



Al-Risalah

“In the (Blessed) Name of Allah, The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful.”

**2nd Annual Spelling Bee
Medical School Advice
IAW 2014 Preview**

On behalf of the MSA Shura, we hope you enjoy this issue. Please understand that this is the culmination of the hard work of your fellow students and the scholars of our community. Therefore, it needs to be treated with all due respect. If you are not going to read the issue, kindly refrain from using it otherwise. Many of the articles, if not all, have direct Islamic themes therein, and some may include verses from the Holy Qur'an or Hadith of the Prophet (S). Thus, it is to our common understanding that everyone will treasure this humble work. May Allah (SWT) allow Al-Risalah to serve as the beacon of light it is intended to be, Aameen. ~ The Al-Risalah Staff

Welcome to Al-Risalah

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(S): Sallalahu 'alayhi wa aalihi wa sallam: prayers and peace be upon him and his progeny

(SWT): Subhaanahu Wa Ta 'aala; may He be Glorified and Exalted

(R): Radiullaahu 'anh/' anha; may Allah be pleased with him/her

(a): Alayhis salaam; upon him be peace

A Far Better Love Story than Twilight

Rizwan Khan | *Al-Risalah* Editor

Instead of rushing to figure out what to do on Valentine's Day the night before, a few of the brothers and sisters gathered on Thursday night, the 13th, to watch a live webinar of Qalam Institute's director, Shaykh Abdul Nasir Jangdawala. This lecture, entitled "A Love Story: The Messenger and Khadija," was broadcast using a projector and the barrier separating the brothers' and sisters' side was partially opened to provide equal viewing (hooray equality).

Shaykh Jangda began his lecture by giving beautiful, brief biographies of Prophet Muhammad (S) and his noble wife Khadija (r), pre-revelation. He continues with recounting important periods of the Prophet's (S) life, such as his first marriage and his peacemaking between the tribes of Mecca in resetting the Black Stone (al hajr al aswad). Shaykh Jangda mentioned the reason why few major events are narrated regarding the Prophet's (S) life pre-prophethood is because he focused his time on building a family, providing for them and developing ties between people in the community.

Shaykh Jangda further mentions the virtues of Khadija, her honorable family roots, her love and loyalty to her husband during his first encounter with revelation and praying with him at the Kabah as a family with Ali bin Abi Talib (a), as the uncle of the Prophet (S) Hamza (r) watched. The love Khadija (r) had for her husband was not limited to times of prosperity in her shared life with the Prophet (S). As Shaykh Jangda retells, the Quraysh (the leading, major tribe of Mecca) imposed an economic and social boycott on the entirety of the tribe of the Prophet (S): the Banu Hashim. Due to this, the Prophet (S) along with Khadija (r) and with other notables from the Prophet's (S) tribe fled to an area known as Shib Abu Talib. Here, the Prophet (S) and Khadija endured the conditions set by the Quraysh (no trade or buying from Banu Hashim and no marrying into his family). This created harsh conditions and many members of Banu Hashim were martyred due to this boycott. Whenever possible, Khadija (r) would send Ali bin Abi Talib (a) to Mecca to buy food from her own wealth for the children affected by the boycott.

The affection of the Prophet (S) for

Khadija (r) was also detailed. Shaykh Jangda mentions the immense sorrow the Prophet (S) had after the death of Khadija (r), to the extent many remarked all the Prophet (S) ever talks about is his remembrance of Khadija (r). "She was his pillar she was his rock of support." Shaykh Jangda beautifully mentions whenever the Prophet (S) obtained any food or item of reverence, he would send a share to the friends of his wife Khadija (r) in honor of her memory. It is amazing sometimes, as the Shaykh mentioned, people skip the part of the life the Prophet (S) when he was in deep mourning for his wife and constant memory of her.

The screening of this webinar is a unique initiative by the MSA to hear from prominent scholars and speakers in our community on topics which are not often lectured on in previous years of the MSA. All in all, I believe many interesting facets of the Prophet's (S) life were learned this night and inshaa'Allah we can take the values of the marriage of the Prophet (S) and Khadija (r) and apply them to our lives as well.

IBTIHAJ MUHAMMAD

Anonymous

"Nothing should hinder anyone from reaching their goals—not race, religion, or gender. I want to set an example that anything is possible with perseverance"—Ibtihaj Muhammad

Alhamdulillah, this semester I was blessed with meeting one of my heroes. Her name is Ibtihaj Muhammad and she is an educated, African-American, Muslim woman who just happens to be one of the greatest fencers the world has seen. On Thursday, November 21st the Loyola MSA was honored to host Sister Ibtihaj and this was one night I will never forget.

Sister Ibtihaj embodies the essence of courage. She told us the cold reality of this world, the

reality that wearing hijab, being African American and fencing was not always the easiest of things. She did not paint the pretty picture that oftentimes we are forced to believe. However, Sister Ibtihaj then taught us that at the end of the day, everything lies in the hands of Allah (swt). She spoke of Islam in a beautiful manner, emphasizing how much it has helped her get to where she is today. She said that yes sometimes she does feel insecure, but that only motivates her to do better. Her competitive spirit and love for Islam is admirable. Growing up she was a very active athlete, and her mom made sure she could find a sport that would allow her to dress modestly. They came across fencing and she fell in love with

the game. "SubhanAllah," she explained, "hijab was the sole reason I discovered fencing."

Personally, I am amazed at how down to earth Sister Ibtihaj is. She was literally chilling with us—at points even poking fun at how we need to work out and she even tried convincing me that LeBron James is a great athlete! In all honesty, Alhamdulillah, Alhamdulillah, Alhamdulillah for women like Sister Ibtihaj Muhammad. She is known as the first Muslim woman to ever represent the U.S. in international competition, but she told us that this is nothing to be proud of. Our deen teaches us to take care of our bodies and she is astounded that it is the 21st century and there is yet to be Muslim representation. In effort to make sure she is not the last, she takes out time to speak to audiences like ours and continues to motivate young Muslim girls around the world.



FRIDAY NIGHT REVIVE

Syed Ali Nasaruddin | *Al-Risalah* Writer

I attended the University of Illinois at Chicago last year as a freshman and found a beautiful, diverse community with many religious resources. It was something that I had never been exposed to and I took full advantage of it. As I began attending more lectures and events in the city, I began to realize how easily accessible they were. Unfortunately, not many students knew of nor cared for them. Using resources such as Ta'leef, IMAN and CMC as inspiration, my friend Zamaan Sohel and I decided to take action and create a safe space for university students to be able to relate to religion and be inspired without being pushed away or intimidated. Thus, the idea for Friday Night Revive was born.

In my path towards God, I found that it was the balanced approaches of the organizations that inspired me; that drew me towards them in the first place. There was a lot of inspiration and spirituality as well as a focus on practicality and pure knowledge. Keeping them separate allowed for both to be fully beneficial for me. The Ta'leef and IMAN lectures allowed my brain to soak in practical knowledge of God and how to live life while the CMC nasheed sessions inspired my brain to fall in love with that practical knowledge of God because, as Ustadh Ubaydullah Evans said, "It is one thing to know God and it is another to truly find Him." The nasheed sessions taught me how to turn religion into something personal and allowed Islam to enter my heart as well as my head.

After transferring over to Loyola this semester I immediately fell in love with the open-minded and not to mention bankin' MSA. All the resources and support that Zamaan and I had been searching for were here and we approached the shura about our ideas right away. Within the first few days we organized the first Friday Night Revive with the gracious help of Laith Elkurd and Raof Baig.

The first hour allows us to fully grasp essentials of our beautiful deen as the Prophet (S) did and the second half allows us to focus on our souls and hearts which have become stones. And the great Imam Junayd al-Baghdadi (r) narrates that, "What can you do about stone [the dead human heart] that circumambulates stone [the Ka'bah]," meaning that, what good is our tawaaf around the Ka'bah if our hearts aren't in it. Singing praise of the Allah and His beloved (S) is one of the favorite sunnahs of our Prophet (S).

The first class that we will be doing this semester is the first in the curriculum at Seekers Guidance, titled "Intro to Islam: Absolute Essentials of Islam" which is taught by world renowned Shaykh Faraz Rabbani. The class is pre-recorded and has a forum available

for any questions students may have for the Shaykh as well. Afterwards there is an hour filled with beautiful songs by many of our brothers and we encourage more and more brothers to participate. Packets with our recited anasheed are available online and will also be at the event.

I ask you all to join us and bless our Friday nights each week with the intention to fulfill the rights of our minds and hearts by learning and loving the path to Allah and His beloved (S). Barak Allah feekum for making me feel so welcome and part of this community. May Allah continue to bless this MSA.

Amal Ahmed | *Guest Writer*

Every Friday night at 5pm brothers and sisters gather for their weekly dose of FNR. What is FNR you may ask? Friday Night Revive is a night filled with knowledge, inspiration and the remembrance of Allah (SWT). Each Friday the night starts with salatul Maghrib, and afterwards we have a recap of what was discussed last week with brothers vs. sisters answering questions. The series that we are listening to is called Introduction to Islam: Absolute Essentials of Islam by Shaykh Faraz Rabbani, teaching us the basic principles that we need to build a better relationship with Allah (SWT) each week. But the night does not end there; there's a nasheed session recited in multiple languages in praise of Allah, exalted is He, and His beloved Sayyidina Muhammad, may Allah shower abundant peace and blessings upon him.

