

## A Year of Struggle

by Jacob Bender  
 CAIR-Philadelphia  
 Executive Director

Back on January 21, 2017, the day after Donald J. Trump was sworn in as the 45th President of the United States of America, I marched with CAIR National Director Nihad Awad and perhaps a million other people through the streets of Washington, DC, to protest Trump's election and his policies of division, fear, and open bigotry.

Since the start of the last campaign for the American presidency, Muslims have been the main (although unsurprisingly, not the only) target of a wide range of Trump advisors, media pundits, and elected officials. Their well-funded campaign of hate has coincided with a documented rise of Islamophobia and hate crimes against Muslim targets across the country, in many cases including violence.

New FBI hate crimes statistics show that almost one-quarter of the victims of anti-religious hate crimes in the past year were Muslim. According to the FBI report, Jews and Muslims were the two most common targets of religiously-motivated hate crimes, with anti-Muslim hate crimes rising by nearly 20 percent.

Add to this the administration's repeated and unconstitutional attempts at a "Muslim Travel Ban," the moral blindness toward millions of refugees, and the draconian threats of a "Muslim Registry," and it is clear why many in the American Muslim community report that they are now a community living in fear.

CAIR's promise to you is that we will respond to that fear. On the one hand by providing the Muslim community with the organizing tools to overcome



their fear, and on the other hand by joining with allies in Christian, Jewish, and social justice communities to say "NO!" to the disastrous policies of this administration: No to Muslim Travel Bans! No to a Muslim Registry! No to turning away desperate refugees! No to religious and racial profiling! No to denials of climate change! No to the cutback of medical services! No to the continuation of wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East! No to the unconditional support of Israel and its occupation of Palestinian lands! And no to the building of walls of separation and subjugation!

These are indeed trying times. And as if we needed any further proof of this, intake calls to our office reporting incidents of anti-Muslim workplace discrimination, government violations of civil rights, and schoolyard bullying have increased 25% over last year.

The good news is that CAIR-Philadelphia has responded with expanded community organizing and a range of exciting and innovative programs that are described and illus-

trated in these pages.

Our office is now blessed to include—in addition to Leena Jaffer, our indispensable Office Manager—two new and talented colleagues: Timothy Welbeck, Esq., our Civil Rights Attorney, and Ahmet Selim Tekelioglu, PhD., our Director of Outreach and Education. The four of us—Muslims, Christian, and Jew—are dedicated to serving the Muslim community to the fullest extent possible during these difficult days.

None of these voluminous activities, however, can take place without the support of your Muslim community and its allies. So we turn to you, dear friends, to help us in our efforts to challenge the voices of violence and hate, and to secure the Muslim future in an America of justice, peace, and mercy.

Please send your tax-deductible and *zakah*-eligible donation today in the return envelope, or go online to donate at: <http://pa.cair.com/donate/>

Thank you,



Jacob Bender



# 2017 Civil Rights Roundup

by Timothy Welbeck, Esq  
CAIR-Philadelphia Staff Attorney



This present era in United States history has revealed that America is who she has shown herself to be, not who she has said she is. The Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights for all their inspiring language and talk of liberty in addition to “certain unalienable rights” amounts to promises of freedom, but American history has taught many people of color and American Muslims that a promise of freedom does not necessarily amount to a guarantee of freedom. The Trump Administration has continued this tradition by seeking to establish policies that disenfranchise people of color, Muslims, women, the LGBT community, immigrants and refugees, and the poor.

In his iconic “I Have a Dream” speech, delivered at the 1963 March on Washington, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, “We have come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.” He added, “It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note...”

In a sense, we view our work at CAIR as a means in which to compel America to make good on its promises of freedom and religious liberty.

On August 1st, I began work at the Philadelphia Chapter of CAIR, and in

so doing continued the organization’s storied history of defending the civil rights and civil liberties of the Muslim community, and working towards the eradication of Islamophobia. What follows is a summation of some of the more important work CAIR has done in that time in advancing this cause.

## FREEDOM OF ACCOMMODATION

A Muslim man called our office and complained that his employer would not allow him to take the necessary time away from work so that he could go on *haji*. I wrote a letter to his employer and followed up via telephone to ensure his employer allowed him to do so without penalty. The employer agreed, and he successfully completed his *haji*.

## FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Our former Civil Rights Attorney Ryan Houldin worked in conjunction with other organizations and law firms to facilitate an agreement between the United States Justice Department and the Bensalem Township to resolve a dispute stemming from the Township’s denial of zoning approval which would have permitted Bensalem Masjid to build a mosque on three adjoining parcels of land in the Township. Bensalem Masjid and its advocates argued the refusal violated the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (RLUIPA), which was enacted in part to prevent religious institutions from experiencing overly burdensome zoning restrictions. The Justice Department agreed that the Township behaved in a discriminatory manner, and filed suit against it. This agreement represents an enormous victory for religious liberty, particularly as it relates to the Muslim community of Bensalem and its surrounding areas. It is our hope the decision of the Justice Department will set a lasting precedent as well.

