

al-bayan

FALL 2013

“ I HAD TO
DEFEND MY
OWN ACTIONS
AGAINST
THE MUSLIM
COMMUNITY. ”

MUSLIMS IN THE MILITARY

THE MUSLIM STUDENT PUBLICATION AT UC BERKELEY VOLUME 16: ISSUE 1

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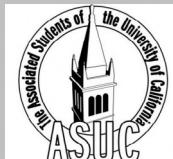
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Al-Bayan means "The Clarification" in contemporary Arabic and "Eloquent Speech" in classical Arabic. The goal of this magazine is a convergence of both, to clarify issues pertinent to the Muslim community in the most eloquent of speech. Befitting the dynamic Muslim community in one of the world's premiere intellectual hotspots that Berkeley is, *Al-Bayan* continues to grow and expand.

We ask for your duas and your feedback! Insha'allah, we serve our purpose to the best of our ability with the help of the Almighty.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

This semester, we ran into an unexpected yet unusually welcome problem: our website crashed from unprecedented traffic. As we scrambled to fix it, we were beyond excited that our message was reaching so many people. Furyal Mahmood's article, "19 (Real) Frequently Asked Questions for Hijabi Women," which featured a hilarious compilation of such accurate gifs, had gone viral. It received over 4,000 likes and was tweeted over 80 times, with many commenters responding back and forth to each other. "I didn't realize some of the questions were this silly," one commenter said.

We hope that just as Furyal's article gave that commenter a new perspective on the American Muslim experience (in that case, for hijabis specifically), this issue of *Al-Bayan* gives you a taste of what Berkeley Muslims are talking about. These topics range from the more serious issue of how to deal with the media's stereotyping of Muslims, to the unique experiences of Muslims serving in the military, to just-plain-fun style reviews of well-dressed community members. We hope that together, these articles add to the Muslim American community's written narrative.

I also wanted to take moment to thank our dedicated board and staff for making this magazine come together, both in print and web forms. Please check our website, www.albayanmag.org, for regular content and join the conversation by leaving comments!

We welcome guest contributions. If you have an article, poem, or photo piece that you'd like to submit, or if you have any questions or feedback, please email albayanmag@gmail.com.

Happy reading!

Assalamu Alaykum (may peace be upon you)

Noma Kahf
Editor-in-Chief

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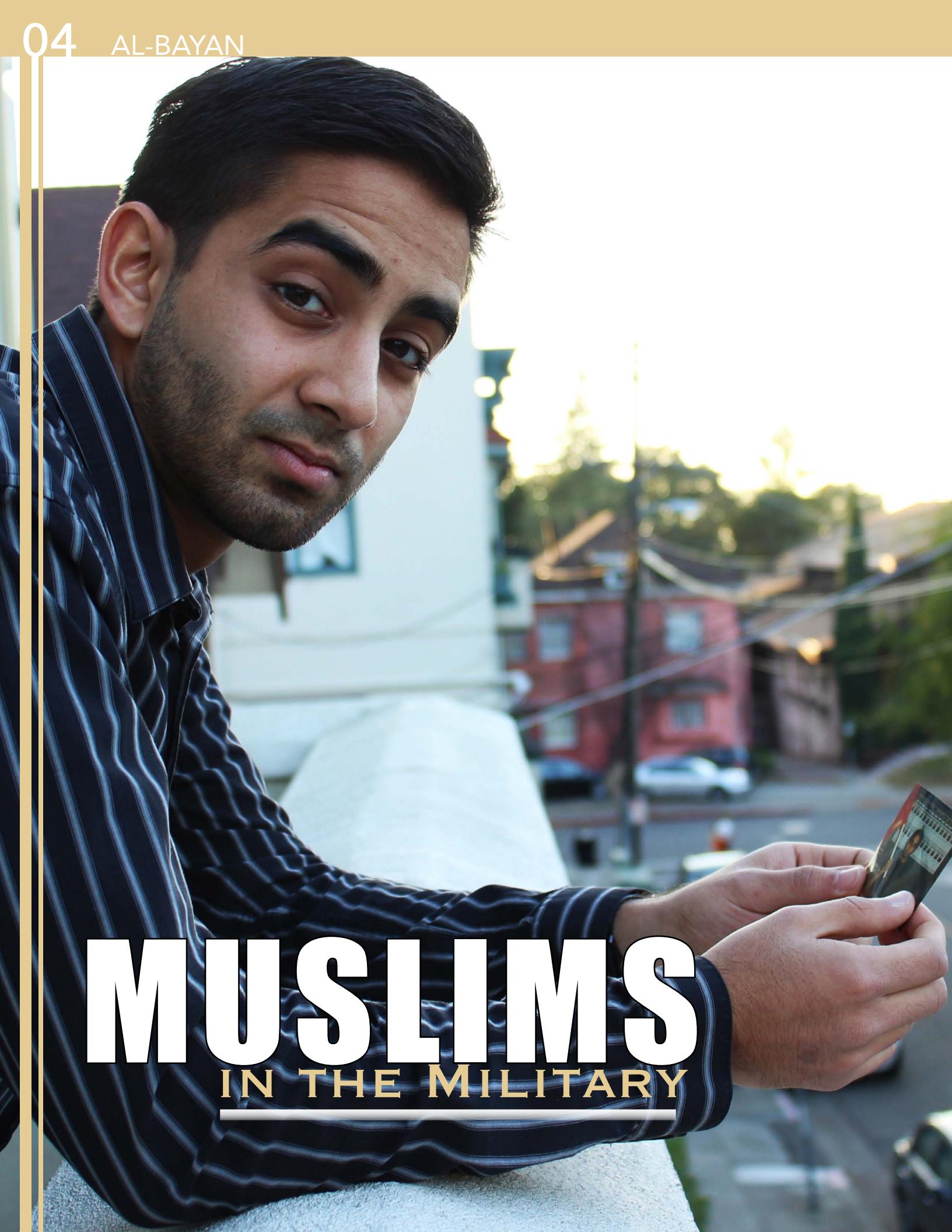
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MUSLIMS IN THE MILITARY

**Article by Hana Ghanim
Photos by Sana Saifuddin**

What would you do if both an Afghan soldier and an American soldier were shot down? Who would you help first? How can you betray your roots, your country, your religion? How can you agree with American foreign policy? How can you support drone strikes?

