugees fleeing their war-torn country.



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Congratulations CAIR on a decade of achievements!

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EMPOWERING AMERICAN MUSLIMS

The SEPTA Bus Ads

Last year, as part of its national anti-Muslim campaign, the Islamophobic group "Stop the Islamization of America" (SOIA) purchased advertising space on SEPTA buses to display ads calling opponents of Israeli policy "savages" and claiming that the Qur'an is anti-Semitic.

Our press release on the issue stated: "These ads are despicable and false, but fall under First Amendment protection. The people behind these ads are part of a well-funded nation-wide Islamophobic campaign pushing a clearly hate-inspired message on the citizens of our city."

When a U.S. District Court ruled that SEPTA could not refuse to place the ads, CAIR immediately began working with an interfaith coalition to push back against these ads. The coalition's efforts included a press conference with Mayor Nutter and a public educational campaign about Islam, including the leafletting of SEPTA riders.

"The efforts of the Philadelphia Chapter of CAIR to educate and engage the public were instrumental in negating the impact of the ads. CAIR's message of inclusion and tolerance was and is a powerful antidote to those whose only goal is to sow fear and hatred."

SEPTA General Manager
Francis Kelly

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Philadelphia Group Lobbies State Lawmakers About Anti-Muslim Bias

HARRISBURG (Oct. 20, 2015) – Highlighting what they say is a national increase of anti-Muslim bias, triggered in part by the rhetoric of some Republican presidential candidates, about 50 amateur lobbyists affiliated with the Philadelphia chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations converged at the state capitol to pitch lawmakers on a range of social issues.

Armed with a talking-points memo and posters emblazoned "I am a proud American Muslim," and "Islamophobia = Racism," the members of the advocacy group fanned out for office visits with legislators and their staffs.

Some of the men wore beards and knitted skull caps. Some of the women wore hijabs. They spoke about anti-Arab bigotry, the Syrian refugee crisis, the movement to have two major Muslim fast days recognized as school holidays in Philadelphia, three state Senate bills that would affect the price of in-state college tuition, eligibility for driver's licenses, and employment opportunities for authorized and undocumented immigrants.

Three- and four-person teams visited the offices of Philadelphia-area lawmakers Louise Bishop, Lawrence Farnese Jr., Dominic Pileggi, Vincent Hughes, and others.

The group that visited Rep. Kevin Schreiber, (D., York) included Abdallah Abououf, a pharmacy technician, of Hummelstown; his wife, Mona Elkony; and their infant son, Yusuf. "Three months old and already a lobbyist?" Schreiber teased, drawing a laugh.

Schreiber turned serious when he noted that candid discussions with American Muslims exercising their democratic rights need to be part of any dialog about a better society.

Jacob Bender, the first Jewish director of a CAIR affiliate, said the event, which was billed as "Muslim Capitol Day," was designed to bring together a diverse coalition that included a rabbi, an Imam, an ordained minister, civil rights organization leaders, and lawmakers to proclaim, "We will no longer allow the Muslim community and Islam to be stereotyped, marginalized and vilified."

EMPOWERING AMERICAN MUSLIMS

Muslim Capitol Day in Harrisburg

One of the year's highlights was Muslim Capitol Day. On Oct. 20th, over 100 community members and supporters from around Pennsylvania travelled to Harrisburg. Meeting with our elected representatives, we conveyed to them the Muslim community's concerns on a number of issues, including the spread of Islamophobia into mainstream politics, supporting the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Pennsylvania, raising the minimum wage, and the climate crisis.

A press conference including a diverse list of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish speakers, concluded the day. The speakers included Jacob Bender; Iftekhar Hussain; State Rep. Jason Dawkins; Tiffany Chang from the Governor's Office; Rabiya Khan, local Muslim activist; Ann Van Dyke, Community Responders Network; Rev. Sandra Strauss, Harrisburg Council of Churches; and Rabbi Linda Holtzman, Tikkun Olam Havurah.

The event was proof that in spite of the increase in Islamophobia, the American Muslim community has many friends among Jewish, Christian, and interfaith leaders and their organizations.

