



Wednesday, August 31, 2011

KENT COUNTY'S

Cultural Insight Council Presents:



Design: Zafar Razaq / Photography: Danny Gantos

UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER

Arab and Muslim Americans After 9/11

SEPTEMBER 2011

will mark the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.



As part of Kent County's continuous commitment to fostering a culture in which our employees understand, value, and sustain diversity and inclusion, the Cultural Insight Council (CIC) has decided to sponsor this Brown Bag Luncheon to assist County employees in providing inclusive services to Arab and Muslim Americans within our community.

Please welcome our presenter Sebastian Maisel, Ph.D., Professor of Arabic and Middle East Studies at Grand Valley State University.

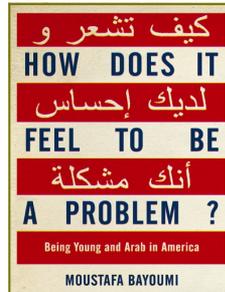


Dr. Maisel will discuss topics related to Arab and Muslim Americans including:

- Contributions of Arab and Muslim Americans
- Dispelling the myths about Arab and Muslim Americans
- Controversial issues facing Arab and Muslim Americans



Suggested Reading



Islam and American Muslims



What is Islam?

Islam is not a new religion. It is the same truth that God revealed to all His prophets throughout history. Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness that should not be associated with acts of violence against the innocent.

Who are Muslims and what do they believe?

There are an estimated 1.2 billion Muslims worldwide. No more than twenty percent of Muslims live in the Arabic-speaking world. The country with the largest Muslim population is Indonesia. Muslims believe in One, Unique, and Incomparable God. They believe in the Day of Judgment and individual accountability for actions. Muslims believe in a chain of prophets beginning with Adam and including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus. God's eternal message was reaffirmed and finalized by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on them all). One becomes a Muslim by saying, "There is no deity but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God." By this declaration, the person announces faith in all of God's messengers.

What is the Quran?

The Quran is the record of the exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad. It was memorized by Muhammad and then dictated to his companions. The text of the Quran was cross-checked during the life of the Prophet. The 114 chapters of the Quran have remained unchanged through the centuries.

What are the "Five Pillars" of Islam?

- 1) The Declaration of Faith - There is no deity but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.
- 2) Prayer - Muslims perform five obligatory prayers each day. Islamic prayers are a direct link between the worshiper and God. Islam has no hierarchical authority or priesthood. A learned Muslim chosen by each congregation leads the prayers.

3) Zakat - One of the most important principles of Islam is that all things belong to God and that wealth is held in trust by human beings. Zakat, or charitable giving, "purifies" wealth by setting aside a portion for those in need. This payment is usually two and a half percent of one's capital.

4) Fasting - Every year in the Islamic lunar month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from first light until sunset. The fast is another method of self-purification.

5) Pilgrimage - A pilgrimage to Mecca, or Hajj, is an obligation for those who are physically or financially able.

What about the **American** Muslim community?

There are an estimated 7 million Muslims in America. The Muslim community in America is made up of people from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and national origins. There are almost 2,000 mosques, Islamic schools and Islamic centers in America. Muslims are active in all walks of life. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in this country and around the world.



Disclaimer: Kent County does not endorse any specific religion. The information contained in these materials and discussed at this event are intended for educational purposes of Kent County employees, and does not serve as an endorsement by the County of the beliefs or the viewpoints of the presenter.

Ethnic Enlightenments

Seven Major Arab Ethnic Groups of
Western Michigan

Source: Field Guide to Ethnic Groups in West Michigan
Grand Rapids Public Museum

ARABS, PALESTINIANS, & JORDANIANS



Countries or Regions of Origin:

Technically, twenty-two countries make up the Arab World. In West Michigan, the greatest number of immigrants has come from Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan.

