



MUSLIM WOMEN'S COALITION

Greater Washington, DC Area Office

Volume 5:1 (2006)

Interfaith Events

Women of Faith-- Celebrating a Day of Unity

The Arlington Interfaith Council (AIC) and the Muslim Women's Coalition Co-sponsor an Afternoon of Interfaith Dialogue

One sunny afternoon in March 26th 2006, MWC took the initiative with the Arlington Interfaith Council to invite women of different faith traditions to talk about their faith. Judy Wolff of AIC and Uzma Farooq, the Director and Vice President of MWC's office in the Greater Washington DC Area organized this event. The event took place in the spacious prayer hall of the First Church of Christ Scientist, Arlington VA. Over two hundred guests attended this event. Each speaker was asked to tell about her religion, the role that women play in it and to offer a cherished inspiration.



Speakers List for the Women of Faith Celebrating a Day of Unity :

- Judy Wolff, CSB (Moderator), First Church of Christ, Scientist, Arlington
- Rabbi Lia Bass, Congregation Etz Hayim
- Uzma Farooq, Vice President, Muslim Women's Coalition
- Zeenut Ziad, Member, Muslim Women's Coalition
- Rev. Elizabeth Bagioni, Trinity Episcopal Church
- Rev. Vernice Simmons, Community Church of God
- Rev. Sharon Core, Pastor, Arlington Presbyterian Church
- Rukmini Walker, Vaisnava Hinduism

MWC's speaker Zeenut Ziad gave an inspirational talk on the status of women in Islam. Her is an excerpt to her lecture:

"The first article of faith is the belief in One, Absolute, Transcendent God who created the universe. Muslims believe in Mohammad (peace be upon him) as God's Messenger. They believe in all His Prophets and their holy Books, in angels and in the Day of Judgment.

From this it follows:

- Since God is the Creator, everything else is created. Therefore, if we are all His creation, we must be equal in our createdness regardless of gender, race, religion or color.
- Human beings were placed on earth to obey God's moral law through our actions, for which we will be accountable to Him on the Day of Judgment.
- If He created all humanity equal then everyone must receive His moral law. He, therefore, sent Prophets and Messengers to every corner of the world. Muslims believe 124,000 Messengers were sent and we revere them all. Muslims particularly love and revere Abraham, Moses and Jesus and the holy Bible and Torah.
- Moral law and accountability demand free will. I must be able to choose between right and wrong if I am to be judged. In addition, to understand the moral law, I must possess reason.

Therefore, every Muslim has to take full responsibility for his or her actions, which should be to use our God-given talents for the benefit of humanity.

- There is no clergy in Islam, since all human beings have to forge their own relationship with God and all paths to God are valid.

- Clear as a bell is the command of the Quran, "Let there be no compulsion in religion." (2:256)

So, in the context of faith, there is no distinction between any Muslim, man or woman. Everyone has the same rights and obligations. Everyone can enjoy God's bounties and is promised the same rewards in heaven.

The Quran illustrates this through the story of Adam and Eve. They were created together from one cell, both broke the moral law together, both repented and both were forgiven. Thereafter, both had to earn God's pleasure through good actions on earth.

Within the context of society, Muslim women and men are privileged in different realms. There is no blind equality because, under Islam, the foundation of social order is the family, not the individual and, therefore, there are different obligations, depending on age and gender."

The full text visit our website at: <http://www.mwcoalition.org/id127.html>

"The world is so beautiful in all its diversity. Let us unite to rejoice and celebrate our diversity. Who better than women to do this? After all, God's favorite attribute for Himself is "Rahman", the compassionate and merciful. The root of "Rahman" is "rahm", the womb. So it is the feminine that God Himself celebrates!" – Zeenut Ziad, MWC speaker



Uzma Farooq highlights some points along with her Dutch participant Rachid at the closing ceremony.

MWC Invited to Attend the Diversity Dialogues Conference in the Netherlands

Sharing Ideas, Building Bridges: A Dutch-US Muslim Dialogue

On November 1, 2006 MWC attended the Diversity Dialogue in the Netherlands. The US Embassy in the Netherlands acted as the dialogue convener and The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund LCCRF as the co-sponsor.

HE Ambassador Ronald Arnall was the brain behind DD conference. His remarkable leadership and open heartedness brought two cultures from two continents with one faith closer. This allowed deeper understanding of diversity within the given civic societies and how changes could be implemented successfully. LCCRF also played a major role in



steering the dialogue toward a greater picture of equal justice and equal opportunity in a well-balanced society. Many new friendships developed and new ideas evolved within both Dutch and the American groups. What was remarkable was that moderate Muslims from all walks of life were present. Everyone was very excited and charged and ready to share his or her thoughts.

MWC hopes that the Ambassador will take this conference to another step as a follow up on the first conference and hold the next conference in the near future. The lessons learnt in Diversity Dialogues Conference in the Netherlands are too great to be forgotten.