Iftekhar Hussain, CAIR-Philadelphia Vice President, speaking at Muslim Capitol Day in Harrisburg.

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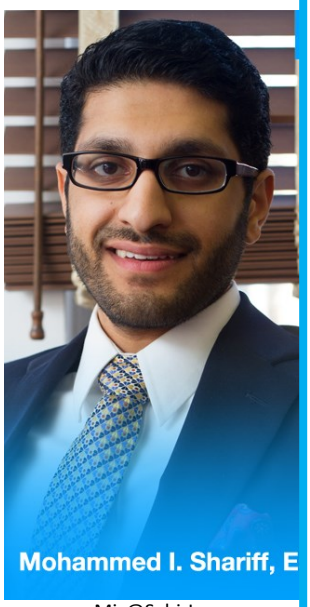

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EMPOWERING AMERICAN MUSLIMS

The Delaware Valley Muslim Leadership Forum

On several occasions during 2015, CAIR-Philadelphia organized meetings of the Greater Delaware Valley Muslim leadership forums. In attendance were imams, board members and executive committee members of mosques and Muslim organizations, CAIR staff, as well as Muslim business owners in the Greater Delaware Valley.

The purpose of the meetings was to establish better understanding and coordination between all segments of the Delaware Valley Muslim community, and particularly between the urban African-American community and the suburban immigrant community.

Several topics were presented and discussed at the Forum meetings, and the Forum decided to act upon the following projects:

1. The establishment of the Philadelphia Muslim Health & Social Services Alliance and the creation of a center to service the health needs of low-income individuals and the under-insured;
2. Organizing a symposium in 2016 on strategies to advance the status of women in the American mosque;
3. Organizing a public lecture by Trevor Aaronson, award-winning Aljazeera America journalist, on the FBI's use of entrapment in the American Muslim community.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: In early 2016, as this 2015 Annual Report was being worked on, the Philadelphia Eid Coalition achieved a significant victory when the Philadelphia City Council unanimously supported a resolution submitted by Councilman Curtis Jones in the support of making the Two Eids official city holidays. The resolution of January 21st was a great victory; however, it is not a law. The resolution still has to be approved by the city and teacher unions, and a host of other elected officials, including the Mayor. The Philadelphia Eid Coalition, of which CAIR is a member, plans to continue to educate and encourage government officials to make the Two Eids legal holidays.

Above, Councilman Jones addressing the City Council. Below, Jones with Osama Al-Qasem, President of CAIR-Philadelphia.

EMPOWERING AMERICAN MUSLIMS

The Philadelphia Eid Coalition

Another project that grew out of the Greater Delaware Valley Muslim Leadership Forum was the Philadelphia Eid Coalition.

"In unity, there is strength" was a slogan of the American labor movement when it was struggling in the early 20th Century for the right to unionize, the abolition of child labor, and the 8-hour work day.

Here in Philadelphia, the year 2015 witnessed a birth of Muslim unity with a community commitment to work together for the recognition of the Two Eids — Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha — as official City and School Board Holidays.

Philadelphia has the highest percentage of Muslim residents of any major city in the U.S., numbering by some accounts over 200,000, with an estimated 15% of city public school students being Muslim.

The deeper significance of this campaign is that official recognition of the Two Eids would be a major victory along the road of full acceptance of Islam as one of the major religions of America. Americans would no longer speak of the United States as rooted in "Judeo-Christian" values, but as a multi-faith democracy built upon the shared Abrahamic values of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

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Top down: Asheq Fazlullah, Iftekhar Hussain, and Jacob Bender leading CAIR workshops.

CAIR WORKSHOPS

During 2015, CAIR Philadelphia continued its free education offerings to the Muslim and non-Muslim community through the following workshops:

- Know Your Rights;
- MYLP (Muslim Youth Leadership Programs);
- Anti-Bullying, for both students and adults;
- "Islam 101";
- Muslim-Christian-Jewish Relations;
- Countering Extremism.

