



AFTAB

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AFTAB: RAYS OF LIGHT

The Islamic Center at New York University's publication which serves as an outlet for creative writing, poetry, art, and other articles. This is a publication through which members of the New York University community can exchange ideas, share their literary and artistic talents, and communicate on the topic of Islam as well as the broad range of issues facing the Muslim community.

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Thank you to all the contributors.

Mariyum Luqman
CHANGE

To be or not to be that is NOT the question
To feel or not to feel it's time to change your perception
It's time to do
It's time to be
Do not waste what time you have
Let your imagination run wild
Allow your mind to run free
Break the constrictions, the boundaries
Put upon us by society
It's time to think,
Ponder,
What lies beyond what we see.
It's not just what's out there or shown on the TV
There's a far greater picture
Far greater than you or me
Yet we both must play our part
Let your thoughts run true
We must feel,
Believe,
Follow our heart.
There's always an end
What we need to find is how to start
Feel,
Change.

Iram 'Shehzadi' Ali
UNTITLED

shiny, dark, round & small,
they trickle through my fingers
as i repeat inaudible words—
said with the tongue
heard by no one.
my favorite rosary.
it actually belonged
to my maternal grandfather,
whom i miss dearly.
so i wrap it around my wrist
in the hopes that its reminder
will provoke me to do good;
in the hopes that the inaudible words
will bring benefit to him—
my maternal grandfather,
whom i miss dearly.

PHOTO BY PRIYA CHANDRA





PHOTO BY NEEHA MUJEEB

The Raskol Khan

'PLOTS OF THE WICKED' (LYRICS)

From the plots of the wicked I run.
Why they stay plotting on the streets I'm from?
Lord, keep me safe from the government guns.
Lord, keep me safe from the government guns.

Come fly-y-y with me. Living clean 'cause
They spy-y-y on me, you see?
If the avenue that's never travelled unravels, I will
Battle any rats and then get back up in the saddle.

The Raskol is a jackal, you're trapped then back-paddle, it's the
Radical ecstatic. Raps are mathematic.
Tracks are just magic. What's he got up in the attic? They
Tapped my home phone so my zone's above the static.

The Raskol is a jackal so I figured the truth, my
Path is what they lost in their youth, forbidden fruits for their
Fitrah. That's why every message he sent you, said to
Fend for every brother and sister every Mrs. and

Mister, spitting with the wisdom illustrious:
Goodness, beauty and justice, so trust us.
Why they want to murder me? I think that they're gutless. If you
Only knew the frequency I'd clue you to tune in.

We unified Allah 'cause there's no holier union, left the
Europeans lifted, higher levels of schooling.
Illuminated and demonstrated methods of grooming. It's
Islam that told the West that women are humans.

Be proud of your culture, but praise God.
Loud and face God on your knees and say "Lord, from the
Plots of the wicked I run, so Lord keep me
safe from the government guns."

From the plots of the wicked I run.
Why they stay plotting on the streets I'm from?
Lord, keep me safe from the government guns.
Lord, keep me safe from the government guns.

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Nadia Ahmad
TWO MONTHS

The flowers lay, bright red, against the gravel
and earth and leaves of grass.
It was windy. Cold; fall was coming.
I found myself imagining what your
body looked like there under the soil,
thinking of what the hard-cover-leather-bound ency-
clopedia facts
about post-mortem body temperature and decay
might be,
because Googled information feels just as fleeting
as the past five months.
Science amid Spirituality. (Or vice versa.)

You were part of the earth now,
and our feet stood at your feet,
stiffly, as if we were trying to
extend our soles into the earth just to touch you.
We stood, like a barrier, like a wind dam - rooted -
and the wind rolled hard across the flattened
rectangles of dirt, as if God were mocking us,
trying to uproot us, show us how easy it was
to go from dust to dust.
---No, He wouldn't do that.

"The coming days will be difficult,"
someone had told me. The wind
blew harder.
We shivered. It tested our patience.

I was cold,
but perhaps you were colder.
I was lonely,
but perhaps you were lonelier.
We stood, arms folded, like the first line of defense
against the waves of wind
that unfolded themselves along a
low, endless ridge of clouds.
From far away, it would seem like
we were protecting you, guarding
you from it all.

Our pennants and prayers fluttered silently around us.

Funny, though, that you weren't even
exposed to the wind.

When I found out my friend, Jordan, had died, I was sitting in Bobst preparing for my macroeconomics and calculus finals. It was a blisteringly hot August day outside, and the cool of the library had provided sanctuary. However, nothing could have protected me from the shock I was about to receive. Several minutes after getting the terrible news, I realized that I was still in the same stunned position, for movement can be difficult to achieve when there is a lump in your throat the size of a boulder. I still remember eating lunch with Jordan everyday in the seventh grade while playing the card game, Top Trumps, and I will never forget his excitement when telling me that he was expecting another sister; Jordan was one of my closest and dearest friends in middle school. When it came time for high school, I arrived unaware of what to expect. The first day, I entered the school to a swarm of freshmen gathered outside of the auditorium, waiting to be let in and be officially welcomed by our principal, Mr. Daher. Like everyone else, I was scared and extremely nervous, lost in a crowd of unfamiliar faces. Then I spotted an equally terrified looking Jordan, and we were ushered into the adult world in tandem. We talked, caught each other up on one another's lives, and spent the entire afternoon together. However, that afternoon would be the last time I would speak to Jordan. Over the next four years, our circle of friends ceased to overlap and we did not share a single class together. Jordan became increasingly reclusive as I become more outgoing. After we both left high school, I set my sights for New York, while Jordan chose to remain in New Jersey. Less than a year later, Jordan's younger sister walked into her brother's room and found his hanging body.

