by Sabah Chaudhry
Photos by Shabiba Sheikh

ISRU, the Islamic Society of Rutgers University, sponsored an event on Thursday March 27th in order to raise money for the Islamic School, Madrasatul Ahlis Sunnah, in East Orange. The topic of the event was “Raising a Strong Individual” in order to increase awareness and the importance of promoting Islamic education among our youth. It took place at 7pm in the Multipurpose Room of the Rutgers Student Center. Alhumdulillah (by the grace of Allah), around $13,000 were raised. Three distinguished Imams came to speak for the event on various topics. They include Imam Abu Bakr Haniff from Muslim Center of Middlesex County in Piscataway, Imam Abu Muslimah of Masjid Ahlis-Sunnah in East Orange, and Imam Siraj Wahhaj from Masjid at-Taqwa in Brooklyn, NY.

The Imams tied in their topics to discuss the importance of Islamic education of our youth as they are the hope of the Ummah of Muhammad (peace be upon him) as stated by Imam Abu Bakr. He further explained that the annihilation of the Muslim race has occurred frequently and its aim is to contaminate the reproduction of Muslims. This can be done by weakening the faith of the parents or from children being lost to the powerful, cultural influence of society. Muslim children are becoming ignorant of their deen and are being led by ignorant people. Currently less than two percent of Muslim children attend Islamic school. “How many kids are taken from their deen by not attending Islamic school before higher education,” said Imam Abu Muslimah. Imam Abu Bakr discussed that there is a solution, and that is through the education and dedication to raise the new generation right. It will take a whole new generation to rise and solve all the problems the Ummah is facing now. Imam Siraj commented, “Within a hundred years from now, most of us will be dead. But I will think that Madrasatul Ahlis Sunnah will still be here.”

Imam Abu Bakr spoke on how the family helps people evolve. He discussed that the biggest challenge in being a good parent and developing a family is understanding what it means. He said, “Parenting is different than giving birth because it keeps you in check.” He emphasized the importance of setting oneself up as a good example before imposing rules on a child. “If you tell a child to do something and he doesn’t see you do it, there is a 50 percent chance he will do it. But if the child sees you doing it, there is a 90 to 100 percent chance he will do it,” said the Imam.

Next, Imam Abu Muslimah lectured on the importance of seeking knowledge and referred to Quranic verses and Hadiths to clarify this topic. The mention of a particular Hadith led him to tears: The Prophet (pbuh) said that, “Indeed Allah will not snatch away the knowledge from the people by simply snatching it away, but knowledge will be snatched away from the dying of knowledgeable people and then the ignorant will speak ignorantly.” Imam Abu Muslimah explained that we take ignorant people as leaders and allow them to teach us the deen which will lead everyone astray. He used the Quranic verse, “Indeed the only ones who fear Allah are people who have knowledge.” One becomes close to God through knowledge of the deen and tauheed. The Quran states, “I command you to have knowledge that no God has the right to be worshipped but Allah.”

The importance of faith and how it develops a strong Muslim was the topic discussed by Imam Siraj Wahhaj. He stressed the importance
Words from the Editor

Assalaamu alaikum,

Since the start of my freshman year to now, four years later, I have witnessed, first hand, the growth of the Muslim community here at Rutgers, and the diversity of organizations that Muslims can participate in. I’ll admit there are times that I get frustrated thinking about the negative images and connotations associated with Muslims, but it is important to be reminded of progress Muslims have made. What I see now, that I saw less of as a freshman, is that Muslim organizations at Rutgers are reaching out to the university and to the community. There are more forums in which Muslims interact with the university at large. This creates awareness of Muslim culture and makes it visible in the public sphere.

However, this awareness is not immediate and change does not occur in masses. Rather it is a gradual process. So our job as Muslims becomes to do dawah and to impart the essentials of our deen to others. What I see this, I am not implying to preach the fundamentals of Islam to every non-Muslim you see. Rather our demeanor as Muslims should echo our beliefs to non-Muslims. Also I mentioned the importance of making Muslim culture visible. On a university level, being involved in projects such as visiting patients at hospitals and going to soup kitchens makes Muslims visible in a good light. Further it is change that individual Muslims make that collaboratively resonates to positive change in the community.

Another mechanism that gives Muslims visibility is their writing. Currently there is a lack of Muslim writers. Maybe I am biased because I am involved in Nasiah, but I cannot emphasize the importance of writing in our community. Writing is twofold: it is a form of communication, and additionally expresses something about ourselves. A writer starts off with a vision, and this vision is communicated through language. His/her work reflects the infusion of thoughts and feelings that have been crafted into art. Writing done in the Muslim community will not only provide a means of communication within the Ummah, but will also lessen ignorance about Islam.

Every Muslim can do his/her part to fortify the Ummah. Our strength as a community should not come from the strengths we share, but how our differences can add to what the community is lacking.

So next time you get depressed thinking about atrocities Muslims are facing and the stigmas that are attached with being Muslim, do something good and know that it has somehow altered the mass consciousness of a people.

Wa alaikum as salaam,
Sarah Khurshid
Editor-in-Chief

ASSALAAMU ALAIKUM,

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Editor-in-Chief

This publication contains the name of God, please respect it. Nasihah welcomes submissions and articles from everybody. Articles may be edited for content and length at the editors’ discretion. Submit all articles to alnasihah@yahoo.com The opinions expressed in Nasihah are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily represent that of ISRU or the staff of Nasihah.

Visit ISRU and Nasihah online at http://muslims.rutgers.edu/newsletter.htm

Caption: Imam Zaid Shakir and Sheikh Jihad Brown speaking at the Allison Road Classroom Building (ARC) on March 29 during the event, “Changing Conceptions.” The event was sponsored by ISRU and NBIC.
The Final Year

Words of Wisdom From Those Who’ve Been There, Done That

Ah, my four years at Rutgers. The evolution of a timid freshman, to a hyper, opinionated Shura member, then to the state of non-existence. Me, who would practically live at the Busch Student Center, even though I never once had a class on Busch campus. Zakia, the in-your-face-you-better-sign-up-for-the-soup-kitchen-or-else sister who would never, ever, go away. She who could always be found at every dawah table, meeting, lecture, food court, email announcement, and ISRU meeting. “What happened?” one may ask. I entered the twilight zone that no one, absolutely no one, can escape. Yes, you guessed it: Marriage. Wait? There’s more! A child. Now, meetings consist of housework, reading “Kermie, Where are You?” upon request, his naptime = my studytime, and to my dismay, DP, who were always there for me when I dormed on Douglass, does not deliver to my house. To the young and single: Fear not! The strange world of married with children is a phase of life that is wonderful and rewarding. Really! Advice: Make the most of your time while you can. Do extracurricular activities, volunteer work, study overseas, study here, enjoy time with friends, learn Arabic, and forget entertainment: READ. ISRU is mubarak, as are its members. Learn from the teachers. Enjoy the great company of the young, aspiring Muslims at Rutgers. It is hard to find them again once you enter the real world. Salamaat: Amani, Beysharams 1,2, and 3, Naima, Silvers/Nichols sisters that disappeared, “old” MIA/MTIA, arsenal of waterguns, FlowingRobesOfPurple, Muthakireen, 916, DB & Shaykh Shuayb Future ISRU Amir. FinalZakAttack.