Facilitated by Executive Committee members Iftekhar Hussain and Asheq Fazullalah, CAIR Staff Attorney Ryan Houldin, and CAIR Philadelphia Executive Director Jacob Bender, these workshops are invaluable contributions to Muslim adults and children alike, as well as to Philadelphia interfaith relations in general.

CAIR workshops were held in 2015 at the following locations:

Al-Aqsa Islamic Society
American Friends Service Committee
CAMP Philadelphia
Church of the Advocate
Church of the Redeemer
Foundation for Islamic Education
Islamic Heritage Month
Islamic Society of Schuylkill County
Jefferson Medical College
Masjidullah, Center for Human Excellence
Masjid Al-Hidaya
Masjid Al-Madinah
MIST, Temple University
Muslim Association of Lehigh Valley
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BUILDING INTERFAITH COALITIONS

Many of CAIR Philadelphia's most successful projects of 2015 — the SEPTA bus ad coalition, Muslim Capitol Day in Harrisburg, the Philadelphia Eid Coalition, and the ongoing campaign against Islamophobia — also included interfaith elements.

Working with social justice activists from other religious communities — Christian, Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, and Hindu — remains at the heart of CAIR's mission, for reasons both philosophical and strategic.

"O humanity! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another."

QURAN 49:13

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Iftekhar Hussain and Rabbi Arthur Waskow at CAIR's Interfaith Iftar during Ramadan; Gov. Tom Wolf (with Jacob Bender), signing a declaration against Islmophobia; CAIR at "Black Lives Matter" demonstration at City Hall; Philadelphia 2015 Interfaith Walk for Peace and Reconciliation; Rabbi Linda Holtzman at Muslim Capitol Day in Harrisburg.

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MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

The year 2015 was a stellar year for CAIR Philadelphia's efforts to appear in the region's media outlets — TV, radio, internet, press — and influence the coverage of the world-wide Muslim community and Islam.

Executive Director Jacob Bender was interviewed or quoted numerous times in a varity of outlets, reaching tens of thousands of people in our region with CAIR's message of peace, justice, and tolerance.

DECEMBER 11, 2015

CAIR director Jacob Bender says Philadelphia Muslims 'apprehensive' following attacks

CAIR director Jacob Bender says Philadelphia Muslims 'apprehensive' following ...
Listen 0:00 / 6:13

Jacob Bender, the executive director of the Philadelphia chapter of the Center for American-Islamic Relations. (Emma Lee/WHYY)