In the United States, suicide rates are on the rise again—whether it's possibly due to the current economic situation, increasing social pressures, or just other countless personal issues. In the Muslim community, I have witnessed an unease to even discuss suicide. This is not surprising considering that in the Quran it says very clearly “And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful

And whoever does that in aggression and injustice - then We will drive him into a Fire. And that, for Allah, is [always] easy.” (4:29-4:30). According to the World Health Organization, every 40 seconds, one person successfully commits suicide. For every twenty failed suicide attempts, there is one that is successful. Even amongst Muslims, suicide is not uncommon, as a Muslim that I knew very well committed suicide several years ago. Just as no one was able to prevent Jordan from taking his life, so too was no one able to prevent Perwez from ending his. Who knew that such an intelligent, caring young man would be willing to leave behind five younger brothers and sisters as well as leave an entire community in shock? Who knew that a Muslim father of two young children and an award-winning professor at an Ivy League university would also be able to end the seemingly American dream that he was living?

It is becoming more and more important to sit down and actually listen to what family members and friends are saying in a day and age replete with distractions—we need to begin to listen better and pay more attention. I've since realized the importance of reaching out, every now and then, to a friend or a loved one and just making sure they are doing okay—even if it is just by listening. After Jordan's death, I immediately began getting in touch again with friends I had grown distant from since leaving high school. Less than two weeks before Jordan died, my friend had a conversation with him on Facebook; Jordan joked about his death a couple of times, which my friend just laughed off. Much later she realized that perhaps Jordan was pleading for someone to listen. It is impossible to know exactly what another person is going through or what they want when it is so difficult for people to understand their own issues and realize exactly what they want themselves.

My two close friends and I went to visit Jordan's grave a week after his funeral. Though the cemetery was certainly not large, we spent what seemed like several hours weaving through the

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PHOTO BY JONATHAN BREWDA

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many footpaths and respectfully walking around countless graves, before my friends noticed a pile of flowers to our right—we knew that could only be Jordan’s grave. We stood quietly for several minutes, attempted to find room to put down our own bouquet, and drove off in reflective silence. Since then, I’ve realized that one of the saddest facts of life is that you don’t realize how much a person meant to others until after his or her death—for that person, they never realize their true worth.



PHOTO BY PRIYA CHANDRA

**S.R.
SCREEN**

Dreams of writing the deepest most eloquent thoughts down on a messy scrap to one day be on an editor’s desk are now lying in a wastebasket with my other failings. Because the truth I’ve learned is that there are a million and one like me. Maybe none of them want to really speak. We can all be silent together because none of my struggles are unique. I can try to be witty, show off my vocabulary, my literary talent in a beautifully spun tale. The problem is all of that is not addressing the truth, the real issues are not eloquent but crude and painful, even embarrassing. I don’t need to write about politics and policies when there is a war waging in me. Behind the degree I will soon hold, there will still be an empty black hole ever expanding because I am held back by this screen that I allow to dictate what’s appropriate to present to the world. There are no expectations I have anymore. I’ve been waiting to feel that I have something to contribute, all the while hiding what I truly have to contribute. What I have is the result of my mistakes, which could paint a messy canvas. I am sure this portrait would be similar to many others. Mirror images of many others, who are unsure how to step forward out of their dark corners. This isn’t the magnificent first piece I’ve dreamed of. It is possibly the stupid, first piece I needed to write. My paper isn’t blank for lack of words, but lack of courage. It is blank for fear of being crushed by the weight of words. You will hear from me again.



What do you see? I see the potential eye for a smiley face. 😊
You may see a dot that is the starting point for a line. ●—————

A child may see the first of an array of random dots across a paper.



An artist may see a dot in the early sketches of a flower.



But in the end it's just a black dot, right?



What varies from one person to the next is not the perception of the shape nor color. It is neither the size nor place. It is not the dot at all; but rather, it is the pupil that changes. It is the person that changes- the view, mind, and opinion that changes.

The pupil is an essential part of our eye. In fact it is only through this little black dot present in every human being that we can admire the world around us. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “the eyes indicate the antiquity of the soul.” And what makes each of our outlooks on life different from one person to the other is the soul behind the eyes. The soul to which belongs their own unique thoughts, minds, and hearts.