Languages Spoken:

Arabic, with regional dialects and variations

Geography and Politics:

The Arab World includes most of the countries of northern Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Levant, or western Mediterranean. While the overall majority of people in this region are Muslim, nearly 60 percent of Arab immigrants to America have been Christian. Waves of immigration to the U.S. have resulted from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and regional conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon, or Palestinians and Jews in Israel.

Leaving and Arriving:

Immigrants from Lebanon and Syria, and other Arab people from the former Ottoman Empire, began arriving to Grand Rapids in the late 19th century. Like other immigrants, they followed chain migrations from their villages. These chains were broken by exclusionary policies from the 1920s until the 1950s. More immigrants came between the 1960s and 2001 as refugees from Palestine and Lebanon, or as economic immigrants from elsewhere in North Africa or the Middle East. Acceptance of immigrants from Middle East fell sharply due to the concerns over terrorism after the 9/11 attack in 2001.

Settlement in West Michigan:

Small numbers of Arab Muslim immigrants blended into the larger Syrian and Lebanese Christian neighborhood south of downtown Grand Rapids in the early 20th century. Some people of Arab descent in West Michigan have migrated here from the large Arab population centers of Dearborn and Detroit. U.S. policies have favored immigration by Middle Eastern people with high levels of education and professional job skills. As a result these immigrants are concentrated in largest numbers with other people of similar social and economic status, in the suburbs of urban centers.

EGYPTIANS

Countries or Regions of Origin:

Egypt

Language Spoken:

Arabic



Geography and Politics:

Egypt is located in Northeast Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, Libya, the Gaza Strip, and the Red Sea. Home to the famous pyramids, Egyptians are proud of their heritage and ancient culture. Centuries of foreign rule by the Ottoman and British Empires created close economic ties with England and the other countries in the western Mediterranean. Egypt gained full independence after World War II and the revolution of 1952 instituted sweeping social reforms. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Orthodox Christian Copts began leaving Egypt in significant numbers for economic and political reasons.

Leaving and Arriving:

Egyptians are one of the newer groups of immigrants to the United States and West Michigan, first coming in the 1960s and 1970s and continuing into the 21st century. Since most were well educated before they came, they found good jobs and assimilated quickly into their communities. Because of their small numbers, many Muslim Egyptians developed similar relationships with Orthodox Christians from Ethiopia and Eritrea, or from Syria and Lebanon.

Settlement in West Michigan:

Since 20th century U.S. immigration law favored entry by educated professionals, many Egyptians in this region came as doctors, professors, engineers and businessmen. They are concentrated in West Michigan's larger metropolitan areas and university cities.

SOMALIS & SOMALI BANTUS

Countries or Regions of Origin:

Somalia



Language Spoken:

Somali, Brawanese (closely related to Swahili), Arabic, Italian, English

Geography and Politics:

Somali is located in East Africa bordering the Indian Ocean, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya. In the late 19th century Somali's northern half was made a protectorate of Great Britain and its southern half of protectorate of Italy. Both nations granted independence to Somalia in 1960. Between 1969 and 1991 the nation was subject to authoritarian socialist rule. Beginning in 1992, the combination of civil war between warlords and political factions, and East Africa's worst period of drought, sunk Somalia into a famine that killed more than 300,000 people. Somali Bantus are a distinct ethnicity that accounts for about 15% of the Somali population. They originate from African tribes from Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi. There are two main groups: those who were brought as slaves by Arab traders and now live in central and northwest Somalia, and those who live and farm in southern Somalia. The overwhelming majority of Somalis and Somali Bantus are Sunni Muslim, although some Bantus Muslims continue to practice traditional animist ceremonies.

Leaving and Arriving:

Somalis began to leave their country and arrive in West Michigan in the mid-1990s to escape the ravages of war. Somali Bantus were not targets of the war, since they did not live in the major cities, but were farmers who lacked wealth that was attractive to bandits. Still, they suffered from decades of neglect and discrimination by the Somali government. Somali Bantus were adversely affected by severe drought that devastated east Africa beginning in the 1990s. Many were forced to leave their homes for refugee camps in Kenya, and eventually resettle in America and other places around the world.

