NAVIGATING IDENTITY THROUGH PHILANTHROPY: A

HISTORY OF THE ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

(1979–2008)

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Sobia Khan, whose love, encouragement,

support, and patience were instrumental in its completion.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my children, Fatima, Amal, Safaa, and Zaki; who

sacrificed a great deal of fatherly time as I completed this dissertation.

I also want to thank the ISNA leaders and staff who generously provided me the time to review materials and documents. I particularly want to thank the secretaries general who were generous with their time and thoughts before, during, and after our oral histories. I want to recognize the leadership, volunteers, and staff of ISNA. While this dissertation at times examines their actions with a critical eye, it does not diminish my gratitude or admiration of their service as a Muslim American. Being able to call upon the research and advice of the best scholars in philanthropic studies and Islam in America to answer key questions or analyze key situations was a tremendous asset. These staff, leaders, and volunteers have had to make decisions in the hot seat through a very turbulent time in Islam in America. Their service to our faith and country has made our nation a better place.

My children (Fatima, Amal, Safaa, and Zaki) sacrificed a great deal as I sought to complete the program. The post-dissertation paradigm in the Khan-Siddiqui household is anticipated with both great pleasure and a bit of dread. With my work on the dissertation having been such a big part of their lives, they do not know what to expect now.

The encouragement of my parents and siblings helped me believe that I could achieve this goal, and I would be lost without their words of support and love.

I especially want to thank my soul mate and wife, Sobia Khan. Living with me and my schedule is not easy even in normal circumstances. However, she made the commitment to guide our family through these uncertain and difficult times. Her critique grounded me. Her support and encouragement kept me going. Her unwillingness to accept anything less than a completed dissertation pushed me on. Her love centered me.

A dissertation is a unique journey that relies upon many people. I have named a

few in these pages. There are too many that remain not named. I am thankful for the generosity that many have shown me in completion of this dissertation. Ultimately, I thank Allah (God) who has provided me with all that is good in my life, including this dissertation. All that is good in the next few pages come from Him and those companions he provided me for this journey. All that is lacking comes from me.

Shariq Ahmed Siddiqui

NAVIGATING IDENTITY THROUGH PHILANTHROPY: A HISTORY OF THE

ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA (1979–2008)

This dissertation analyzes the development of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), a Muslim-American religious association, from the Iranian Revolution to the inauguration of our nation's first African-American president. This case study of ISNA, the largest Muslim-American organization in North America, examines the organization's institution-building and governance as a way to illustrate Muslim-American civic and religious participation. Using nonprofit research and theory related to issues of diversity, legitimacy, power, and nonprofit governance and management, I challenge misconceptions about ISNA and dispel a number of myths about Muslim Americans and their institutions. In addition, I investigate the experiences of Muslim-Americans as they attempted to translate faith into practice within the framework of the American religious and civic experience. I arrive at three main conclusions. First, because of their incredible diversity, Muslim-Americans are largely cultural pluralists. They draw from each other and our national culture to develop their religious identity and values. Second, a nonprofit association that embraces the values of a liberal democracy by establishing itself as an open organization will include members that may damage the organization's reputation. I argue that ISNA's values should be assessed in light of its programs and actions rather than the views of a small portion of its membership. Reviewing the organization's actions and programs helps us discover a religious association that is centered on American civic and religious values. Third,

ISNA's leaders were unable to balance their desire for an open, consensus-based organization with a strong nonprofit management power structure. Effective nonprofit associations need their boards, volunteers and staff to have well-defined roles and authority. ISNA's leaders failed to adopt such a management and governance structure because of their suspicion of an empowered chief executive officer.

David M. Craig, Ph.D., Committee Chair

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Chapter One — Charting a Course

On January 20, 2009, President Barack Obama declared, in his inaugural address, that the United States was a "nation of Christians and Muslims, Hindus and Jews."[1] This was a defining moment in Muslim American history, as well as in the history of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), one of the largest and most influential Muslim American organizations. Seated next to Governor Howard Dean, the chair of the Democratic National Committee, was ISNA's president, Dr. Ingrid Mattson.[2] Mattson's proximity to the center of power on that day demonstrated ISNA's emergence as the preeminent Muslim organization in America.