## GOVERNMENT OVERREACH

A Muslim presented to our offices reporting that a police officer in

plain clothes and an unmarked car, approached him at work and arrested him. The man reported that the officer subsequently took him to a local police station; however, the officer never formally charged him with any crime, did not finger print him or process him. He was detained for a total of ten days, nine of which were in solitary confinement, then ultimately released without any formal charges brought against him. Our office is in the process of filing a false imprisonment suit on the man’s behalf.

## COALITION BUILDING

Our office joined the Montgomery County Fair Policing ad hoc committee, which includes representatives from the Norristown NAACP and People Power representatives. The ad hoc committee convenes to strategize and implement “Know Your Rights” seminars in addition to fair policing workshops in high schools within Montgomery County, along with other policy recommendations that would result in more equitable policing of marginalized citizens in Montgomery County.

Our office participated in a lobbying effort at the state capitol, along with other affiliates of CAIR, to solidify partnerships with state officials to further protect the civil rights and liberties of Muslims throughout Pennsylvania. We met with the Pennsylvania Human Rights Commission to discuss further working in partnership to fight against Islamophobia. We also met with a number of state legislators, regarding their support for the proposed legislation to renew Pennsylvania’s hate crime law, in addition to sharing some of the unique concerns the Muslim community in middle Pennsylvania. Lastly, our coalition met with Pennsylvania Department of Homeland Security regarding how we may forge a more sustainable alliance between the Muslim community and government agencies.





# In the Community

By Ahmet Selim Tekelioglu, PhD

CAIR-Philadelphia Outreach  
and Education Director

My first few months at CAIR-Philadelphia witnessed arguably the most beneficial learning curve in my life; and I say this despite having earned a doctorate in Political Science and worked as a professor in several universities.

On the interfaith scene, I continue to meet wonderful souls who are invested in building a mutually enriching future in America, even when it required engaging in difficult conversations.

In civil liberties work, led by Timothy, we often have to witness injustice and speak against bigotry, close-mindedness, and hatred. And yet, it is that amazing spirit of engaging in human rights work, along with a decisive, unapologetically Muslim American confidence, that helps us persevere in these trying times. I remind myself of this every single day.

## OUR EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

One of my most significant accomplishments during my first three months as Outreach and Education Director was the completion of our brochure describing the workshops, seminars, and courses we are offering

free of charge to institutions throughout the Greater Delaware Valley. (A brief summary of the booklet can be found on the next page.)

Additionally, Timothy and I have conducted workshops on “Civic Engagement” at the Islamic Society of Greater Harrisburg, and I have visited United Muslim Masjid and North Penn Mosque, speaking with community members and listening to their concerns.

## ADVOCATING FOR JUSTICE

I also made two trips to Harrisburg to engage with government officials and politicians in preparation for Muslim Capitol Day, which is now scheduled for April 24, 2018. While in Harrisburg, our group of Muslim activists led by Advisory Board Member Aaysha Noor met with Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera; our talk focused on anti-Muslim bias in school curriculum and Islamophobic incidents in our schools. We held a follow up meeting in November with Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) and the Office of Safe Schools to discuss future concrete steps. We are working with multiple agencies and allies to ensure CAIR-Philadelphia contributes to anti-bullying efforts state-wide and can provide cultural competency trainings for educators.

At CAIR-Philadelphia we especially value building interfaith and inter-group alliances. Our chapter has been very vocal in opposing injustice against any group, and in speaking out about such crucial issues as the climate crisis. We are engaging multiple non-profit and state-wide agencies to build these alliances of virtue, much alike in the example of our Prophet’s (pbuh) role with Meccan institution of *hifl al-fudl*.

Part of my responsibilities as Education and Outreach Director is to visit mosques, get to know the community, and on occasion, given the honor of delivering the Friday *khutba*/ sermon, in which I usually highlight the Islamic values of social justice and peace. I believe it is imperative for us to emphasize these key tenets of our faith time and again.



## UPHOLDING A NOBLE PRINCIPLE.

Before I close my letter, I would like to request your duas/ prayers for a new chapter in our education and outreach services. Through the Islamic Community Center of Lancaster, I applied to be a volunteer chaplain with the Lancaster County Prison. Muslim inmates there have not had a jum’a service in a long time. Alhamdulillah/All Praise is to God, just recently we learned that my application is approved. Please pray for our incarcerated brothers and sisters and for the success of this new endeavour. It is our Muslim duty, brothers and sisters in faith, to protect both our rights as well as the rights of all people facing prejudice, persecution, or poverty. I am convinced that it is this simple and noble principle that will carry our society away from bigotry, hatred and short-sightedness.

I ask you to pray for all of us at CAIR-Philadelphia so we can serve you in the best way possible!