N. Zakia Rodriguez
University College 2003
Major: History

Assalaam Alaikum,
ISRU for me was taking a few hours of my time every week to seek some knowledge about Islam. Nobody forced me. I went on my own willingly. To me, ISRU provided soul-searching lectures, opportunities for me to make lifelong friends, and a place where I could feel at home with other people who believed in the same things I did. Most importantly, it was made up of people who showed their genuine love for Allah (SWT). It was welcoming from the first time I went to a meeting freshman year. After that, missing a lecture because of an immense load of homework was disconcerting. I have felt inner peace many times just by listening to the Quran being recited so beautifully at the start of each meeting. I have gotten help and answers to my questions from people without being intimidated. The iftar dinners we had were so successful Alhamdulillah – so much love was spread through things like that alone. Breaking the fast with so many friends is something I will never forget. The lectures were interesting, heartfelt, thought provoking, and even humorous at times. Insha Allah, ISRU will continue to be a place where anyone who desires to seek knowledge and meet others who desire the same will be able to do so. The dedication of everyone involved in ISRU has been nothing but inspiring. May Allah (SWT) guide us all on the straight path and increase our knowledge of Islam. Jazak Allah Khair.

Shazia Ansari
Douglass College 2003
Major: History and Elementary Education

A Year to Remember

Reflections From Those Who’ve Only Had a Glimpse

Assalam-u-alaiium Brothers and Sisters,
O you who believe! Be patient and excel in patience and remain steadfast, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, that you may be successful.[1] [The Glorious Qur’an 3:200]

Once upon a bright evening, I was walking toward my apartment. I glanced over at the abandoned bus stop on my path and found one single poster on the entire bus stop which read, “RU Muslim? Come join ISRU.” It was my invitation from Allah Ta’Ala to join the Islamic Society of Rutgers University. When one is in search of the true path, even a deserted place illumines the path to guidance.

Alhumdulilah, I have reached the end of my first year at Rutgers College. In the magnificent name of Allah, the Merciful and Caring, seeds of friendship have been planted in the oasis of ISRU which will serve as a cornerstone for my growth as a devout, steadfast, and patient Muslim.

There is no doubt that one who remains absorbed in dhikr of Allah Ta’Ala, remains steadfast and patient and attains success in Dunya and in Akhira.

-Mirza Baig

Assalamu alaikum,
Had it not been for ISRU and the Muslim community here at Rutgers, I would have had a lot of time on my hands. Fortunately, I happened to walk in the Busch Campus Center on a Thursday, where I found two brothers at the Da’wah table who informed me about ISRU. At my first ISRU meeting, I was delighted to see that the brothers were receptive and supportive of a new member. After my first few weeks I saw a transition between the time I spent at my dorm and the time I spent at Busch Campus. Because I did not know any Muslims at Rutgers before coming here, I would spend time in my dorm with the so-called “Honors kids,” and shoot pool or play video games. Although I got good at pool, I experienced the difference between a Muslim atmosphere and a non-Muslim one.

Living in Central Jersey, the Muslim brothers and sisters here may not appreciate the luxury of having a close-knit and active Muslim community. I grew up in Northern Jersey, and went to a high school without other Muslims. There were also no Muslims in my town, until recently, when the Muslim population grew to 11 people; this community is truly a blessing from Allah (SWT).

I feel Allah (SWT) could not have been more gracious towards me than to involve me in a community where the brothers and sisters inspire me... to increase my Iman.

“...Allah (SWT) could not have been more gracious... than to involve me in a community where the brothers and sisters inspire me... to increase my Iman.”

-Shazia Ansari

-Asher Hussain
by Aamir Abdul-Ghani

All praise is due to Allah (swt), and let peace and blessings be upon our beloved Messenger Mohammad (saw), who has blessed us by being the perfect of examples. I think we have all imagined ourselves at the time of the Sahaba, wondering how fascinating their akhlaq was and what their days were like. What were their day-to-day activities; how did they carry themselves? When I was blessed to be in Yemen during the summer, I experienced a community that resembled to me what the Sahaba were like. It was a community devoted to pleasing Allah (swt) and constantly keeping the Prophet (saw) on their minds. Many times when we visit a new city or country, we can come up with one word to describe it. The only word I could come up with when describing Tarim is Sunnah.

To begin, I just wanted to set the scene. The first thing on everyone’s mind is the weather. Therefore, I will say that the weather there was definitely hot. The climate was arid, so humidity was not a problem. If you were walking in the street, all you needed was a head covering, and you were set. You can always wonder about some of the practical applications of the Sunnah. Therefore, when I wore a kafi in Yemen, I realized why I needed to wear one.

I visited the city of Hadramout Valley, which was called Tarim. The city is literally between two gigantic mountains that overlook its inhabitants. Many people say those mountains were created to preserve and protect the secrets of Tarim. They say no one gets to Tarim without a test. I don’t blame you if you don’t believe me. When I heard that, I too was skeptical. I then realized it’s not an easy voyage. Sure, it is easy to book a flight, jump on the plane, and land in Tarim a day later ready to go. That is your plan, but Allah is the best of planners! Every person who was with me at the program went through an ordeal of some sort, testing his or her desire to get to Tarim. Allah (swt) would test our intentions and see if we were truly going for His sake. My personal challenge was getting from San’a to Tarim in a 1983 Toyota Land Cruiser, with three other brothers. Now, the distance between San’a and Tarim was about 340 miles. This is like going from New York to Boston one way. This is where I realized my plan was not going the way I wanted it to go. I still don’t know why I did this, but I know it was for the best reason. I had a hotel and a flight already reserved, and I could have gotten to Tarim by plane, early the next morning. However, I chose to go on the journey by car, which was leaving on the spot, instead of relaxing in a hotel and taking an easy 1-hour flight to Tarim. Therefore, I chose the cab ride thinking it was supposed to take us 8 hours, but it took us 12 instead. We were driving through the desert, so you can imagine how the roads were. I had never felt as thirsty in my life as I did during that unforgettable journey. We would stop often, and guzzle down a couple of cold drinks, but the heat was so incredibly intense, that we would get thirsty in another half hour. Nevertheless, this brings me back to the point that everyone is challenged in some way or form upon entering the city of Tarim.

