

In this Issue

Recent Events

[Understanding Hajar and Sarah
Karamah Submits Testimony](#)

[Upcoming Events
Black History Month Lecture
Series](#)

[Law and Leadership Summer
Program 2014](#)

Quick Links

[Help Us Continue to Help
Donate Now](#)

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work possible](#)

January 2014 Newsletter

Assalamu Alaykum!

So much has happened around the world and at KARAMAH since our last newsletter. The "Arab Spring," which has affected the lives of millions of women and men continues to reveal its consequences. Until a few days ago, another war was imminent, and now the 12th anniversary of September 11. Has it really been that long since our world was turned upside down by these horrific events? When will it all end? When will the world heal and regain its sanity?

On the phone today, my mother told me: "even the Prophet Muhammad had moments of frustration. When he felt that way, what did God tell him? He revealed the verse in the Qur'an 'Fa inna ma'al 'usri yusra, Inna ma'al 'usri yusra--Verily, along with every hardship is relief. Verily, along with every hardship is relief.'" (Qur'an 94:5-6).

With this incredible reminder from one amazing woman, our fervor to advocate for women and men worldwide is renewed. Indeed, KARAMAH continues to advocate for the civil rights of American Muslims at home, and for human rights worldwide. To advance this commitment, a bright young lawyer, Awais Khaleel, has joined the KARAMAH team as the Associate Director of Civil Rights Law and Programs. Through his efforts, we hope to continue the critical civil rights advocacy we have been engaged in for the past 20 years.

At the same time, we are also feverishly advocating for gender equity and against domestic violence in our homes. There is a connection, often unmade, between family law and our civil rights. Many judges, lawyers, imams and leaders are unfamiliar with Islamic law, and confuse it with cultural customs. As a result, many questionable patriarchal practices and views are being attributed to our faith, thus contributing to a serious legal and cultural misunderstanding. We at KARAMAH see an important role for us to play in educating our community and the larger society about Islam. Join us as we continue to educate on Islamic and civil law from traditional and authentic perspectives. Please see our upcoming events below.

Yours,

Aisha Rahman, Esq.
Executive Director
Summer 2013



Aisha Rahman, Dr. Raja El Habti, Rabbi Batya Steinlauf, Rev. Susan Hayward Speak on Hawa

Hawa (Eve), Maryam, Sarah and Hajar (Hagar): A Fall/Winter Series

Warm and friendly crowds often braved cold weather to join KARAMAH for three interfaith panels on Hawa (Eve), Maryam and our two mothers: Hajar and Sarah. Though all three Abrahamic faith traditions share the historical figures, guests had an opportunity to celebrate our shared history, stories of faith, motherhood, struggle and hardship, as well as variances in our different faith traditions.

The third in the lectures series featured the lives of Hajar and Sarah on January 8. KARAMAH is dedicated to celebrating the historical lives of women who often go unrecognized for their contributions to humanity. It was a night committed to education and enlightenment.

The goal of this series was to provide insight into and lessons from the lives of these great women. For adherents of the Abrahamic faiths, the character and stories behind these historical figures provide an indelible example for all people, regardless of age, background, or gender. Featuring an esteemed panel of speakers specializing in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic scholarship, the lectures presented how modern and historical interpretations differ among faiths, how these perspectives are sometimes colored by societal views on gender, and how their example can be appreciated today. Notably, each of the events was structured to allow robust engagement between the speakers and the audience through an extended Question and Answer session. [Read more](#)

Looking for Lawyers



Are you a lawyer interested in offering your pro bono services to help KARAMAH help more families achieve their human rights across the country? If so we are looking for you. KARAMAH gets calls from people around the world in need of legal assistance for a variety of family law matters. You can help from where ever you are. In little or no time you can join KARAMAH in helping families achieve their human rights where ever they live. Help us help more. Send us an email with your information. [Email us](#)

KARAMAH Submits Testimony on the Syrian Refugee Crisis



The Syrian Refugee Crisis was the topic of a hearing held by the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights on January 7 at 2:30 pm. KARAMAH submitted written testimony that will be included in the official record of the hearing.