ISNA's story is that of a newly established Muslim American identity, one that both "establishment"[3] Muslim Americans and the United States government embraced. The latter's support came after September 11, 2001, when American national security interests required a Muslim American identity that could be a mediating force with Muslim Americans and the Muslim world. America's acceptance of ISNA as the single Muslim American identity over others came at a heavy price — racial, ethnic, and ideological segregation.[4]

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[1] "Barack Obama's Inaugural Address" *New York Times,* January 20, 2009.

[2] ISNA National Office of Interfaith and Community Alliances.

[3] The argument of who is "mainstream" is the source of argument within Muslim Americans. I choose to use the term "establishment" Muslim Americans. In my definition "establishment" Muslim Americans are sunni who embrace Islamic institutions as central to an Islamic identity. They also adhere to a more traditional form of Islam. The Nation of Islam, secular Muslim groups and Shiite groups are not included in this term. Organizations like ISNA, Islamic Circle of North America, Council of American Islamic Relations, Muslim American Society, Muslim Public Affairs Council, Muslim Alliance of North America, Islamic schools and centers are a few examples that would be included in this group.

[4] Even ISNA understands this heavy price. On the weekend of January 14, 2011, ISNA launched its Annual Diversity Forum to deal with issues of race, ethnicity and religious differences. Over 500 Muslim Americans attended this conference.

This dissertation seeks to accomplish two broad goals. First, it aims to broaden our understanding of American religious history by exploring ISNA in a case study. By looking at how ISNA developed as a Muslim American institution and how it formed a strong identity, we can better understand how Muslim Americans translated faith into practice. It also helps dispel myths about Muslim Americans and ISNA. Second, ISNA used the nonprofit form to establish a representative presence of Islam in America; therefore, this dissertation also examines how ISNA, as a membership-based religious nonprofit organization, was able to balance issues of diversity, legitimacy, and power with its core values during times of crisis and stability. These issues are important in understanding both the progress and failures the organization made on issues of diversity and legitimacy.

This chapter charts a course through ISNA's journey from 1979 through 2008. First, I outline the central argument and identify important trends and events in ISNA development. Second, I introduce the three founding groups and development of identity within ISNA. Third, I detail my research methods. Fourth, I provide a literature review of nonprofit studies and Islam in America. In the conclusion, I chart the next three substantive chapters of this dissertation.

Central Argument

As a religious nonprofit organization, ISNA acts within an American context. Issues of diversity, legitimacy, and power influenced its evolution as an American nonprofit organization. These issues helped define the final, widely accepted identity embraced by ISNA.

In this dissertation, I assert that ISNA consistently pursued the role of serving as the representative of Muslim Americans. This role required both internal and external legitimacy. Because of the incredible diversity within the Muslim American community, ISNA needed to embrace a broad identity for internal legitimacy. This internal legitimacy was vital in order to counter the Islamophobia that impeded external legitimacy.

In creating ISNA as a religious nonprofit organization, the founders sought to express their shared commitment to making Islamic piety central to the organization's reason for being. This choice to be a *religious* nonprofit reflected their frustrations with other Muslim organizations, notably the FIA. This shared religious commitment helped bridge the founding members' different group identities. At the same time, becoming a religious *nonprofit* in the United States shaped ISNA's core values, too. By adopting the nonprofit form and increasingly adapting their operations and priorities to the democratic, voluntaristic, and pluralistic values of the American nonprofit sector, ISNA strengthened its commitment to those values. This dissertation examines this organizational tension between being a *religious* nonprofit and being a religious *nonprofit* as a way to understand ISNA's history and its relationship to Muslim Americans. To this end, David Craig suggests a helpful approach to identifying and evaluating a nonprofit organization's values:

> Values are not the morals of stories, nor are they aspirational ideals. To have any meaning, they must be made explicit through ongoing debate within an organization combined with action to build structures that articulate these values anew. I do not mean simply speaking these values. I use the term articulate in the sense of an articulated limb that has a specific structure related to its operations and purposes. This structure enables certain movements but not others. This range of motion comes with limits,

too, some of which are inherent in the structure itself and some of which are due to external forces and constraints.[5]

ISNA's leaders adopted bylaws, budgets, programs, and staff to express and articulate their core values for the organization. ISNA publications expressed points of views or allowed debate to illustrate its adherence to pluralistic values. ISNA's values were strengthened and weakened by the internal and external forces.

ISNA's efforts were hindered by a highly centralized, bureaucratic framework, as well as internal factions that undermined each other. The distribution of power and the distrust in a central chief executive made it difficult for ISNA to build upon its successes. Traditionally, nonprofit boards hire and empower chief executives to execute the mission of their organizations. In ISNA's case, however, the distrust of a central chief executive blurred the boundaries between the role of the board and the role of the chief executive.

The rise of Islamophobia coupled with the revival of Islamic identity and activism are two important trends that affected ISNA's development as a nonprofit organization. In addition, the Iranian Revolution, the First Gulf War, and terror attacks on September 11, 2001, are key events in the analysis of ISNA. Externally, these events generated a rising level of Islamophobia and resulted in greater scrutiny of Muslim Americans. Internally, these events created a greater sense of unity and identity among Muslim Americans.

Each of these events required ISNA to make important decisions about its core values. Issues of diversity, legitimacy, and power influenced these decisions. This dissertation outlines those decisions in an attempt to understand how ISNA became one

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[5] Craig, David M., "Religious Values in the Healthcare Market: Stories and Structures from Catholic and Jewish Hospitals" *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics,* (2008) p. 225

of the most influential Muslim American organizations by 2002. Central to this story are the three founding groups or factions of ISNA, which I describe, in the next section, as the activists, HSAAMs (historically Sunni African-American Muslims), and cultural pluralists. Their internal struggle and search for common ground fueled ISNA's quest for internal and external legitimacy.

These founding groups were represented by the eight chief executive officers who led ISNA between 1981 and 2012. These officers, who held the title of secretary general, were responsible for managing the organization and greatly influenced its direction. Each individual's particular approach to nonprofit management and leadership influenced the organization's journey. Of these eight men, three were activists (Rabie Hasan Ahmed, Amer Haleem, and Ahmed ElHattab), one was a HSAAM (Dr. Ihsan Bagby), and four were cultural pluralists (Dr. Iqbal Unus, Dr. Sayyid Syeed, Dr. Muneer Fareed, and Safaa Zarzour).

Founding Groups of ISNA

Three different groups came together and established ISNA. I refer to them as activist internationalists (activists), historically Sunni African-American Muslims (HSAAM), and cultural pluralists. The activists were American Muslims who were influenced by or who supported global Islamic movements like the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami. They saw their efforts on behalf of Islam in America as part of a global network of Islamic work. HSAAMs were African-American Muslims who came to Islam from outside the Nation of Islam. The HSAAM movement started in the 1920's. Its members accepted traditional orthodox Islam and rejected the version of Islam being

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propagated by the Nation of Islam. Finally, the cultural pluralists were devout Muslims who sought to engage in building Muslim American institutions to sustain their religious identity while integrating (but not assimilating) into the structures of American society.

Although these groups have many similarities, they differ primarily in where their religious identity is centered. The activists' identity was centered in a global Islamic movement, whereas HSAAMs centered their identity in Blackamerican religion. Cultural pluralists' identity was centered in the American religious experience. I consider the American religious experience to be voluntary, relative and pluralistic. Religion and theology are broadly interpreted and practiced. I will examine this further in the next section.