I wanted to share some of the experiences, which I personally, have never heard of happening anywhere else in the world. To start, everyday after the Fajr and ‘Asr prayers, everybody in the prayer area stands up and forms a line to shake hands with one another. They base this on the hadith that when two people greet each other, their sins fall off. In addition, when two people greet each other, they bring 10 angels with them, so if everyone in the room greets each other…Allah Akbar! The people in Tarim are staunch Shafi’i fiqh followers. Therefore, the Jummah prayer is not offered in Dar al Mustafa, the major school in Tarim. The reason is that in Shafi’i fiqh, at least 40 people from your own city must be present in order to have a valid Jummah. In Dar al Mustafa, almost everyone is a traveler from all over the world. Students travel great distances to be among these great people, and the surrounding environment. Therefore, we would go to a nearby masjid and offer the prayer there.

Regarding the culture, the Sunnah is the culture. I was blessed to be able to attend a Yemeni wedding. We packed 100 or so people into a small room, which probably should have only fit 50. No invitation cards, everyone is invited! Picture a packed room where people are literally sitting on top of each other. When you come into the room, you are supposed to say salaam to everyone individually by shaking hands, starting at the right of course. Then you can sit down. After that, some nasheeds are sung, and then the food is brought out. Now imagine how hard it is to form a halaqah…oh wait, I didn’t tell you. Every time you eat, you gather at least five people with you, and eat out of one plate for barakah. Everyone eats with their hands, and shares the blessings of the food. So we had five people to a plate in such a crowded room, Masha’ Allah, ah…the memories.

The shuyukh there are amazing people. They are so accessible to the people, unlike in America where you need to make an appointment to see Assalamu’alaikum. If you ever need anything, you can literally go to their house and ask to come in. If you do get to go to their house, you will see some of the best hospitality around. You can not visit without having some fresh dates and delicious tea. If anyone has some time off from school or work, I strongly urge you to explore this magnificent land. I have heard it only costs about $150 a month to raise a family in Yemen. Can you beat that! If you don’t have a long-term plan to stay there, then I highly recommend the month long program that is now being offered. We had the privilege to study Arabic, Fiqh, Seerah, and attend some quality lectures. The program was well organized, and comfort was not an issue. They treated us well, Alhamdulillah. In addition to the classes, we would go on various trips to see the different cities in Yemen. We even had a chance to see Prophet Hud’s (alayhi salaam) grave, which was an incredible site. If learning Arabic is your only focus, then study at the Badr Institute, which is going in its 24th year now. There is nothing like learning Arabic in an Arabic speaking country; you will see instantaneous results.

I encourage everyone to plan a trip to this blessed land. In this essay I tried being as detailed as possible, but intentionally left things out to motivate others to seek, on their own, the refreshing treasures of Tarim.
Where are the Muslims?

by Basem Hassan

Feb 19, 2003- This past weekend a half a million people took to the streets of NYC, with literally MILLIONS more storming the citadels of cities and capitals around the world for one purpose only - to protect innocent Muslims and Arabs in Iraq from America’s war.

While on the surface this historic moment of global unity is one to give us hope of the potential in humanity, underneath is evidence of a disaster awaiting our community.

When my children are old enough to know of such things I am afraid they will ask me “Daddy, is this the day the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims stood in solidarity with their oppressed brothers and sisters?” Perhaps I will parry the truth to such delicate minds by telling them “Yes, there were some Muslims present at the rallies”.

But most likely I will be as honest as I am in writing this now by confessing “No, they all had excuses, and only handfuls were present”. But where were the Muslims? Surely nobody in America loves the Arabs and Muslims of the Middle East more than America’s over 7 Million Arabs and Muslims?

It appears that when I ask this question, where are the Muslims, time and time again I am audience to the linguistic mastery of our cultural history. Not only concerning this specific rally but all issues that concern us, from our bastard child Palestine, to the unheard of Gujaratt, to forgotten detainees, to our struggling masjids and everything imaginable in-between.

Once asked of people I delight in the splendid and sometimes poetic illiads which we convince each other are reason enough for not knowing, not supporting, and not caring.

The most recent myth I’ve seen take hold of our community is that we ‘should not be involved in anything socio/political until we improve our Iman’. Wow, thank God that 1400 years ago, the Sahaba did not follow these misguided ideals or the enemies of Islam would have wiped them out while they made duas. They were resolute in what Iman they had and while they made duas. They knew the knowledge entrusted in Islam would be lost to those who succeeded in destroying the religion, whether by directly killing it or by completing the McCarthystic agenda of criminalizing the Shahada.

Don’t think it can happen? Neither did interned Japanese during the 40’s, or current detainees, or our Indian and Kashmiri brothers and sisters who wonder how the government can coordinate a popular lynching of entire villages that the entire Muslim world does not even know about. Or Palestinians dying to live, or Iraqis living in anticipation of mass death. Or… Should I go on? That’s right, we know it already, so where’s our Omar Ibn Al-Khattab?

In his room studying?

The Sahaba, whether by choice or divine planning, improved their Iman by actively defending their religion and their people. They took whatever knowledge they had and made it kinetic as was commanded of us time and time again all throughout the Quran. How can you expect to become closer to God when you are selective of which parts of the Quran you want to work on implementing in your life? This is a total package religion but we seem to treat it as ‘a la carte’ theology.

I’ve heard the ‘weakest of all faiths’ reasoning before. It’s an excuse best used by those who do the least. Believing that we have more knowledge watching an event on television, rather than someone who is attending it as the millions of people on Feb. 15th who fought against injustice.

Let’s replace our passiveness with another command that is so simple, it’s one of the first Surahs Muslim kids learn. Al ‘Asr, In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. By Time. The Human Being is utterly lost. Except those who have Iman AND do righteous acts AND exhort each other to uphold the truth AND exhort each other to have patience.

Before saying, “see, we need to have Iman first” ask yourself this - when do you know that you have Iman? Is Iman a destination? I’ve reached Iman so now I can begin implementing the next part of this Surah. Or is Iman a process that we develop over the course of our lives? But waiting until we have reached the end before we assist the needy is a waste, and people will die waiting for us to reach an epiphany and take action.

It’s clear that each one of these components is a pillar in upholding humanity. The intent is that they are all necessary simultaneously; not in cascading order, as those who look for excuses would have us believe. Knowledge will bring Iman, it will support action. Action will increase knowledge will. Iman will strengthen action and increase knowledge.

Yeah, excuses, that’s what it comes down to. Why we don’t get more active in blessing American democracy, it is that we have excuses. Why the next generation hasn’t relived our
The Origins of Islam

by Sami El-Mansoury and Humayun Khan

Almost 1400 years ago, the Archangel Gabriel brought down the Holy Koran from Allah the Almighty to the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him). This was a time unlike any other, a time that changed billions of lives. But many erroneously believe that Mohammed (pbuh), founded the great religion of Islam.