Settlement in West Michigan:

As refugees, Somalis and Somali Bantus had little choice in where they would be resettled in the United States. Their placement in West Michigan was due to the location of sponsoring organizations. In West Michigan, Somalis and Somali Bantus have mostly been relocated in Grand Rapids and Kentwood.

SUDANESE



Countries or Regions of Origin:

Sudan

Language Spoken:

Arabic, Dinka, Swahili, Acholi, Nuer, Nilotic, Anuak, Shilluk, Nubian, Ta Bedawie, Azande, Moru, Madi, other Sudanic languages, English

Geography and Politics:

Sudan is a large country in northern Africa on the Red Sea, that borders Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Chad, and Congo. Since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1956, Islamic military regimes have controlled the government. Sudan has endured two major civil wars between Muslims in the north and Christian in the south over the last half century. These wars combined with a severe drought, have left more than 4 million people displaced and 2 million dead. The conflict in Darfur in 2003 caused an additional 200,000 to 400,000 deaths and 2 million displaced persons.

Leaving and Arriving:

The Sudanese are recent arrivals in Michigan. Most came as teenagers around the year 2000. They fled the destruction of their homes and families as children, and spent much of their childhood at refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia. They were assisted in coming to West Michigan by refugee service agencies, church sponsors, and foster homes. Since most of the new arrivals were approximately the same age, many completed high school and college and entered the community as adults around the same time. Within Sudan, there are many different ethnic and linguistic groups. "Sudanese" is only treated as a single ethnicity once immigrants have left their country, and band together in their new homes.

Settlement in West Michigan:

Bethany Christian Services in Grand Rapids was responsible for much of the resettlement of refugees from Sudan in the early 2000s. As a result, the highest concentrations in West Michigan are in Grand Rapids, Wyoming, and Lansing. A Sudanese Episcopal church in East Grand Rapids and a Sudanese Lutheran church in Wyoming now serve as gathering places for the Sudanese community.

SYRIANS AND LEBANESE

Countries or Regions of Origin:

Syria, Lebanon

Language Spoken:

Arabic, French, English



Geography and Politics:

Lebanon and its larger neighbor Syria are located on the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle East and border Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, and Israel. Syria and Lebanon existed as territories of the Ottoman Empire from 1516 until 1918. But instead of gaining full independence, the French and British established Lebanon and Syria as separate Christian and Muslim mandates. France granted Lebanon and Syria full independence in 1943, and Syria received its independence in 1946. A lengthy Lebanese civil war raged from 1975 until 1990, between various Christian and Muslim political groups, leaving the country devastated and occupied by Syrian troops. Both nations have also engaged in armed conflict with Israel, their neighbor to the south.

Leaving and Arriving:

Many of the founders of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Grand Rapids came from the village of Rashayya al-Wadi in the central Bekaa Valley of Lebanon. Members of St. George's Orthodox also in Grand Rapids, came from the nearby village of Aitha al-Foukar. Most of these immigrants came between the 1890s and the 1920s to escape ottoman rule, and for economic opportunity. A second and smaller number of Muslim Lebanese have come more recently to West Michigan since the civil war ended there in 1990.

Settlement in West Michigan:

When the first of two Antiochan Orthodox congregations were founded in Grand Rapids around 1908, about 350 Syrian and Lebanese Christians were counted in the local population. They worked as peddlers, furniture or art metal workers, or proprietors of small grocery stores, confectionaries, and cafes. A group of about 75 Muslim Syrians, Turks and Kurds also existed in Grand Rapids by about 1910. Of these, two-thirds were reported to work at the Pere Marquette Railroad roundhouse. Most in both groups lived in the "Market Street Colony" on the city's southwest side, between Market and Wealthy streets, and Grandville and Division Avenues. Today they are generally dispersed within the Grand Rapids metropolitan populations.

