

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

# TEACHABLE MOMENT COMMUNITY RESPONSE GUIDE

## Guidance for Local Communities to Respond to Challenges & Opposition

Ramadan 2010



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**WANT ADDITIONAL TRAINING IN SOME OF THE CRITICAL SKILLS PRESENTED IN THIS KIT?**

**JOIN CAIR IN WASHINGTON, D.C., ON OCTOBER 9, 2010**

CAIR's leadership conference and banquet will take place on Saturday, October 9, 2010 at the Marriott Crystal Gateway in Arlington, VA and promises to be both inspiring and motivating.

The theme of the 16<sup>th</sup> annual banquet is *Defining Our Faith: Defending Our Rights*. Our keynote speaker will be **Dr. Tariq Ramadan**, named by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 most important innovators of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**The leadership conference is a unique opportunity comprised of six critical skill sessions including training on the following issues:**

public speaking,  
engaging Congress,  
challenging Islamophobia,  
protecting civil rights,  
conducting on-camera interviews  
and utilizing social media.

Community leaders are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity for growth and development.

Please contact Mrs. Aseel Elborno at 202.742.6454 or [aelborno@cair.com](mailto:aelborno@cair.com) to register for this event.



## I. INTRODUCTION

Dear Community Leaders,

Assalaamu alaykum and Ramadan Mubarak. Peace be with you, and may you have a blessed month of Ramadan.

This guide is intended to give you tools for representing Islam and Muslims to your local community in the media and to successfully respond to current challenges and other possible incidents against our community.

The current crises Muslim Americans are faced with – from the raucous opposition to the construction of an Islamic center in New York City and other Islamic centers nationwide, the misunderstanding of the celebration of the Eid al-Fitr holiday and the coincidence of its timing falling near the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, to the possible burning of the Quran on that tragic anniversary by extremist groups – require Muslims to be exemplary in their adherence to Islamic values and ethics.

This exemplary response to these challenges must be both visible and constructive. We as a community must use this trying time as a perfect opportunity to tell our own story.

This is also the time to utilize alliances built over years of friendship and hard work in our communities, and to create new ones with other people of conscience.

Please use this kit to the fullest of your ability in your efforts to serve our community and our country. If you have any feedback, share it with us. If you have any questions, ask us. Please photograph and videotape any activities you carry out and share them with CAIR and the media.

By being proactive, we make it easier for our friends and allies from other faiths to stand with us, as they have already shown they will.

May Allah accept your fasting and efforts in this blessed month of Ramadan.

Let's get started,



Nihad Awad  
Executive Director

## II. TIMELINE AND GENERAL ACTION ITEMS

### Ongoing throughout the month of Ramadan:

- Pitch interviews with your spokespeople to local media (See Appendix C for tools and resources). Topics can include explaining the Islamic calendar & Eid dates, or to suggest coverage of your open houses or other interfaith efforts. Your presence in local media can help increase public understanding and familiarity with Muslims.
- Contact & activate your local interfaith network:
  - Contact your partners in previous interfaith efforts (individuals and institutions: Sikh, Christian, Jewish, and all others) and ask them to release an open letter, statement, or publish an advertisement using the National Council of Churches letter in Appendix E as a model.
  - Do the same with your civil rights allies.
- Host open houses at your mosques, community center or school. (See Appendix C for tools and resources.) You can request “Welcome to Our Mosque” and “Welcome to Our Ramadan Iftar” brochures from CAIR (e-mail [info@cair.com](mailto:info@cair.com) or call 202-488-8787).
- Arrange a 20,000 Dialogues showing of the DVD “Talking Through Walls,” a success story of faiths coming together. Publicize the event with partner organizations to draw a diverse audience. (See Appendix I for more information.)
- Communicate with your local CAIR chapter to alert them to any external issues you are facing and to keep them informed of your efforts and events.
- Activate your local Islamic umbrella organization or mosque association to coordinate this month’s efforts, if you have not already done so. Remember to include your local Muslim Student’s Association or other youth groups.
- Request copies of CAIR’s new “Challenging Islamophobia” pocket guide and distribute the guides to your community members(e-mail [info@cair.com](mailto:info@cair.com) or call 202-488-8787).

### Eid al-Fitr 2010

- Invite the larger community to share in the celebration of Eid al-Fitr with the theme: “Celebrate Eid, Celebrate Diversity.”
- Take advantage of the large number of people attending Eid activities to organize a service event such as a blood drive, as many communities already do. An event like this can help show your local area how Islam encourages service and generosity.
- Publish an advertisement in your community paper explaining the Islamic calendar and Eid dates.
- Use the Eid khutbah as an opportunity to mention the sad anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and reaffirm Islam’s respect for life and human dignity, and to emphasize the need for peace and harmony throughout the world.

## September 11, 2010 National Day of Unity and Healing

- Join with your larger community and interfaith partners in a day of unity and healing. See section V in this packet for details.
- Ask Allah to use the anniversary to unite our country.

## Outreach after Ramadan and Beyond

- Book an event with 20,000 Dialogues to show the DVD *Talking Through Walls*, a success story of faiths coming together. (See Appendix I for more information.)
- Hold a mosque open house. (See Appendix C for tools and resources.)
- If you do not already have one, set up an outreach program that will establish long-term relationships between you and other significant institutions and organizations in your area. Joint programs, such as a blood drive or feeding the hungry, with other religious institutions are one way to do this.

### III. EXPLANATION OF EID DATES AND THE MUSLIM CALENDAR

Whether or not Eid al-Fitr falls on September 11 this year, Muslims should focus on reaching out and engaging their neighbors of other faiths.