It is upon us to understand and grasp the concept that there are different views and perceptions in the world. What better way to do so than to peer through the little circular windows of someone else? Look through and see a new world through the eyes of someone else. The world physically remains the same, but our view of the world changes dramatically. Suddenly, the world is no longer two-dimensional. We have different priorities, realities, and visions. We see the other dimensions. We understand and appreciate the world a little better.

Hamdulilah. حمد لله

Lisa Shah
MASH'ALLAH BROTHERS

Some men are jerks- girls we know that that's true!
But it's also no secret that some women are too
There are men in our community who are masha'Allah guys.
They're on top of their deen- they don't gossip or tell lies and
there's no denying their integrity and respect but
these noble traits, some sisters choose to neglect.
Though these masha'Allah brothers are truly practicing their faith,
some of y'all sisters- you just wanna hate.

One angry sister poisoned the well, and well
now the rest of us sisters are under this spell
thinking "we're so hot!"
"No man is good enough for us"
And thus
we spread this poisonous thinking to others
as we sit there and spew out the flaws of good brothers
who doing nothing but try to find good a Muslim woman
to love and confide in.

With each day that passes he just hopes to survive
working long hours, making barely enough to get by or provide for the family he wants so des-
perately to start but
we taint his good name, and make him weak in his heart
until he starts to believe that he's really not good enough.

Wake up sisters! Why are we fighting this war
against our allies in battle, men that we should adore?
Have we forgotten Allah created us in pairs?
These incredible men are the answers to our prayers!

If we keep knockin' down our masha'Allah brothers
then, I'm tellin' you sisters, we'll never be mothers
let alone wives so
stop judging these upright guys
because they haven't yet won the Nobel Prize
but, don't take my advice, because when I get mine
you'll be watching in envy, from behind the sideline
as you whine
and complain that another good one got away
When in reality you were too stubborn and thick-headed to see him for who he is without letting
his human faults get in the way.
Girl, take a good look at yourself to make damn sure of your worth
cuz a masha'Allah brother might be your only way into paradise, your golden ticket off this earth.



PHOTO BY SHYEMA AZAM



Tazmin H. Uddin
THE INNER BATTLE

Droplets form rivers and oceans
Dew drops cling to leaves
The wise one knows,
Such is the way we once were
A clinging drop of congealed blood
We lay still in the womb until
We enter this world where
Corruption rages rampant.
The covers keep me warm
In the dark cold world,
But it is out there that I wish
To stand
In the presence of my Lord.
Hear the echoes of "Prayer is better than sleep"
"Prayer is better than sleep"
As the whispers of the evil one
Lulls me back to sleep.
Wake up after the sun
And realize I was met with defeat
The inner battle rages
As my soul seeks the light
Rays shine upon my spirit
But the darkness still surrounds
Moments of weakness
Drive me
To rise to repentance
Answer the call
"Come fast to prayer"
"Come fast to success"
I stand, bow, and prostrate.
I pray, beg, and plead
I seek understanding from
The beautiful words I recite
I read.
I find words of comfort
That help me continue the fight
This battle that rages within
Has left scars that cannot be seen
Scars and wounds on the soul
But through these cracks,
Light enters my heart
Envelopes me
Leaves me with a sense of serenity,
Tranquility.
I am at peace.
Never alone, in the presence of
My Lord.

Gareth Bryant
THE RIVERS OF THE STREET!!!

When it rains, it pours, as the torrential bathing of New York, keeps us wet & cold.
Winds direct this Rain, to every corner, block & sidewalk; it just does what it's told.

The day-long down-pour, from the Sky, funnels down avenues & alleyways.
The Storm-Clouds are gray, thick & heavy, with Water; there are no Sun-rays.

At every corner, there's a junction of the Rivers of the Street.
Storm drains are where all these mighty concrete Rapids meet.

The homeless dwellers, of our underground city, use these rains, to shower.
They only get one chance to get clean; sometimes it rains less than an hour.

For them, these Rains represent hope, that Allah has not abandoned nor forgotten them.
They just take what they can get; it's nothing to us; to them, the Rain is a precious gem.

So, the next time that we complain, about the Rain, we ought to be more grateful.
This Water, from the Sky, nourishes the Earth, making plants grow big & fruitful.

The next time we get drenched, we should think about our poor, homeless counterparts.
We don't care how it feels, being at the bottom of the barrel; it doesn't affect our hearts.

They're the homeless, living in Train Stations & Sewers; they wait & hope for the Rain.
We ignore them, without realizing that they're those whose only lifeline is a Storm drain.



PHOTO BY NEEHA MUJEEB

Emily Okita
BLESSED SONS

I.

Kitchen.

There are three sons: Sabir, Mabruk, and Jabreel who are eating breakfast while they are watching the morning news on T.V. Meanwhile, their mother answers the phone.

Hello, ma'am.

Yes.

Ma'am, my apologies, but your husband did not survive the impact...He's dead.

(no answer)

We cannot find his remains.

(Her two eldest sons look at their mother and they see how upset she is. Jabreel puts his spoon down and tries to listen closely to his mother's phone conversation.)

The other bodies are covered with ash. Others are being rushed into ambulances towards emergency rooms in Bellevue.