"The best part is obviously the lecture itself, but even the discussion and nasheeds sessions are so beneficial mashaAllah. It does exactly what it promises to do, revive my love for Allah (swt) and his Messenger (pbuh), little by little, every week," stated Farah Bozai

"At FNR we are hoping to build a community for the sake of Allah through the medium of knowledge and nasheed," explained Syed Ali Nasaruddin. "FNR started as a way for us to get closer to Allah and Allah's beloved, sallallahu alayh, together, as a tight-knit community?"

"The intimacy of the atmosphere and the beautiful group of sisters are definitely worth staying on Friday night for" added Sharifah Abdallah. "Also, the lecture itself is wonderful, so many good lessons and reminders from it alhamdulillah". Just as my brothers and sisters shared, what a truly amazing way to end your stressful week, with remembrance of the one who created us. So if you haven't stayed for your weekly dose of FNR, make sure you do, you don't want to miss out!

Backpack Project



Abdullah Ansari | *Guest Writer*

It was when I came across a YouTube video named "\$20 Homeless Backpack Care Kit" that I thought of doing a "Backpacks for Homeless" drive for my freshmen project. I wanted to give back to my local

community, and I thought that making backpack care kits was a very effective way to help those in need. Alhamdulillah! With everyone's help, we were able to make 23 backpacks. We filled the backpacks with items such as: blankets, hats, gloves, scarves, clothing, food, soap, disinfecting wipes, toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, and deodorant. We took the bags down to Masjid Al-Ihsan, and in collaboration with the masjid, we were able to get the backpacks to those in need. However small, we were able to do our part in giving back to our community, and InshAllah this was only a beginning step towards helping all those in need.

Bagged Lunch Event

Zainab Bozai | *Guest Writer*
Sharifah Abdallah | *Guest Writer*

One of the most enjoyable and rewarding events of MSA is the bagged lunch event. It is amazing to see how students from several organizations come together for one purpose: serving the community around us. On January 31st, MSA teamed up with other organizations to host this semester's first bagged lunch event.

Each organization was responsible for bringing items such as fruits, snacks, bread, and drinks. Alhamdulillah, the turnout was incredible! Looking from afar, you could see an assembly line of diverse students hard at work, almost as long as the entire width of Rambler Room. Everyone had an integral role to play: spreading peanut butter and jelly on bread, bagging and labeling the sandwiches, adding snacks and juice, and packing and numbering the boxes. The event wouldn't have been as successful as it was, mashaAllah if not for the help of each and every student there. It's events like these where it doesn't matter who represents what group, because the language of serving humanity is universal.

The first bagged lunch event I attended was on October 4th and it consisted of mostly just MSA members. This meant that MSA was responsible for providing all the food and supplies necessary. Though it was on a much smaller scale than the most recent one we had, with a goal of 75 bagged lunches, it was such an amazing bonding experience amongst Muslims. We all collaborated together so nicely to make a small difference in our greater Chicagoland community. It was this first bagged lunch event that really showed me how great it feels to serve those who aren't as fortunate as we are and left me wanting to do more! Then, the second one came rolling in on November 1st. This time, MSA wasn't alone. Other organizations joined us and took responsibility for bringing certain items. I've noticed that dividing up items like this makes everything a lot more manageable because no one group has too much of a load on themselves. MSA was responsible for fruits and, Alhamdulillah, the event was another success story. Everything was highly organized beforehand and we left no room for disorder. MSA and a few other students from other organizations came early and set up all the tables with the snacks, fruits, and juice ready to be put in bags and the sandwich making stations laid out with bread, knives,

peanut butter, and jelly. People came and helped, we shared a few laughs and pictures, and overall it was a wonderful and productive day. The most recent one on January 31st was on a whole other scale of awesomeness. Every organization really stepped up in terms of attendance and donations of supplies. This event really showed what a significant difference a few students can make when they work together towards a greater good. We made 567 bagged lunches, not to mention many more sandwiches, and sent them to four different locations across Chicago! This is why bagged lunch events are my favorite: they're tremendously rewarding and enjoyable. May Allah (swt) reward us all for our efforts and allow us to continue to help our neighbors who need it most.

Prophet Muhammad (S) told us that when making dua for Jannah, to ask for the highest levels of Jannatul Firdaus. This teaches us to always aim high and dream big. While 500 bagged lunches did seem to be out of our reach, the beautiful Loyola community came together once again to prove that no goal is too big for us. With Allah's infinite blessings and grace, we were able to surpass our goal with a total of 567 bagged lunches to feed the needy in four different locations across Chicago!

The bagged lunches could not have come together in a more beautiful fashion, Alhamdulillah. I was ecstatic to see the room fill up with students and the tables with food and materials as we got ready to get our hands dirty and tackle our ambitious goal. Perhaps most gratifying of all is the power of service and how it so gracefully brings together such a big and diverse part of campus, all with the one goal of feeding our under-served neighbors. With the blessings of Allah (swt), the effort has grown exponentially, and I hope to make our next goal 1000. I am confident that, with the energy of the students and the continued blessings of Allah (swt), we can reach it, Insha'Allah! So incredibly proud of all the different organizations and incredible students that came together and made this feat possible. May Allah continue to bless you all.

"There's something amazing about food that brings people together. Even though I was the only one present from my organization I felt anything but alone. The whole room smelled like peanut butter and jelly and it inspired this fun spirit in everyone in the room. It was like we were all kids on the playground joking around and having fun!" -Kristina Georgis (Hellenic Students' Association)



POTLUCK IFTAR

Anbreen Basher | *Guest Writer*
Zainab Bozai | *Guest Writer*

We are all aware of how hard it can be to fast, especially when it's of the voluntary nature, but it becomes much easier when you have others with you. Not only do you get rewarded tremendously for it InshaAllah, but it becomes enjoyable as well. In an effort to revive the sunnah of fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, the MSA hosted their first potluck iftar of the semester on January 30th.

After the Maghrib prayer in congregation, people lined up to indulge in the food. Some of the delicacies included Italian Express pizza, pasta salad, baked mac and cheese, red velvet cheesecake brownies, and lemon bars. The tables were surrounded with filled plates, joyous laughter, happy faces, and Alhamdulillah satisfied stomachs. These potluck iftars do an amazing job of bringing brothers and sisters together in an effort to both please Allah (SWT) and follow in the footsteps of our beloved Prophet (S). Besides, who doesn't enjoy eating delicious food and appreciating good company while gaining reward InshaAllah?

If you missed the first potluck iftar, you can look forward to the next one, InshaAllah. Be sure to bring a friend or two to cherish the fun times that are the MSA Potluck Iftars.



ISLAMIQUEST

Zeba Shethwala | *Guest Writer*

Every year, the Loyola MSA chooses to participate in the Orphan Sponsorship Drive through Islamic Relief. Various fundraisers are set-up with the goal of raising enough money to sponsor an orphan for a year. Sponsorship entails providing food, clothing, and an education for the child. This year is no different.

The most recent fundraising effort put together by the Orphan Sponsorship team was IslamiQuest, a weeklong Islamic scavenger hunt. Students were asked to form teams of five or six members and donate \$30 to play. Five teams signed up: Team Sarah and Sujud's Fan Club, Dream Team, Team Domination, Habibi, and the Ascetic Alchemists. Each day,

at Fajr, teams would receive a set of four questions of varying difficulties. Some questions were in code, requiring teams to use the clues provided to determine what was being asked. Other questions had multiple steps, each part providing some clue to the correct answer. Every question was assigned a point value. As long as teams answered correctly on the first try, they received full credit for the questions. Incorrect responses usually resulted in losing half credit and hints cost one point. To build competition, a five point bonus was awarded to the team to correctly answer each question first. The purpose of the game was not just to gain the most points, but to learn something along the way.

On the first day, answers were slow in

coming, but competition grew quickly. The most dedicated players were up at Fajr, providing answers to some of the questions within minutes of receiving them. Rankings were posted every night, and no two nights ever showed the same results. By the time Friday came around, teams were anxious to hear who the ultimate winner was. In the end, team Habibi came out on top, winning by a mere 1.5 points.

The event was a complete success. Through IslamiQuest, a total of \$204 was raised for the Orphan Sponsorship Drive. Alhamdulillah! On behalf of the Orphan Sponsorship team, thank you to all who participated. May Allah (swt) reward you immensely for your generosity.

Annual Spelling Bee

Mehreen Rahim | *Al-Risalah Editor*

This year's campus-wide spelling bee was hosted by the National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS), and was co-sponsored by Students for Justice in Palestine (JSP) and American Red Cross. The event was structured as a fundraiser for a great cause that the Muslim Student Association has been working to promote – The Orphan Sponsorship Drive. All proceeds went to the cause allowing participants and viewers to provide food, shelter, and education to children in need.

What is the Orphan Sponsorship Drive?

According to UNICEF and USAID, there are approximately 153 million children orphaned by one or both parents around the world. The number of orphan children has risen in many countries to over fifty percent what it used to be. This reinforces the importance and need to resolve this issue, which is what Islamic Relief strives to do.

The Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) said, *"I and the person who looks after an orphan will be in paradise together like this,"* reports Al-Bukhari. He describes the motion by raising his forefinger and middle finger together.

Islamic Relief USA works with organizations worldwide to provide care for orphans in countries where war, famine, and poverty are prevalent. Donors to Islamic Relief USA are sponsoring over 11,000 orphans in two-dozen countries. Islamic Relief Worldwide has sponsored over 30,000 orphans annually. The support these donors provide, is often times enough to aid an orphan's entire family out of poverty. Islamic Relief strives to connect donors with orphans to better provide for them and their families. This organization also implements projects to further orphan's education and training. To learn more about this cause, visit the Islamic Relief USA website (<http://www.irusa.org/campaigns/orphans/>).

LUC MSA and NSCS present:
SPELLING BEE
 Funded by SAF
 Thursday, February 27, 2014
 7 pm
 Damen MPR South
 \$3 entrance fee
 \$6 participation fee
 All proceeds go to helping an orphan in need!
 there will be prizes!

Brothers' Halaqah

Razaan Mateen | *Al-Risalah Editor*

The Brothers' halaqahs are small gatherings at 7pm on Wednesday nights in the Damen musallah. They are led by a brother chosen by the halaqah leader of the preceding week. This way, a brother has one week to prepare a topic to discuss for his session. No one knows the topic of the halaqah other than the brother presenting. Despite that, as 7pm approaches, brothers slowly begin trickling in, taking a minute to greet everyone before they sit down and join the circle.

This semester we've transitioned from a lecture type setting in which the leader quotes a few verses from the Qur'an or Hadith reiterating a lesson to one where the leader introduces a topic supported by Hadith or verses of Qur'an, shares his experiences, and thereafter opens the floor for input from the other brothers. Of course, our halaqahs are supposed to be spiritual gatherings, so it makes sense to quote the Qur'an or Prophet Muhammad (S). But sometimes listing Qur'an and Hadith to illustrate a broad message really formalizes the informal setting we wish to maintain, and brothers get bogged down by translations and heavy explanation. Now, because the leader begins by sharing an experience, the setting is much more intimate; brothers have a personal experience, not just a verse from the Qur'an, to relate to and contemplate. When

the halaqah leader shares an experience from his life, we get an authentic, personal example of an individual living in modern society.

This new style encourages discussion topics that may not be obviously represented in Qur'an but are obviously represented in the lives of people, such as the topic of racism, discussed by Ahmed Aleem the week of Feb 3rd. The week before that, Brother Ali Nasruddin discussed what humility entails, and how to approach it regarding our relationships with God, friends and family, and - after input by a brother - our academics. We also discussed how we often make presumptions about individuals we may not even know - be it regarding their spirituality, their character, or their beliefs. During his session, Brother Laith Elkurd introduced the idea of Husnu Dhann (Positive Thinking), a state of mind which helps us build more genuine, honest, and considerate relationships with the people around us, and also strengthens our trust in and love for God. Each of these topics dealt with an issue that someone, in that circle or outside, was dealing with. The halaqahs provide a platform for individuals to voice their doubts, concerns, beliefs, with the non-judgmental and accessible atmosphere to let it happen. These gatherings are open to anyone who is interested.



Sisters' Halaqah

Samreen Hassan | *Guest Writer*

As a transfer student I was anxious about starting at a new college. It is sometimes intimidating meeting new people and getting adjusted to your new environment. However, the MSA made it really easy for me. As soon as I came inside the musallah I was bombarded with welcome hugs, smiles, and rounds of 20 questions. All in all, they made me feel right at home. It seemed like I have always been attending Loyola. That word "sisterhood" is more than just a word, it is this sacred bond that can truly only be felt. And I felt it in just the first week here at Loyola.

You can especially feel this bond in the Halaqahs that happen every Wednesday at 5 pm. The first halaqah I went to was given by Sister Zahraa. The night began with the maghrib salat. Then, one by one the sisters came together to form a circle. As the talk began the night became even sweeter as we passed around the rasmalai and gulab jamun. The topic was on Riya and its dangers. A part of it was how even the smallest wrong intention can lead to the disease of the heart. And what makes it so terrifying is that sometimes we don't even realize it and we commit shirk- "worshipping" someone else besides Allah (SWT). For example, we may fix our salah just because our abbu or ammi is watching and they are going to smack us if they see us slack off in prayer. Or we may want to "impress the VP of MSA" so we can get special treatment. Whatever it may be, we forget that we are praying only for Allah's sake. However, just

like how with every lock there is a key, similarly, there are solutions for every problem. First and foremost, we must make dua. Dua is such a powerful weapon; it can make what may seem impossible possible. Also, acquiring knowledge helps you gain awareness- in fact it is compulsory on every man and woman to seek knowledge. We learned that self-reflection is also very beneficial because Riya is an internal struggle. For only when we realize our mistake can we truly turn around, ask forgiveness, and fix our intention for it is never too late, Inshallah.

After the talk was over sisters took turns sharing stories, worries, tips, and laughs as we enjoyed our sweet treats. Although this topic may have been a little heavy, what made it easy and approachable were the very sisters in that Musallah. The environment was so warm and comfortable that you were able to express your thoughts freely. Finally, just the way it began, we ended the gathering by remembering Allah (SWT) as we each said a little bit for the dua and concluded with a beautiful recitation of surah Al-Asr. May Allah grant us all the Hidayah to correct our intentions, purify our hearts and to be among those that illuminate the darkness. Ameen.

"Thawban Radyallu 'anbu narrates: I heard Rasulullahu Sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam saying: Glad tidings to the sincere (people). They are an illumination in the darkness, because of whom all severe evils are driven away." (Baihaqi)

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

Asad Sayeeduddin | Guest Writer

Success is not achieved overnight. When we look at the greatest individuals of our time, whether that is people of the deen or dunya, we see a common factor between these types of people. Their similarities exceed beyond being successful in their respected field. Rather, it is more closely related to a trait that many of us yearn for and only a few of us actually have. The characteristic these individuals have installed within them is simply a strong work ethic.

Developing a strong work ethic goes beyond simply making a new year's resolution or uttering a few phrases that you believe will change your life. In order to develop this trait, an individual must have his or her mind focused and be prepared to put in the right amount of work needed to be at the top of their field. For example, Shaykh Husain mentioned a study chronicling the childhood of superior tennis players. In this study, researchers found that these athletes had put in 10,000 hours of work in order to hone

their craft, which equates to roughly 20 years spent constantly grinding to achieve their goal. Furthermore, these researchers also mentioned that these hours were not done so with an absent mind. In fact, these long and tiring hours were achieved in solitude or with a helpful instructor. In other words, achieving excellence requires a person to put in countless hours of hard work and dedication with a sound and focused mind. When one does so, excelling at any particular field becomes more attainable. Such a work ethic can also be translated for us to be put in our effort to be better Muslims.

As Muslims, we always have a desire to get closer to the deen. Particularly after the month of Ramadan, all of us experience a religious high, where we say we will become a hafiz of the Quran or that we will attempt to perform more good deeds. Yet, this effort repeats itself every single year. The month of Shabaan comes around and we are better than we were before Ramadan but as the days start to pass by, we end up going down a slippery slope and end up standing in the same spot we were on

the night before Ramadan. In order to prevent this trend from repeating, Shaykh Husain gives a simple piece of advice of how to increase our level of iman and that is simply by remembering Allah (SWT) and being in a constant state of dhikr.

Such advice seems strange upon initially hearing it, however one must take baby steps in order to reach one's goal. For instance, if a person is not in the habit of doing dhikr, one can start to do so after performing a prayer and progressively increase to a point where one does so after each prayer that one performs. Eventually, one may start doing so walking to class and so on and so forth, until one's tongue is in a constant state of remembering Allah (SWT). So as we all strive to better ourselves both as human beings and servants of Allah (SWT), acquiring a strong work ethic combined with a robust mindset is key in order to reach our goal. Once an individual can wholeheartedly focus their time and effort on a desired goal, only then can that individual achieve excellence in their desired field.

**Reflection of talk delivered by Shaykh Husain Abdul Sattar. Shaykh Husain holds weekly dhikr sessions at ICC every Sunday after Maghrib. Live stream of these sessions are also available on sacredlearning.org*



Let Us Give Thanks

Mohamad Kassir | Guest Writer

Complaining is what humans do best. When something horrible happens to us, the first thing we do is complain about it rather than finding a solution. For most of us, our life is based on complaining, no matter how small the problem we are facing is. We waste our time exaggerating about that problem and acting as our lives are ruined by this conflict. We are used to making a big deal out of every bad thing that happens to us. We only look at the negative side of the problem that we face and we totally forget that there is something positive hiding behind the negative. If we were asked to give a summary about a day of the past, we would only mention the worst part of that day. The small negatives in our lives turn, in our minds, to disasters. The bad overpowers the good.