To prepare for the Diversity Dialogues, MWC's Greater Washington DC Area Office conducted an informal survey on young Muslims and Muslim families living in America. The purpose was simple: To develop an understanding of the diversity within the Muslim Community. Some of the questions placed before them were related to their understanding of their faith, their involvement in the community they lived in, the difficulties they faced such as intolerance and what the chief complaints and remedies were. This was not a formal survey but a supplemental one to provide a basis for the feelings of Muslims living in the community here. MWC feels that this is just the beginning and more research needed to be done in conjunction with Social Scientists.



Left: H.E. US Ambassador to the Netherlands Ronald Arnall talks about the importance of having a Dutch and a US Muslim dialogue between the two continents. Above: US attendees discuss the issues relevant to ethnic diversity within their communities with the Dutch Muslims;

Women, Faith and Development Alliance (WFDA)



Heads of different faith, development and women's groups pose at the National Cathedral in Washington DC.

Common Ground, Common Goals, Common Action

MWC participated in a workshop for discussion at the Inaugural Planning Meeting for WFDA on June 28th, 2006. This unique, new alliance's purpose is to promote and measure progress on reducing poverty, gender equality, women's empowerment issues, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

At the meeting, MWC Vice President and Director of the Greater Washington, DC Area Office, Uzma Farooq emphasized the importance of addressing these goals while taking into consideration indigenous populations and cultures, especially in the Islamic world.

The WFDA is co-founded by Washington National Cathedral's Center for Global Justice and Reconciliation, InterAction's Commission on the Advancement of Women, Religions for Peace and the Women's Edge Coalition. MWC was one of the first organizations to officially join the Alliance and to work toward WFDA's projected World Women's Summit in 2008. The purpose of this summit is to encourage real change on international conventions and declarations that have addressed women's issues such as the Beijing Platform, and the Millennium Declaration.

MWC is an active member of the WFDA Summit Planning Committee along with the Advocacy Committee. As a reputable organization, MWC has provided WFDA with names of other moderate Muslim women to participate in the alliance and in the 2008 summit. By actively participating in WFDA, the MWC has gained greater recognition for its work as a faith-based women's humanitarian and educational organization.

Community Outreach

The menu:

- Mild Chicken Biryani
- Macaroni & Cheese
- Vegetables
- Salad
- Bread
- Fruit
- Brownies
- Soft Drinks & Juice

Muslim Women's Coalition's annual dinner with the abused women's shelter

On March 9th 2006 Muslim Women's Coalition had its annual dinner with Doorways for Women and families in Arlington VA (abused women's shelter). This dinner took place at Clarendon United Methodist Church in Arlington VA. It was a wonderful opportunity for MWC volunteers to eat dinner with the women and their families from Doorways and learn more about the community they live in.

MWC was able to serve about 45 clients including children and volunteers both from Doorways and MWC. A total of four hours went into this project.

MWC Teen Gift Basket Project with Inova Fairfax Hospital

During the spring of 2006, on April 13th, Muslim Women's Coalition visited INOVA Fairfax Hospital in VA and donated 24 gifts bags/baskets to the teen patients at INOVA FAIRFAX Hospital. Leslie Brady (Director of Development at INOVA Fairfax Hospital for Children) received these gift bags on behalf of the teens at INOVA. MWC members love this project as it is done in conjunction with the MWC youth. Parts of the hours donated by the youth go toward Community Service programs in their schools. MWC wants to instill goodwill gesture in their youth through programs such as this. This is a beautiful way to support the sick and injured kids through in kind donations of items listed below.

The gift items included: Nail polishes, lotions, body spray, game cards, hand held games, journals, pocket notebooks, deodorants and pen sets.

Check out the Summer Newsletter 2006 of INOVA FAIRFAX MWC is featured in it!



MWC volunteers delivering teen gift baskets at Inova Hospital

"Dear Uzma and the wonderful people at the Muslim Women's Coalition,

Thank you for taking the time to pot together such lovely gift bags for the adolescent patients. Your group's generosity truly brightened many hospital stays. The teens loved all the great items in the bags. On behalf of the adolescent unit at INOVA Fairfax, thanks for thinking of our hospitalized teens!

Best Regards, Kate Gardner."

Iftar Dinner with the State Department

Muslim Women's Coalition attended the annual State Department Iftar Dinner on October 18th 2006. Muslims from various faith-based organizations were invited. Under Secretaries Karen Hughes and R. Nicholas Burns co-hosted this event in lieu of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Each welcomed Muslims to this blessed event by honoring women in Islamic history and highlighted the importance of religious diversity and interfaith in the United States. MWC applauds the State Department for extending the goodwill gesture of diplomacy, tolerance and sincerity towards the Muslim community by celebrating Ramadan. The event was a great opportunity for Muslim women journalists, activists, foreign exchange students and community leaders to come together and exchange ideas for strengthening the community they lived in.



Ramadan Baskets

Like every year MWC took part in the Ramadan Basket drive for the abused women in the Northern Virginia shelter called "Doorways for Women and families." All together 5/6 baskets were donated to Doorways for Women and families during Ramadan. Khyati Desai, who is the Community Resources Manager for Doorways for Women and Families (formerly The Arlington Community Temporary Shelter) helped with the need list for their clients. *Note: Due to time constraints MWC was able to give Ramadan Baskets to only a few families for the year 2006.