(no answer)

As we speak, the other fire fighters and police officers are recovering what they can find. Ma'am, we are doing the best we can...

He's dead-d?

I am sorry.

Mom, Mama,

Mom,

Maman, ca va?

He's gone, your father...he's not here anymore.

II.

The night before Habibah and her husband, Sayyid's argument ended in a knockout.

Where were you the night before? And the night before that...How come you came two and half hours later for dinner when I specifically called your secretary in your office and she told me that you were on your way home? Explain to me, *my dear Sayyid*, what's happening with you?

Dear, stop yelling or raising your voice with me. I apologize that I was late for dinner and taking our sons to football practice.

No, don't apologize to me. Explain why you're never here for your three sons. Ever since we were married when I was twenty years old, I've always understood that you'll be absent from my life...

Absent? Excuse me, what do you mean absent? I've been there for you. I've provided you with a comfortable life where you don't have to earn your own living and you can do whatever you please. I let you renovate our kitchen and interior decorate own house, these are all the freedoms that I've given you. Why are you taking them for granted?

Freedom? WHAT are you talking about? The only freedom I've had is being a good, dutiful housewife and mother for our three sons while you're off traveling the world on your "business" trips.

Dear, they are business trips and I am taking care of finances.

Right...The motel receipts I find in your inside coat pocket are from cheap girls. Girls who you've slept with in our own neighborhood, on our block, inside our own bedroom and I've even heard them say it from their own lips when we have our Sunday morning tea before prayer. Is THAT business? How long have you ben having your affairs...what's going on? How many times have you welcomed extramarital affairs with sleazy whores you picked up on the Lower East Side?

Shut up.

I will NOT because I have too much dignity and self-respect for myself to ever betray our marriage and our family.

I said: Shut up.

Why? Because I am telling you HONESTLY what you don't want to hear instead of what I think you would want me to say, DEAR SAYYID.

Habibah, shut up. The neighbors will hear you. Good. Everyone can hear what I am yelling about because you're filthy and an irresponsible pig of a husband who's always patronizing me and-----

Sayyid punched Habibah's right cheek and she fell down. He continued to kick and smack her. The neighbors across the street heard her screams. They closed their blinds and turned on the television volume as loud as possible.

It's not the first time that this has happened.

III.

Habibah recounted what happened when he lost his temper and control of his fists:

Jabreel, Mabruk, and Sabir,

My sons are free from their father.

Allah granted us our liberation from his madness.

Last night was the final night that I would have to take his abuse.

He should not have ripped out the titanium kitchen stove tops,

and branded them on my breasts,

where thick scabs resemble

a ground zero's third-degree victim's burns.

The night before my nightmare ended,

after I called him a pig, he ripped apart my blouse and cashmere cardigan,

He pulled off my Hermes hijab,

then he made "love," on the kitchen white marble floor.

Imagine...

I saw him take off his navy tie with tiny white polka dots,

His suit smelled like cheap perfume,

The after used smell of sex and there were lipstick marks on his neck.

I kicked and screamed,

I scratched him so he wouldn't

wrap his tie around and cover my mouth.

he pulled out my dark, brown hair in long strands.

It was two beasts fighting to the death, as his Japanese-Algerian hands wrestled "kisses" from my lips.

I refused to kiss him

and then he banged my forehead three times against the wall,

on our kitchen cabinets on the right hand side of the kitchen stove.

He muffled my screams as I called out for help, then he hastily wrenched my pencil skirt and yanked down my lingerie,

and there he went, again and again. My eyes rolled behind darkness and I saw tiny bright lights from the kitchen appear faintly and after he finished, I covered my nakedness,

before he walked upstairs, and another flight of stairs, to the master bedroom, he paused for one.

I called out to him,

"YOU FILTHY BASTARD. HOW C-C-CAN YOU LIVE W-WWITH YOURSELF AFTER YOU'VE RAPED YOUR OWN WIFE AND YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE THE C-C-C-COURAGE TO LOOK AT ME? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? YOU MONSTER, I'LL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES FOR ME TO DIVORCE YOU BECAUSE I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANYMORE, YOU G-GODAMNDAMN BASTARD."

He smirked and pulled his wedding ring off.

Then, he casually threw it toward me.

I cradled the ring and the tears wouldn't stop.

IV.

After Sayyid went upstairs, Habibah continued to cry and her three sons walked into the kitchen. They heard everything and they had no idea what to do other than comfort their mother.

Jabreel: Maman, would you like a cup of tea?

He picked up the porcelain teapot, the one with white and pink orchids that her mother gave to her. He filled it water from the sink faucet. Next, he set the teapot on the stove as it boiled and simmered, as she kept sobbing softly.

Mabruk entered the kitchen and he wrapped his arms around me.

Mabruk: Maman, it's okay...Maman...it's okay. Here's my handkerchief.

Then, Mabruk held her hand and she looked at the handkerchief. It's the same handkerchief her father gave to him before he passed away two months ago. She wiped her tears and his green, hazel eyes were not her husband's. They were her grandfather's along with his olive skin and smooth, clean complexion. Her grandfather was Lebanese and Japanese.