These are the types of misguided questions Muslims in the military face regularly.

However, these misconceptions didn't affect Tian Soepangat's decision to join the Navy for five years.

"It was a spur-of-the-moment kind of thing," Tian said. "They came to my high school to do a presentation, and the next month I just signed up."

Tian has not faced any criticism from his community or the military. In fact, he believes the Navy was very "accommodating" of his beliefs.

"They gave me time to go pray, and sometimes when we were out on deployment, we could go to the masjid," he said. "Last deployment, I was in Bahrain and I was able to have Iftar with the locals. My boss in the Navy was on deployment during Hajj [in] Saudi Arabia and he got to do Hajj."

Cal State East Bay senior Adeeb Ahmad signed up for the Marine Corps delayed entry program at the age of 17.

"It was a rough time in my life and the discipline and sense of brotherhood was very appealing at the time, more so than the Muslim community, unfortunately," Adeeb said. "My mother was against it because she was concerned for my safety. My father was okay with it because it did make me more disciplined and well behaved."

For six months, he tutored other recruits and helped them pass the

ASVAB, an aptitude battery test. However, he left the Marine Corps one week before leaving for basic training.

Unlike Tian, for the duration of the period of his association with the military, Adeeb received much criticism from his community.

"My friends would verbally attack me, which turned me off to the Muslim community [even] more," he said. "Imam Mustafa Umar was a dear friend of mine at the time and helped convince me to intern at CAIR and spend more time at the masjid. After my internship was over, I decided to leave the Marine Corps before my contract was locked in."

Despite his departure from the military, Adeeb still felt disconnected from the Muslim community.

"I felt like I didn't belong to the Muslim community anymore because people assumed I was fighting in wars and supporting the killing of Muslims, even though I was enlisting under the reserves as a legal services specialist," he said. "I felt more accepted by the military community than my own community."

Both Tian and Adeeb agree that contrary to what the Muslim community assumed, the practice of Islam was actually encouraged rather than prohibited in the military. Furthermore, they have never felt discriminated against or criticized for being Muslim.

"It was actually encouraged for me to tell people about my religion," Tian said. "On my last deployment we had a Catholic chaplain, and he had a program where every day [someone read] a different prayer. Every Wednesdays at night, I would do a prayer and read something from the Quran so that everyone could hear it."

However, Tian admits there was some hardship when it came to keeping up with Islam.

"Fasting was hard, but it was doable. I spent the Ramadan [before last]

on deployment in the Persian gulf. I worked in the engine rooms, so it was like 110 degrees every day. [Also,] it can be really difficult, because of all the temptations and peer pressure that surrounds the stereotypical military lifestyle. We work long hours and when they're deployed for 7 months at sea, the first thing sailors want to do after they pull into a foreign port is go to a bar to drink and party. It's really easy for people to fall into that lifestyle especially if they're young and single and weak-hearted, but that's a problem for any pious person not just Muslims specifically," he said. "But it was good for da'wah. When I tell [my colleagues] I'm fasting, and they see the struggle I'm going through, it would actually make them want to know more. I had to learn my own religion to be able to tell them."

While Tian and Adeeb were grateful for the military community's support of their religious practice, Adeeb was disheartened at the harsh judgments he faced from the Muslim community.

"I had to defend my own actions against the Muslim community," Adeeb said. "If it wasn't for my sheikh talking to me and my amazing internship experience at CAIR, I would have definitely stayed in the Marine Corps and had a very strong negative opinion of the general Muslim community."

Nevertheless, both Tian and Adeeb feel their experience in the military has affected their future goals.

Adeeb has recently completed an EMT course and plans on doing his masters in Emergency Service Administration after working. He wants to work for emergency/disaster relief agencies with the federal government.

Tian, inspired by his service as an engineer on his ship, is currently studying engineering at Laney College in Oakland, and hopes to transfer to Berkeley in the future.

"If it wasn't for the Navy, I would have really gone a different path. I wasn't really good in school; I only did the bare minimum," Tian said. "After the Navy, I found out what I wanted to do, and it really strengthened my religion."

“ It was actually encouraged for me to tell people about my religion. ”





TAKING A STEP IN SADIA'S SHOES

A look into the daily life of Sadia Saifuddin

Article by Furyal Mahmood

Photos by Husna Hadi

For Sadia Saifuddin, every day brings a new schedule, new struggles, and new opportunities, but the life of this UC Student Regent-Designate comes with high demands. Sadia often finds herself immersed in the works of her professional life, while, at times, struggling to maintain her personal life. The daily grind for this inspirational, tenacious woman is one to admire on a professional, academic, and religious basis. However, Sadia Saifuddin makes it clear that her secret to developing a rewarding lifestyle lies in developing healthy habits and a strong work ethic.

"I personally don't believe that you need to sacrifice or jeopardize your health for your work"

At the core of her essential habits, Sadia ensures that she fulfills 3 basic quotas: eating as healthy as possible, exercising at least 3 or 4 days a week, and ensuring a minimum of 7 or 8 hours of sleep every night. Sadia explains that these fundamental elements are key to having a "balanced approach to life", although she admits that her daily schedule didn't always prioritize them. During her junior year, when she was an ASUC senator, her habits were not reflective of a healthy lifestyle. Instead, they were causing her to feel as though her system was "clogged" - she noticed that it was harder to wake up most mornings and function optimally while completing her work. It was apparent that her lifestyle needed to change in order for her to be happier and more productive, and she understood that it started with making her body happier and more productive.

"When it comes to balancing my academics and my work, I think I just have to roll with the punches"

When leading a professional life as busy as Sadia's, it's easy to throw academic work on the back-burner, and in fact, it seems that Sadia's hectic professional schedule demands that her academic life be put on hold. Contrary to this belief, Sadia explains that her daily routine emphasizes her studies and ensures that she leaves no opportunities for procrastination. While clarifying her role as a Student Regent, Sadia stresses that she's a student first and a regent second. Even in this fashion, Sadia makes sure that she doesn't neglect either responsibility; she schedules specific times in her day to go to her office and "take care of business" while also leaving plenty of time to study, complete her assignments, and even relax.