CAIR recommends that khateeb mention the sad anniversary of the 9/11 attacks in their Eid sermons, and reaffirm Islam's respect for life and human dignity, and to emphasize the need for peace and harmony throughout the world.

Also, please be extra vigilant in protecting your mosque or gathering on this day. (Refer to CAIR's Muslim Community Safety Kit in Appendix D for more information.)

It would help to explain the Islamic calendar and Eid dates in advance to those who might misunderstand if they see Muslims celebrating Eid on September 11 this year. Feel free to use the handout in Appendix J to share with interfaith or civic leaders, or with media outlets. If you give it to a media outlet, please let them know that it is not an exclusive (i.e. other outlets may receive the same text) so that they are not surprised if they also see it published or quoted from elsewhere.

### IV. RESPONDING TO 'BURN A KORAN DAY'

On September 11, 2010 the Dove World Outreach Center in Gainesville, Fla., plans to hold an "International Burn a Koran Day" and is encouraging others to follow the church's example in burning the holy text. This event is already getting worldwide media attention.

Book burners are generally looked down upon as extremists. The practice is historically associated with religious persecution. The Nazis burned copies of the Jewish scripture, the Torah, during their campaign of violent anti-Semitism leading up to the Holocaust.

Dove World Outreach's Quran burning has been condemned by local political leadership, as well as by the National Association of Evangelicals. Most recently, the town even denied the church a permit to burn the books. While all of this is very encouraging, the burning may get international media attention for which we must be prepared.

- Encourage Muslims to pray for God to soften the hearts and open the minds of people to the beauty of the Quran and the goodness of its message, and its positive influence in society.
- Issue a challenge to Muslims in your community to sponsor the distribution of 100 copies of the Quran to American political and policy leaders as a positive response to the Quran burning. Copies of the Quran can be sponsored here: <https://www.cair.com/support/QuranSponsorship.aspx>
- Coordinate a food drive with a local food bank.
- Coordinate a blood drive through a local hospital or the American Red Cross.
- Host a "National Day of Unity and Healing" open house at which public officials and members of the local community can learn more about Islam and Muslims.

## V. NATIONAL DAY OF UNITY AND HEALING (9/11/2010)

To honor the memory of the thousands of human beings who were murdered on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, CAIR is designating 9/11/2010 as a National Day of Unity and Healing. This will be a day of opportunity to rebuild broken relationships between all people in the U.S., regardless of religion, race, gender or status.

Across the United States, we hope that houses of worship, churches, synagogues, and mosques will open their doors and greet their neighbors with open minds and hearts. On this day, there will be an opportunity for people of faith to learn about one another's traditions.

God explains that as diverse entities within the community of mankind, we can work towards the greater good for all:

"For, every community faces a direction of its own, of which He is the focal point. Vie with one another in doing good works. Wherever you may be, God will gather you all unto Himself: for, verily, God has the power to do anything." [Quran 2:148]

"Unto every one of you We have appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie], then, with one another in doing good works. Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ." [Quran 5:48]

- Host a scripture reading, at which religious leaders will read passages from their sacred texts, focusing on passages that offer spiritual support for mutual understanding and interfaith dialogue. Make sure to invite the media to this event.
- Hold “National Day of Unity and Healing” open house at which public officials and members of the local community may learn more about Islam and Muslims. (See Appendix C for tools and resources.)
- Call on local religious and political leaders to speak out against growing Islamophobia and in support of diversity and equal rights for all citizens.
- Issue a challenge to Muslims in your community to sponsor the distribution of 100 copies of the Quran to American political and policy leaders as a positive response to the Quran burning. Copies of the Quran can be sponsored here: <https://www.cair.com/support/QuranSponsorship.aspx>
- Coordinate a food drive with a local food bank.
- Coordinate a blood drive through a local hospital or the American Red Cross.

## VI. RESPONDING TO DEMONSTRATORS, HARASSMENT OR STAGED PROVOCATION AT YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP

Mosques increasingly have become the target of anti-Muslim protesters and others who hope to disrupt activities or make a provocative statement or film. Incidents experienced by various mosques have included heckling by groups of demonstrators, staged events inside the building, and the depositing of pig parts, defaced Qurans, or other items intended to provoke fear or anger.

Special emphasis should be placed on developing a positive working relationship with local law enforcement authorities and government officials who may be contacted if protesters go beyond the constitutionally-protected right to free speech in a public area – for example, if protesters trespass on mosque property or physically harass worshippers.

- Always remember that the right to hold peaceful, public demonstrations is a core American value.
- Take video and still photographs of the protest and send them to CAIR. Designate individuals to film (preferred) and/or photograph any demonstrations, provocations or harassment at your mosque or prayer service. Be ready for unexpected events and have a camera prepared at all times. Filming is crucial to document events and protect your community from unfounded accusations.
- Do not engage in debates with protesters or allow worshippers to be provoked by the protesters. Encourage your community not to engage with protesters or respond to provocations, and remind worshippers of the Prophet’s teachings of patience and peaceful tolerance in the face of verbal abuse.
- Ask for extra police protection if you know of any planned action at your place of worship. Call the police department immediately as a precaution if protesters show up unexpectedly.



- Report incidents of harassment or intimidation to the police and to CAIR. If an incident occurs, fill out an incident report form at: <http://www.cair.com/FileaComplaint.aspx>
- If you have advance notice of a protest, reach out to interfaith partners. You can stage a unity event to counter the anger and bigotry typically seen at anti-mosque protests. Have signs made saying “Peace not Prejudice” or “Out of Many One” (this refers to the Latin phrase “E pluribus Unum” which is on the Great Seal of the United States) or “Americans United Against Bigotry.”