ISNA's Founders and Their Struggle for Identity

ISNA's journey through Islam in America and its quest to become the representative Muslim American organization were affected by the diversity of Muslim Americans, the power structures that existed within the organization, and forces external to the organization. From its inception, ISNA included a diverse group of leaders seeking to define, articulate, and implement their vision of a Muslim American nonprofit organization.

We can compare the three founding groups to divergent religious identities being established in the United States in the early twentieth century. Three distinct models of American Jewish identity being formulated at that time: assimilation, Zionism, and

cultural pluralism.[6] It may seem odd to claim similarities between Zionists and American Muslims but internationalist commitment on behalf of coreligionists was the same. Similarly there is a comparable cultural pluralist identity. Only assimilation is missing within the founding groups of ISNA. Although all three of these models existed among Muslim Americans broadly by the mid-twentieth century, only variations of the last two models existed among the groups that founded ISNA. These variations were Zionism and cultural pluralism. At ISNA's inception, no one in the leadership was calling for assimilation. The establishment of the Muslim Student Association of US & Canada (MSA) and ISNA was part of a plan to counter the assimilation of Muslim American identity into the larger melting pot.

ISNA emerged as these groups united in an effort to form an institution. Although these three groups differed in their goals, they were willing to share resources and come under the banner of one organization. The history of ISNA involves the internal struggle of three competing, but at times, complementary groups.

The first group was inspired by Muslim activist movements like the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami.[7] This group concentrated on developing activist Muslims who would help propagate Islam while developing institutions that would serve pious, activist Muslims. Their vision of mosque building focused on developing

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[6] Whitfield, Stephen J., "In Defense of Diversity: Jewish Thought from Assimilationism to Cultural Pluralism" in *Charity, Philanthropy and Civility in American History* Ed. Lawrence Friedman and Mark McGarvie. New York: Cambridge University Press 2002. 302

[7] Activist is a term that refers to Muslims who seek to further Islamic goals by propagating Islam by teaching those within how to practice the faith accurately while also adding to the Islamic ummah by propagating and converting non-Muslims to Islam. Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami are examples of activist movements that have gone further and attempted to engage in the political process.

institutions that would fulfill this mission.[8] They were in America to propagate Islam but were tied to their homelands and a perceived global Islamic movement. America was a resource that could promote work in the Muslim world.

The development of international relief funds was another central feature of their work. This group thinks of itself as transnational and diasporic. I am designating this group as "internationalist activists" for the purposes of this dissertation. Their position on these movements is best articulated in the *Islamic Horizons* magazine in 1978:

> The MSA[ISNA] doesn't claim to be an Islamic movement in the sense Ikhwanual Muslemoon was, or Jammat e Islami Pakistan projects itself. These two great exponents of Islam in today's world are comprehensive in their scope and sweeping in the formulation of their critique on the current systems of the world. Conceptually, we find ourselves in agreement with them. We do subscribe to their view that the present-day ideologies are outmoded, that the crisis in human spirit is deepening and any solution short of a total Islam will only accelerate the fall of humanity down the precipice. That's why we consider the leaders of Ikhwan and Jamaat as benefactors of our ummah.[9]

The activists did not seek to "take over America" as many critics argue; instead, they sought to spread Islam, educate Muslims about correct Islamic practice, and leverage Muslim American presence as an important political force. These Muslims had a specific vision of what Islamic practice required: abhorrence to interest-based loans, establishment of Islamic educational institutions, development of Islamic literature, teaching "American people" about Islam, and training Islamic workers and other elements about the practice of the Islamic faith. This group also saw itself as an important pressure group to change U.S. foreign policy toward the Muslim world. This group

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[8] See Poston, Larry A., "Da'wa in the West" in *The Muslims of America*, ed. Yvonne Haddad. Oxford University Press (1991) p. 125-135

[9] "MSA–Goals and Strategy" *Islamic Horizons* April 1978 pg 1.

probably was the strongest at the time of ISNA's inception. This strength was due to its ties to the global Islamic world and the funds that it was able to leverage when this group began to organize.