"Yeah I'm 21, but really, I'm a kid at heart"

Outside of both her academic and professional worlds, Sadia finds herself immersed in good company and good reads. Whenever Sadia encounters downtime, she doesn't hesitate to call some of her closest friends and enjoy each other's craziness, or take weekend trips back to her hometown to visit her family. With 4 younger siblings, it's easy for Sadia to escape from her professional and academic life and appreciate the rambunctious, energetic ways of her younger brothers and sisters. For Sadia, it's especially important to "cherish and cultivate" the relationships you have with others, both familial and non-familial, so that you always have a positive and genuine support group. Aside from enjoying quality time with friends and family, Sadia never hesitates to enjoy quality time with a good book. When it comes to reading, Sadia explains that she loves "stretching [her] brain" in any way possible, especially when it comes to being engaged with books or keeping up with current events.

"I just recently got engaged!"

On the topic of being engaged, Sadia not only enjoys being engaged in books and reading, but also being engaged to her fiancé, Shahryar Abbasi. As her days get progressively busier and more stressful, Sadia describes how talking to Shahryar can provide a way to be reminded of a simple, but necessary fact: everything is going to be okay. As someone who also was involved in student government, former ASUC Senator and External Affairs Vice President Shahryar knows the struggles and challenges that Sadia faces; Sadia often calls him to help her prepare for interviews, get an opinion on specific topics, and talk about each other's days. Although Sadia explains that her opinions and Shahryar's opinions on certain issues "don't always match," he still never fails to provide a source of support, understanding, and most of all, love.

"How do I do it? By the will of Allah"

As her days become rigid and tight with meetings, appointments, and work, Sadia finds that one of her biggest escapes and sources of hope is through her faith. She believes that it is essential for her to constantly strive to "improve [her] deen"¹ and never be "static" on her Islamic journey. Every day for Sadia starts with waking up for fajr² prayer and being alone with Allah during the quietest hours of the morning, which she describes along with the other 4 daily prayers as extremely "therapeutic." As she struggles and faces seemingly impossible challenges, Sadia believes that making dua³ asking for guidance from Allah, along with a healthy daily routine, is what helps her lead a successful and rewarding life.

[1] Understanding and practice of Islam

[2] Literally means "dawn" in Arabic; fajr prayer is the first of the five daily Islamic prayers

[3] Literally means "invocation" in Arabic; the Islamic act of supplication, in other words, asking God for something



“ For Sadia, it’s especially important to “cherish and cultivate” the relationships you have with others, both familial and non-familial, so that you always have a positive and genuine support group. ”

THE BLAME GAME

Photos by Nermene Aboudamous

Article by Tahmina Achekzai



Many Muslim Americans, including myself, find themselves cringing at terms like "extremists" and "terrorists," and how casually they are often tossed around. But there's another word whose use bothers me just as much: "media." Perhaps it's because as an aspiring journalist, I don't like hearing the field I want to enter spoken about with such disdain and disrespect. Or perhaps it is because the word is used to group all journalists, from the most objective to the extremely biased, into one category. Sometimes, it seems as if the "media" receives the blame for many of society's problems, including the problems of the Muslim community.

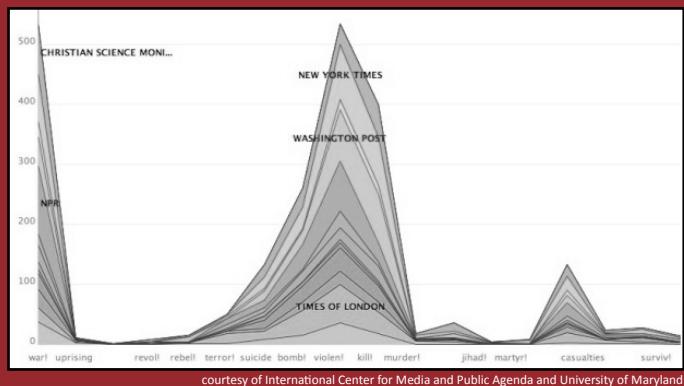
"So, Tahmina, what do you want to study in college?" - a question I have heard countless times in the past year or so. Sometimes, I shrug it off with a "It's complicated," or "lots of things." Other times, I opt for a more thorough answer. When my uncle asked me what I wanted to do one day, I explained that I was interested in both medicine and journalism. Quite abruptly, he responded that I should just become a doctor. "Journalism is corrupt." For the rest of the conversation, I listened as he went on and on about how the media is full of lies and liars, making it clear that it was no place for a good, practicing Muslim. His words were nothing new to me. I often hear the same spiel from many others, trying to convince me that the media is the reason for all our problems. What bothers me the most? When I hear it from

“This isn't a one-ended sword; it's a vicious cycle. The conflict arises, the media covers it, the public watches it.**”**

my Muslim brothers and sisters - casually tossing the idea in conversations or spending a great deal of our discussions complaining about how the media misrepresents the Muslim community, is responsible for Islamophobia, and focuses on our problems rather than our normality.

The truth is, the media focuses on everybody's problems because that's what the public is interested in. Many news organizations are not *trying* to target Muslims. When a conflict arises, the media covers it. This means 9-11, but it also means the 2012 Aurora shootings and the Sandy Hook incident last year. The fact that Islam is being used to justify certain conflicts in the world is not the journalists' fault. That's not to say that most journalists are completely innocent. The news, like other businesses, needs to make money, and sometimes they do what they have to in order to make sure their business operates properly. Sometimes that means giving more coverage to certain events than to others, but this is just a reflection of the public's desires and viewership levels for respective segments. This isn't a one-ended sword; it's a vicious cycle. The conflict arises, the media covers it, the public watches it.

Pointing a finger at the other party does not break the cycle - that only stimulates the whole process. In Islam, we are taught to blame ourselves before others. Despite that, many Muslims point fingers at others - and this finger is often pointed at the media. From the Arab Spring to the Boston Bombings, many of my Muslim friends have ex-



Right: Coverage of stories related to the Muslim world correlated with the amount of public interest in those stories.