## APPENDICES

### A. WISDOM FROM THE QURAN FOR FACING ABUSE AND CHALLENGES

At this time in history, Muslim Americans are challenged by torrents of lies and distortions about their beliefs and practices. Use the wisdom of the Quran to remind and educate your community about how to respond to hostile and aggressive remarks.

- “But [since] good and evil cannot be equal, repel [evil] with something that is better – and lo! he between whom and yourself was enmity [may then become] as though he had [always] been close [to you], a true friend.” [Quran 41:34]
- “Yet if God had so willed, they would not have ascribed divinity to anything beside Him; hence, We have not made you their keeper, and neither are you responsible for their conduct. But do not revile those [beings] whom they invoke instead of God, lest they revile God out of spite, and in ignorance: for, We have made their doings seem good unto every community. In time, [however,] they must return to their Sustainer: and then He will make them [truly] understand all that they were doing.” [Quran 6: 107-108]
- “O you who believe, be steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity, and never let the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: (for) that is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God: verily, God is aware of all that you do.” [Quran, 5:8-9]
- “The (true) servants of (God) the Compassionate are those who walk on the earth humbly, and when the ignorant address them, reply with (words of) peace.” [Quran, 25:63]
- “You shall most certainly be tried in your possessions and in your persons; and indeed you shall hear many hurtful things from those to whom revelation was granted before your time, as well as from those who have come to ascribe divinity to other beings beside God. But if you remain patient in adversity and conscious of Him – this, behold, is something to set one’s heart upon.” [Quran 3:186]

- “Out of their selfish envy, many among the followers of earlier revelation would like to bring you back to denying the truth after you have attained to faith – [even] after the truth has become clear to them. Nonetheless, forgive and forbear, until God shall make manifest His will: behold, God has the power to will anything.” [Quran 2:109]
- “Hence, bear with patience whatever they [who deny the truth] may say...” [Quran 20:130]
- “And defer not to [the likes and dislikes of] the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites, and disregard their hurtful talk, and place your trust in God: for none is as worthy of trust as God.” [Quran 33:48]
- “And endure with patience whatever people may say [against you], and avoid them with a comely avoidance.” [Quran 73:10]

## B. PROPHET MUHAMMAD’S EXAMPLE IN DEALING WITH ABUSE, HARASSMENT, AND DEFAMATION

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The Prophet Muhammad and his companions are our best examples of how to respond to verbal abuse and harassment.

### EXAMPLES FROM THE PROPHET AND HIS COMPANIONS

“Through 13 years of the Makkan period of revelation, the Muslims endured being mocked, humiliated, slandered, tortured, sanctioned, starved, boycotted and murdered. Then add to that another eight years of war, plotting and treachery at the hands of the polytheists of Makkah. When the Prophet ﷺ finally won the city of Mecca, he came in with a powerful army of 10,000 strong. If he wanted, he could have taken revenge and massacred these criminals. Instead he came to them and said, “I say as my brother Joseph said: ‘No blame will there be upon you today. Allah will forgive you, and He is the most Merciful of the merciful.’” Then the Prophet ﷺ told the people of Makkah, “Go back to your homes for you are all free.”

“This beautiful trait is usually remembered by giving examples of the Prophet’s ﷺ companion Al-Ahnaf bin Qais (ra). It is narrated that one time a man verbally attacked al-Ahnaf and he didn’t respond and kept walking. So the man walked behind him persisting in his verbal abuse of al-Ahnaf until they came to the village. Then al-Ahnaf turned around and asked him, ‘If you still have something to say then get it all out now, before the people see how you are acting and it hurts your reputation.’ In another situation, a man started shouting insults at al-Ahnaf. He followed him until al-Ahnaf turned to him and said joyfully, ‘Hey man, the time for lunch has come upon us. How about you join me?’”

*Source: Forbearance and Composure, by Yahya Ederer, Published on August 11, 2010*  
<http://www.suhaibwebb.com/personaldvlp/part-3-forbearance-and-composure/>

## C. TOOLS AND RESOURCES

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### TALKING POINTS

Below are talking points on some current major issues that you or your institution's spokespersons may find helpful when giving media interviews or talking about these issues in other circumstances.

#### **Mosque Controversy**

- Denying the building of any religious institution on such a false premise that Muslims in any way would be an unjust indictment of the religion of Islam and its peaceful followers in America.
- It is our chance as Americans to come together to reject bigotry and the politics of paranoia. The whole world is watching this debate and rooting for the America that they have always admired: The America of freedom and tolerance.
- The organizers of the lower Manhattan Islamic cultural center and all American Muslims are very sensitive to the genuine feeling of many fellow Americans about this project and its location. We know that there is a lot of confusion about Islam and how the terrorists have falsely claimed actions in its name. We know that we have to do more to explain our religion to our neighbors and friends. However, not building a Muslim center near Ground Zero on the basis of not opening the 9-11 wounds would mean that Islam and Muslims were responsible for the terrorist attacks. And that is absolutely wrong.

#### **Eid al-Fitr Date Falling Near 9/11**

- Islam uses a lunar calendar, which changes approximately 11 days each year in relation to the calendar used here in America.
- In 2000 and 2001, Eid al-Fitr arrived near the Christmas holiday. This was seen as an opportunity to build interfaith relations. In 2003, Eid-al-Fitr was near Thanksgiving and many conversations turned toward things all Americans have to give thanks for. It would be better to follow those examples than give in to the politics of fear.
- It is a shame that some are using the coincidence of Eid-al-Fitr, a yearly Muslim holiday, and the 9/11 anniversary falling near each other as a way to instill division and fear.