While Senators may disagree on many foreign policy issues, there was bipartisan support for the need to effectively, adequately, and appropriately address one of the most horrific humanitarian crises in many years: that of Syrian refugees.

"In an era of so much political polarity, it was heartening to see Senators from across the aisle agree on the urgency of the Syrian refugee humanitarian crisis. There is a critical need to develop on-the-ground, self-help based solutions that consider vulnerable populations' social, financial, security, and educational needs," said Associate Director of Civil Rights Law and Programs Awais Khaleel who attended the hearing and submitted KARAMAH's written testimony. [Read more.](#)





Where's the Real Dr. King?

WILL THE REAL Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. please stand up? Don't give me the "dreamer" King that America force-feeds us. I want the militant, warrior King who was gunned down for his political views. Give me the freedom-fighter King who railed against the Vietnam War and provided inspiration to the anti-war movement with his "Breaking the Silence" speech in 1967.

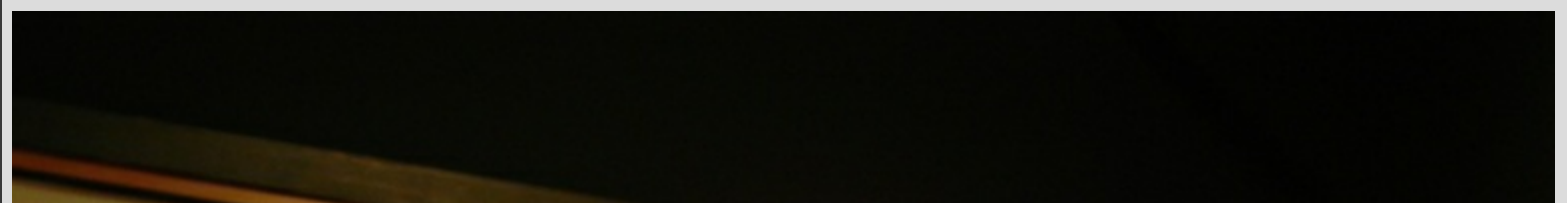
America wants that King to stay buried in an Atlanta grave. Our young learn about the whitewashed King: a pacifist, non-violent idealist who only wanted integration with the slave master's children.

Dr. King has been reduced to what the Rev. Dr. Michael Eric Dyson of Georgetown University calls a "safe Negro," a romantic dreamer who doesn't make white people uncomfortable. In his book "I May Not Get There With You," Dr. Dyson explains that Dr. King was much more than a dreamer. The real King, according to Dyson, was far more radical than the one served for holiday dining on the third Monday in January.

America wants, as it did in King's day, to maintain social order. Schools lead the charge by teaching a mild-mannered history lesson that seeks to pacify instead of inspire. Why was he killed in 1968? As long as he was preaching, "We shall overcome" he was allowed to live. But as he evolved, his work took him from the South to the North, where racism is an entirely different animal.

Dr. King began to accuse Northern whites of "psychological and spiritual genocide." Dr. Dyson writes that Dr. King said, "I'm tired of marching for something that should have been mine at birth." He began to expand his platform from racial-justice issues to mainstream economic and political issues, which took him out of his place as a "Negro leader" and made him a greater threat to the white power structure. A growing number of people - including some poor whites - found he had a greater appeal, as he now was speaking to their plight in America.

KARAMAH wants the Dr. King that stood for justice to be remembered. Staff spent the Dr. King holiday not on a day off but as a day on. They volunteered at Powell Elementary School helping kindergarten teachers prepare learning materials for their students.