Left: According to a study by the ICMPA and the University of Maryland's school of journalism, news organizations mostly opted for neutral terms like "war" and "violent" in coverage surrounding the 2010 elections in Iraq, instead of terminology like "jihad" and "terrorism."



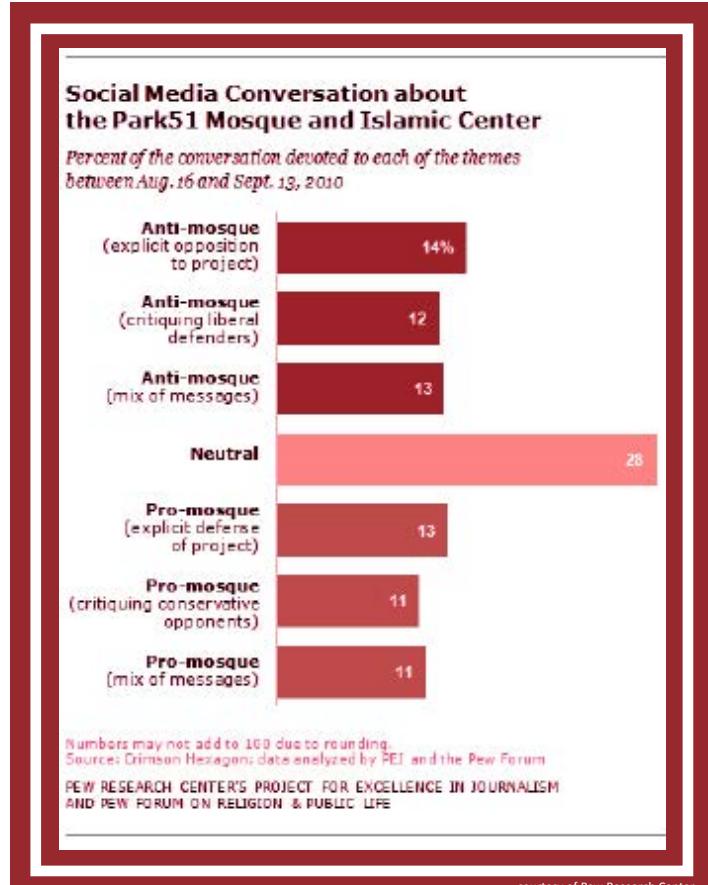
pressed concern about why the media is giving Islam more attention than other religions, which they translate into bias against Muslims. And it's true: Islam has been getting more media coverage than other religions.

But by blaming the media, we're avoiding the real problems. The problem of terrorism in the name of "Islam" is not going to be solved by merely attacking those who cover the events. I used to get mad when journalists and politicians called Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda "Muslim." *They aren't true Muslims*, I would think. *They can't claim that title. By calling them Muslims, the journalists are making people think this is what Islam is about.* However, the journalists weren't making that up to give Islam a bad name; the terrorists call themselves Muslim. They declare God as one and Muhammad as his messenger. Some of them really believe they are good Muslims, that the acts they are committing are actually justified by the Quran. That's not the media's problem: that's the ummah's problem.

While kids are growing up, how many of them actually learn the meaning of the Arabic surahs they're being taught to memorize? How many of them are overwhelmed with countless rituals and rules? I know this isn't just me. I've been to enough Sunday School classes to know that more often than not, there are plenty of young (and even old) Muslims who have knelt down ($5 * 365 * n$ years) times in prayer, not knowing what words they were muttering under their breath. How easy is it for these Muslims to be led astray? Either by rejecting the faith altogether or being brainwashed into misunderstood Islamic values, it's definitely not unlikely. Focusing on the details, rather than the foundations of belief and sincerity, is only one of the many problems within the Muslim community that makes it an easy target.

After the Boston Bombings, I heard more concerns from my Muslim brothers and sisters about why the media was blowing it up so much than why the suspects had understood Islam in the way they did. Is that really the way to approach the problem? I was actually surprised at how far the media had come from the September 11 attacks in 2001. When I was watching CNN, an interviewee mentioned the suspects' religion, but no sooner had he done that than Anderson Cooper had stopped him: explaining that no one is sure of the religion or of its relation to the actual attack. On the Washington Post, I read articles arguing that their being Muslim said nothing about Islam and shouldn't be misconstrued. These aren't no-name organizations. World-famous journalists are defending our religion for us. But these same journalists are being grouped into the statements many Muslims make attacking the "media."

People complain about why no one mentions the religion of other terrorists or shooters, but journalists have to include the religion of suspects



courtesy of Pew Research Center



who "happen to be Muslim." The fact of the matter is that although Muslims account for only small fraction of terrorism in the US, those Muslims who do commit acts of terror often do so in the name of Islam. The shooter in the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007 didn't use his religion to justify his actions. The Wisconsin Sikh temple shooting had little to do with the shooter's religion, but more with white supremacy. Perhaps journalists are not covering the events as objectively as they should, or perhaps they're emphasizing things they shouldn't. Yes, the media is responsible, in part, for Islamophobia. But so are we. Sometimes the facts are there. They're depressing. And they point to our own community. I understand it's not everyone; it's a minority. But it's a minority in our community.

The better the Muslim community understands that, the sooner they take their share of responsibility for what is happening, the sooner we'll garner the respect (and the media coverage) we think we deserve.

Change OF HEART

Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.

Al-Qur'an 13:11

Article by Omar Rehmane

Photo by Sana Saifuddin

We are in a bad way, in dire straits, we Muslims. Oppressing each other in our own lands, being impotent at best in the lands of others. We succumb to the poisons of greed, and nationalism, and classism, and every other fault you can think of – and instead of repenting and solving, we rationalize and dodge. We blame every possible group (our parents, the non-Muslims, the government) before we blame the true cause: ourselves. Each and every one of us have a responsibility to change what is in ourselves, because as He tells us in the Qur'an, that is the only way He will change our condition.