The Prophet Mohammed was a great leader and the final Prophet of Allah (pr, Ul-lah, English - God), yet he had no part in founding the religion that nearly 1.6 billion people follow today. In the Koran, Allah states that his Ummah (group of believers) is one Ummah, and that includes followers of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and even Adam and Eve, the first two human beings (may peace be upon them). It was Adam who was the first to teach “submission to Allah’s Will” to his children, making him the first Prophet of Islam. Even the origins of Judaism and Christianity refer to believers, followers of Islam, and not to specific faiths. The term Judaism is derived from the name of the great leader Judah (Arabic - Yehudah), great-grandson of Abraham. As Judah was a leader of one of the twelve tribes of the Children of Israel (Jacob), the people of his tribe were referred to as Jews (Ar. Yehud). After a time their religion, Islam, was renamed Judaism. This is similar to Christianity. Many of the earliest “Christians” were Jews, and after the Ascension of Christ, his message (which was also that of Islam) was placed under the title of Christianity to differentiate it from the Jewish religion.

Today, no follower of the last Prophet of Islam would refer to him/herself as a “Mohammedan,” for this is exactly what was done after earlier Prophets and leaders like Judah (may Allah be pleased with him) and Jesus (pbuh). Today, a Muslim is a Muslim, and his or her creed is the same as that which was taught by every Prophet. As Allah (SWT) states in the 21st chapter of the Koran: “Verify, your Ummah is one Ummah, and I am your Lord, therefore worship Me (alone).” (The Holy Koran, 21:92)

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) never claimed that he was founding a new religion. Instead, he stated that his message is a continuation of Allah’s message to all of the other Prophets. Muslims understand the importance of these Prophets and believe that each Prophet had a very crucial role in teaching Allah’s religion. For example, they believe in and respect Jesus (Ar. ‘Isa) as the Messiah (pbuh) and await His Second Coming. However, the major distinction between Islam’s and Christianity’s views of Jesus (pbuh) is that Muslims believe he is not God nor the son of God, as this does not follow the fundamental teachings of earlier Prophets such as Abraham the Patriarch (pbuh). Muslims consider Allah to be One, Absolute, not begetting, nor was He begotten.

Most of the Prophets were sent down for certain ages. Mohammad’s (pbuh) message was sent down to all people. He did not write the Koran as it has been historically recorded because he was illiterate. On the contrary, Muslims believe that the Koran is the exact Word of God as revealed to the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) through the Archangel Gabriel. If one reads it in context and without bias, one will find that the Holy Koran does not contain any inconsistency or contradiction. It also contains several scientific facts. These characteristics, hailed by many Non-Muslims as “baffling,” suit the Perfect and Absolute Word of the Lord. May God grant us all an understanding of our history, and grant us all Paradise.

by Sarah Issa

In the aftermath of the war in Afghanistan, the media directed spotlight to intolerant Muslim regimes such as the Taliban and others. Religious authorities such as Rev. Jerry Falwell declared on the CBS program “60 minutes” that “Islam teaches the destruction of all non-Muslims.” Falwell was among the many that alleged that Islam was intolerant. Intolerant Taliban practices were declared as a product of Islam; thus, making Islam guilty of intolerance. However, the doctrines of Islam, the Qur’an, and Islam’s history prove otherwise.

The Quran states: “Let there be no compulsion in religion” (Surah 2 Verse 256). This verse affirms that compulsion conversions were forbidden. The Qur’an also confirms that religious preference is an individual choice. “Say, ‘The truth is from your Lord’: Let him who will believe, and let him who will, reject (it)” (Surah 18 Verse 29).

In regards to the spread of Islam, Muslims were told to invite individuals to Islam: “Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have stayed from His Path, and who receive guidance” (Surah 16 Verse 125).

Tolerance has not only been affirmed in the Qur’an but has been practiced in Islamic dynasties. Historically, Islam has not flourished from intolerance. On the contrary, Islam has flourished alongside Christianity and Judaism. The Prophet Muhammadd (pbuh) sent the following message to monks of Saint Catherine in Mount Sinai: “This is a message written by Muhammad ibn Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, far and near, we are behind them. Verily, I defend them by myself, the servants, the helpers, and my followers, because Christians are my citizens; and by Allah! I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be changed from their jobs, nor their monks from their monasteries. No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims’ houses. Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God’s covenant and disobey His Prophet. Verily, they (Christians) are my allies and have my secure charter against all that they hate. No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them. If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, this is not to take place without her own wish. She is not to be prevented from going to her church to pray.”

The third Caliph Omar bin Al Khattab often expressed that he was not only accountable to the protection of Muslims but also to the protection of Christians and Jews in the dynasty.

In addition, in Spain, Christians and Jews lived in the Muslim dynasty for 800 years where the Christians experienced their “Golden age”. Orthodox Greek and Catholicism have both survived in the Ottoman Empire for the last 500 years. According to the Bayle P. Dictionary, many western writers expressed the survival of the Christian Churches to be unique to Islam. “…We may feel certain that
Reflecting on a Tragedy

by Noreen Mirza

Non-Muslims often have misconceptions about Islam that we struggle to deal with at all times. In order to successfully present Islam, we must continue to stay united, work together, and also make efforts to clear misconceptions that we may have about one another. Mashallah we have a large Muslim community that consists of many nationalities, races, and sects. It is inevitable that misunderstandings between us will occur and that we will differ in our cultural practices, and even our religious priorities. However, we must recognize our similarities, respect our differences, and attempt to understand one another before drawing conclusions that will cause disunity amongst us.

One misconception is that the practice of commemorating the Tragedy of Karbala serves no purpose other than stirring up feelings of hatred and hostility among Muslims. Like anything else, if done with bad intentions, the commemoration will not be beneficial to our growth as a community. However, if the memory of Karbala is kept alive with good intentions, the tragic event can serve to teach us some valuable lessons.

The event took place around 680 A.D. Yazid, the son of Mu’awiya who was then appointed as Governor of Syria, demanded an oath of allegiance from Husain (A.S), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.). Husain refused because he felt that by recognizing Yazid as a religious leader, he would be approving of his corrupt ways, such as buying people’s support with money and appointments to government posts. Yazid asked the governor of Medina to convince Husain to pledge allegiance to him. Before hostilities could arise in his homeland, Husain left his home in Medina and traveled to Mecca. The people of Kufa sent letters to Husain asking him to come to Kufa because they wanted to lend their support to him. Husain set out to Kufa with about 72 supporters, including women and children. However, the Kufans also turned against him because they were either bought out, or feared for their lives. “O grandson of the Prophet, the hearts of the Kufan people are with you but their swords (resources) are with your enemy”- Faradsaq (poet). Husain and his 72 supporters were confronted by Yazid’s forces which consisted of thousands of men in Karbala. Husain continued to refuse to pledge his allegiance to Yazid. This is where the injustices towards Husain and his followers began in order to get them to surrender.