Local Resources

Mosques/Masjeds

Bosnian Cultural Center

Website : www.bccgrmi.org
E-mail : bccgrmi@yahoo.com
Phone : 616.706.0685
Address : 2839 Eastern Ave.
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Islamic Mosque and Center of Grand Rapids

Website : www.islamiccentergr.org
E-mail : Islamiccenter@sbcglobal.net
Phone : 616.247.8786
Address : 1301 Burton Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

The Islamic Mosque and Religious Institute

Website : www.grmasjid.com
E-mail : info@grmasjid.com
Phone : 616.940.0730
Address : 3357 East Paris Ave.
Kentwood, MI 49512

Markets

Mediterranean Island

Address: 4301 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508
Phone: 616.245.2046

Middle Eastern Market

Address: 2417 Eastern Ave.
Grand Rapids, MI 49507
Phone: 616.245.2046

Restaurants

Le Kabob

Address: 4022 Alpine Ave. NW
Comstock Park, MI 49321
Phone: 616.647.9722

Marie Catrifs

Address: 1001 Lake Drive SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
Phone: 616.454.4020

Olive Express

Address: 134 Monroe Center St.
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Phone: 616.454.5644

Parsley Mediterranean Grille

Address: 80 Ottawa Ave. NW #150
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Phone: 616.776.2590

The Pita House

Address: 134 Monroe Center
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Phone: 616.233.4875

Safari Restaurant

Address: 4476 Breton Road SE
Kentwood, MI 49508
Phone: 616.554.5030

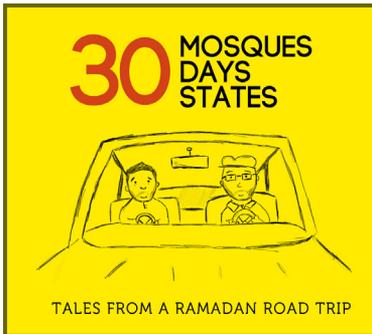
Online Resources



www.cair.com/AboutIslam/PublicationDownloads.aspx

Publication Downloads:

- An Employer's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices
- A Health Care Provider's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices
- An Educator's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices
- Law Enforcement Official's Guide to The Muslim Community
- A Correctional Institution's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices



30 Mosques in 30 States is Aman Ali and Bassam Tariq's Ramadan road trip across the United States.

Beginning Aug. 1 in Alaska, the two will spend each night of Ramadan at a different mosque in 30 states around the country.

www.30mosques.com



www.ISNA.net



www.MPAC.org

Cultural Insight Council

For many years Kent County has recognized the value of visionary leadership in the area of diversity and inclusion. Kent County's activities and efforts in this area have not only existed so that we may be viewed as a visionary leader in all aspects of business, but we have also strived to transform this vision into reality by working to create an environment where all employees feel accepted and valued. The County's leadership realized early on that to achieve its vision in the area of diversity and inclusion, it must be shared and owned collectively by many of the approximately 1,700 employees who make up the organization known as Kent County.

In 2000 County Administrator, Daryl Delabbio, led the way for all County employees to embrace a diverse workforce. To help obtain this goal, the Cultural Insight Council was formed in January 2001. The council was and remains comprised of employees from various County departments and levels; bargaining unit employees and members of management. During the formation of the council, each member went through intensive diversity training to equip him or her with additional knowledge to increase their cultural competency.

Subcommittees were formed to identify ground rules, to generate ideas, to discuss expectations and to develop plans on how the council would reach out to employees and the community to let them know that "we" value diversity and inclusion.

The mission of the CIC is "To act as a catalyst to foster a culture which recognizes, accepts and values the individual differences of its employees and is responsive to the changing need of our diverse community." Our vision is "To have a culture where employees understand, value and sustain diversity and inclusion." In order to realize our vision, the CIC hosts several educational and entertaining events designed to create a greater awareness among our employees about the various cultures that exist within our workplace and in our community.

For More Information about the Cultural Insight Council please contact:
Kent County Human Resources Department
300 Monroe Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-632-7440



"Kent County...Where Diversity & Inclusion Matter"