Sabir: Maman, here...Mabruk, here's a towel. Yes, Maman, it's Egyptian linen, but I'll buy another one...Mabruk, wipe the blood from Maman's lower lip.

Jabreel: Maman, what tea would you like? Jasmine, of course, Maman.

Mabruk: Sabir, hand me the adhesive bandages and rubbing alcohol...Maman, this may hurt

and Sabir, keep holding her hand.
Jabreel: Maman, we won't let this happen
EVER. Maman, please don't cry....it's okay...
it's okay.

phone call about her husband's death...their
nightmare ended.

In šhāh'Allāh.

V.

On September 11th, the day she received that



PHOTO BY NEEHA MUJEEB

Rania Mustafa
AN IDEA

I am the idea of misconception. I see the looks. I see the stares. I may not be looking, but from the corner of my eye I see it. I see the look of confusion stirred with a bit of fear and maybe a smidge of empathy. Behind that look I see a mountain of questions. Does she have hair? Was she forced to dress like that? I wonder where she's really from? Does she hate me? Is she a terrorist? Does she know where Osama bin Laden is?

I counteract the stares with a look of my own. A look pleading that you look past the barrier that has been put up around me by the media.

A look begging you to just ask me. A look asking you to break down the barrier brick by brick.

And once the questions are vocalized, the answers are soon to follow. I do have hair. I chose to dress this way. I don't even know you to be able to hate you, and even if I did know you I would not hate you. I am not a terrorist, in fact I never even met anyone you would call a "terrorist". I am an American - born and raised here. And no, I do not know where Osama bin Laden

is.

During my junior year of high school, I remember having a heated debate about the freedom of speech in my Advanced Placement U.S. History class. It was close to the end of the year and I had already established myself as the “liberal” and the “feminist” and a bit of the “socialist.” Labels.

On that day, the debate initially arose from the discussion of the “Schenck vs. United States” Supreme Court case from World War I. The government had passed the law called the Espionage Act. According to the case discussion from the American Bar Association:

The law said that during wartime obstructing the draft and trying to make soldiers disloyal or disobedient were crimes. Almost 2,000 people were accused of violating this law and were put on trial.

Charles Schenck was against the war. He mailed thousands of pamphlets to men who had been drafted into the armed forces. These pamphlets said that the government had no right to send American citizens to other countries to kill people.

The United States accused Schenck of violating the Espionage Act with his pamphlets, while Schenck argued that the Espionage Act was unconstitutional. Although the Court agreed that Schenck’s pamphlets would be lawful at any other time, they unanimously upheld his conviction—stating that the Espionage Act did not violate his First Amendment right during a time of war.

As it might be obvious, I argued that the Espionage Act was indeed unconstitutional. However, I did admit that if the information he was spreading involved secret information that could have sabotaged the military efforts, then it would be in the government’s best interest to impose a limitation on the freedom of speech. In this case, however, dissent from war was and should not be considered as a criminal activity, let alone “espionage.”

As the debate continued, the point of discussion slowly evolved. I continued to argue that everyone has first amendment rights that need

to be protected. Somehow, the discussion became a back-and-forth argument between me and just one other student. Then came the moment of truth:

“What if someone says something hateful against Muslims?” she retorted as I continued to remain stubborn in my view.

“So what? In order to address the issues of the other side, you need to know their arguments,” I responded.

This was around March, 2008 -- a time when the rhetoric and hate against Muslims was not as great as it has been within the contemporary political climate. As the debate over the Islamic Center to be built in downtown NYC continues, along with Eid-ul-Fitr [the celebration at the end of Ramadan] potentially being on or around September 11 and people wanting to host a “Burn the Quran Day,” I still stand strongly by my view. Yes, most rational people will see that Muslims do in fact have a right to build a community center wherever they please because they did not have anything to do with the tragedy of 9/11; that Eid-ul-Fitr being around the date of September 11 is a mere coincidence since Muslims follow a lunar calendar; and that burning the Qur’an is not the appropriate way to go about setting up roads to interfaith understandings.

However, what is being done with the remarks that are being thrown at the Muslim community? I absolutely defend the right of those opposed to the Islamic Center to speak up—regardless of how bigoted or irrational their statements may be. I absolutely defend the right of people to question why Eid is around the date of September 11 and the Church can hold the Qur’an burning as far as I am concerned.

Why?

People can argue that all these actions are hate speech and not protected by the First Amendment because they criminalize a whole group of people and could potentially lead to violent crimes stemming from the rhetoric of Is-

lamophobes. However, to deem these actions as 'hate speech,' the affected Muslims need to begin thinking about actually seeking legal recourse and using the laws to guide and protect them as much as the laws are being swung as a victory for the supposed patriots protecting the nation against an invasion by Islam.

American Muslims need to be reminded that they also have a right to the same freedom of speech that their very opponents are using as justifications for their words and actions. If we, the American Muslim community, want to show that these acts are unconstitutional, we need to stand up and do that through the proper means. These proper means do not involve limiting our discourse to our own closed circles.