Yazid’s forces, led by Umar Ibn Sa’ad, blockaded Husain’s camp, cutting off access to the Euphrates river and their water supply for three days while they were in the deserts of Karbala. When Husain still did not surrender, he and his supporters were brutally killed, along with Husain’s 6-month-old baby. The women and children were taken as prisoners, tied to chains, and the women had their chadors snatched from them. People who claimed to call themselves Muslims committed this kind of oppression against the

Why so many Muslims?

by Alya Khan

Revolutions have been transpiring throughout the ages of mankind in one form or another. They sprung out from people’s hearts as a means for change and as a means for meaning in this life. With these revolutions comes a rejuvenation of society shaping to reform the way of life for a better tomorrow. As most Muslims began to migrate to America in the 60’s and 70’s, they brought with them a way of life not just for a better tomorrow, but for the best tomorrow. Islam is not just a religious practice, but a way of life, a guidebook on everyday matters. Yet, at the same time it is a way of life that is widely misunderstood and thus most widely criticized. A poll taken found that over half the respondents had prejudiced opinions of Islam as terrorist and anti-American and though harassment towards Muslims took a steep decline, discrimination went steeply up.

To many Muslims living in America, this is a deja vous feeling; the Salem Witch Hunt, the degradation and loss of freedom of Native Americans, slavery, and the Japanese containment during World War II, etc. become eerie facts of history. The question that lurs in our minds is are we next? And as this question frightens us, we are astounded by the growing number of people converting to Islam. For we now outnumber Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Mormons, and are more numerous than Quakers, Unitarians, Seventh-day Adventists, Mennonites, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Christian Scientists, combined. Many demographers say Islam has overtaken Judaism as the country’s second-most commonly practiced religion and it is known to be the fastest growing religion in the country coincidentally. Quite a paradox this may seem, but with a little insight, it makes perfect sense.

Perhaps the most immediate appealing factor of Islam is its diversity. It is generalized that Muslims are just Middle-Eastern, but in fact only one out of eight American Muslims are of Arab descent. Native-born African-Americans and immigrants from South Asia account for the core of the Muslims in this country. America is renowned for its “melting pot” community, and a mosque is the best melting pot example that can be found. For a mosque can even be found on a Navajo reservation in New Mexico. Furthermore, a large faction of the white middle class comprise of the American Muslim community – over 80,000.

As goes the diversity, there is the unity. Though the unity of Muslims needs improvement, the simplest unity is prevalent: prayer in congregation. As Muslims, we take it for granted, it is seen as just another practice of our lives, but looking at it from a different perspective, it is something beyond the mundane. In a mosque, surrounded by picturesque mosaic, bowing down before the Almighty God in unison. In a “trance-like” state we humble ourselves while joining together with our brothers and sisters regardless of ethnicity, financial status, age, etc.

See “WHY” on page 12
by Shabila Sheikh

One day will Allah gather the apostles together, and ask: “What was the response ye received (from men to your teaching?)”? They will say: “We have no knowledge: it is Thou Who knowest in full all that is hidden.” Al-Qur’an, 5:109

Narrated by Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him): Allah’s Apostle said, “Do not wish to be like anyone, except in two cases: (1) A man whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it righteously. (2) A man whom Allah has given wisdom (knowledge of the Quran and the Hadith) and he acts according to it and teaches it to others.” (Sahih Bukhari)

The apostles of Allah (SWT) have done their job. Have we, as Muslims, done ours? Given the situations of Muslim countries and Muslims in America, can we say that we have represented Islam fairly? Personally, I say no. But I’m not going to take my own nonsense lying down, and I hope my sisters and brothers in Islam will join me in stomping out our egos and igniting a wave of true submission to Almighty Allah.

It’s the Era of Da’wah; the time when Muslims wake up and remember what we’re supposed to be doing: inviting others to Islam. (Some of us choose to hit the snooze button). Yet, how can we undertake this task, without an understanding of our religion? Imagine a Muslim who is approached and knows nothing beyond the basics of the religion. He can either admit to his cluelessness, or fabricate a few high falutin ideologies that make Islam seem oh-so-lovable in a minute flat to end the conversation.

Well, guess what? The truth and beauty of Islam, SubhanAllah, carries the learner infinitely further than the boundaries of tall tales. It is important to remember that we may be Muslims by name, but that does not make us scholars or qualified da’ees (inviters to Islam). As human beings, we can only teach as much as we have learned. Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur’an, “I hope my Brothers and Sisters will join me in igniting a wave of true submission to Almighty Allah.”

It is not (possible) for any human being unto whom Allah had given the Scripture and wisdom and the Prophethood that he should afterwards have said unto mankind: Be slaves of me instead of Allah; but (what he said was): Be ye faithful servants of the Lord by virtue of your constant teaching of the Scripture and of your constant study thereof (3:79).

SubhanAllah, the prophets (pbuh) were humble and acknowledged the truth of this ayah by constantly reminding, learning, and reinforcing the laws set forth by Allah ta’ala. We should implement these elements into our lives because the effects are amplified times over.

For example, we as Muslims have a responsibility of reminding each other when we go astray. In doing so, we also remind and reinforce the Islamic concepts in our own minds and hearts, as is indicated in the following ayah: “But teach (thy Message) for teaching benefits the Believers” (51:55). Referring regularly to the Qur’an and Sunnah is a method of relearning. One should never say to himself, “I forgot what the ayah/hadith says, but I’m pretty sure it says this;” without following up with reference to the appropriate source(s). Remember when Allah (SWT) says: “Allah has revealed (from time to time) the most beautiful Message in the form of a Book, consistent with itself, (yet) repeating (its teaching in various aspects)” (39:23).

Allhamdulillah, the Qur’an is the most perfect “lesson book.” Imagine, if one were to read the Qur’an once, how much he would learn, relearn, remind, and reinforce in his being, Insha’Allah. Take a moment to reflect on how much this system is multiplied when one embraces the Qur’an on a regular basis. Now, take that person and place him in a Rutgers campus center, or just about anywhere for that matter, and observe how he interacts with his environment—people, objects, visuals, etc. Take a step further and notice how others might be intrigued by this person who is different, perhaps Muslim. His humility, modesty, and goodness speak for themselves and invite others to learn about this tranquility, known to us as true Islam.

by Nicholas Amon

I grew up in a strong Christian family that placed an emphasis on active church life. As a young Christian, I was involved in various church events including being Youth leader to assisting in church services. So you can imagine it came as a shock to my family when I told them that I was converting to Islam. Initially it met with strong resistance, but through the grace of God, my family eventually accepted and supported my decision. Many times my family and friends have asked me why. Why had I left everything that my parents had taught me, to embrace this new and alien religion? What had I found so unacceptable in Christianity that could lead me to accept Islam? The answer lay simply in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. This concept of God being divided into the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit, never sat well with me. I read the Bible profusely to try to understand where this concept emerged. Nowhere in the Old Testament could I find any proof of the Trinity. Not only was I dissatisfied with the Christian concept of trinity, but I also felt that I was not getting any closer to God from what I was learning in church. I felt as if I was eating the food without getting the nourishment. Slowly I became disillusioned with the Christian doctrine. I am ashamed to say that instead of looking for alternatives to Christianity, I began to disavow the whole concept of religion. The thought began to manifest in my mind that religion was a man-made concept. When I entered my first year in college, what I observed only confirmed my thoughts on religion. Freshman year came and went and I had almost given up on God and religion. But praise be to God; God had not given up on me.