### **“Burn a Koran Day”**

- While we are saddened by this church’s shock tactics, we plan to meet their hate with good deeds. We support CAIR’s initiative to distribute Quran’s to political leaders and policy makers around the country. Understanding, not book burning, is they way forward.
- We appreciate that Christian groups like the National Association of Evangelicals have opposed this action. NAE cited the Bible as saying: “Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else” (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

### **National Day of Unity and Healing**

- America is not a nation built for one race, ethnic group of faith. It is built on a set of ideals. This day is intended to honor two of them, tolerance and inclusion, which seem to need highlighting given the unusually divisive tone of our recent national conversation. (An example is the angry opposition to the Islamic cultural center in lower Manhattan.)

## **MEDIA RELATIONS BASICS**

Below are some basic guidelines for interacting with the media, such as doing one-on-one media interviews, holding a press conference, and writing letters to the editor or op-ed columns.

### **How to Be Interviewed:**

Prepare before an interview:

- Write down likely questions and practice answering them.
- Determine your talking points. Know the
- Practice with someone.

What to remember during an interview:

- You are in control of the interview.
- Begin and end with your talking points.
- It is a dialogue, not a conversation.
- When you finish your answer, stop talking.

Deflecting Statements:

- “Let’s look at this issue from a broader perspective...”
- “There is an equally important concern...”
- “Let’s not lose sight of the underlying problem...”

Taking Control of Interview

- Agree to the “angle” before the interview.
- Establish rapport with the interviewer.

- Provide background on issue to journalist before the interview.
- Never say “no comment.”

#### On-Air Etiquette:

- Let the technical people do their jobs.
- Note to brothers: Don't be afraid of make-up. It is part of the technical aspect of television -- it keeps you from looking "washed out" on air.
- Don't be wishy-washy.
- It is standard to use the interviewer's first name, rather than Mr. or Ms. Name.
- Try not to make the interviewer look ignorant. If you must correct, do so lightly.
- Don't read your responses.
- No notes for TV
- 3x5 card notes are fine for radio.
- Learn to take cues.
- Assume that all microphones are on, even before or after the interview.
- Ask the producer where you should look during the interview. Depending on the set-up, they may want you to look directly into the camera, or to look only at the interviewer and avoid looking straight into the camera.

#### Media Event Checklist:

If you are holding a press conference or other event to which you invite media, use these guidelines to make sure you are prepared:

- A news release has been delivered to all local media gatekeepers.
- The local wire service daybook editor has been notified.
- A suitable site has been selected.
- A media kit has been prepared containing a statement, a copy of the news release and relevant backgrounders and fact sheets.
- An articulate, knowledgeable spokesperson has been selected.
- Representatives from all major groupings within the community have been invited to take part.
- Sisters will be represented at the event.
- Spokespeople have met and decided on appropriate talking points.
- All participants have agreed to stick to the talking points.
- If the event will be held in a mosque or Islamic center, approval has been obtained and relevant parties notified.
- A table or podium has been arranged.
- If the event is outside, a microphone stand has been obtained.
- Room has been made at the site for television cameras.
- Signs directing media to the site have been put up.

**Model Press Release Addressing “Burn a Quran Day” and National Day of Unity and Healing”:**

*You can modify the text below and send it to local media outlets to announce your open house or other event. Just fill in the words in [BRACKETS] with your local information.*

Insert Your Local Organization Name and Address Here]

- MEDIA ADVISORY -

[NAME OF AREA] Muslims to Respond to Fla. Quran Burning with ‘Day of Unity’ Mosque Open House

([CITY AND STATE], [DATE]) -- On [DATE], the [NAME OF AREA] Muslim community will hold an mosque open house as part of a call for a “National Day of Unity and Healing” as a proactive response to the international outrage over a Florida church’s plan to burn Qurans, Islam’s revealed text, on September 11, 2010.

Video: Planned Fla. Quran Burning Sparks Outrage

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSrZaPD8onc>

Video: International Burn a Koran Day

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Tf9M9HRMWk>

WHAT: National Day of Unity and Healing Mosque Open House

WHEN: [TIME AND DATE]

WHERE: LOCATION, ADDRESS]

CONTACT: [CONTACT NAMES, NUMBERS, E-MAILS]

At the open house, public officials and members of the local community may learn more about Islam and Muslims and will receive a free copy of the Quran.

“[QUOTE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL UNITY, HEALING and mutual understanding], said [NAME AND TITLE OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE].

[LAST NAME] said the open house is part of a nationwide effort by the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).

There are some [NUMBER] of Muslims in the [LOCATION] area.

- END -

## Model Press Release Addressing Eid Al-Fitr

*You can modify the text below and send it to local media outlets to announce your open house or other event. Just fill in the words in [BRACKETS] with your local information.*

Insert Your Local Organization Name and Address Here]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- MEDIA ADVISORY -

### LOCAL MUSLIMS MARK END OF RAMADAN WITH PRAYERS, BAZAAR

WHAT: [DATE], the Muslim community in [CITY OR AREA] will celebrate the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan with communal prayers and [OTHER ACTIVITIES, IF ANY]. (Ramadan is the month on the Islamic lunar calendar during which Muslims abstain from food, drink and other sensual pleasures from break-of-dawn to sunset.)

The prayers mark the beginning of the Eid al-Fitr (EED-al-FITTER) holiday, in which Muslims exchange social visits and seek to strengthen bonds of brotherhood. During this holiday, Muslims greet each other by saying “Eid mubarak” (EED-moo-BAR-ak), or “blessed Eid,” and “taqabbalallah ta’atakum,” or “may God accept your deeds.”