The worst part of all this is that there's no secret information holding us back from doing the right thing. All the information is readily accessible and available; we have only to follow it. Islam has to be simple and clean because it follows from two facts about the religion – one, Islam distinguishes between people *only* by piety, and not by intelligence, and so it has to be accessible to people of all levels of intelligence, and two, Islam is for every person in the world, so there can't be any hidden knowledge. So there we are, no excuses. The complication we introduce into the religion serves only to mask its true nature and allow us to fulfill our desires rather than our obligations.

But why would we do that? Why ever put our desires over the religion, when we know the reward for obedience as well as the punishment for going astray? Certainly we are all fallible, and we all sin – in of itself, this concept is not indicative of anything more than our status as humans. The distinction is subtle but important. We simply don't accept our wrongdoing. When presented with undeniable proof, we wave our hands almost impatiently and spout meaningless phrases like "that's

for a different time" (as though Islam applies only to a specific era) or "we have bigger issues" (as though it's acceptable to ignore *any* of Allah's directives). This is the disease we suffer from that did not afflict the *sahaba* or the *tabi'in* or the *taba tabi'in* (collectively referred to, of course, as the *salaf* – try not to hyperventilate). They heard orders and obeyed. We hear orders and question.

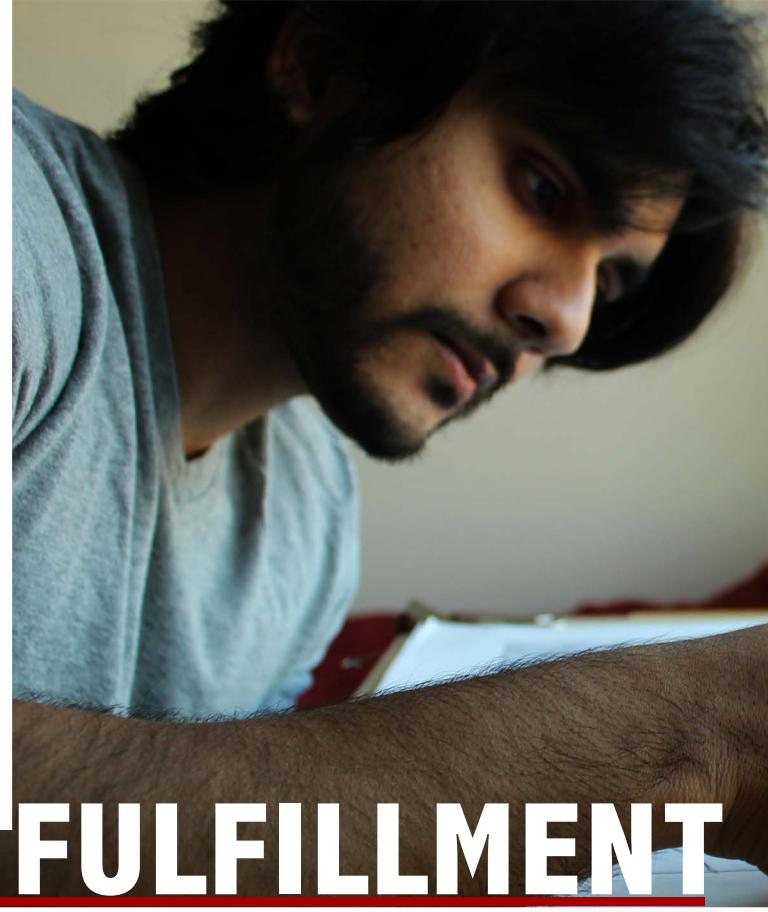
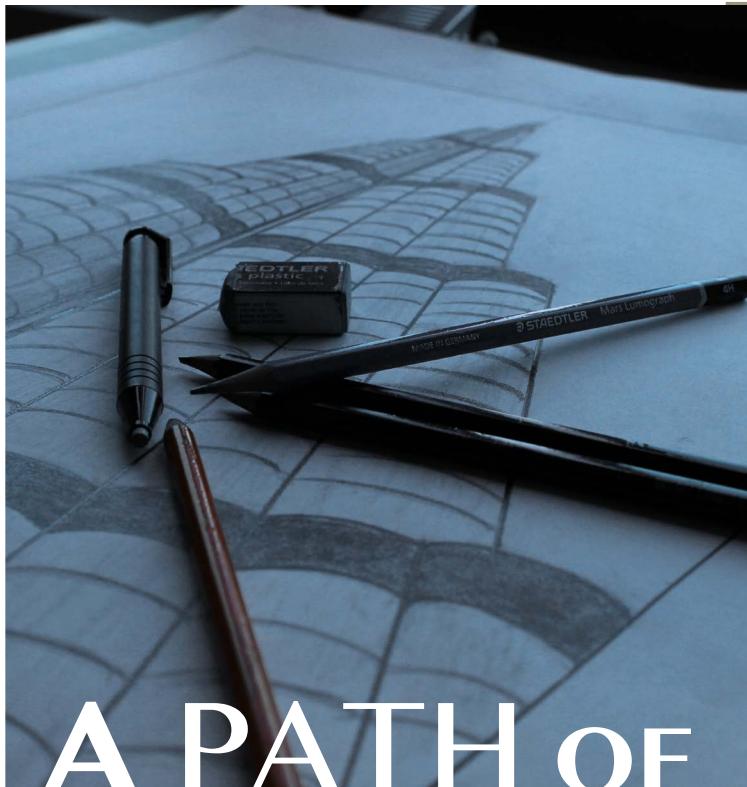
One form of rationalization is so glaringly wrong that it bears special examination – we claim we "aren't ready" to do certain acts of worship. Not ready? What are we waiting for, precisely? We confuse cause and effect, it seems. *Iman* is not the fuel for our actions of worship but rather a reflection of our worship. So if we wish to grow closer to Allah and the *sunnah*, as we should, then we should not wait around for a boost of *iman* to strike us from the ether but rather increase our acts of worship and our attention to them, and get on our knees and beg Allah to accept our deeds.