In my sophomore year, I met a Muslim who was with me in many of my classes. Not knowing then that he was Muslim, I immediately noticed that he carried himself with a different demeanor than others. We immediately became friends. As a result we met to study together. During these studying sessions, we would sometimes digress and talk about our experiences in life. During these many conversations, the topic of religion came up. I shared my history with him, discussing Christianity and the problems I had with it. This naturally led to a discussion on Islam, specifically on the concept of tawheed. This small conversation about tawheed, the “Oneness and Unity of God” was my first step towards Islam. Subsequently, I was introduced to the Muslim community here at Rutgers. Through this community, I began to learn more about Islam. But yet I was still hesitant; the Bible never mentioned Prophet Mohammad (saw), and other concepts in Islam were new and alien to me. Then when I went to the masjid for the first time during jummah prayers, what I saw there drastically changed my life. When I saw all those people worshipping together, I was struck by the beauty of salah. In that instant, I knew in my heart that I had found the right path. A few weeks later I took shahaddah and officially became a member of the Muslim ummah.

Safar 1424 A.H. page 8
Death

by Hassan Khaja

Yesterday someone died of second and third degree burns
But what would you do if you learned that tomorrow was your turn
Would you finally spend all the money you earned and saved in your urn
Or would you realize that it was for the next world that you should’ve yearned
Now it’s time to wake up, you got a million prayers to make up
Break up with your girlfriends, now is the arrival of later
Once your gone, time for your family to start the 72-hour God marathon
Turn the tape player on and start listening to the Quran
Such a hypocritical phenomenon
That this is the only time we strengthen the bonds of Islam
He stops being an automaton
And sees that all praises are due to Ar-Rahman
He used to be Don Juan
He didn’t think beyond pleasing what was under his long Johns
Because they were his girl’s fetish
Now his face is reddish
Gripped by fear, his tears run down to his beard
All the warnings were more than just stupid jeers
Time to switch gears and spend from what he holds dear
But death is easy for the giving
And a sign for the living
Obscure realities become vivid
Of the meaning of your existence and the source of your subsistence
The message met you with resistance
Now everything’s clear and you stop resisting
You’re insisting that you saw the message and never missed it
But no one’s interested now
Blood’s dripping from your pierced eyebrow
Now you find out that’s not what life’s about
No one is more alive than the dying
Around him everyone’s crying, while he’s lying in his bed
Eyeing the room for his dusty Scripture
Now the Quran becomes a mental fixture
Time to look at the big picture
Reality finally hits you
While the devil’s whispering in your ear “Chill, akh, I’m with you”
And the past finally gets you
I bet your libido never let you resist going beyond a kiss
Or even beyond a single tryst
You seek repentance for that really old sinful sentence
That you said before and you know you meant it
No one is more dead than the Godless
They’re the most immodest and oddest
If they worship anyone, it’s the hottest goddess
Plastered on the swimsuit issue
Who has her own issues
Posing in overpriced tissues
Looking to the wealth that they hoard
To find the missing link between themselves and their Lord
The forgetful heart is empty
Maybe I’m venting about how they tempt me
With trendy Fendis and a philanderer’s ending
Hypnotized by their mindless monotony while they sink deeper into hypocrisy
They’ve forgotten who never forgets
Maybe I am among the walking dead
A blackened heart attached to a talking head that listens to the whispering hawks instead
By these winged devils, I get stalked in bed
telling me how much my life’s been botched until it finally winds up on my crotch
Obey my hawa, shed my overgrown beard, and abandon this tedious salah
My nafs is my ilah
So when I’m asked, I can say that my emotions were the gods that lorded over me
Cauising me to deny what nature created in my mother’s ovaries
And carried into me at my conception
16 years later I realized the deception
Twenty later, I witnessed its resurrection
Turn my face to embrace faith rejection and follow my infatuations and affections
I’m heading in a new direction
Where I wet my bedding with leaden drops of blood, sweat, and depression
My pseudo-relationship ship came to an end
But I still bend Islam to chase my thankful friend or brilliant friend

Debris begins to fall
We think these things are small
We rather dream about going to the mall.
The pillars start to weaken
Our slumber starts to deepen
We act very little but we do a lot of speaking.
Unbearable is the blaze
Because we couldn’t lower our gaze
In foolish things we wasted all our days.
Our integrity begins to scorch
All because we refused to carry the torch
But everything’s OK if I get to drive a Porsche.
Our honor has been burned
How the tides have turned
How many towers will fall before the lesson is learned.
The metal begins to melt
The final blow is dealt
True faith our hearts never felt.
We have prepared our own pyres
Following our lusts and desires
Our tongues say Muslim but our actions call us Liar.
Our greed provided the spark
Ignorance turned our hearts dark,
Slowly each sin left its indelible mark
Our worldliness is the fuel
Our heritage has become nothing but a tarnished jewel.
And we would never send our kids to anything except secular school.
We watch our legs burn,
Unaware that next it is our turn,
We are so confused from friends and foes that we cannot discern.
Oh! the oppression and horror we have seen.
All because we neglect our deen.
May Allah rescue Al-Quds and Masjid Al-Aqsa from the Ziahaalimeen!
What will it take to make us rise
To save us from our demise
And realize that our “allies” are our enemies in disguise.
What will it take to rouse this giant
Who has become a client to this devil civilization
Migration from our old ways and sins
Is the only way to usher the new age in.
SISTER SISTER... Can't resist her

by Talal Sarwani

The Executive Committee of the Muslim Student Association had done a great job organizing a gathering for the Seniors. There was an ample selection of food, from Zaatar, Taboulou, and Hareesa, to Keema-Roti, Biriyani, and Haleem. An unseen line in the middle of the Multipurpose Room served as the criterion of demarcation, separating the bros from the sisas; the guys from the gals. It was left up to the individual to obey the rule of the line: Protect your gaze, and protect your modesty. Yes, there was an occasional eyeing incident here and there, some intentional, and some not intentional.