We need to know and believe that everything happens for a reason. Allah (swt) will only choose for you that which is good and beneficial to you. In the beginning, you may not be able to see the bright side of a dismal situation, but, if you give it some time, you will be surprised by how much good this problem carries along with it. Our beloved prophet Mohammad, peace be upon Him, has told us in the following hadith: "How wonderful is the affair of the believer, for his affairs are all good, and this applies to no one but the believer. If something good happens to him, he is thankful for it and that is good for him. If something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience and that is good for him" (Muslim, 2999). This shows us that, no matter what happens to us, the first thing

we should do is thank Allah for everything He has done for us. No matter how hard the problem is-- no matter how disastrous it seems— we should remain strong because we know that Allah is there for us. He is The Sustainer, The All Provider, and The Most Generous. He will only choose the right thing for you. Because we are human beings, we do not always have the ability to see what's there for us. All that we can do is give it time in order to see a lot of unexpectedly wonderful things happen. We should always look at the blessings that we have instead of looking at what we don't have. When we are able to recognize how much we are blessed, we will no longer attempt to think about the things we don't have. We shouldn't compare our lives to anyone, but at the same time we should look at those people who don't have what we have. Those people, who don't even have the basic means of life, just like the people in Syria nowadays or our brothers and sisters in Palestine in their hardships. We should pray for them and help them as much as we can.

We should be thankful to Allah for blessing us with all that we need and beyond. As Allah told us in the Quran that the more we thank Him, the more He gives us. This is how generous He is with us. Let's look at how foolish we are when we complain right away when something small happens to us, even though Allah (swt) and his Prophet (s) told us that there will be something good behind it. We should believe in our hearts that Allah (swt) will only choose that which is beneficial to us, and we should be a bit more patient when a calamity happens to us, because Allah (swt) has blessed with a lot more wonderful blessings. So let's all thank Allah (swt) for what He has given and for what He has in store for us.

Reflections on the MSA by a Graduating Senior

Rizwan Khan | *Al-Risalah* Editor

This spring semester, Inshaa'Allah, will be my last semester at Loyola. For those who don't know me, my name is Rizwan; a.k.a., the uncle of the MSA, the godfather (I'm hoping that will catch on), that Shia guy, the dude with the best advice and maybe other names I'm not familiar with. I've been active in the MSA since my freshman year, three and a half years ago, and my thoughts on the MSA have changed every year since then. I want to focus on my "concluding" thoughts, which I think have finally settled into an opinion. I want to begin by saying my opinions are ones which I have formed through my own experiences; these may not be a high priority for others, may offend some, but I believe they are relevant enough to warrant a discussion with a concrete mission: to analyze what the MSA has accomplished, what it hopes to accomplish and how.

Lately, I've been notorious for criticizing the MSA for its shortcomings and failures. In the past, I've been hesitant to voice my concerns on what we as an organization are doing wrong, inquiring about what we are doing to tackle issues we see in our Loyola community (particularly within the Loyola Muslim community) and why our focus has largely been in inviting [big name] speakers and simply maintaining weekly halaqahs. But as a senior, I feel obliged to leave my thoughts, in the hope someone may take advantage of them and start a reformation of the current trends in our organization.

I base this reflection with the claim we have failed to build a conscious Muslim com-

munity at Loyola, which consists of a diverse group of Muslims: practicing and non-practicing, Arab and Desi, European and African, Sunni and Shia, etc., and etc. Though we take pride in having a large membership, in reality, we have a very few number of active, consistent members. More worrisome than that, the membership is made up of individuals which fit a very stereotypical mold. Because of this, the events we do as an MSA and on a social, personal level (as a derivative of MSA), are naturally attractive to those who fit the same mold as the status quo. The ostracizing and the unattractiveness of this method is obvious: those individuals who do not fit into the mold will not feel a connection with the organization which aims to build a community of Muslims. For this reason, we may have Muslims on our campus who look towards other organizations and groups of friends to build community(ies). Unfortunately, not all of these other groups provide an environment which can consistently maintain Islamic standards of what is desirable and what is forbidden.

I don't expect us to maintain a connection with every Muslim on campus and have him/her attend every single MSA event; but, there must be an incentive provided by the MSA which every Muslim on campus can connect to and take advantage of. Now, you may ask, what is this incentive the MSA can provide? I believe one answer is diversifying. No one on this campus is on the same level of religious consciousness. We need to operate on a level which can reach the lowest and highest of us in knowledge and faith. We need to accommodate different beliefs which exist in our organization.

One may say we already do this (retreats,

Mozaffar discussions, etc.) but what has been the result of these initiatives? Has the status quo of the MSA changed? In reality, it hasn't. I won't say we haven't made progress: we invited a Sufi scholar last year (for which marketing was horrible to non-existent), a Shia scholar (the drama surrounding this is too much to mention in one article, ask me later) and recently began a series called Friday Night Revive (which in all likelihood, couldn't have taken place a couple years ago). But there is much more to be done and the change, as cliché as it may sound, begins with us. We, as members of a Muslim STUDENTS Organization, need to look out for things we have been doing, such as ostracizing other Muslims on campus. We need to put aside fears of being divergent and take proper action to change the way we run as an organization to a route which is wide enough to accommodate as many people as we can. Allah (SWT) does not change the conditions of a people who do not take steps to change their conditions first.

I wish I could write more, but I refuse to make this article longer than it has to be. Inshaa'Allah, maybe next time, through any medium, we'll be able to critically think of our success and for the large part our failures as an organization. If I have offended anyone with this post, then welcome to life which is full of offenses and people different than you. I'm sorry for the hurt feelings, but I make dua that your hurt can be used to positively impact the MSA. If any brother or sister has questions or wants to yell at me for this, you can email me at murizwan14@gmail.com. Salaam.

Freshman Reflection

Anonymous

If you were to ask me the one thing that made my MSA experience worthwhile, I would reply with one word: brotherhood. We all share Islam, which is what holds us together in a way that is truly unique. It is something that is so unique that people begin to wonder what it is that makes us so close. They begin to wonder what it is that makes us so honest to each other. They begin to wonder what it is that makes us care for each other. I can go on and on, but the answer is simple: we all share the same goal of la illaha illa Allah. Allah (SWT) says in the Quran, "And re-

member the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers." This ayah was revealed concerning the two tribes of Medina—Aws and Khazraj—that were always in conflict, yet Allah, through



Islam, brought them together and made them brothers.

Similarly, I can see the same effect with our own MSA. Differences that we still share today—that

may have prevented us from even knowing each other—do not get in the way of our brotherhood. Rather, Allah has brought together our hearts with this wonderful religion, and we are able work, hang out, and drink chai together. We all support and look out for each other, and, as a freshman, I felt this was especially true. The upperclassman really helped transition us well in every aspect. We looked towards them for help, advice, and inspiration, and they were always there guiding us through the first semester of our college careers. With only a glimpse of this MSA's potential, I look forward to meeting new people and continuing to build the strong relationships that make us who we are today.

Education, Right or Privilege: Through the Lens of our Jaded Culture

Hiba Zakai | Guest Writer

I taught at a small, private school in a neighborhood of Chicago, which shall remain unnamed at the request of the principal. The institutional culture is unique as the students that attend are children of immigrants, and some of them are from undocumented families. The professionals of the parents range from taxi drivers to small business owners. As a cultural anthropologist wannabe, this educational institution environment is ideal for someone like myself who has always been fascinated by the impact identity, race, and culture has on learning development. However, as I now continue my second quarter in my doctorate program at DePaul, an urban campus – I am yet again faced with the challenge of defining “culture” in the context of an institution versus defining “culture” in our society.

One definition that has resonated with me, speaks of culture as the thread that weaves together the fabric of everything we value and need to know—beliefs, morality, expectations, skills, and knowledge—giving them functional expression by integrating them into effectual customary patterns. In this essay I make the claim that our teaching mythologies as educators could reflect the personal influences we bring to our curriculum and into our classrooms in order to strive for “living-learning” growth for our students. I too have the same wish as Raymond Williams: “I wish that we could recognize that education is ordinary: that it is, before everything else, the process of giving to the ordinary members of society its full common meanings, and the skills that will enable them to amend these meanings, in their personal and common experience.”

Growing up in the Middle East, I have had the privilege of attending private American international schools where I was taught by teachers from six continents. My classmates included similar diversity – our school community was a mixture of ethnicities, nationalities, and religions. Countries



that were represented both from teachers and students ranged from Arab, Southeast Asian, North and South African, North and South American, and European nations. My senior class trip included a ferry across the Red Sea to

in the Middle East; then with my travels as an independent college student and a member of the Model United Nations academic community during my undergraduate tenure at the University of Arizona. It was not until graduate school in my Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison that I become more conscious of service-learning and social justice initiatives in higher education such as Alternative Spring Break trips and student development leadership trainings that provided a sense of purpose to what many of us may take for granted – the ability and the means to travel and connect with individuals of different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. And more importantly – to learn, reflect, and act upon from those learning experiences as a 21st century world leader. In fact, whichever path we take in our journey of discovery with our students, as educators – student and academic affairs

“I am yet again faced with the challenge of defining ‘culture’ in the context of an institution versus defining ‘culture’ in our society.”