This group had much in common with Louis Brandeis's vision of religious (in his case, Jewish) nationalism. As described by Stephen Whitfield, Brandeis argued that Jewish activism

> far from contradicting American political values (including forming a more perfect union) . . . would make Jewish Americans into better Americans precisely because their commitment to democracy would be solidified. Instead of suffering from the anguish [of] dual loyalty, Jewish Americans would find reinforcement, since the goal of supporting the Jewish community globally would help fulfill the historic American mission of serving as a city upon a hill.[10]

These global activists understood the necessity of Islamic international activism for Muslim Americans. They, like Brandeis, saw no contradiction or tension between global activism and the American identity. The difference between these individuals and Brandeis was that Brandeis had little knowledge of his faith and had little interest in promoting Jewish values through institutional practice.[11] These leaders not only had an interest in promoting Islam through institutional practice, but also possessed a strong grounding in the faith. Many of these leaders later broke away and established the Muslim American Society (MAS — predominantly an Arab American group) or joined the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA — predominantly a South Asian group).[12]

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[10] Whitfield, p. 305

[11] Ibid

[12] Other major organizations like the Council on American Islamic Relations, Muslim Public Affairs Council, American Muslim Alliance and American Muslim Council were established by ISNA leaders. These organizations continued to be a part of ISNA's informal umbrella. They were active in ISNA

The second group included the growing number of new Muslim Americans called HSAAMs (Historically Sunni African-American Muslims) who had been involved in American Islam for nearly half a century.[13] These Muslims came to Islam not through a mediating structure like the Nation of Islam, but directly through immigrant and indigenous missionaries. HSAAMs sought a connection to "universal" Islam but also struggled with the development of a Muslim American identity.[14] HSAAMs embraced Sunni Islam through interaction with immigrants and saw themselves as distinctly different from the Nation of Islam and its descendants. They embraced "immigrant" Islam in an effort to embrace "mainstream Islam" and also to embrace Islam's message of unity and diversity. They probably considered the Nation of Islam as neither "correct Muslims" nor followers of "true Islam." As Edward Curtis suggests, HSAAMs also interacted with the Nation of Islam and Imam W. D. Muhammad's movements, among other African-American Muslim groups. In fact, the current leader of the Muslim Alliance in North America, a predominantly HSAAM organization, is Imam Siraj Wahhaj, who is a former Nation of Islam leader.[15]

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conventions, publications and event. All of these organizations were formed after 1990 when ISNA nearly ceased to function and had all but shut down.

[13] The term "historically sunni African American's was coined by Dr. Ihsan Bagby in creating a typology of mosques by ethnic identity. Dr. Ihsan Bagby is a professor at the University of Kentucky, serves as secretary general of the Muslim Alliance of North America and is an elected board member of the Islamic Society of North America.

[14] Leonard, Karen Isaksen, *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation 2003) p 78.

[15] Yuskaev, Timur. "Siraj Wahhaj" in *Encyclopedia of Muslim American History*, ed. Edward E. Curtis IV. New York: Facts on File, Inc., (2010) p. 573.

Their Islamic faith has to be seen in the context of a "Blackamerican"[16]religion that frames African-American faith in terms of slavery, justice, and African-American experience in America.[17] HSAAM saw fellow immigrants as kindred spirits in their Islamic journey — because they also faced discrimination and opposed American foreign policy while seeking to establish a purist form of Islam. As this group struggled to distinguish itself from the "heretical" Nation of Islam, it embraced immigrant Muslims and, for a period, racial tensions and differences were put aside.

In the 1990s, this group broke away from ISNA and formed the Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA).[18] The group sought to "unite and formulate a 'more authentic, normative form' that does not give up the critical stance toward American society." Although ISNA leaders sought to include HSAAMs as part of the leadership, they failed to pay attention to the issues that were uniquely important to HSAAMs.[19] ISNA leaders recognized and expressed in meeting minutes the need to include indigenous American Muslims as equals in the organization — for example, through inclusive leadership and by paying attention to their needs and priorities.[20]

However, this official recognition in the minutes of an ISNA board meeting did not necessarily make its way into successful policy. HSAAMs who were part of ISNA leadership felt that they had been used by their immigrant brethren and that their funding

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[16] Blackamerican is spelled in this way on purpose. This term was originally coined by Gayraud Wilmore.