Ultimately, we must each examine ourselves closely. Who do we follow? Our desires, our parents, the most eloquent *sheikh* we can find, or Allah and His messenger (SAWS)? We have abandoned and disrespected the knowledge that was gifted to us, and we somehow are taken aback that this has consequences. No more, brothers and sisters. No excuses, no rationalizing, nothing. It is time to prioritize being good over feeling good. Only then can our condition be changed. To conclude, a quote from an Israeli commander: "When the Muslims fill the mosques for *fajr* prayer like they do for Friday prayers, then we will fear you."

They get it. Why don't we?

“When the Muslims fill the mosques for fajr prayer like they do for Friday prayers, then we will fear you.”





A PATH OF PERSONAL FULFILLMENT

“ It's not about the money; it's about how happy we are, how good we feel everyday. ”

Article by Manal Ahmed

Photos by Sana Saifuddin

As a freshman currently trying to plan the next three years of university classes, I have been asked endlessly, "What do you want to do in the future? What do you want to major in?" And also as a freshman with a relatively liberal background in education, I reply, "Uh, I don't know." Then, the interrogator responds, "At least you have some idea of whether you wish to go into the arts or the sciences." And that's when I chuckle, and reply, "No, not at all."

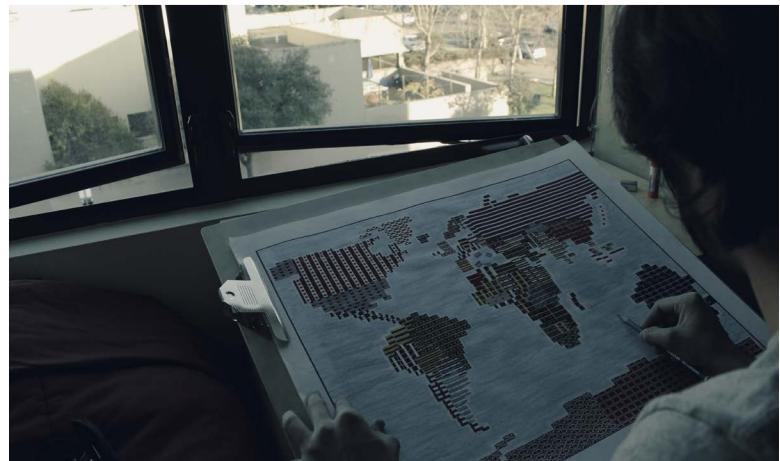
The thing is, with dichotomous desires and passions, I am at a crossroads in my life: shall I pursue the arts or the sciences? Before I make any decision, I wish to come to some sort of terms with the influences in my life, and I assume in the lives of many other young Muslims. Why is it that I received unfailingly the same advice from nearly all the adults related to me, be it by blood, culture, or religion:

go for the sciences? And why is it that when I was searching for inspiration online for my high school art pieces related to Islam, I was given endless references to pre-modern Islamic architecture and stoneware, but I hardly find a handful of contemporary Muslim artists who were not solely focused on the art of calligraphy? The imbalance of Muslim representation in the arts and sciences is staggering, and it is more than important to address the influences—cultural stigma, gender roles—that have created and exaggerated this divide.

My journey in understanding the divide began with an interview with senior Practice of Art major, Samee Siddiqui. As a male entering the field, he tells me how many of his peers look at him in surprise when he reveals his major. "You're the first [person I know] to become an artist," is a response he receives often. As Samee says so himself, "I [too] would be surprised to see other Muslim [men] doing art." So the question remains, what value is there in pursuing an education, a career, in the field, and why is it that Muslim representation in the visual arts is lacking?

For Samee, Islamic art is an important tool of communication, a possible form of dawah in and of itself. "It's somewhat to tell people that...we have our own point of view...that this is how [we] are. It's not about war...politics, we have the other side, too." With a visual arts background myself, I can attest to how effectively art can record emotions, ideas, and even history, too. Correctly employed, art can grant viewers insight into anything—a way of life, a culture, a mind—in a way that other methods of communication cannot. There is an intrinsic quality of emotion and human truth that exists in art that cannot be found in words or science. Art is a phenomenon that has paralleled human existence since the beginning of human existence. It has stood the test of time, so why is it dying presently in the ummah?

"People say, 'why don't you become a doctor, an engineer, have a job, earn some money?'" Samee explains. Sure enough, it is often the salary or the lack of, which drives an individual to or from a field. As many of us are first-generation Americans, there is often pressure from family both overseas and here in the United States to earn a good salary. It may be the fact that our roots are in countries with living standards and opportunities that cannot compare to those found here. Some-



times the only way for our extended family to determine success is through money, the currency of capitalism and politics, which may have historically marginalized our roots as inferior. However, as Samee continues to say, "it's not about the money; it's about how happy we are, how good we feel everyday." For Samee, art is a passion; pursuing it in both education and career only makes sense. He says, "I won't be upset if I don't have money. I will be happy; I will be enjoying what I love to do." Therefore, it comes down to the individual to determine how to measure his or her success, is it monetary, or is it, as it is for Samee a life-long pursuit of passion?

To continue to further my understanding of the divide between the arts and sciences and the stigma surrounding it, I interviewed Madeeha Ghori, third year Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) major. Regarding external pressures in pursuing her education, she says, "Alhamdulilah, I received a lot of encouragement from all my family members. One of my aunts studied computer science when she was in college, so it isn't entirely unheard of for a woman in my family to be in STEM." However, because Madeeha lives away from home while studying, and leaves the state for internships, she says that, "it has often been impressed upon me that my parents are making a very unusual decision (for my family, at any rate)." Personally speaking, I have also known Muslim women who have faced difficulty in leaving home because of traditional ideologies. Nevertheless, I see that in our generation, both men and women are beginning to receive more freedom as parents and traditions ease into this environment in which it is often highly impractical for an individual to remain at home for the entirety of his or her life before marriage.