(NOTE - There are [ESTIMATE OF LOCAL MUSLIM POPULATION] Muslims in [CITY OR AREA].)

WHEN: [DATE]

Community gathers at \_\_\_ a.m.

Prayers begin at \_\_\_ a.m.

Bazaar opens at \_\_\_ a.m. and lasts until \_\_\_ p.m.

WHERE: [ADDRESS]

CONTACT: For more information, call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (not for publication), or call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (for publication).

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Each year, Muslims from America and many different countries come to the prayers in the colorful dress. The prayers themselves are quite visual, with worshipers arranged in neat rows and bowing in prayer in unison. Participants exchange embraces at the conclusion of the prayers.

NOTE: Because this is a religious service, reporters and photographers of both sexes should dress modestly. That means no shorts for men or short skirts for women. Some communities

may ask female reporters and photographers to put a scarf over their hair while in the actual prayer area. Photographers should arrive early to get into position for the best shots. Photographers are also advised not to step directly in front of worshipers and to seek permission for close-up shots. Shots of shoes removed for prayer, and rear-angle shots of prostrating worshipers, are considered inappropriate.

- END -

### **Writing a Letter to the Editor**

Guidelines to increase your chances of publication:

- React quickly to news of the day, negative coverage or views you support. If possible, have the letter in the hands of an editor on the same day.
- Address the letter to the organization's opinion editor.
- Keep your letter to no more than 150 to 250 words.
- State the purpose of the letter in 25 words or less.
- Pick one main topic and focus only on that one issue.
- Be authoritative. If possible, speak on behalf of a local organization in which you are involved.
- Give background information on the issue or misconception. Cite impartial and objective sources.
- Offer a reasonable and fair solution to the problem you are addressing in your letter.
- Be passionate or even controversial, but avoid rhetoric and defamation.

### **Writing an Op-Ed:**

Op-eds, or opinion columns, are among the most powerful framing vehicles. If you have a talent for writing and expressing ideas, this can be an excellent way to give a Muslim perspective on hot-button issues (or any other topic). You might also consider partnering with local Christian or Jewish leaders on an interfaith op-ed. Here are some tips for writing an op-ed:

- Check with the editors on newspaper editorial submission policy.
- Keep it short. Stick to one issue.
- No more than 800 words.
- Write the headline first.
- Make your first line a zinger.
- Pitch it to one newspaper or other media source, and let them know it is an exclusive.
- State your conclusion first and summarize at the end with a call to action.
- Express a unique opinion then base it on facts or first-hand information.
- Don't skimp on facts.
- Include a bio sentence about yourself (the author) and contact info.

### **STEPS FOR HOSTING A MOSQUE OPEN HOUSE**

1. Prepare the members of your local community by explaining the necessity of building a positive image of the mosque in the surrounding area. Let them know that the experiences of other communities have shown that a positive neighborhood image offers many benefits. Ask



for input concerning the details of when and at what time the open house should be held. There are no hard and fast rules for such things.

2. Invite local community leaders, clergy, law enforcement officials, activists, and government officials. Remember to invite the mayor, congressional representatives, the chief of police and members of the city council. These people should all receive written invitations. Follow up with a personal phone call. Letters are not enough.

3. Publicize the event by sending a well-written news release (see sample) to the local media. You may also place paid advertisements in the local newspaper. Send the news release to the religion calendar editor, the city editor and the feature editor at the newspaper. Send a release to the assignment editor at the local television stations. Also send copies to news directors at the local radio stations. Send announcements to local churches, synagogues or other houses of worship.

4. Politely inform your guests of mosque etiquette before they arrive (see “Welcome to Our Mosque” brochure). This will make them feel at ease and avoid embarrassment. Be ready to answer questions about prayer, separation of men and women and other common issues.

5. Clean the mosque. The first impression is one that will last. Make sure bathrooms are spotless. Have a mosque clean up day prior to the open house. Consider touching up areas that need painting.

6. Set up a reception area where guests can be received, told about mosque etiquette and served refreshments. Have greeters at the door to direct arriving guests. Have knowledgeable people conduct tours of the facility. Do not leave guests alone to wander about the mosque. Give each guest a name tag. Make sure sisters are available to make female guests feel welcome.

7. Select literature to be given to the guests. Avoid material with a strong political message. Do not push materials on guests. Let them select what they wish to read.

8. Post signs at appropriate locations in the facility to explain what things are or give directions.

9. Pray that your efforts will open the hearts of your guests.

You can order “Welcome to Our Mosque” brochures from CAIR that help explain aspects of American mosques to visitors. “Welcome to Our Fast-Breaking” brochures are also available if you are hosting an open iftar for interfaith guests. Please allow time for delivery.

## D. ADDITIONAL CAIR RESOURCES: CAIR MUSLIM COMMUNITY SAFETY KIT AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION GUIDE

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The “Muslim Community Safety Kit” has been developed to better equip you and your community with the knowledge necessary to protect against anti-Muslim or anti-Arab bigotry or attacks, and to secure your basic legal rights.

Available at <http://www.cair.com/ActionCenter/CommunityToolKit.aspx>

The Civic Participation Guide is designed to give you step-by-step instructions for contacting, meeting with and working with public officials.

Available at: [http://www.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/CAIR\\_Civic\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/CAIR_Civic_Guide.pdf)

## E. STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

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**As the observance of Ramadan begins, a call for respect for Muslim neighbors**

<http://www.nccusa.org/news/100811ramadanrespect.html>

New York, August 11, 2010 -- The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, its Interfaith Relations Commission and the Christian participants in the National Muslim-Christian initiative, have issued the following statement:

As our Muslim neighbors begin their observance of Ramadan with fasting, re-dedicating themselves to God and God's service, we as Christians are troubled by fellow Christians in the United States who are expressing intolerance against Muslims in words and deeds.