With Imam Mikal Shabazz of Masjidullah

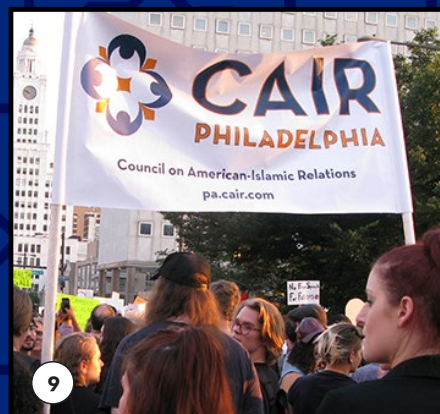


# CAIR-Philadelphia 2017 | The Year in Photos





# CAIR-Philadelphia 2017 | The Year in Photos





#### PHOTOS FROM REVERSE PAGE:

[1] Linda Sasour was the keynote speaker at our 2017 Annual Banquet. [2] Jacob Bender testifying at a Philadelphia City Council session on Islamophobia. [3] Marchers demonstrating as part of a dramatic presentation at the Annual Banquet. [4] Tiffany Chang Lawson, Director of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, leading a workshop on "Civic Engagement" for the Muslim community in Harrisburg, organized by CAIR. [5] Gov. Tom Wolf with Salima Suswell, CAIR-Philadelphia Executive Committee Member, at an Eid al-Adha Dinner at the Governor's Residence in Harrisburg; Salima was recently appointed to serve on the Pennsylvania Commission for Women, the first Muslim woman so honored. [6] Aaysha Noor, CAIR-Philadelphia Advisory Board Member, and Timothy Welbeck, Esq., our Staff Attorney, meeting in Harrisburg with PA State Senator Lawrence M. Farnese Jr., in support of "hate crime" legislation. [7] Jacob Bender speaking at a vigil in memory of Nabra Hassanen, a 17-year-old Muslim young woman who was abducted and murdered while walking home from her mosque in Reston, VA. [8] PA State Senator Sharif Street speaking at our 2017 Annual Banquet. [9] CAIR-Philadelphia at a demonstration after white-supremacists marched in Charlottesville, VA, leaving one person dead, and President Trump equated the white "nationalists" with anti-racist religious protestors. [10] CAIR-Philadelphia helped to organize an event at Philadelphia International Airport and thousands of people turned out to protest President Trump's "Muslim Travel Ban 1.0". [11] CAIR-Philadelphia at a march for "Climate Justice" in Washington, DC. [12] CAIR-Philadelphia and Muslim community members at the Annual Philadelphia "Interfaith Peace Walk." [13] CAIR-Philadelphia lawyers were part of the legal team that helped the Muslim community of Bensalem overcome local opposition to the construction of a mosque. [14] Over 30 interfaith clergy and religious leaders from many faiths at CAIR-Philadelphia's "Interfaith Iftar Dinner" at Masjidullah during last Ramadan.

## CAIR-Philadelphia's Free Courses, Seminars and Workshops

*"To each of you We prescribed a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation [united in religion], but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; so race to [all that is] good." Qur'an 5:48*

In an attempt to put the Qur'anic injunction to "know one another" into practice, CAIR-Philadelphia is offering free courses, seminars, and workshop throughout the Greater Valley Region. Our teacher/facilitators—Director of Education Dr. Ahmet Selim Tekelioglu, and Iftekhhar Hussain, Asheq Fazlullah, and Margarita Miriam Abuawadeh—are all experts in their fields and committed and passionate educators and have taught these courses dozens of times throughout the region. Our courses cover such topics as:

Islamic beliefs and practice;

The accomplishments of Muslim civilization;

The history of the American Muslim community;

The legacy of African American Muslims;

CAIR-Philadelphia Executive Director Jacob Bender brings his unique background in interfaith relations with two seminars: the

first comparing and contrasting Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, and the second on "Jewish Power: Myth or Reality."

Finally, Timothy Welbeck, CAIR-Philadelphia Staff Attorney, delivers legal expertise and civil rights experience with "Know Your Rights" and anti-bullying workshops and seminars on the history of American racism, police misconduct, and media manipulation.

All of these workshops, seminars, and courses are offered by CAIR-Philadelphia without cost to communities throughout the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area and the Greater Delaware Valley.

To bring one of these exciting educational experiences to your educational or religious institution, call the CAIR office at 267.515.6710, or email us at [info@philadelphia.cair.com](mailto:info@philadelphia.cair.com).

We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

SAVE THE DATE!



**12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BANQUET**  
**MARCH 10, 2018, 5:30-9:30 PM**  
**SPRINGFIELD COUNTRY CLUB**

*Defending our Freedom ~ Living our Faith*

**DALIA MOGAHED**  
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

PLUS  
A SPECIAL  
CONCURRENT  
PROGRAM  
FOR  
THE  
KIDS

**MO AMER**  
ENTERTAINMENT