Egypt and my winter break road trips were to Lebanon, Jordan, or Bahrain. My summer vacations were to the “homeland”—Pakistan and mini trips to Dubai or backpacking through Europe. Not realizing at that time that those might have been my most formative years as an individual and a member of the global community. Admit it or not, at the end of the day where we come from or the cultural experiences we acquire along the way in our journey of “discovery” makes us who we are, and it is our educational intuitions – both K-12 and higher education environments that can create an identity of purpose. One can say that the culture children learn as they grow up is, in fact, “ways of taking” from the environment around them.

I had started collecting cultures, languages, and stories during my K-12 years, first as a daughter to a parent who raised his family

professionals alike – should strive to bridge the gap between what is taught outside and inside the four walls of a classroom. The extent to which students’ academic achievements are influenced by the environment in which learning occurs is an important issue for the sociology of education.

What role does a multicultural education



play in defining a “globally-educated” society with world leaders as citizens? A society exists when a collection of human being has identifiable and recognizable links with one another, and interacts in patterned ways. In that sense, it is true, we can today speak of “global society,” since virtually all human being are now inter-linked through the flow of information and

Loyola Students for Life

Aksa Rashid | Guest Writer



Loyola Students for Life (LSFL) is an organization here on campus that works to help end and create awareness of various human injustices, including abortion. Every year, LSFL along with other colleges from around this area head to Washington, DC to attend to huge event that is The March for Life, where over half a million people march in front of the capital on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade.

As excited as I was to attend, I was also a little nervous at first because as one of the only Muslim students attending the march from Loyola, I expected that most of the events and speakers that we would hear would be predominantly Christian and a little harder to relate to. However, this was not the case at all. By the end of the march, it didn't matter what religion you practiced, or if you practiced any at all because everyone felt so truly inspired by the things that they learned. I was able to learn a lot and all of the problems that were addressed were issues that Muslim students today also face.

Attending the march is one of the highlights of my year, and I encourage everyone to take part in not only the march, but to also come out to LSFL meetings that are held every Sunday at 6:30pm in Cuneo 311.

CONTINUED: Education

commerce. The 21st century Muslim youth in America have silently, and some not so silently, become the movers and the shakers of their communities by redefining cultural identities around mosques, in Islamic schools, at home, and on college campuses. Some of these developments can be contributed to the nature of the learning spaces and the external environment of our society.

Culture grants us the permission to be comfortable with who, where, and what we are. However, identities that are rooted in deep cultural contradictions can be easily misunderstood through a state of doubt and confusion. Inner consistency and stability are two rare, yet strong threads needed to complete weaving the colorful fabric of true religiosity and deep spirituality, which can only be achieved within a sound cultural core. A key element of culture is the ability to create a sense of community. A culture's strength is measured in its capacity to shine an identity, produce social unification, and inspire its members to acquire the knowledge and skills to empower them to achieve personal and societal goals for growth.

Despite the incredible individual talent and the increasing numbers, community and self-determination are two key ingredients required for the balance of achieving a "successful" and effective culture. Clifford Geertz eloquently highlights the purpose of culture as a guiding path: "some things are, for all intents and purposes, entirely controlled intrinsically: we need no more cultural guidance to learn now to breathe than a fish needs to learn how to swim". However, take note that unlike how I

view culture – as collected attributes during our journey from the places we visit or the people we meet, he views with different colored lenses: "Culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns – customs, usage, traditions, habit clusters – as has, by and large been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions – for the governing behavior."

The realization of a world society for the 21st century means that local people deal with people from all over the world. International corporations around the world have always needed multilingual skills in their employees, but they are also seeing the need for further education. They are training their employees in cultural issues as well, emphasizing the different belief systems within the global diversity. Recently, in international news we saw reforms in Education for All through brave actions of young girls like Malaya in Swat, Pakistan. Education is no longer a white-man privilege. However, the burning question is that in this day and when billions of humans are struggling for limited resources, how can we utilize the "free" gems or tools provided to us to our advantage? One challenge I propose to fellow community members, educators, and students alike is to be able to understand the places, people, and way of life that surround us and to utilize technology as a means to share, reflect, and hence grow. In other words, ask yourself, if education is a right and not a privilege, why do we have difficulties in embracing the ways of our societies and technology as a curriculum itself? Should be simple, one would think.

Reviving a Sunnah:

Smile. Smile more often. Smiling not only signals happiness towards others, but also helps cope with life stresses. Smiling has proven to lower blood pressure as well. Abdullaah ibn Haarith [PBUH] said: "I never came across a person who smiled as much as Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]. Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] regarded smiling to a brother as an act of charity."

[Tirmidhi]

Medical School: Reflection and Advice

Muhammad Saifullah

Loyola [MSA] Alum '12
Rush Medical College '17

Bismillah Al-Rahmaan Al-Raheem. Fellow students, respected brothers and sisters of the MSA I still very much consider myself a part of, Assalaamua'laykum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu! It has been a while; I hope everyone is in the best of health and the strongest of Imaan inshaAllah. To my esteemed freshmen brothers and sisters, welcome! Needless to say, Loyola, LUC MSA in particular, is amazing mashaAllah, enjoy the experience, cherish it, and please stay connected.

Now, onto the topic at hand. Med school has been an exhilarating experience thus far. To be honest, the transition from undergrad to med school was really tough, academically and personally. I remember Shaykh Dr. Husain Abdul Sattar (may Allah SWT preserve him) advising me prior to my semester off before med school, telling me to prepare for a spiritual drain. Now I feel that I realize what he meant by that. This makes for a nice preface to this piece. Out of all the challenges, I feel that the environment is the most difficult aspect to adapt to. You realize that you are in a very different place, far away from places and people that bring you comfort. You realize that you are not getting a chance to do many of the things you used to take for granted, not as much at least. There tend to be periods



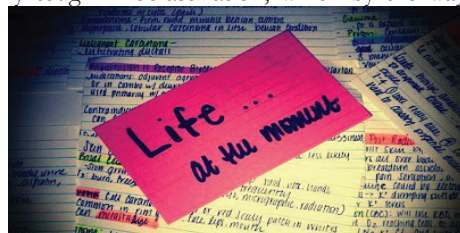
of isolation, loneliness, and even discomfort. The environment, though at Rush it's more friendly than other places I feel, tends to get quite secular, professional, and, well, spiritually draining... this leads me to my first humble advice: please use your time wisely. In undergrad, though you may think otherwise, you have a lot of free time on your hands. If you plan on pursuing higher education like med school, you're not going to have this luxury for long. Rid yourselves of needless distract-

tions, and spiritually fortify yourselves in preparation for that which is to come inshaAllah. Try to spend as much time in the Masjid, in good company, and in the pursuit of Sacred Knowledge (Islamic Studies) as possible. Try to spend some time everyday with the Qur'an and engaged in Dhikr, Remembrance of Allah SWT - it's very, very important.



At the same time, you realize a lot about yourself. You are pushed to your limits, and realize how much time you used to waste and how much more you can do. You discover new heights of potential within yourself, and slowly yet surely, you get used to it. The academics get really challenging too; it's a dimension apart from undergrad. The interesting thing is that it's more the intensity, the volume, and the pace rather than the content that gives med school academia its reputation. If you're a science major in undergrad or if you have a firm grasp of basic science prerequisites before coming to med school, a lot of the material is review and building upon what you already know. I even came across material I recall learning in high school. The challenge lies in the amount, the volume that gets thrown at you in a short period of time. Shaykh Husain put it well when he said that med school is like drinking out of a fire hydrant. In order to deal with this, you need a lot of discipline and focus, and you need to get rid of bad habits you may have. I learned this the hard way...

Humble advice #2: get into shape early so you won't have to later on when it gets really tough. Procrastination, which by the way



is something you shouldn't have in the first place, needs to go out the door. You cannot afford to fall behind in med school; it's a day to day studying endeavor building up to exam time. Cramming doesn't work, not anymore, trust me, I tried. There is just far too much on your plate to mess around. Repetition and practice is key. Discipline, organization, strict scheduling, eliminating distractions - essential. You have to acquire a new level of focus and dedication to your studies. If you work on acquiring and maintaining these habits from now, inshaAllah you'll be in good shape, now and later on.

At this point you might be thinking: are you kidding me!? Relax, honestly, as a good friend and fellow alum Mansoor Ahmed told me as I was preparing for this journey, if you can remove bad habits and learn to be disciplined, you'll be just fine. And yes, there is a bright side. All the intensity aside, med school is amazing. It takes learning to a whole new level, beyond the classroom. There are lectures, lots of them, but then you get to apply your knowledge in workshops, labs, team-based learning sessions, and clinical settings. It's hard to describe in words; you have to experience it

to truly understand. It is when you learn at this level that you begin to realize the miracle of human creation and the absolute blessing of good health. Alhamdulillah, I get the opportunity to wake up everyday and look forward to marveling at the Creation of Allah SWT in a different way. It never gets old; there's always something to learn, something to realize, something to take benefit from. I may be overwhelmed at times and intensely involved most of the time, but I absolutely love it!

Here comes humble advice #3: make sure medicine is what you want to do. In my opinion, motivation is THE number one factor in the entire process of applying and getting into med school. Pre-med and med itself is really tough if you haven't figured it out yet and it's a long journey, from undergrad to when you become a full physician. In order to hang in

“If you can remove bad habits and learn to be disciplined, you'll be just fine.”