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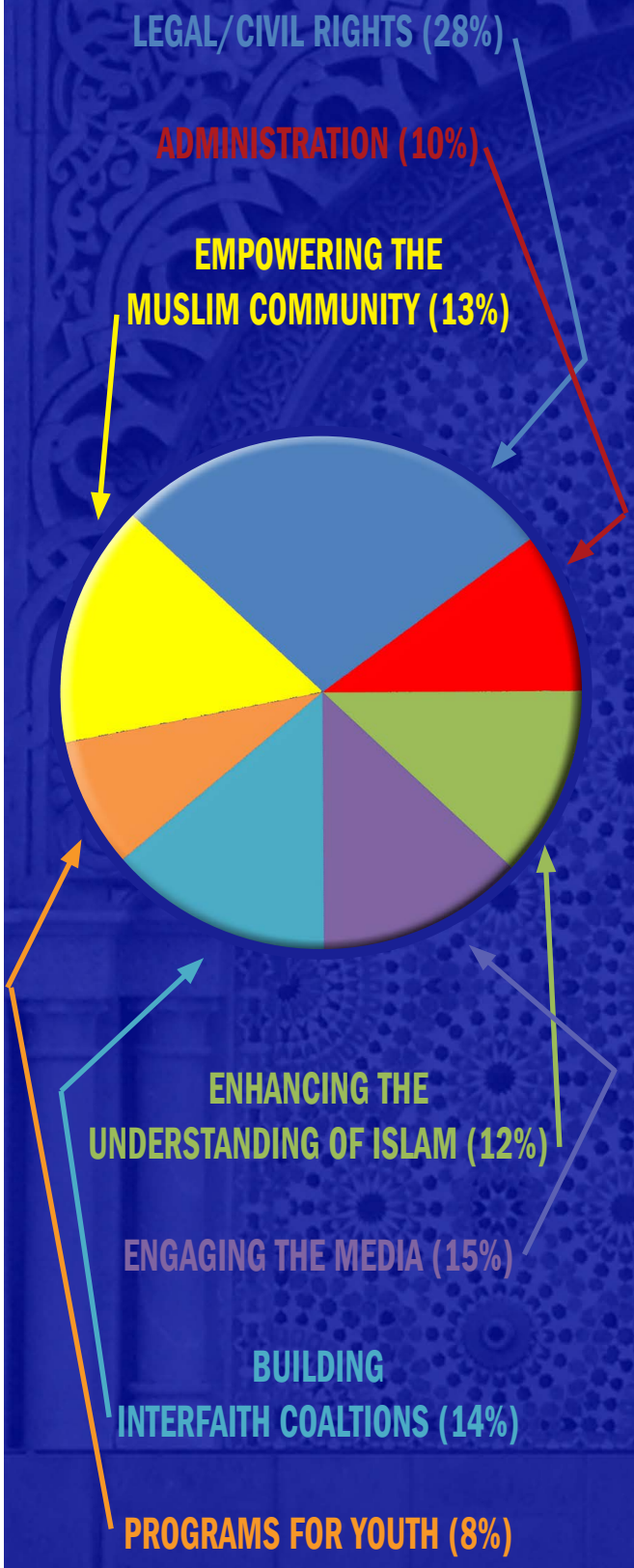
2016 PROJECTED EXPENSES BY PROGRAM



FINANCIALS

2015 STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

REVENUE and SUPPORT	Total
Banquet	
Banquet Ticket Sales & Advertising	$49,945.00
Public support	
Direct Deposits	$29,300.00
Donations	$229,676.00
Total Revenue and Support	**$308,617.00**
EXPENDITURES	
Management and Operational Expenses	
Payroll	
Staff and intern salaries	$164,759.00
Benefits	$25,000.00
Operations, Utilities and Office Supplies & Rent	$26,000.00
Legal Dept. Fees	$5,845.00
Travel and Food Reimbursement	$6,446.00
Programs, Services & Marketing	
2015 Annual Banquet	$44,780.00
Newsletters & Publications	$8,841.00
Other Programs, Services & Marketing	$7,662.00
Professional Services	
Fees	$5,775.00
Tax service, legal council	$3,100.00
Misc. Expenses	
Misc. expenses	$5,107.34
Total Expenditures	**$303,315.00**
Change in Net Assets	$30,870.00
Net Assets, beginning of year	$85,150.00
Net Assets at Year End	**$116,020.00**

2016 PROJECTED EXPENDITURES

Management and Operational Expenses	
Payroll	$172,000.00
Benefits	$26,000.00
Operations, Utilities and Office Supplies & Rent	$27,500.00
Legal Department Fees	$5,800.00
Travel & Expense Reimbursement	$7,000.00
Professional services	
Fees	$6,000.00
Tax services	$3,000.00
Programs, Services & Communications	
Annual Banquet	$50,250.00
Communications and Programs	$20,000.00
Contingency/Misc. Exp.	$18,000.00
Total Expenditures	**$335,550.00**

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OPERATIONS MANAGER

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The Beauty of Islam
By Asiyah Goldson (Grade 9)

What wonders and happiness do we have when it comes to Islam?

The opportunity to come together and worship Ar-Rahman.

The thought of knowing something beautiful comes after this life,

For the good Muslims, inshallah, gifted with paradise.

Allah S.W.T is oh so merciful

He sent angels to protect us wherever we go.

The Prophet S.A.W taught us about Islam,

He was sent to guide us and help strengthen our Iman.

He never gave up on Muslims even though some gave him trouble,

He would always keep his patience, and stay forever humble.

Prophet Muhammad S.A.W taught us how to be kind and gentle towards others,

He told us never to commit shirk, and to always respect our mothers.