The discussions that I have seen recently are mostly among Muslims within their own communities. The discussions that take place outside of the Muslim communities are primarily being run by those who are spreading Islamophobia and a utopian view of a rather right-wing, monotonous nation. Anything that is outside of this view is the "other." In this case, the other is Islam. Some people are hon-

estly looking for answers and yet are finding none because they don't know where to look. Should every person know that Muslims follow a lunar calendar and therefore the dates for Muslim holidays change from year to year? Yes, but that's not something that is common knowledge and the only people we can blame for others not knowing the basics of Islam is ourselves.

American Muslims need to stop taking offense from the comments being spurred by idiocy or out of ignorance and instead need to take advantage of the platform that has already been set. All the issues are out in the open. We know the arguments of the other side, yet we are choosing to sit back and allow others to speak on our behalf. What follows afterwards is complaining that gets us absolutely nowhere.

We, American Muslims, need to step up and implement the rights already granted to us by our Constitution.

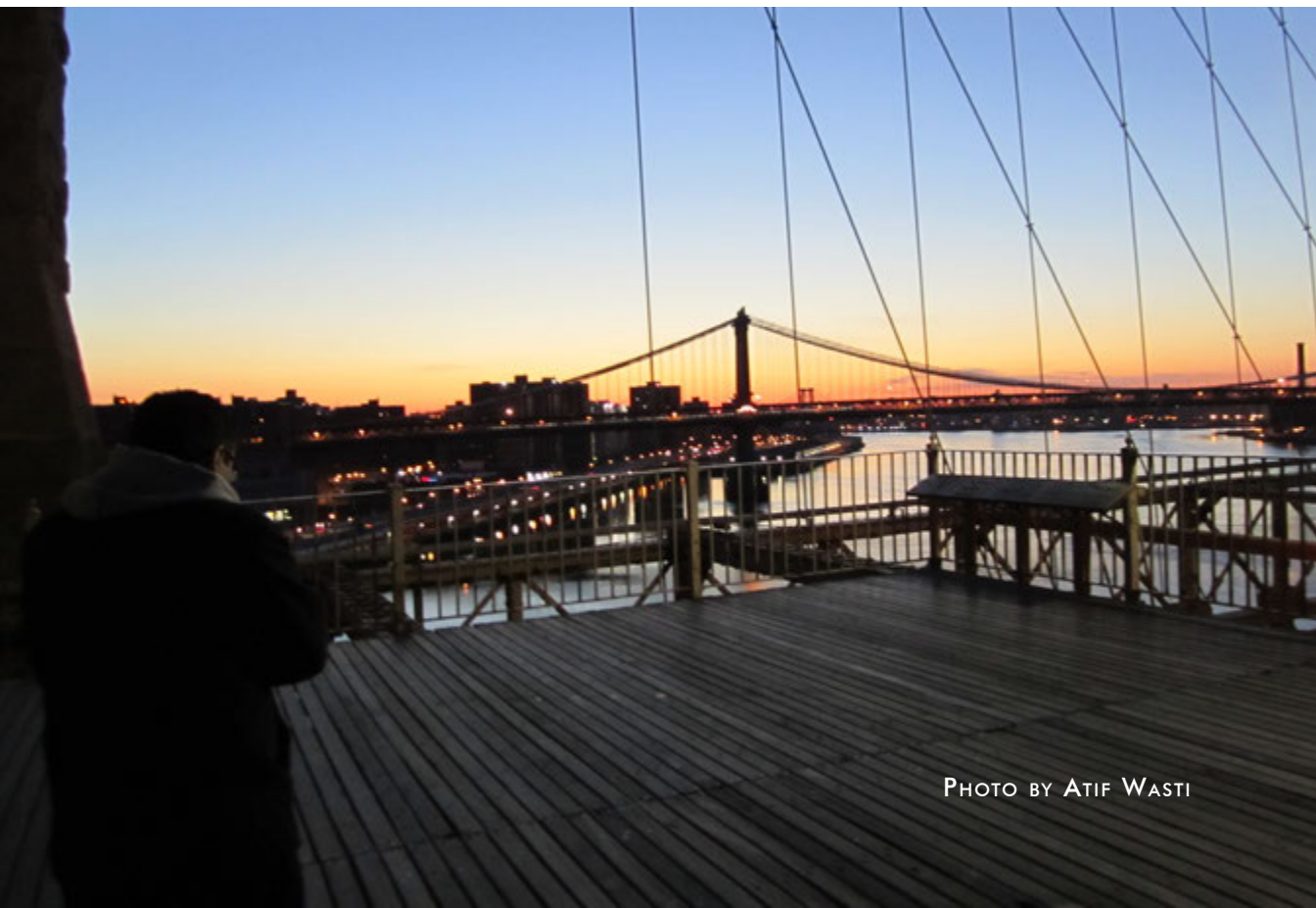


PHOTO BY ATIF WASTI

Anonymous

I SEE

(by IC Goer)

It's small
In the basement of a Church
It's small I see,
Small,
Close-knitted,
Family.
I see
Different backgrounds,
Ethnicities,
Bow together in prostration.
I see
The room,
Fill with brothers and sisters
People I look up to in admiration

I see
Friends who are family
I see
The ummah in unity
I see
This place that has become home
I see
What community truly feels like
And I thank Allah for causing this place to be
created
And I pray that this place continues to be
blessed
I see the IC,
My home,
My family.