CONTINUED: Medical School Advice

there, excel, come out in one piece, and stay that way, you need to have a good reason to pursue this field. You should genuinely enjoy science, studying all about the human body, mechanism of disease etc. There is helping people involved of course, but that can't be your ONLY reason because you can do that in many other fields.



If you're thinking money, with all due respect, that is not good enough a reason and not strong enough a motivation. Even if you manage to pull through, you'll face a lot of difficulty later on. Especially if you don't like your job - you may have wealth but you'll not be happy. Wealth is from Allah SWT and He will Provide for you InshaAllah regardless of the field you're in. Just do what you want to do with sincerity and good intention, while making sure what you're doing is beneficial to yourself and those around you. If all the motivation you have is that your parents want this for you, you may want to sit down with them and have a serious discussion about your future.

You may be wondering if/how I got over the spiritual drain mentioned earlier. Alhamdulillah, I feel that I have gotten used to life as a medical student and have gotten over the

initial drain. It's difficult for me to be far from Masajid, from sacred gatherings, from the company of scholars, from comforting environments like the Loyola musallah etc. and I really wanted to continue my Islamic studies... But I remind myself and this helps me move forward Alhamdulillah: this is my assignment from my Lord SWT. There are so many steps in the medical school application process in which one can end up discontinuing, but Allah SWT took me through all those stages and brought me here. It is not by chance that I find myself in this honorable and humbling position. I sincerely believe that this is the plan of Allah SWT for me, so I need to embrace it and work hard to seek His pleasure through it. And as Shaykh Husain assured me, inshaAllah I'll be able to return to the Masjid and the Madaris once I'm done. But right now, this is my work, this is my goal, this is my focus, this is my Ibadah. Humble advice #4: trust me my brothers and sisters, this very perspective can help you keep going, whether your post-graduate endeavor lies in the medical field or elsewhere.

If things seem to not be working out, please be patient. Remember: things always go according to Plan, but they may not go according to your plan. Have faith in Allah SWT, that He knows what is best for you and will guide you there inshaAllah. With this in

mind, do your absolute best, work hard with sincerity and good intention. And for crying out loud, if medicine doesn't work out as a career option, don't fall off the deep end. It's an OPTION, there are many more out there, really good ones. Have parallel options ready just in case; I did, and at one point I was going to pursue some but Allah SWT willed otherwise and here I am Alhamdulillah.

All this reflection and advice can be applied to any graduate level endeavor inshaAllah, so I hope everyone who reads this can somehow take benefit. There is so much more I want to say, but this is getting quite long now (typical eh? For those who know me) so I'll stop here. I wanted to include some advice for those applying to med school or preparing to do so, pre med folks, but that's a whole article on its own. InshaAllah, I'm planning on preparing a detailed document regarding that this summer, so hopefully that works out and reaches those who are interested. Until then and after then, please feel free to email me with specifics: muhammad_s_ullah@rush.edu. I can't promise a prompt reply but I'll do my best. Besides, you've got great upperclass folks in the MSA, so please reach out to them. I hope this helps somehow, as folks consider med school, or grad school in general. Sorry about the rambling; I can't help it, I am after all a Loyolan :)

Sunnah in Action

WEEK 2: DHIKR

Zainab Bozai | Guest Writer

Now, I want you to imagine something beautiful: Allah remembering you. In this beautiful Hadith Qudsi, Allah (SWT) says "I am to my servant as he expects of Me, I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers Me in his heart, I remember him to Myself, and if he remembers Me in an assembly, I mention him in an assembly better than his..." (Bukhari and Muslim). One of the beautiful things about dhikr is that it connects you with Allah (SWT) all the time. There is dhikr to say when you leave your house, when you see something good, and when you see something bad. When it is raining or there is thunder, there is something to say. These daily adhkar keep the heart soft and keep you in constant remembrance of Allah (SWT).

Read full article at: <http://sunnabinaction.weebly.com/week-2-make-thikr.html>

WEEK 3: GIVING

Shaziya Barkat | Al-Risalah Editor

An encouraging smile as you pass a stranger. An uplifting word to a brother or sister. A period of quality time spent with the family. These may seem like mere strokes in our day, yet when observed in its entirety, these strokes come together to form the vivid painting of our lives. With each act of giving- whether it's giving a smile, a word, or a moment of our time- our canvas becomes rich with color. But how you choose to decorate that canvas is up to you; it's your art. You might use a defined paintbrush, or you might smear on some color with your fingers. Creating art is not limited to just one way, and each approach ultimately forms a unique and creative piece. That's the beauty

of giving as well: there are endless ways to do it. Yet each generous action ultimately adds to the exquisiteness of our canvas in the eyes of Allah (SWT).

When it comes down to it, generosity is one of the most noble traits of a believer as it requires selflessness. It is not only considered an act of worship, but the act of giving is much more in that it begins to mold itself as part of who we are. It allows us to grow in our empathy for others and in our love for our brothers and sisters. The act of giving forms bonds and unity, the foundation for this Ummah. So smile and spread the love in every which way you choose until your painting thrives with color. They say beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. Will the ultimate Beholder like what He sees?

Read full article at: <http://sunnabinaction.weebly.com/week-3-be-generous.html>

Radio Islam

Tahera Rahman | Guest Writer

“The media is so anti-Muslim!”

“The only Muslims I ever see on TV are angry ‘terrorists.’”

“The news is always so biased!”

Chances are you’ve said and/or heard some form of these phrases at some point in your life, if not several times within the past few years.

As a journalist, I’m not going to deny that; you’re right.

A 2009 Gallup report found that whether or not Americans have a personal prejudice against Muslims, “at least one in five Americans say that most Muslims around the world are not accepting of other religions and of people of different races other than their own.” This means that your classmate, co-worker, or neighbor may like you, yet still believe that Muslims, as a whole, are a close-minded people.

These feelings aren’t a secret, whether in- or out-side of the Muslim community. The same Gallup report found that about half of a nationally representative sample “of Mormons, Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, and Jews agree that in general, most Americans are prejudiced toward Muslim Americans.”

We don’t have to look very far into the past to find more recent examples of Islamophobia. Let’s not forget about an entire New York City taking their hate to the streets in 2010, protesting the Park 51 Islamic Community Center because it would supposedly become a breeding ground for terrorists. Or just a week ago, when a Superbowl Coca-Cola ad ignited a fury of racist posts and tweets that showed the undercurrent of ignorance that has no doubt been bubbling among society long before the ad aired.

Deaf in Islam

Raof Baig | Guest Writer

“So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?” (55:13) This verse from the Quran is repeated 31 times in Surah Ar-Rahman. We are given 31 chances to reflect back on this beautiful verse and the importance it brings. Speaking from experience, however, there are many blessings in our lives that are not given the level of appreciation that they deserve. One of these many blessings include that of hearing, a common ability that many of us take for granted. Being Muslims, we understand how sound and hearing play an important role in our religion. It may be the Adhaan (call to prayer), recitation of the Quran, Nasheeds (poems/songs Islamic in nature), or the Jummah khutbas (lectures) we hear every week. Imagine not being able to enjoy these vital parts of our religion. For many Muslims, that is their reality.

The deaf Muslim community lives among us, yet feels isolated. They feel isolated because they cannot hear what other Muslims hear every day. They are not able to converse with others and

enjoy the social aspect of being a Muslim. Being deaf in a religion that revolves around oral practices is a major struggle our fellow Muslim brothers and sisters go through. Personally, the reality of being a deaf Muslim is relevant in my life as I have four relatives who range from being hard of hearing to completely deaf. I see how disconnected they feel from their own religion. For example, the normal Jummah khutbah is fast paced in order to get the most information out in a small amount of time. When it is hard to understand each word from the speaker’s mouth, giving up halfway and sitting in isolated silence is a hard reality for many Muslims. We count on Jummah to be our religious reminder of the week, to get us excited about our religion, at least for another week. For deaf Muslims, this connection and spiritual high is missed and is therefore spiritually burdening. I asked my deaf relative how it feels in a daily Islamic setting, he said, “Every time when I go to Jummah or an event where there is a speech, I am so confused on what they are saying because I don’t catch every word. It’s tough being a deaf Muslim, but it is my personal Jihad.” Deaf Muslims do not allow their disability to hold them back and to me, they

are better Muslims than I’ll ever be.

So what do we do about the anti-Muslim sentiment that surrounds us? What CAN we do? Well, we can begin with ourselves; “Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.” [Qur’an, 13:11]

Let’s transform this Quranic text into daily action (and I say this as a reminder to myself, first).

We can not underestimate the power we have as young, Muslim Americans. Many of us have been born and raised in the U.S. We empathize with the peer pressures of an average middle-schooler, we’re intrigued by the same media discussions as the average American watcher/listener, we share the struggles of tuition and exams with the average college student. Any local organization would scramble to utilize these relatable attributes and experiences; whether it be mentoring youth at IMAN, producing a Muslim talk show at Radio Islam (yes, that is a plug for my workplace), or taking an active role in LUC MSA’s very own outreach programs, such as Islam Awareness Week.