As the interview turned more to Madeeha's field of study, she explained to me the importance of having diversity in EECS. Ghori says that because "people create things for their own use...[and] draw on their own experiences when they create...the more diverse a group of creators, a more diverse group of creations." Muslim representation in the field is equally as important, as Madeeha explains, "the engineering world is very much dominated by a small set of people and their viewpoint tends to dictate the types of technological advances we see. If more Muslims worked in the technological fields, we might see a larger variety of values stressed in the types of devices created for us." Although it may be difficult for an

outsider to the field to see exactly how values can shape technology, Madeeha poses a hypothetical situation to illustrate the concept: "if there were no Muslim programmers, how long would it take for a group of Muslims to get together and pay someone else to build a Quran app? Would such an app be as Muslim-friendly as an app built by Muslims themselves? Probably not."

In relation to women embarking on their educational or professional journeys, Madeeha stresses, "it's very, very important that more women give the EECS field a chance. It's impressed on women from a very young age that technology shouldn't be 'their thing'... Studies show that due to societal pressure, girls start to lose interest in the math and sciences by the fourth grade. Women don't necessarily 'need' to get involved in EECS for the sake of having women in EECS. Women need to get involved in EECS because maybe they'll love it... But so many of those women have never given themselves the chance to find out if this is the case." Like Samee and his passionate journey in the arts, Madeeha, too, believes in following the path that grants a sense of personal fulfillment. However, this desire is one that should exist beyond outside pressures and forces. Madeeha urges women to experiment in her field in defiance of the stereotypes that surround it, to expose themselves to ideas they may never have been in contact with before on the possibility that there may be some hidden talent and interest in the field.

Although, as we have seen, there may be an imbalance in Muslim and gender representation in the arts and science fields, there are clearly honorable, worthy reasons to pursue each field. As individuals currently in pursuit of an education, it is imperative to question and re-examine our intentions, to attempt as best we can to distance ourselves from external pressures when making decisions, and to open-mindedly and willingly identify our passions and talents in life. Yes, success is how you make it to be, but for as deep a sense of fulfillment as possible, ensure that your education, your career, is rewarding not only in this life, but in the afterlife as well. As Muslims, our lives belong to Allah (SWT), and it is of utmost importance that we never lose sight of the grander picture.

Article by Omar Fawzy

Photo by Husna Hadi

“ By truly believing
that Allah will
answer your duaa,
you subconsciously
improve your
performance because
you are convinced
that what you asked
for will happen. ”

Mom I just don't care anymore, I'm dropping out of school!" Looking back, I realize my self-hatred prompted this. Throughout my sophomore year of high school I earned less than a 1.0 GPA. I began receiving letters in the mail that I was at risk of not graduating high school. In addition to these letters, I was at risk of attending a continuation school since I was low on credits. Coming from a household that took Islam's commandment of education very seriously, I never understood why I was suffering academically. However, one sleepless night I contemplated a thought: is there a correlation between academic performance and religion?

I realized that I was only Muslim by name, not by action. I did not uphold the five pillars and I disobeyed a key principle of Islam - education. My disobedience brought about academic failure, which in turn brought about a personal crisis. I felt alone, lost, and confused because I measured who I was through academic marks, thus labeling myself as a failure. It was through these struggles that I slowly began trying to identify myself. Only much later did the thought of identifying myself as a Muslim occur to me. From the rich history to the innovative contributions, I realized that I am a part of a remarkable religion and community. With this sense of pride, however, came the responsibility to uphold values and rituals, such as prayer- an act I never performed.

An Academic Transformation through FAITH



Soon enough, this simple act transformed my life. Prayer allowed me to exercise one of the Muslim's greatest assets: duaa . "And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way (2:186)." Recognizing that I had to do my part, I began asking Allah to put me on a path to success, to provide an opportunity.

The opportunity came in the beginning of my junior year in the form of an acceptance into Middle College, a program that allows students to take high school and college classes simultaneously. It was the opportunity I needed, the fulfillment of my duaa. I was provided with guidance from my peers and teachers, I was challenged, and I was excelling in my studies. Still, there were times I wished Allah had not answered my requests because the program was more difficult than I expected. How did I think I would be able to perform in college classes if I could barely pass high school? I was surprised, however, to find that these very struggles

kept my relationship with Allah powerful. I was thankful because it was only through this relationship with Allah that I attained freedom. I was no longer enslaved to the public measure of intelligence because my faith provided me with a different measure.

My first semester of Middle College marked the beginning of a journey I never imagined feasible. With all of the insight I gained regarding faith and with the mentorship provided by my teachers, I achieved decent grades and surprisingly raised my GPA by .7 in one semester. This was the outcome of hard work, but more importantly of whole-hearted duaa. I had asked Allah to help me achieve a 4.0 in the next semester - a goal that seemed so unrealistic. But it made sense: by truly believing that Allah will answer your duaa, you subconsciously improve your performance because you are convinced that what you asked for will happen. That said, I received my first 4.0 and from that day forward, my life transformed miraculously.

In a year and a half my GPA went from less than a 1.0 to a 3.1. I graduated high school one semes-

ter early and continued my academic career at community college. From receiving letters in the mail that I was at risk of not graduating to receiving congratulatory letters for making the Dean's list, my academics flourished to the same proportion as my relationship with Allah. I completed my studies at community college with a near 4.0 and applied to my dream school: UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business. Until today, I am still shocked at how fast I went from almost being a high school dropout to being a 19-year-old Junior at Haas. I have no one to thank but Allah.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, God will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise ." This hadith underscores the correlation between academia and Islam. Whether the hardship is school or otherwise, prayer is the antidote for all sufferings. Even when it feels like your duaa is not being answered, that doesn't mean it was ignored. Countless times throughout my journey I did not receive what I asked for, but looking back, I cannot be more thankful.



FASHION FORWARD

Photos by Husna Hadi



Hanna



Hamza



Autefeh

"I love keeping it casual but nonetheless trendy and always, always girly. I want my clothes to say that here is a fashion forward, fun and bubbly young lady who knows what she wants."

- Hanna Jalanbo

"What's cool about clothes is that it is just another type of art, a creative expression of yourself. You can just go outside and express yourself through clothes. I would say my style is streetwear mixed with hipster and sometimes formal. I just wear what I like."