Christ calls us to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39). It is this commandment, more than the simple bonds of our common humanity, which is the basis for our relationship with Muslims around the world.

Grounded in this commitment, we question the anti-Muslim tenor of actions and speech regarding the building of Cordoba House and mosque near the site of the former World Trade Center in New York City. We are keenly aware that many Muslims, as well as Jews, Christians, Hindus, and others, lost family members in the attacks on September 11, 2001. We recognize, as does the Muslim community around the world, that it was a group of Muslims who embraced terrorism and teachings counter to the Qur'an and Islam that carried out this action. We stand with the majority of Muslims—including American Muslims—who are working against such radical influences in their communities. They have our support for building the Cordoba House as a living monument to mark the tragedy of 9/11 through a community center dedicated to learning, compassion, and respect for all people. This effort is consistent with our country's principle of freedom of religion, and the rights all citizens should enjoy.

We also decry the anti-Muslim actions and plans of many church leaders and members, such as those of the Dove World Outreach Center in the U.S.A. Misguided or confused about the love of neighbor by which Christ calls us to live, leaders and members of this church and others are engaged in harassment of Muslims, and in the planning of an "International Burn the Qur'an Day," to be held on September 11th. Such open acts of hatred are not a witness to Christian faith, but a grave trespass against the ninth commandment, a bearing of false witness against our neighbor. They contradict the ministry of Christ and the witness of the church in the world.

We ask all Christians to promote respect and love of neighbor, and to speak and work against extremist ideas, working with Muslims as appropriate, in order to live out the commandment to love our neighbor, and to promote peace.

The National Muslim-Christian Initiative brings together 14 religious bodies from various streams of Muslim and Christian communities, who seek to enhance mutual understanding, respect, appreciation and support of what is Sacred for each other through dialogue, education and sustained visible encounters that foster and nurture relationships.

Since its founding in 1950, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA has been the leading force for ecumenical cooperation among Christians in the United States. The NCC's 36 member faith groups -- from a wide spectrum of Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, Evangelical, historic African American and Living Peace churches -- include 45 million persons in more than 100,000 local congregations in communities across the nation.

NCC News contact: Philip E. Jenks, 212-870-2228 (office), 646-853-4212 (cell),  
pjenks@nccusa.org

## F. STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FROM NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS

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Press Release: NAE Urges Cancellation of Planned Qu'ran Burning  
<http://www.nae.net/news-and-events/469-press-release-nae-urges-cancellation-of-planned-quran-burning>

For Immediate Release: July 29, 2010  
Contact: Sarah Kropp, 202-789-1011

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) encourages increased understanding and reconciliation between those of different faiths and backgrounds, and it laments efforts that work against a just and peaceful society. The plans recently announced by a Florida group to burn copies of the Qu'ran on September 11 show disrespect for our Muslim neighbors and would exacerbate tensions between Christians and Muslims throughout the world. The NAE urges the cancellation of the burning.

NAE President Leith Anderson said, “It sounds like the proposed Qu’ran burning is rooted in revenge. Yet the Bible says that Christians should ‘make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else’ (1 Thessalonians 5:15).”

In 1996 the NAE addressed religious persecution saying that “If people are to fulfill the obligations of conscience, history teaches the urgent need to foster respect and protection for the right of all persons to practice their faith.” [1] In the same resolution, the NAE pledged to “address religious persecution carried out by our Christian brothers and sisters whenever this occurs around the world.”

The NAE calls on its members to cultivate relationships of trust and respect with our neighbors of other faiths. God created human beings in his image, and therefore all should be treated with dignity and respect. The proposed burning of Qu’rans would be profoundly offensive to Muslims worldwide, just as Christians would be insulted by the burning of Bibles. Such an act would escalate tensions between members of the two faiths in the United States and around the world.

“We have to recognize that fighting fire with fire only builds a bigger fire,” said Joel Hunter, Senior Pastor of Northland, A Church Distributed, in Orlando, Fla., and member of the NAE Board of Directors. “Love is the water that will eventually quench the destruction.”

Anderson said, “The most powerful statement by the organizers of the planned September 11th bonfire would be to call it off in the name and love of Jesus Christ.”

[1] National Association of Evangelicals, Worldwide Religious Persecution 1996. See <http://www.nae.net/government-affairs/policy-resolutions/413-worldwide-religious-persecution-1996>

## **G. STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR PARK 51 FROM 31 RABBIS AND OTHER JEWISH LEADERS**

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This call has been initiated by 31 Jewish leaders, including Rabbis from a very broad spectrum of Jewish life -- Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, Reform, and Renewal:

Rabbis Rebecca Alpert (Temple University); Dennis Beck-Berman; Leila Gal Berner; Amy Eilberg (Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning, St. Paul, MN); Michael Feinberg; Laura Geller (Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills); Everett Gendler (Emeritus, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA ; Emeritus, Temple Emanuel, Lowell, MA); Roberto D. Graetz (Temple Isaiah, Lafayette,CA); Margaret Holub; Nancy Fuchs Kreimer; Joyce Galaski; Marc Gopin; Peter Knobel; Mordechai Liebling; Ellen Lippmann (Kolot Chayeinu); Or Rose; Brant Rosen; Jeff Roth; Zalman Schachter-Shalomi; Gerald Serotta; David Shneyer; Burton L. Visotzky (Jewish Theological Seminary); Brian Walt (Taanit Tzedek-Jewish Fast for Gaza); Arthur Waskow (The Shalom Center); Sheila Peltz Weinberg (Institute for Jewish Spirituality); and Cherie Brown (National Coalition-Building Inst); Jeffrey Dekro; Arlene Goldbard (Shalom Center president);

Cindy Greenberg (Shalom Center board and Kolot Chayeinu president); Judith Plaskow; and Prof. Russell G. Pearce (Fordham University).

