

Summer Greetings

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Assalamu Alaikum!

Early Ramadan greetings to all of you! This spring has been one of growth at KARAMAH. As you read about in previous newsletters, we hosted two excellent programs in New York City at the United Nations Conference on the Status of Women in March. We also held several events throughout Washington, DC celebrating Black History Month and Women's History Month. Our staff has hosted several international delegations and I trained a large group of judges, lawyers, and advocates at conferences in Maine, New York and Boston on Islamic family law and serving Muslim clients.

What I want to share most with you, though, is our spring lecture series. In the last couple of months, we have hosted the first two of our four town halls in the *Muslim American Stories: A Series of Town Halls on Civil Rights and the Family* project. The first town hall was on April 18 in Fort Lauderdale and the second town hall was on June 1 in Chicago, Illinois. You can read more about the project, each of the town halls, and the personal story of a member of our community who experienced civil rights violations below. We are dedicating this newsletter to this project, and we hope that you will engage with us as we continue on this project by [sharing your own stories](#).

We also just hosted a crucial event at the ADAMS Center in northern Virginia titled *Exposing the Truth of U.S. Torture: Restoring Human Dignity*. In anticipation of the holy month of Ramadan, I invite you all to our next event on the same topic in Washington, DC at the El-Hibri Foundation this Thursday, June 26. While Ramadan is a time for spiritual growth, reflection and community building, it is also a time to reflect on the status of Muslims around the world. We are bringing you this programming during Torture Awareness Month to ensure that we all remain aware of what is happening to our fellow Muslims and how necessary our work is to restore human dignity and the rule of law.

Yours,

Aisha Rahman, Esq.
Executive Director

Update: Muslim American Stories Project



About three months ago, we launched an ambitious project designed to change how KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights engages in the struggle for greater civil and human rights in the United States. Entitled *Muslim American Stories: A Series of Town Halls on Civil Rights and the Family*, we hope to bring

greater awareness on U.S. civil rights problems with particularly deleterious consequences for not only the immediate victim, but the core of our communities-the Muslim family.

More than twenty years ago, Dr. Azizah al-Hibri and several remarkable and successful Muslim lawyers determined the need for a women-led organization advancing global human rights from an Islamic scholarly position. Since 1993, KARAMAH has been involved with major domestic and international efforts to promote human rights and dispel any notion that a proper understanding of Islam allows oppression, terrorism, and misogyny.

Through all the aforementioned work, our staff noticed a disturbing dynamic. Lax enforcement of certain civil rights was causing significant stress for Muslim families and making it more difficult to maintain a healthy family dynamic. We found that when Muslim children were bullied because of their faith, entire families would share in the isolated child's emotional and psychological trauma. Similarly, when Muslims were religiously or racially profiled, the consequences of shame, social alienation, and lack of employment opportunities were shared by spouses, children, parents, and entire communities. These lateral consequences to Muslim families and communities were particularly prevalent when Muslims were denied basic dignity and rights because of our nation's broken immigration system. So many Muslims - along with Americans of all backgrounds - have been harmed by a system that offers insufficient numbers of visas to domestic violence survivors, often criminalizes undocumented persons reporting crimes (like abuse), and disincentivizes trust with law enforcement and pursuit of community resources.

In response to and through a generous grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, we launched a program that encourages our community to not only discuss bullying, profiling, and immigrant discrimination, but to humanize the consequences. We named the program *Muslim American Stories: A Series of Town Halls on Civil Rights and the Family* because it includes four separate town halls across the nation and placed a priority on giving Muslim Americans an opportunity to share their personal experience with these issues.

With Ramadan and our annual Law and Leadership Summer Program on the horizon, we are waiting a few months for our final two town halls. In early autumn, we plan on coming to Los Angeles, California to discuss discrimination against Muslim immigrants. Our final town hall will be in late autumn in our home base of Washington, DC. At this event, we will discuss all three issues and talk about important next steps for our community.

I will leave you with one final and honest note. Muslim Americans have been understandably reluctant to share their stories. However, some courageous members of our community have stepped up and used this platform to show how these issues impact them, their families, and their communities. Immediately below this letter is one especially compelling story from an inspiring young woman. We hope you can learn from her experience and are inspired to also share your story, which you can do [here](#).

Otherizing in Higher Education: My Story of Being Bullied For Wearing Hijab



Merima Tricic is an LLSP alumna, class of 2013. She shares her story on being bullied and discriminated against because of how she chose to express her faith.

When I first decided to wear the headscarf, in the midst of my second quarter in college, I did not really expect a lot of reactions at school or from the general public. Perhaps it was because I was so taken with my decision that I never gave much thought to how my fellow students would treat me-I certainly had never thought that I would be treated differently by my professors. I assumed that I would be peppered with questions from my peers...why did you make the decision? Why now? But what I was not ready for was the judgment from faculty. After all, at a progressive university,

can you really expect to have your relationship with a professor compromised because of religious dress?