Our parents and grandparents settled here with the main goal of providing a comfortable lifestyle for their children. It was a difficult and essential task, but our generation needs to move beyond the fancy-job, white-picket-fence dream. We need to contemplate how we can benefit our greater American society, because that’s the only way others will realize that we are, in fact, an irreplaceable part of this nation’s fabric.

Tahera Rahman is the producer of Radio Islam, the nation’s first daily, live call-in talk radio program produced by Muslims for the mainstream market. RI broadcasts from Chicago’s Loop, the nation’s third largest listening market, covering a variety of topics and hosting a plethora of distinguished guests, including Nobel Peace laureates, authors, peace and justice activists, and civil servants such as congressmen, ambassadors and members of various parliaments. To see how you can be a part of the RI team, email Tahera at trahman@radioislam.com.

are better Muslims than I’ll ever be.

The problem that needs to be fixed in our Muslim communities is awareness among our fellow Muslims. Sign language interpreters should be made available in our local mosques for Jummah or during lectures. Imams and local Islamic leaders should attempt to learn sign language or at least form easier paths of communication. There are groups out there that advocate for deaf Muslims and provide basic services that should be available everywhere. Global Deaf Muslim is one of these great programs and their mission is very essential: “To advocate for the advancement and inclusion of Deaf Muslims in the Muslim Ummah and to raise awareness of Deaf Muslims issues within the broader Muslim community.” At the end of the day, I envy my fellow Muslims who are deaf because they have a blessing in disguise. On the Day of Judgment when we are held accountable for our actions, our limbs will either speak for or against us. “Their hearing (ears) and their eyes and their skins will testify against them as to what they used to do.” (41:22) I pray that we are in the position of our fellow Muslims who are deaf, for their ears will not speak against them, inshaAllah.

ISLAM AWARENESS WEEK 2014: FACES OF ISLAM

MONDAY, MARCH 31

Taste of Faith | 3:00-5pm | McCormick Lounge
Explore the diversity of Muslims through cuisines from across the globe.

In Search of Peace | 4-5pm | McCormick Lounge
A diverse panel of speakers share their journeys and experiences in Islam.
Speaker: Abdullah Madyun, Imam of Islamic Institute of Urban Affairs, & 4 LUC Students

The Secret Lives of Muslims | 7pm | Bremner Lounge
Take a deeper look into American Islam.
Speaker: Tahera Ahmed, Chaplain of Northwestern University

TUESDAY, APRIL 1

Exploring Islamic Art | 3-5pm | Damen MPR
Experience the wonders of Islamic art and architecture at this annual art exhibit.
Receive your very own calligraphy tile and henna tattoo!

Divine Advice: Lessons from the Quran | 7pm | McCormick Lounge
Join us as we delve into this Holy Book's numerous teachings on ethics.
Speaker: Abdul-Malik Ryan, Assistant Director of DePaul University's Office of Religious Diversity

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

Walk a Mile in Her Hijab | All day | Loyola University Chicago
Try out the Hijab (headscarf) to experience a day in the life of many Muslim women.

The Legacy of Female Scholarship in Islam | 4:15-5:30pm | Damen MPR North
Learn the important role females have played in Islamic scholarship and how Islam empowers women.
Speaker: Humaira Basith, former Executive Director of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago

Hijabi Monologues | 8pm | Mullady Theatre
Journey into the soul of the American Muslim Hijabi.

THURSDAY, APRIL 3

Sharing a Meal with Our Neighbors | 12-2 pm | Damen Student Center MPR South
Help make a difference by packing a lunch for Chicagoans in need.

Service to Mankind: A Faith Mandate | 4:30pm | McCormick Lounge
Discover how Islam promotes service and caring for our community.
Speaker: Edmund Arroyo, Founder of the Heartspeak Institute

Entertainment Night | 8pm | LSB 142
Enjoy an evening of comedic acts and inspirational performances by fellow students.

FRIDAY, APRIL 4

Friday Prayer | 1:40 & 2:40 pm | Damen MPR
Observe a sermon & prayer attended weekly by over a billion Muslims around the world.

Culmination Dinner | 7 pm | Damen MPR
Join us in celebrating the diversity of our Loyola community with a complementary dinner.
Speaker: Dr. Rami Nashashibi, Executive Director of the Inner-City Muslim Action Network

Dear Mufti...
...with Mufti Abrar Mirza

DEAR MUFTI: What's your advice to those of us who continuously procrastinate studying, in order to go to events and do activities for any club, including MSA?

-Anonymous

A Muslim must be balanced in his life and give due attention to all responsibilities. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) spent time in calling towards Allah Ta'ala, yet he looked after



his wives, played with his grandchildren, carried out household chores, went on expeditions, hosted visitors, engaged in worship, and much more. Similarly, the students



must also make out time for their studies, worship, family, and community services. In order to accomplish this, one should create a schedule and abide by it strictly. Time after Fajr must be utilized, as there is much blessing therein, and one should avoid activities that provide little benefit and waste much time, such as TV, social media, and YouTube. At the same time, if one finds it difficult to fit everything into his or her schedule, then he or she should prioritize and focus on what is most important, not necessarily what is most enjoyable.

DEAR MUFTI: Is "being concerned about my reputation" a valid reason to limit my interaction with the opposite gender? I'm having difficulty understanding how this is a justification to do something for the sake of Allah (SWT). Every time I make an intention to limit my interaction, everyone tells me about all the rationale reasons I should stop. But, my intention is never "I am doing this for Allah" but rather "I am doing this so people wont talk badly about me." How can I make my intention more sincere? What are some practical ways I can guarantee my intention is sincere and limit/control my interaction with the opposite gender in a campus setting?

- Anonymous

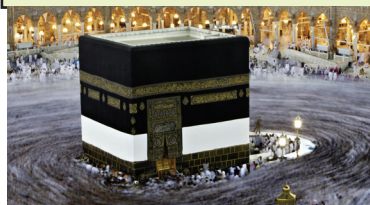
Avoiding acts that cause people to have suspicion or otherwise think negative of you is, in fact, a principle of the Sharia. Recognizing this, you should remind yourself each time that your reason for avoiding improper gender interactions is one that is in line with the Sharia. Hence, it must also be in accordance with the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala. Continue to observe proper



gender interaction rules and remind yourself that its eventual purpose is Allah Ta'ala's pleasure. Do not fall for Shaytaan's attempts to keep you away from good deeds with all types of excuses. In general, an effective manner of increasing the desire to please Allah Ta'ala is regularly reminding oneself of the punishments of Hellfire and the bounties of Paradise.

DEAR MUFTI: Can you perform Hajj if you have student loans? I have heard that a person needs to be free of debt to perform Hajj.

-Anonymous



Hajj is not obligated on a debtor, as financial ability is one of the conditions for obligation. However, if the person wishes to perform Hajj and the creditors do not ob-

ject, then he may perform the Hajj, including his fard Hajj. Nonetheless, it is best to pay off one's loans first and as soon as possible, especially in the case of interest bearing loans. And Allah knows best.



Essential Principles of Islamic Clothing and Adornment

Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani
ilmgate.org

Truly the greatest thing for which humans have need after food and drink is clothing, with which man conceals his nakedness, protects himself from the heat and cold, and adorns himself for social settings. Given that Islam is a faith that incorporates injunctions inclusive of all areas of life, it has not overlooked the subject of clothing and has established for it inviolable principles and rulings.

It may be that modern man considers clothing and adornment to be from those everyday, mundane issues that are subject to compliance of what is in vogue in each time and place, that it has no relationship to the rulings of *halal* and *haram* and thus not an essential issue upon which life depends. However this claim has but arisen due to insufficient reflection and lack of examination on the effect of clothing on human life. In fact, clothing and dress, despite its relation to a person's outward rather than his inward, still has a deep effect on his behavior, character and spiritual states. Amongst clothes are those which plant the seeds of arrogance and pride in the soul while others nurture in them modesty before Allah. There are those which establish good character in them and others which pave the way towards extravagance, sin, vanity, and infringement upon the rights of man. Therefore, whoever claims that clothing is but exoteric and that it has no connection to behavior or the character hidden within the hearts is truly uninformed of human nature.

For this reason, Islam did not left the matter of clothing in vain. Islam does not approach any of the affairs of life except

with a methodology that conforms to sound disposition and that is in harmony with the demands of nature. Given that humans are disposed to variation in types of clothing and food, Islam did not limit him to one type, excluding others, nor specified for man a particular style or particular form of dress, nor even a particular lifestyle. Rather it established a set of fundamental principles and dictums that every Muslim must abide by in the matter of clothing and then left him free to choose what he prefers from the [different] sorts of dress. Nothing thus prevents a change in the styles of clothing as long as a person upholds these principles and fulfils their necessary conditions.

From the first of these principles is that clothing must conceal the nakedness (*'awrah*) of a person. Islam requires a man to wear that which conceals what is between his navel and his knees, and that a woman conceal her entire body with the exception of her face, hands and feet. Covering the *'awrah* is the most important objective of clothing. Allah, glorified and exalted be He, states: "O children of Adam! We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and (clothing) for beauty". Thus Allah, glorified and exalted be He, explains that covering shame, i.e. concealing the *'awrah*, is of the greatest objectives of clothing. Clothing that does not fulfil this aim neglects that for which clothes were created, thus making it forbidden for use. All clothes that reveal a portion of the nakedness of a man or woman are not accepted by Islamic law, though they be beautiful or in fashion. Likewise, clothing that is fine and thin or clings to the body, which reveals to the viewer the shape of a portion of the body that must be concealed, would fall under the ruling above in impermissibility and would be disallowed.