- Hamza Siddiqui

"My style is unique because it's a mix of many different trends based on my mood. Some days I wake up feeling like a gypsy, or a 90s grunge byproduct or I feel like Chiquita banana. It really depends on what makes me happy that day which makes my style unique because I always stay true to myself. My clothes are what makes me happy rather than dressing to appeal to others. The Prophet, PBUH, always advocated looking presentable as a positive image of Islam and that's something I seriously try to implement in my style. This is why you'll rarely see me wearing sweats or clothes of that nature in public!"

- Autefeh Sajjadi

“Being presentable in appearance and cleanliness was taught by The Prophet long ago. These Muslim students today take it to the next level using their sartorial style to articulate how they use style to express themselves as individuals.”



Abdullah

“Preppy, but semi professional. I want my style to say I take care of myself, that I dress confidently and make an effort each day.”

- Abdullah Khan



Abdi

“I am what I am. I dress for myself and don't try to over think it too much.”

- Abdisalam Hassan



Nabeela

“I like to think I dress boldly and laid back at the same time. Denim and blazers are some of my favorite separates, but maxi dresses are so effortless and simple that I can't help but want to wear them all the time too. Neons are also something I'm a huge fan of, particularly yellow--it's a pretty electric color that adds personality to anything you pair it with. I've never been huge with accessories but I appreciate a good statement necklace, especially chunky hardware and chain links. I take a lot of pride in what I wear and I honestly believe that clothes and what we do with them say a lot about who we are as individuals. So if I wanted my clothes to say anything, I'd hope they're speaking my personality--laid back with an edge.”

- Nabeela Khan

THE School OF Prayer



Poem by Aman Falol

Photo by Sana Saifuddin

In public elementary school,
one the most memorable educations for a male brain
is sex.

Only at recess
exercising of heads commence.

Subject of Study:

Physical Education Prep.

Ten year olds,

flex the muscles of their limp and sinful ambitions
before puberty provides them the knowledge.

To compensate for chemical incompetence,
they scream at girls whore
then taunt them with moans.

I learned males are specie of shark.

Little girls

bait little boys in with cleavage
learning to catch a predator,
rape,
heartbreak,
and STD'S.

This circle of life
killed me.

My eyes wanted to conducted research
but my hollow heart deprived me of field experience.
I refused

to enroll on a course on Shaitan's satisfaction
where passing grades produce the highest degree of failure.

My only solution
transfer institutions.
Therefore, I enrolled
brains of intellect and impulse
inside
School of Prayer.

Admission is accessible to all.
One Prerequisite

Public announcement of the most private commitment:
Ashhadu Allah Ilaha Illallah Wa Ashhadu Anna Muhammadar-Rasulullah.

Upon Entrance,
outsiders urge students to stop attending
Treat them as a public enemy
Thinking attendees shall never know the flavor of love
But when school is in session,
one arranges five daily dates with Allah,
who loves the knees into submission
and places people
in pleasurable pious positions.
When we schedule dinner
the day is fast,
then we indulge on more dates at sunset.
Loneliness
is the best preparation for intimacy.

At first glance,
coursework seems rigorous.
But prayer translates into better rest than sleep.

One's soul
lies in the bed of god's mercy
and desires to dream disappear.
Our heart recognizes the reality of flight
as tension is lifted by sprouting wings of inner peace.
This
is the only bed of love
suitable of sharing with everyone.

During prayer,
one recites the words of our lord in repetition
transforming into instruments of the omnipotent.
These vocal chords
string together harmony of life and death.
Glorifying neither,
yet beautifying both.
Worldwide,
billions bellow beautiful Quran
because God will always share the sound of compassion.

Topics tackled include
the gravity of peer pressure.
Alone we fall due to their pull.
Only through recitation,
do my buckling knees shake off the weight of the world
and rise once again;
a testament to the revival of the spirit and body
through remembrance of god.

The school encourages all to attend.
However, tuition is pricey.
Offers acceptable by our chancellor,
A serving soul
enslaved by the commitment of faith.

Invest in prayer
And take control
of your education.



Glossary

Alhamdulillah: all praise is due to Allah/God

Allah: the Arabic word for God

Ashhadu Allahu Akbar Illallahu Wa Ashhadu Anna Muhammada Rasulullah: I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is Allah's messenger. This is the Islamic declaration of faith and is called the shahada. Saying it with conviction makes one a Muslim.

CAIR: Council on American Islamic Relations, a Muslim American advocacy and civil rights organization

Da'wah: preaching one's faith, including through character. The word in Arabic literally means "making an invitation."

Deen: the Arabic word for religion. To improve one's deen is to improve one's practice of the religion.

Dua: prayer, supplication

Fajr: the first of the five daily prayers, prayed at dawn

Hadith: the quotes sayings of the Prophet Muhammad

Hajj: the annual pilgrimage to Mecca that must be performed by Muslims at least once in a lifetime. This is one of the five pillars of Islam.

Iftar: the evening meal that Muslims eat when breaking their fast at sunset. The word in Arabic literally means "breakfast."

Imam: religious leader, often of a mosque

Iman: faith

Inshallah: God-willing

Mashallah: literally means "God has willed it" in Arabic. Often said when speaking about someone or something admired, as a reminder that everything comes from God

Masjid: mosque

Quran: the holy book of Islam; the word of God

Ramadan: the ninth and holiest month of the lunar calendar, during which Muslims fast from dawn to sunset.

Sahaba: companions of the Prophet Muhammad

Sheikh: Islamic scholar

Shaitan: satan

Sunnah: the way of the Prophet Muhammad, based on his sayings and teachings

SWT: subhanahu wa ta'a'la; Arabic phrase for "glorified and exalted is God"
Taba tabi'in: the generation after the tabi'in; the grandchildren of Prophet Muhammad's companions

Tabi'in: the generation after the sahaba

Ummah: the Muslim community, often spoken of on a global level



D'yar menu items are prepared to order using only fresh ingredients and contain no trans fats. We are proud of the quality meats, vegetables, and seasonings that go into every dish.



**Tahini
Falafel
Tabouli
Baba Ganoush
Fresh Vegetables**

**Event
Catering Available**

Open Daily 11am-10pm.

**Gyro
Kabab
Shawarma
Chicken Plate
Meat/Lamb Plate**



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