(All affiliations are noted for identification only.)

The statement follows:

As Jews committed to religious freedom, to honest dialogue, to peacemaking, and to the celebration of the One God, we strongly support the plans of the Cordoba Initiative to build a mosque and Islamic cultural center at the tip of Manhattan, near the site of the World Trade Centers destroyed on 9/11/01.

The Cordoba Initiative took that name precisely to celebrate the history of that city and neighboring areas of Andalusia in what is now Spain, where for centuries Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived together not only in mutual tolerance but in mutual harmony.

The leaders of the Córdoba Initiative, Imam Faisal Abdul Rauf and his wife Daisy Khan, have written and spoken innumerable times about the importance of interfaith dialogue and shared work for peace among the Abrahamic communities. They have planned the mosque not simply because they have a "right" to build there, but because they want it to be a beacon of Muslim peacemaking in direct critique of the terrorist violence that destroyed the Twin Towers on 9/11/01.

To affirm that we support the building of the Cordoba Initiative cultural center and mosque, we invite all Jews of good will who can physically gather at noon on Thursday, August 5, at its intended site at 45 Park Place, to join voices in a serious and devoted vigil. (Take #1 subway to Park Place.)

At the same time, we think it necessary to make clear our deep distress at the decision of the Anti-Defamation League to oppose these plans. Though the ADL has often done good work, in this specific case -- whatever its intention -- it has undermined those very adherents of Islam who uphold the Quran's teachings of peace, who condemn terrorism, and who share with some Jews, some Christians, and some others a commitment to peaceful dialogue.

The ADL's action disparages Islam's commitment to the Unity of God. And it risks encouraging hatred for all of Islam by Jews and others in American society.

This behavior by the ADL cannot be justified on the basis of the hostile reactions of some New Yorkers - a minority of the nearby neighborhood -- while the neighborhood community council and hundreds of family members of the dead of 9/11 have endorsed the mosque. The ADL's action may indeed help to fire up exactly those unthinking emotions filled with rage and ignorance.

So we also invite Jews to call the Anti-Defamation League to join in briefly, politely, and firmly asking the ADL to change its position. Its phone number is 212/885-7700. To reach the office of Abraham Foxman, its director, press "1" and then enter "Fox."

And to join in signing this statement, please click [here](#).

Please forward this message to your friends, congregants, and co-workers. Thank you!

With blessings of shalom, salaam, shantih -- peace!

#### H. STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR PARK 51 FROM NEW YORK CITY MAYOR BLOOMBERG:

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The following are Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's remarks as delivered on Governors Island:

"We have come here to Governors Island to stand where the earliest settlers first set foot in New Amsterdam, and where the seeds of religious tolerance were first planted. We've come here to see the inspiring symbol of liberty that, more than 250 years later, would greet millions of immigrants in the harbor, and we come here to state as strongly as ever - this is the freest City in the world. That's what makes New York special and different and strong.

"Our doors are open to everyone - everyone with a dream and a willingness to work hard and play by the rules. New York City was built by immigrants, and it is sustained by immigrants - by people from more than a hundred different countries speaking more than two hundred different languages and professing every faith. And whether your parents were born here, or you came yesterday, you are a New Yorker.

"We may not always agree with every one of our neighbors. That's life and it's part of living in such a diverse and dense city. But we also recognize that part of being a New Yorker is living with your neighbors in mutual respect and tolerance. It was exactly that spirit of openness and acceptance that was attacked on 9/11.

"On that day, 3,000 people were killed because some murderous fanatics didn't want us to enjoy the freedom to profess our own faiths, to speak our own minds, to follow our own dreams and to live our own lives.

"Of all our precious freedoms, the most important may be the freedom to worship as we wish. And it is a freedom that, even here in a City that is rooted in Dutch tolerance, was hard-won over many years. In the mid-1650s, the small Jewish community living in Lower Manhattan petitioned Dutch Governor Peter Stuyvesant for the right to build a synagogue - and they were turned down.

"In 1657, when Stuyvesant also prohibited Quakers from holding meetings, a group of non-Quakers in Queens signed the Flushing Remonstrance, a petition in defense of the right of Quakers and others to freely practice their religion. It was perhaps the first formal, political

petition for religious freedom in the American colonies – and the organizer was thrown in jail and then banished from New Amsterdam.

“In the 1700s, even as religious freedom took hold in America, Catholics in New York were effectively prohibited from practicing their religion – and priests could be arrested. Largely as a result, the first Catholic parish in New York City was not established until the 1780’s – St. Peter’s on Barclay Street, which still stands just one block north of the World Trade Center site and one block south of the proposed mosque and community center.

“This morning, the City’s Landmark Preservation Commission unanimously voted not to extend landmark status to the building on Park Place where the mosque and community center are planned. The decision was based solely on the fact that there was little architectural significance to the building. But with or without landmark designation, there is nothing in the law that would prevent the owners from opening a mosque within the existing building. The simple fact is this building is private property, and the owners have a right to use the building as a house of worship.