Prophet Muhammad S.W.T taught us the difference between wrong and right,

In Islam, Muslims should never ever fight.

We were taught to look after each other like brothers and sisters,

And to avoid shaytan's evil whispers.

It doesn't make any sense why humans would worship other humans.

Do they not look at camels?

How they are made?

And at the sky,

How it was raised highly?

And at the mountains,

How they are fixed firm?

And at the eart,

How it is spread up?

Non-believers ask, "Why do Muslims local Allah S.W.T or Prophet Muhammad S.A.W when we never saw them?

"Why do Muslims insist on wasting their time?"

The answer is that love can be seen and love can be blind.

Islam is perfect, it is like no other,

It is something that everyone should look into further.

As for non-believers, I wish they would understand, I wish they would learn,

To Allah we belong and to Him we return.

POETRY CORNER

CAIR's Poetry Contest for Middle School & High School Students

In November, 2015, CAIR-Philadelphia announced its Poetry Contest for middle and high school students. Participants chose to write on one of three topics: A characteristic of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and how you exemplify this characteristic in your life; what the masjid means to you as a Muslim living in a non-Muslim society; and the beauty you find in Islam. Thirteen students from around the area submitted poems which were judged by members of CAIR-Philadelphia's Executive Committee. The winning poems are printed on this and the following page. The following students also submitted poems: Omar Alhaj, Haider Ali, Tabassum Aminur, Emine Bicak, Jannat Chowdhury, Yaqqoub Johnson, Nur Khalil, Haanya Quadri, Hamida Sanford, Shaymaa Shehata, Madinah Stokes.

Medieval Muslim poet.

The Perfect Guest
By Mariam Shehata

I stood there and I wondered
I imagined a whole theme
What if the prophet came
To visit my whole family
I didn't make it all up because this is really how it would be
My whole family from all over the world were at my house
We all stood there waiting so excited to see him
Then we heard a really soft knock at the door
So we all ran to meet him
As soon as my father opened the door
We were just stunned, speak no more
He was a walking beauty
Such an amazing sight
He said Assalamu Alaikum
And entered with his right
He greeted my dad, mom, aunts,
Uncles, cousins, sisters, and brothers
He took off his left shoe
Then he took off the other
He had gift bags in his hands
He brought us dates straight from Madinah
Such a generous man and when we thanked him
He said Shukran Lirab Al Alameena
He stayed standing, he said something so polite
He said you choose where I sit, your house, your right
We told him to sit anywhere that he'd like
He gathered us in a circle then gave us a speech
He told us about Jannah and the goals we had to reach
He reminded us of the importance of prayer and Quran
And that Jannah wasn't easy, we had to have a life plan
And the most important life plan is following Islam, our Deen
And if we plan on any other goals, just remember
to start with Bismillah AL Rahman AL Raheem
After his lecture my grandma asked something silly
She heard this joke so many times but still found it funny
She said "Oh prophet of Allah, do old people like me enter Jannah?"
He laughed and said "U sure do have a funny sense of humor Sabihah."
We were all speechless, she asked
"Oh prophet of Allah, how did you know my name?"
He said "You are one of the ones who follow my Sunnah strictly and
I also shall recognize you on judgement day."
I wanted to take a selfie with the prophet on my snapchat
But then I remembered the hadith about unnecessary photos and
I didn't want to make him upset
And I noticed different because for once when I looked around
All electronic devices were all shut down
It was time for dinner so we all repeated the Duaa After the prophet
And we ate with our right not our left
He reminded us to give our neighbor a plate because
The food my mom cooked, they may have smelled
So I took a plate of food to my closest neighbor Alex
And I told him about the prophet coming for a dinner fest
When I came back in I heard the prophet say: thank you Allah
For providing us with food and water and making us Muslims
Then he thanked my mom, washed his hands,
And used his Miswak as we copied him
The Athan went off and he made wudoo
They had to leave to Maghreb prayer soon
Then all of the men got up and gathered to leave
The prophet put on his right shoe first and left everything neat
My whole family was sad that he was going to leave
But we knew not to worry because if we follow our Deen
We'll meet with the prophet again in Jannah. Say Ameen
All the children ran to say goodbye to the prophet
He loved children so much, he even gave them chocolate.
And just before we thought
That was the last thing that day
As soon as we opened the door
Our eyes were amazed
Once we heard a loud crowd and looked outside
Hundreds, thousands of people waiting from every street side
When they saw how beautiful the prophet was shown
Because as soon as he stepped outside in the dark, his face glowed
It was glowing like a bright shining moon
In that moment without any further due
Every single one of them and I mean ALL
Said Ashhadu An La Illaha Illa Allah Wa Ashhadu An Muhamadan Rasoolullah
Turns out my neighbor Alex couldn't keep quiet
And now all of Philly knew about the prophet
And when they all saw the prophet and immediately converted
I knew the prophet was a miracle sent as a message
And then I remembered I was only imagining
But man how great that would be if it really happened
And maybe after the prophet leaves
I wouldn't return to my crazy careless life
Because my heart would've been inspired
by a glorious man that night