The second principle is that the purpose of clothing is concealment and beautification, concealment for reasons aforementioned, and as for beautification, because Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, calls [clothing] adornment when He states: "Take your adornment at every place of prayer" and in His statement: "Say: who forbids

the adornment that Allah has brought out for His slaves, and the good, pure things of sustenance?". Nasa'i transmits from Abu'l-Ahwas from his father that he related, "I entered upon the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and he saw me in a shabby state. He said 'Do you have wealth?' I said 'Yes, Allah most High has given me all kinds of wealth'. He exclaimed: 'If you have wealth it should be seen upon you'". It has also been narrated from Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Truly Allah loves to see the effect of His bounties upon His slave". (Tirmidhi 124:5, and he deemed it *hasan*)

As for when the purpose of [clothing] is arrogance, pride, sin, vanity and ostentation, then [such clothing] is forbidden. It is narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Eat what you like and wear what you like, provided you do not fall into two things: extravagance and conceit." (Bukhari, as an explanatory remark in the beginning of [the Chapter of] Dress).



The third principle is that clothing which a person uses to imitate disbelieving nations are not permissible to wear for a Muslim if his purpose

of wearing such clothing was to imitate them. Ibn Nujaym writes in [the Chapter of] the Nullifiers of Prayer from al-Bahr al-Ra'iq (11:2): "Then know that resembling the people of the book is not disliked in everything and indeed we eat and drink just as they do. That which is impermissible is but imitation in that wherein there is blame and where one intends resemblance by it.

Read the full article at ilmgate.org



Book Review: The Kite Runner

Basharath Khan | *Al-Risalah* Writer



Khaled Hosseini's novel, *The Kite Runner*, is a story about a young boy named Amir who spends much of his childhood living in Kabul, Afghanistan with his single father and their two servants: Ali and his son, Hassan. Amir and Hassan are very close friends and spend much of every day together flying and running kites, climbing on trees with their slingshots and harassing neighbors, and causing other mischief around the house. However, although they are very close friends, they differ in many ways. Amir is the son of a wealthy entrepreneur, which has allowed him to receive a formal education and provided him the ability to read and write. Hassan, on the other hand, is not so fortunate, and spends his days helping his father around Amir's house by taking care of daily chores such as cooking, cleaning, and other tedious tasks.

The story begins in a very calm fashion with both Amir and Hassan living their daily lives without any surprising occurrences; Amir is constantly trying to meet

the high expectations that his father has set for him, and Hassan is simply aiding his father in his tedious daily activities, looking for every opportunity to spend time with and devote his loyalty to Amir. However, as the story progresses, an unexpected turn of events results in Hassan and Ali moving away after having lived all of their lives as servants to Amir and his father. Shortly after, Soviet Russia begins to invade Kabul, making the area very dangerous to continue living in, and forcing Amir and his father to flee to Pakistan to pursue safety. After spending some time in Pakistan, the two of them decide to move to a small town in California. Many years pass, but the memories of his time in Kabul continue to haunt Amir. He eventually returns to Kabul, and unexpectedly receives an opportunity to finally come to terms with his uncomfortable past.

Hosseini's novel is a very detailed account of Amir's life from childhood to adulthood, utilizing very vivid imagery and descriptions of context that allow the imagination to picture every scene that is taking place. He combines the fictional life of Amir with the very real and disturbing events that Afghanistan has faced in recent years. Hosseini puts into perspective the immense contrast between the comforting western lifestyles and the harsh and cruel conditions of much of the middle-east. This book is a great read, having you flip page after page and constantly shuffling through various emotions all the way to the final period.

Poetry: *Innocent Human* *There Can Never Be*

Abdullah Motiwala | *Guest Writer*

He told me to think
Think a little before I use my tongue to speak
He said, you are not even knowledgeable enough to preach
He said, who are you to show me the way and teach
He said, if you don't have anything good to say just hold on to your speech
I'm not Sherlock Holmes but here, I'll give you a hint to this mystery
He and He alone knows my history

I always believed in brotherhood but never got love back
I ran toward you, but you switched tracks,
I walked amongst you but you switched paths
I was judged amongst you and mocked, I guess Satan is the one that distracts

I couldn't take it, so I finally spoke,
Sorry, I know my forgiveness has no value, but still I beg your pardon
I know it's been tough, but if God wills, we will be standing together in the everlasting garden

Solving to find the x to this equation of disunity has been more complicated than it seems
Our love for each other has disappeared, almost completely
No one can surpass any hurdle without support and belief

I paused, caught a breath, and again I spoke,
I know an innocent human there can never be and mistakes are made unintentionally
I know misjudgment destroys one's imagery, but I am certain we will find the word unity, one day, we will find it, hopefully, in our personal dictionaries





◊◊ (LEFT) **Sherjil Baig** - "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds." (21:107)

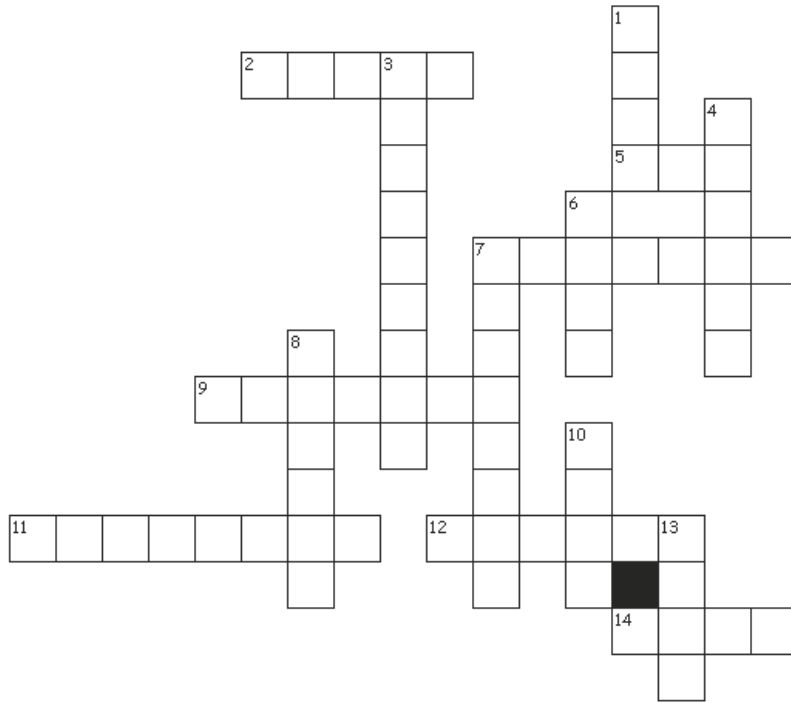
- (RIGHT) **Shaziya Barkat** - "By the sun and its brightness. And by the moon when it follows it. And by the day when it displays it. And by the night when it covers it. And by the sky and He who constructed it" (91:1-5)



◊ (LEFT) **Ahmed Aleem** - "And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth - all from Him. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought." (45:13)

ISLAMIC CROSSWORD

First in Islam



Across 2. The First Muezzin 5. Bakr First Khalifah 7. First Pillar 9. First Wife of the Prophet(PBUH)
11. First Month in the Islamic Calendar 12. First Surah in the Quran 14. First Prayer

Down 1. First Masjid in Islam 3. The Muslims first emigrated from Makkah to this nation 4. First Sin on Earth
6. The First Major battle between the Muslim and Kuffar. 7. First Martyr in Islam 8. First Child of the Prophet(PBUH)
10. First Child to convert to Islam 13. The First Prophet in Islam

KEY: Adam/ The First Prophet in Islam **Bilal**/ The First Muezzin **Murder**/ First Sin on Earth **Fajr**/ First Prayer **Khadija**/ First Wife of the Prophet(PBUH)
Abu Bakr/ First Khalifah **Fatiha**/ First Surah in the Quran **Muharram**/ First Month in the Islamic Calendar **Abyssinia**/ The Muslims first emigrated from Makkah to
this nation **Badr**/ The First Major battle between the Muslim and Kuffar. **Zainab**/ First Child of the Prophet(PBUH) **Sumayyah**/ First Martyr in Islam
Zaid/ First Child to convert to Islam **Quba**/ First Masjid in Islam **Shahada**/ First Pillar

This copy of Al-Risalah was made possible by:

OUR STAFF:

Shaziya Barkat

Newsletter Coordinator

Ahmed Aleem

Editor

Mehreen Rahim

Editor

Sonia Sherwani

Editor

Rizwan Khan

Editor

Razaan Mateen

Editor

Syed Ali Nasaruddin

Writer

Basharath Khan

Writer

Zeba Shethwala

Designer, Writer

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Raooof Baig
Samreen Hassan
Sharifah Abdallah
Sherjil Baig
Tahera Rahman
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