[17] Jackson, Sherman A., *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking Toward the Thurd Resurrection* (Oxford University Press 2005).

[18] Leonard, Karen Isaksen, *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research* (New York: Russell sage Foundation Press 2003) p. 78.

[19] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus. May 2, 2011.

[20] Meeting Minutes, ISNA Majlis Ashura, July 30-31, 1983

priorities were largely ignored.[21] The group sought to establish their own institution that would serve their priorities and vision. They sought not to disengage from their immigrant brethren, but to engage them as institutional equals.[22]

The third group included Muslim immigrants who had experienced the failure of the post-colonial Muslim world.[23] They found American ideas of pluralism, diversity, and democracy as the right mix to develop a Muslim American identity. Their vision of mosque building was to develop institutions that could establish a permanent local presence of American Islam, while also helping to develop a Muslim American identity steeped in American ideas and Islamic theology. They were practicing Muslims who saw America as being compatible with Islamic ideals. For these Muslims, America was more "Islamic" than the Muslim world.[24] Just as they allowed culture to influence the practice of faith in their country of origin, they allowed American culture to influence it in their new homeland. They saw America as fertile ground on which to live their lives, raise their families, and practice their faith. They acknowledged the need for Muslims to come together to preserve cultural and religious practices. They also saw the need to follow in the footsteps of other immigrant and faith groups who found strength in unity. I am calling this group the "cultural pluralists."

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[21] Dannin, Robert. *Understanding the Multi-Ethnic Dilemma of African-American Muslims* in *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*.ed. Haddad Yvonne and John L. Esposito (Oxford University Press 2000) p. 264.

[22] Interview with Dr. Ihsan Bagby, April 2011.

[23] See Khan, Muqtedar, *American Muslims: Bridging Faith and Freedom* (Maryland: Amana Publications 2002) p. 12

[24] Khan, Muqtedar, *American Muslims: Bridging Faith and Freedom* (Maryland: Amana Publications 2002) p. 12.

Cultural pluralists did not come to ISNA and the Muslim Student Association as graduates of Islamic activist work in the Muslim world. In fact, they saw distinct problems with those movements, which they articulated on the editorial page of *Islamic Horizons.*

> But, we don't follow some aspects of their [Ikhwan and Jamaat] methodology for certain reasons. An organization without goals is at best a fossilized structure. Yet when it comes to means, goals alone are not the determinant. . . . The MSA [ISNA] is not led by a Prophet. . . . It's led by a group of ordinary Muslims and its membership is also of humble people. . . . MSA[ISNA] doesn't aspire to be a political party; it doesn't want to be another Ikhwan or Jamaat or, for that matter, their extension. Our immediate concern is the future of Muslims as a cultural entity in North America.[25]

Their vision of ISNA was an organization that would help establish an Islamic presence in America, thus making it easier for Muslims to live a fruitful life in this country while enjoying American institutions of freedom, democracy, pluralism, and capitalism. As one letter to *Islamic Horizons* states, "Islam has adapted itself formally to local customs and traditions throughout the world and has been thus far successful to maintain itself without abandoning its essence."[26]

This vision of a Muslim American identity was different from Brandeis's Zionism or the activist Islamist global movement. The cultural pluralists' vision was closer to Stephen Whitfield's description of Horace Meyer Kallen for Judaism. Kallen was a proponent for Jewish American cultural pluralism. Kallen believed that a liberal democracy could sustain and reinforce Jewish communal identity. The son of an

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[25] "MSA–Goals and Strategy" *Islamic Horizons* April 1978 pg 1.