In my "hijab chronicles" the most memorable moment is when I walked into a meeting with my professor to discuss my research and I was asked point blank, "What happened to you." I began to look down at myself...had I cut myself? Was I bleeding? Had I spilled something on my clothes? And then she repeated, "What happened to you." This time, I felt as if she had slapped me-catching me completely off guard.

"What?" I responded, confused.

"Why are you wearing the hijab?" she had said in a jeering way.

[Read More Here.](#)

-Recent Events-

Exposing The Truth of U.S. Torture: Restoring Human Dignity

On June 6, KARAMAH, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, the Constitution Project, and the Qurtuba Institute hosted a special program at the ADAMS Center titled *Exposing the Truth of U.S. Torture: Restoring Human Dignity*. The program featured three speakers: Dr. Azizah al-Hibri, Ambassador Thomas Pickering, and Reverend Ron Stief. Both Dr. al-Hibri and Ambassador Pickering served on the Constitution Project's Task Force on Detainee Treatment.



Dr. al-Hibri, who is the Chair and founder of KARAMAH, spoke first. She talked about the origins of the Constitution Project's Task Force on Detainee Treatment and that its conclusion was that United States had indisputably engaged in torture. Dr. al-Hibri also pointed out that national security officials engaged in falsified renditions resulting in many detainees enduring torture without ever being charged or found responsible for a crime. Perhaps most importantly, Dr. al-Hibri challenged the audience to take action by electing individuals who do not condone torture.

[Read More Here.](#)

Religious & Racial Profiling Town Hall

For years, whether it was the post-9/11 NSEERS program, the raids on Muslim organizations in 2002, or more recently the numerous cases involving Muslims being profiled by law enforcement at airports and elsewhere, racial and religious profiling has become an unfortunate constant in our communities. The stories are endless as we often hear about - and sometimes become desensitized to - horrific incidents and their consequences in our community. On June 1, KARAMAH hosted a town hall to humanize these stories.



The featured panelists were prominent civil rights leaders familiar with the Muslim community. The first was Manar Waheed, Esq., Policy Director at SAALT, which is an organization founded in response to post-9/11 discrimination. Ms. Waheed is a national advocate for civil and human rights and brought significant experience to the panel. Ms. Waheed spoke on federal programs like 287(g) and Secure Communities, as well as local programs like the NYPD's expansive surveillance program that legitimize religious and racial profiling. Especially since 9/11, federal and local enforcement have indiscriminately targeted Muslim Americans, including campus groups and even wedding parties. Ms. Waheed observed how the targeting and surveillance tactics employed by law enforcement has created an environment of fear and alienation, making it more difficult for Muslim American to not only trust law enforcement, but attend mosques, join religious and secular organizations, and live their life with freedom.

[Read More Here.](#)

Missed the event? Watch the full video below.



Racial & Religious Town Hall in Chicago, Illinois

Anti-Muslim Bullying Town Hall

On Friday, April 18, members of the south Florida Muslim community convened at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale to discuss anti-Muslim bullying. The speakers discussed the effects and roots of anti-Muslim bullying, while also addressing ways to address the problem in schools and at

home.

The first speaker, Kiran Shekh, PsyS., is a school psychologist at a Broward County private school. Ms. Sheikh, who has worked in various positions in both public and private education, discussed how bullying against Muslims is a problem that psychologically, emotionally, and physically hurts children.



Additional speakers included Saif Ishaq, Esq., the Executive Director of City Year Miami and a prominent local activist; Safiah Afify, Esq., an Assistant State's Attorney at the Palm Beach County State's Attorney's Office; and Mildred Duprey de Robles, a Conciliation Specialist with the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Relations Service.

This event was streamed live and watched across the world. Video of the event will be available on this page soon.

-Upcoming Events-

June

Exposing the Truth of U.S. Torture: Restoring Human Dignity

June 26, 2014

El-Hibri Foundation

1420 16th St. NW, Washington DC

Exposing the Truth of U.S. Torture:

June
26th

Restoring Human Dignity

Where: 1420 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036

When: June 26, 2014 • 6:00pm refreshments, 7:00pm event starts

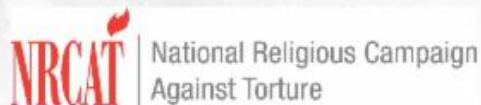
Event will feature:

Dr. Azizah al-Hibri, Founder & Chair of KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights; Member of The Constitution Project's Task Force on Detainee Treatment

Ambassador James R. Jones, Co-Chair of The Constitution Project's Task Force on Detainee Treatment

Other panelists TBA

Sponsors include:



Co-sponsored by Amnesty International USA

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