Delaware Valley
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DVSB is an affiliate of Islamic Networks Group (ING).
To learn more about us, visit the website at: www.ing.org
If you are interested in arranging a seminar or becoming a speaker, please contact us at email

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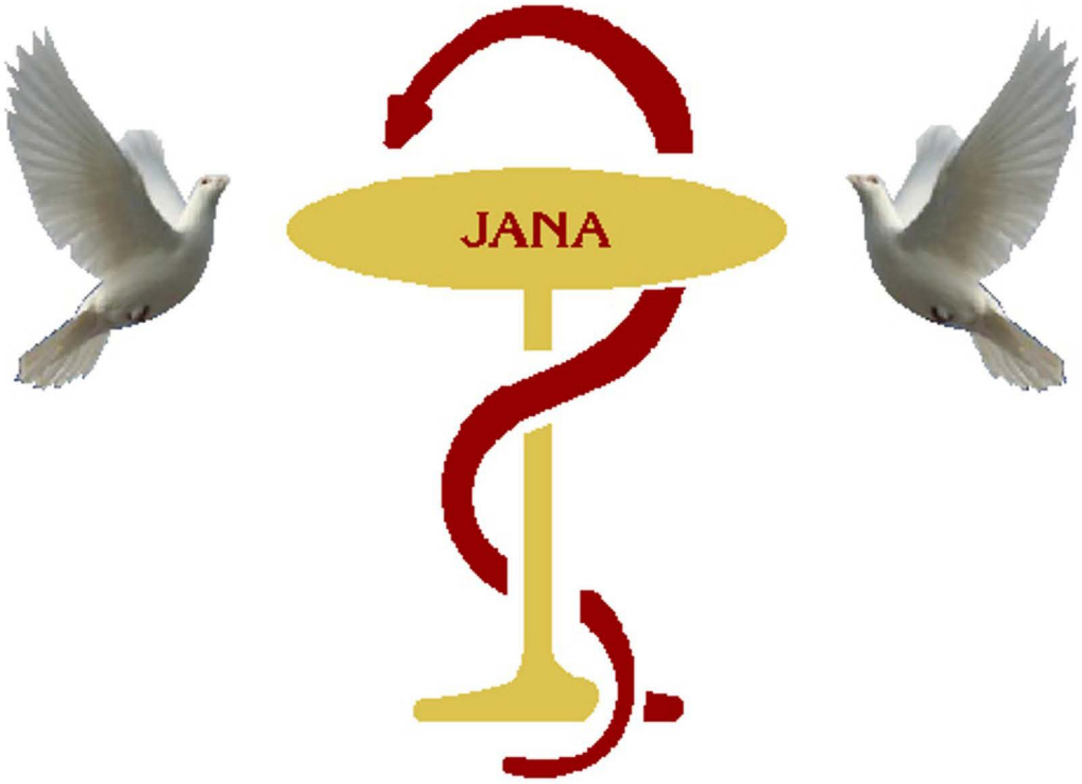

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