Lisa Shah

I HAVE BROKEN FREE

Before I even open my mouth to speak, you've decided my story,
like you know everything that makes up my inventory.
I see the media has fed you some appetizing lies
about the kind of woman I am- as if they've seen me through my eyes.
Because of what's wrapped so tightly around my head
they've gone out of their way so that you would be led
to believe that my scarf represents fear or oppression
when in reality, it's a symbol of strength and progression
and confidence and faith.
You'll never know what it takes
to walk out in public, wearing your faith on your head
having everyone judge you for things you never said.
No sweetie. I am not oppressed. But I sure as hell used to be.

I have broken free.

Free from the shackles of this naked society
by choosing to uphold my dignity and piety
I have broken free.

Free from caring more about styling my hair
than I care about people-
people who don't even have water to drink
or children who wander alone in the streets because their parents are dead
and to think
showing my hair is more important than that?

I have broken free

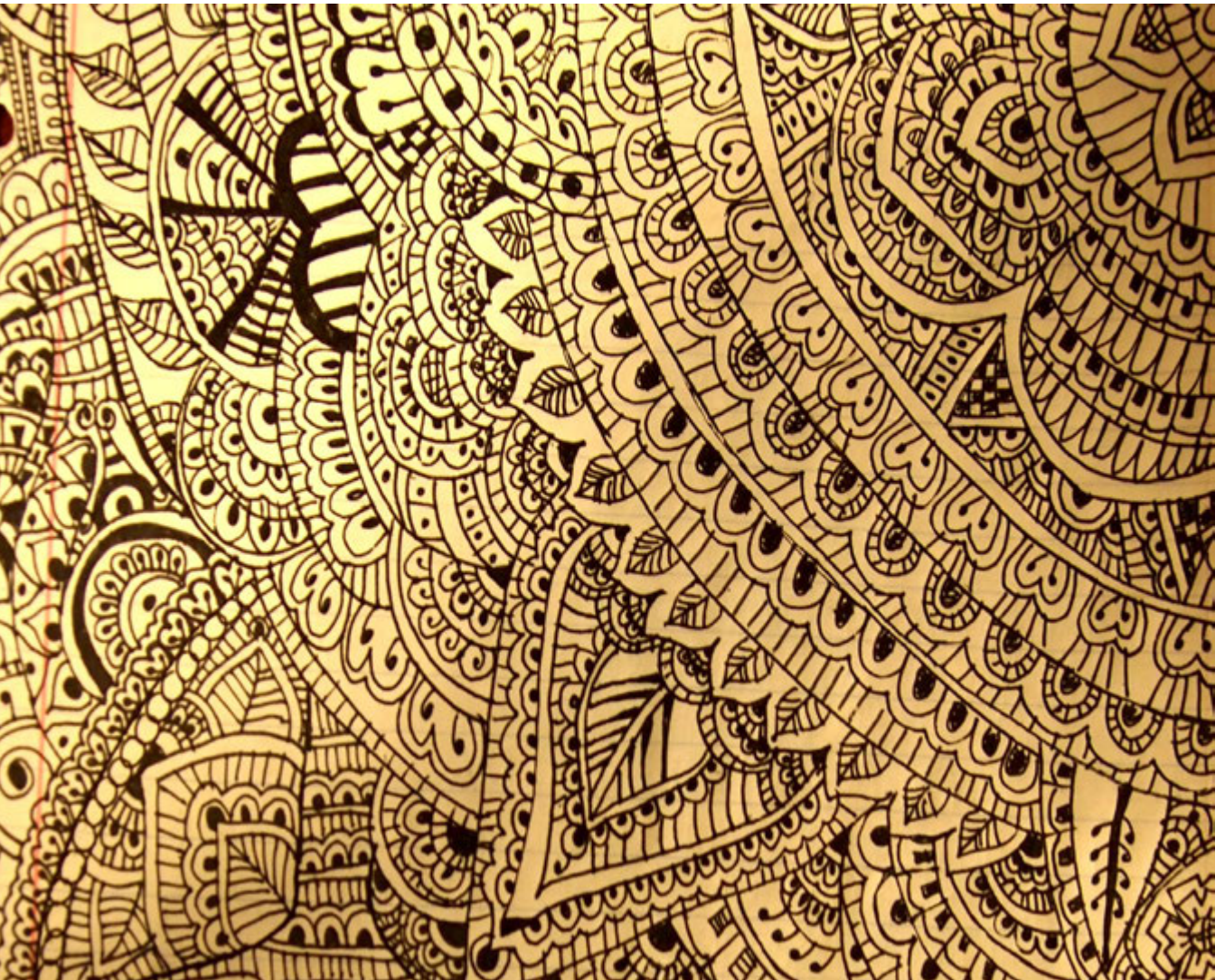
Free from the filthy gazes of men
as they judge me on a scale of 1-10 and
whistle and holler their shame away
as they bank on looking at my body when it isn't even theirs to look at anyway