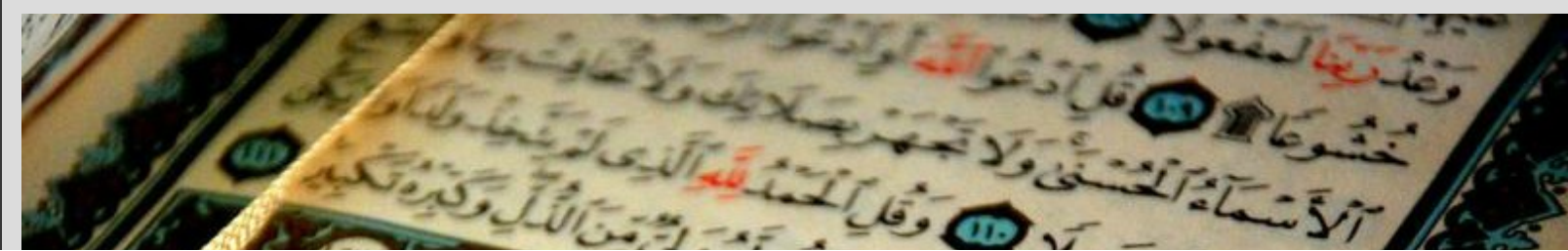


Law and Leadership Summer Program LLSP Alum Spotlight

Meet Maysa Elsheikh. She's a sophomore at Johns Hopkins University studying Political Science and Anthropology. She's a member of the LLSP Class of 2013. Maysa is also a member of the JHU Muslim Students Association where she has organized the young women to do a Chai and Chat meeting every other Thursday. "I told them about the LLSP and they were very interested. We spend our time discussing the controversial ayats in the Qu'ran about women. We also want to learn more about the wives of the Prophet (PBUH)," she said.

She's taken what she learned in LLSP and put it to good use. In addition to organizing the Chai and Chat she attended a sister's public speaking course in Dallas organized by the Qalam Institute. "We went over how to inspire and motivate others and how to conduct a halaqa. It was very helpful. I learned from LLSP how to listen to different perspectives on the treatment of women in Islam. It opened my mind to look deeper into that," she said.

"Practicing my speech before our debut at Busboys and Poets this summer taught me a lot. It was the first time I spoke in public. LLSP helped me learn how to tell my story in public without reading from a paper." You can apply for LLSP and learn what Maysa learned and more. [Read here](#)





Research

What Do We Have to Hide? The Islamic Principle of "Satr" and Cultural Bias

Many of the victims who reach out to KARAMAH face a serious dilemma. They are told by those around them that bringing such issues into the public eye violates the Islamic principle of satr. However, the popular understanding of the principle of satr in our community is loaded with cultural biases. It reduces the options of a victim into two equally unfair and unrealistic ones:

- * Obey God who ordered us Muslims to cover each other's shortcomings and flaws, and remain silent at the expense of the victim's safety and well being; or
- * Speak up and publicly denounce the perpetrator of the abuse, and hence disobey God and create fitnah (chaos and conflict) in the community.

This understanding shows no regard to victim's rights. In fact, it contributes to the problem by injecting it with an element of spiritual abuse. It forces the abused to abandon legitimate protections or feel deeply guilty for defying God. Furthermore, Muslim women who opt against the advice of some "well intentioned," "God fearing" relatives and friends, and publicly disclose the abuse or harassment, are often faced with hostility and pushed out of the community. [Read more](#)

-Upcoming Events-

Law and Leadership Summer Program 2014

Spend three weeks learning with other women from around the world about Islamic Jurisprudence, Leadership, and Conflict Resolution. "Fantastic", "Incredible", and "I'm so glad I came" are just a few of the ways LLSP Alum have described the experience. Meet friends for life as you delve deeper into the unique challenges facing Muslim women today, while, at the same time, emphasizing individual's talents and opportunities available to participants. Apply today. Deadline March 1. International applicants must apply early to expedite the visa process. LLSP will not be just three weeks of your life, it will be three weeks that will change your life. [Read more](#)

Black History Month Lecture Series

KARAMAH celebrates Black History with two lectures during the month. February 12, join us at the El Hibri Foundation 1420 16th Street as we Celebrate Black Women in Islam. Our presenters include KARAMAH Board Chair, Aisha Al Adawiya and Ieasha Prime, founder of Sisterhood in Action.

February 26, we take the series to the Islamic Heritage Museum, 2315 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE, 7:00 pm. Our theme is Making Malcolm X's legacy Real. Our panel will feature Khalil Shadeed, producer of the award winning program the Scholar's Chair, Dr. Jared Ball, author of A Lie of Reinvention: Correcting Manning Marable's Malcolm X and Okianer Dark, Dean of Howard University's Law School. Come early and get a good seat.

Help Us Help More! These girls deserve a world that values their human rights.



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