“The government has no right whatsoever to deny that right – and if it were tried, the courts would almost certainly strike it down as a violation of the U.S. Constitution. Whatever you may think of the proposed mosque and community center, lost in the heat of the debate has been a basic question – should government attempt to deny private citizens the right to build a house of worship on private property based on their particular religion? That may happen in other countries, but we should never allow it to happen here. This nation was founded on the principle that the government must never choose between religions, or favor one over another.

“The World Trade Center Site will forever hold a special place in our City, in our hearts. But we would be untrue to the best part of ourselves – and who we are as New Yorkers and Americans – if we said ‘no’ to a mosque in Lower Manhattan.

“Let us not forget that Muslims were among those murdered on 9/11 and that our Muslim neighbors grieved with us as New Yorkers and as Americans. We would betray our values – and play into our enemies’ hands – if we were to treat Muslims differently than anyone else. In fact, to cave to popular sentiment would be to hand a victory to the terrorists – and we should not stand for that.

“For that reason, I believe that this is an important test of the separation of church and state as we may see in our lifetime – as important a test – and it is critically important that we get it right.

“On September 11, 2001, thousands of first responders heroically rushed to the scene and saved tens of thousands of lives. More than 400 of those first responders did not make it out alive. In rushing into those burning buildings, not one of them asked ‘What God do you pray to?’ ‘What beliefs do you hold?’

“The attack was an act of war – and our first responders defended not only our City but also our country and our Constitution. We do not honor their lives by denying the very Constitutional rights they died protecting. We honor their lives by defending those rights – and the freedoms that the terrorists attacked.

“Of course, it is fair to ask the organizers of the mosque to show some special sensitivity to the situation – and in fact, their plan envisions reaching beyond their walls and building an interfaith community. By doing so, it is my hope that the mosque will help to bring our City even closer together and help repudiate the false and repugnant idea that the attacks of 9/11 were in any way consistent with Islam. Muslims are as much a part of our City and our country as the people of any faith and they are as welcome to worship in Lower Manhattan as any other group. In fact, they have been worshipping at the site for the better part of a year, as is their right.

“The local community board in Lower Manhattan voted overwhelming to support the proposal and if it moves forward, I expect the community center and mosque will add to the life and vitality of the neighborhood and the entire City.

“Political controversies come and go, but our values and our traditions endure – and there is no neighborhood in this City that is off limits to God’s love and mercy, as the religious leaders here with us today can attest.”

## I. HOW TO HOST A ‘DIALOGUE PARTY’

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Source: Unity Productions Foundation (UPF)



**Join a nationwide campaign to bring people of different faiths together using films about Muslims to stimulate discussion and promote understanding**

**Organize a Dialogue Party:** Bring people together and host a dialogue using PBS documentaries about Muslims to build greater understanding.

A Dialogue Party is a group of at least 125 people that come together to watch a UPF film, then divide up into diverse groups of 5 to discuss it with a facilitator, and have every



participant evaluate the experience. [CAIR note: events held with fewer people can also be successful.]

#### **What we provide:**

- We will provide two DVDs of the film
- An online/phone orientation for the people you choose as the facilitator
- A dialogue packet with evaluation forms
- A list of possible speakers you may want to invite to enhance your event.

#### **Films Offered:**

- *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*
- *Cities of Light: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Spain*
- *Talking Through Walls*
- *On a Wing and a Prayer*
- *Allah Made Me Funny*

Hosting a party requires orientation by 20,000 Dialogues phone training and online tutorial. It also requires you to fill out the [Dialogue Party application](#) and tell us more about your event.

**What is it 20,000 Dialogues?** 20,000 Dialogues is a nationwide grassroots interfaith dialogue project using UPF films to spark dialogue and discussion amongst people of different faiths with the goal of building peace through greater understanding.

Visit: <http://www.20000dialogues.org>

For any questions and to help with organizing your dialogue, please contact Project Director Daniel Tutt at 202.262.1304 or at [Daniel@upf.tv](mailto:Daniel@upf.tv)

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### **Handout: The Islamic Calendar and Holiday Dates**

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[You may copy this text and place it on your own institutions letterhead. We do request that you include the source information.]

#### **The Islamic Calendar and Holiday Dates**

(Source: Council on American-Islamic Relations, [www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com))

Islam follows a lunar calendar, which is approximately 11 days shorter than the solar Gregorian calendar. Ramadan is the ninth month on the Muslim lunar calendar in which Muslims fast during daylight hours and try to increase their prayer, generosity and kindness.

Muslims observe two main holidays. The first is called Eid al Fitr (Festival of the Fast Breaking) and the second is called Eid al Adha (Festival of the Sacrifice), which

commemorates the Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son for God, and coincides with the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

Because the months on a lunar calendar (such as Ramadan) begin about 11 days earlier each year in relation to Gregorian months, the month of fasting moves slowly through the seasons, each year a little earlier than the last. This year, Muslims began fasting on August 10 or 11 (depending on their locations), which means that Eid al-Fitr, the Islamic holiday that comes at the end of Ramadan, may occur on or near September 11. [Actual dates are determined by calculating or sighting the new moon. The Eid is also possible on September 9 or 10.]

We are explaining this calendar in order to preclude any possible misunderstanding that could result from seeing Muslims observe a holiday that happens to fall this year near the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

In 2000 and 2001, Eid al-Fitr occurred near the Christmas and Hanukkah holidays. This was seen as an opportunity to build interfaith relations. In 2003, Eid-al-Fitr fell near Thanksgiving and many conversations turned toward things all Americans have to give thanks for. It would be better to follow those examples than give in to the politics of fear.

Incidentally, since the Hebrew calendar is also based on a lunar calendar, the dates for Jewish holidays change each year. This year, the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah falls on September 9 and 10.