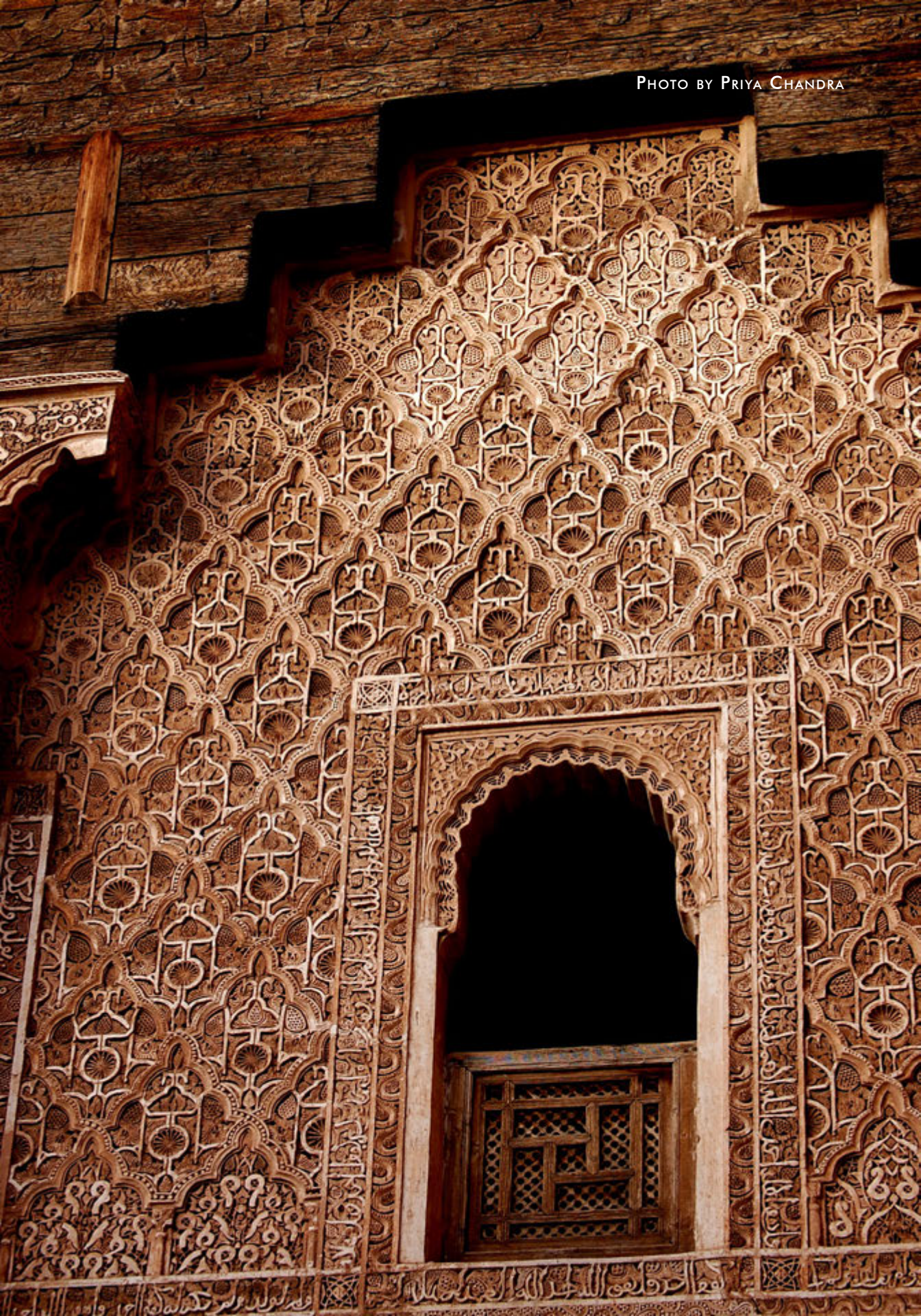
I have broken free.

Free from seeking happiness where it doesn't exist
at the bottom of shot glasses or in clubs that insist that
your skirt must be this high if you want to get in cuz
it's like a contest for who can show the most skin and
you can't look different if you want to fit in.

But if fitting in means I can't be who I am
then I'm sorry, I don't want to fit in- but damn
it's hard to be different when there's so much hate in the world
people ordering me to remove my scarf so they can see my curls.
Well my orders come from a higher authority
so following your commands just isn't my priority.
Allah is my King, my Guardian, my Guide.
It is Him I obey and in Him I confide.
He alone encourages me to keep my scarf on
reminding me through the eloquent words of the Qur'an that
the true believers will have success and
that this life is nothing but a fleeting test.
So as a believer I patiently persevere cuz
I know for sure, my paradise, isn't here.

DRAWING BY SHARMIN HOSSAIN







ISLAMIC CENTER AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

PHOTO BY NEEHA MUJEEB