Ali and Gibran greeted and embraced the brothers they hadn’t seen at the prayers earlier in the day. Being roommates, the two already saw too much of each other, so they soon split and mingled with others. The same of chatter was going on, “So when are you getting married?” “What’s her name?” “Where’s she from?”

Brother Hassan, who just back from a winter break trip to the Emirates, pulled Ali to the side to say that he had found his one. A surprised and overjoyed Ali whispered to Hassan, “Who, what, when and where?”

“She’s my dad’s best friend’s daughter, back in Dubai.”

Ali and Gibran, were both mustered was “Masha’allah wa Mabrook,” and gave him just short of a bear hug. A few moments later, Ali ended the announcement to the brothers with “Insha’llah, we’ll all be getting our invitations to the Nikah of Brother Hassan and Sister Laila sooner rather than later.” As the brothers crowded forward to congratulate Hassan, Ali and Gibran both found themselves falling behind the crowd. They both remembered a conversation they had a few months ago, when they had come to the realization of how appealing a Hijab was. It wasn’t the ideal of the Hijab that they found appealing, nor did they care what it meant to the wearer of the loose outer clothing; all they knew was that it looked oh-so-good, like a well-styled coif. Back to the present, Ali and Gibran couldn’t believe what they were hearing; were they already so behind? Left and right they heard their brothers speak of their Ones back home, and their Ones across the room. Although they had just one semester left before graduating, it seemed like everyone except them had plans for their future.

There were about twenty minutes before dinner was going to be served, so the committee heads took this time to get people to sign up for a final hurrah of helping the MSA out. Brothers and sisters walked around the auditorium, clipboards in hand, getting people to help out. As Ali listened to Hassan talk about his trip, everything around him suddenly slowed down to a crawl. He watched the most beautiful face he had ever seen, glide through the crowd, and walk right in his direction. ‘Twas the prettiest face he’d ever seen covered all around with the magic of a Hijab. He had never seen her before, and barely registered what she was saying when she got to him. Something about Da’wah, and something about signing up. A few moments later, a few feet away, time had slowed for Gibran as well. He had this same most beautiful person say something about tables, and again something about signing up. He gratefully took the clipboard and signed up, a few names down from Ali. Time continued in limbo for Ali and Gibran... they were, for lack of a better word, smitten. Time snapped back to regularity with the call to the ‘Asr prayer. After praying in congregation with the brothers, the time came to supplicate to the Almighty, and both asked for the same thing, or should I say, person. That night, both Ali and Gibran slept little. “She’s my One,” they both thought to themselves, and decided that they would spend the rest of the semester making her the One, forever. Both decided this intention would remain within themselves, shared with no one, and so these best of friends, these roommates, these brothers, would keep from each other what they had so long hoped to tell the other.

A week later, neither Ali nor Gibran had any luck finding this mysterious ‘n’ purty Muslimah. Ali spent each day of the week at a different place where people usually prayed, hoping to catch some sight of the sister, and hopefully moving closer to gaining insight into the sister’s identity. Monday at the Cultural Center, Tuesday at the Study Lounge of the Student Center, Wednesday at the Library, and then back to the Cultural Center on Thursday. Gibran spent his week on the alien Women’s College campus. The placed seemed so odd to him, and was a pain to get to, but sacrifices must be made when striving to find one’s One. Alas, neither had any luck, and both sat dumbfounded when she didn’t even show up to the weekly meeting on Thursday night. Both were at a loss, but their determination never wavered, so both continued to keep things to themselves.

In order to attain the Unknown Sister, the boys had decided that they would have to undergo a change, so an attempt at impressing the sister began the day after the first and only sighting. Both would stay awake after Fajr, Ali giving the excuse that the Comp Sci projects were just piling up, while Gibran would tell Ali of the rigors of writing a 50 page paper on the “Primordial Contract and the Necessity of its Reflection in Achieving Purity of the Soul.” Masha’allah, what hard working lads. They would finish their college related work by about 10:30 in the morning, and go to at least one of their classes each day. The rest of the day would be spent in search of another sighting, until about 6:30pm. After the Maghrib prayer, it was Gym-time. Since the One they were after was so simply stunning, it was only fair that they too be in the best shape possible. Lest I forget, now would be a good time to mention their change in wardrobe. Though the contents of their closets hadn’t changed, the brothers’ appearance had changed significantly. Both would usually throw the first, semi-unwrinkled thing on, and walk out the door. That all changed, as Gibran looked hot as desert sand in his Diesel fankers, and never-tucked-in H&M shirts (with sleeves rolled up, of course). Ali looked scorchingly tasty, like a plate of Nihari with the usual Bollywood tunes and Junoonification, while an equally enamored Gibran put away his N.Al-Zo and Amr Diab CDs, instead listening to

See “SISTER” on page 12
None of You Shall Enter Paradise...

by Asher Hussain

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad, may peace be upon him (pbuh), is His messenger and servant.

Before I proceed, let it be known that my intent for using such a title was merely to draw the readers' attention. Now that you have read this much, you might as well read the entire thing. You are probably wondering where I am going with this article, and most importantly, what the rest of the title is. The Sahih Muslim Hadith reported by Jabir states, “I heard Allah’s Apostle (pbuh) as saying, ‘None of you shall enter Paradise because of his good deeds alone, and he would not be rescued from the fire, but because of the Mercy of Allah.’” Does this mean we should stop doing good deeds? After all, entrance to Paradise is only contingent upon Allah’s Mercy. Clearly, the answer is NO. Forgiving and punishing is in the hands of Allah alone. We, as Allah’s servants, are to praise and glorify Him, to obey His commands and in turn ask Allah to be admitted into Paradise. Our goal is to perform good deeds and put our best efforts in devotion to Allah and a good example of this was set by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Mughira bin Shu’ba reported that Allah’s Apostle (pbuh) worshipped so much that his feet were swollen. It was said to him: “(Why do you undergo so much hardship despite the fact that) Allah has pardoned for you your earlier and later sins?” Thereupon he said: “May I not (prove myself) to be a grateful servant of (Allah)?” (Sahih Al-Muslim).

Allah says in Surah An-Nahl, “The mystery of the heavens and of the earth belongs to Allah…” (Surah 16, Verse 77). Also, Sahl bin Sa’d said, “I was in the company of Allah’s Messenger. He gave a description of Paradise and concluded with these words, ‘There will be bounties which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human heart has ever perceived.’” (Al-Bukhari). So why does Allah provide us a description of Paradise and the joys of its inhabitants if we cannot fathom its bounties? By describing Heaven and giving contrasting images of Hell, Allah motivates us to aspire to the Ultimate Happiness—Paradise. Thus, the purpose of this article is to make us aware of these descriptions and to rekindle our desires to experience Paradise and its pleasures.

In this world, we take the good with the bad; however, for the inmates of Heaven, Allah guarantees everlasting bliss. Abu Sa’id al-Khudri and Abu Huraira both reported Allah’s Messenger (pbuh) as saying: “There would be an announcer (in Paradise) who would make this announcement: ‘Verily there is in store for you (everlasting) health and that you should never fall ill and that you live (for ever) and do not die at all. And that you would remain young and never grow old. And that you would always live in affluent circumstances and never become destitute, as words of Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, are: “And it would be announced to them: This is the Paradise. You have been made to inherit it for what you used to do”’ (Surah Al-A’raf 43). Let us ponder over this concept of eternity.

grandparents from the responsibility of running productive masjids is because we have excuses. Why we wait for someone else to implement programs that would benefit us is because we have excuses.

Well, excuses are easy, so easy everyone can have one for no effort at all!

I do give credit to this new reasoning I’ve heard, of not having enough Iman to get involved so it’s ok to stay home and make dua for someone else to do things. Yes, once you find your Iman, you will realize that you need to be involved today and everyday because this is what brought Islam to pinnacles of history. Because for 1400 years nobody asked “Where are the Muslims?” They were everywhere, public and proud.

To those who still want to hold on to the faulty rationale that God will save us if we just believe more while doing less, I refer you to the final authority on this subject.

“You are invited to act in the cause of God, but some of you turn stingy. The stingy are stingy towards their own souls. God is Rich, while you are poor. If you turn away, He will substitute other people in your place, and they will not be like you.” Quran 47:38

if Western Christians, instead of the Saracens and the Turks [Muslims], had won the dominion over Asia, there would be today not a trace left of the Greek Church.”

In South Asia, Mahatma Gandhi wrote the following: “I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place in Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for his pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and his own mission. These and not the sword carried everywhere before them and surmounted every trouble.”

It would be misleading to assume that tolerance in Islam only existed in its doctrines. Today, there are churches across the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. In Egypt, there are 14 million Christian Copts. In Iran, a republic viewed as intolerant and extremist, there are fixed seats in its parliament for Christian and Jews.

As many critics of Islam continue to accuse it of intolerance, the bells of the cathedral in Jordan will be heard along with the Muslim Azhan (calling to prayer).
SISTER continued from page 10

some khaleeji love tunes courtesy of Abdul-Majeed Abdullah. Thrusly they joined the starry-eyed dreamers of the night, under a spell brought on by the love bug’s bite.

A month had passed with nary a sight of the uber-sister. Ali and Gibran were waiting at the bus stop on an unseasonably freezing day. It was nearly Spring, and the temperature was a wind-chilled twenty-five degrees.

“So what’s been going on with you?” Ali asked Gibran.

“Whaddaya mean?”

“Well, you’ve been lookin’ pretty slick lately... anything I should know?” Ali inquired.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, just the same ol’...”, Gibran responded, with a smug smile on his face.

“What about you?” Gibran asked Ali,

“You’ve been dressin’ purty smart the past few weeks... Anyone I should know about?”

Ali and Gibran both forced back their laughter, not knowing what the other knew.

“No One, unfortunately... just job inter- views. The days of chasing the Hijab and Niqab are gone,” said Ali.

“If only there was someone for us around here.”

“Insha’allah Gibran... we’ll find the One meant for us... and hopefully it won’t be Keanu Reeves.” “Ameen brotha,” said a snickering Gibran.

They had to turn away from each other to avoid bursting out in laughter, when finally the bus arrived. They got on the bus, and took a seat in the back. Gibran turned to Ali, “What would you do if you actually had someOne in mind?” “That’s easy,” a confident Ali started to answer, “I...” As the doors of the bus opened, time once again slowed down as it had done a month ago for our two brothers. There she was walking up the front of the bus, the One person they desired to see above all others. She was wearing a gray hooded sweatshirt to shield herself from the bitter cold. As she walked down the aisle of the bus to sit in the third row from the front, the minds of Ali and Gibran were racing. Ali’s mind rushed with images of finally being able to introduce himself to her, as Gibran’s mind was clouded in the glee of hearing her acceptance three times over. Then this One they had so longed for, as stunning as she ever was... removed her hood, and her blonde hair flowed. The hearts of our two brothers sank deeply into a place that would be best left without description. Where had the Hijab and Niqab they had been chasing gone? Ali and Gibran did not even look at each other. At the next stop, these two brothers with the most disappointed, depressed, and heart-sunken looks on their faces, couldn’t take what was happening. Gibran got up and walked out and off to... somewhere. Ali would get off a few stops later, and would end up going to class. This One they had been searching for, the One they had been so enamored with, was still on the bus. Her name was Jennifer Ramirez, a roommate of Sister Haifa. The infectious sisterhood she felt around Sr. Haifa and the other sisters was just too much fun for her. She couldn’t refuse an invitation to the Senior Dinner, where she gladly helped out with signing people up for the Da’wah tables. She even went so far as covering herself out of respect for what the sisters represented to her. Ali and Gibran would learn only a little of this, and that too, much later.

Narrated Buraydah ibn al-Hasib: The Prophet (SA’AS) said: to Ali Ibn Abi Talib (RA’A): Do not give a second look, Ali, (because) while you are not to blame for the first, you have no right to the second. Sunan Abu Dawud Book 11, Number 2144. Also reported by Ahmad and Al-Tirmidhi.

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Quite a display of peace, a display of a goal mankind has sought for ages, coming together in such simplicity and harmony. Nor does it stop here, but the splendor of the Quranic verses being recited brings about such a channel of mediation to gather people in awe. It is not only the sound, but the meaning that enthalls those who hear it. If you have been given the opportunity to understand the meaning of the glorious words of the Holy Quran, the truth is handed to you in a clear form for you to be able to embrace and to love.

Unfortunately, many non-Muslims do not have much exposure to Islam in this respect. They instead see a mutated description, but because of this mutated version from a third person, their curiosity grows. What really is Islam? What does it promote and why? Where did this religion come from? The Quran is better than any news channel in answering these questions and it is here that people can finally have their questions answered. After all, after 9/11, the Quran was the number one book sold. And not so coincidentally, the number of Muslims converting to Islam increased.

Finally, the major influence that guides those to the way of Islam is Muslims themselves. For the majority of Muslims are people with a kind nature, willing to aid those in need regardless of religious background, contradicting the stereotype of Muslims as terrorists. How can it be that your Muslim neighbor, who baby-sits your kids, brings over food when you are sick, or simply greets you with a smile no matter what kind of day they had can be the same as those men shown on the FBI most wanted charts labeled as terrorists seeking “jihad” against Americans? The answer is simply that they are not the same. And when people come to realize this, the words Islam, Muslims, and Allah take on a completely different meaning, away from the falsehood and onwards to truth.