[26] Readers Comment, "A need for Looking at Islam in the American context" *Islamic Horizons* (May 1981), p2

Orthodox rabbi, Kallen was uncomfortable with both the orthodox tradition and the reform movement. Similarly, he disagreed with Brandeis on Zionism without a connection to the Jewish tradition, as well as the idea of Americanization or assimilation.[27] Kallen was important in helping to show the compatibility of Jewishness with citizenship; he was also instrumental in reconciling ethnicity with democracy.[28] However, Muslim American cultural pluralists not only believed in the important role of Islamic faith and tradition, but also practiced the faith, which was unlike Kallen, who was a secularist.

Muslim American cultural pluralists did not see the need to change all of American society to the faith of Islam to help a Muslim American community thrive. The American nonprofit sector combined with American civil liberties was fertile ground for these new Americans to start a new life. This group became the primary leadership within ISNA and has become the emergent Muslim American identity embraced by both the Obama and Bush administrations.

Each one of these groups (HSAAMs, activists and cultural pluralists) helped contribute toward a Muslim American identity within ISNA. However, the cultural pluralists have emerged as a dominant and more acceptable public identity. Although ISNA was not exclusively composed of just these three groups, they are the major focus of this dissertation.

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[27] Whitfield, p. 307

[28] Ibid, p. 308

Establishing a Muslim American Identity: Tensions and Transition

ISNA leaders like Dr. Muneer Fareed, Dr. Sayyid Syeed, Dr. Iqbal Unus, and Safaa Zarzour, mentioned earlier, have embraced the cultural pluralist identity. This identity fits the pluralistic, non-collectivist American ethos. That same ethos gives rise to numerous voluntary organizations in the American nonprofit sector. Today, ISNA, like many other American nonprofits, uses the voluntary sector to promote a shared identity, a representative voice, and a set of common purposes.

The pluralistic, non-collectivist American ethos is at odds with the two groups that, for different reasons, question the idea of being "Americans" along with being "Muslims." The activist immigrant Muslims who split away from ISNA and established the Muslim American Society remain opposed to the nation's capitalist doctrines and other western values until recently. The HSAAMs also criticize the American society for injustices rooted in African-American experiences with slavery and discrimination. Both groups fit uncomfortably with today's ISNA and with each other.

The selection of ISNA as a partner was a strategic choice for the United States government. However, this choice exposed the division among Muslim Americans. That is, many African-Americans and other immigrants do not feel included in the ISNA identity. The American government has not embraced a number of major national organizations (Council on American Islamic Relations, Muslim American Society, Muslim Alliance in North America) in the same way it embraced ISNA and its cultural pluralist identity.

ISNA has worked to include African-American Muslims in the "identity" that it established. In fact, ISNA's vision of a Muslim American identity is theoretically rooted

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in the long history of Muslims in America. ISNA adopted the Civil Rights narrative and the African-American struggle against oppression as key components of its vision of a Muslim American identity. However, because immigrants and other American Muslims did not experience the struggles that African-Americans faced, these ISNA leaders have found it difficult to understand the struggles in a meaningful way.

The organization has sought, some would argue unsuccessfully, to bridge the non-immigrant-versus-immigrant divide. The organization has consistently struggled with a "calculus of rights" for those who came here as immigrants and for those who are indigenous to America. ISNA has sought to define Muslim American rights as a group in terms of both non-immigrants and immigrants.

This Muslim American identity has also exposed a division among immigrant Muslim Americans. This rift exists between those who are more activist and align their beliefs with Jamaat-e-Islami and the Muslim Brotherhood and cultural pluralists who are not aligned with international and transnational diasporic movements. This activist group is suspicious of the United States government and considers it an unreliable partner. International activists are at odds with ISNA's core belief — that it is vital to work with every administration of the US government rather than be left out in the cold.[29]

Furthermore, activists have been suspicious of interfaith relationships until recently.[30] They, like many HSAAMs, would disagree with the goal of ISNA to become, in Dr. Sayyid Syeed's words, "the Muslim Rev. Billy Graham. ISNA should serve as the

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[29] Nimer, Mohamed, "Muslims in American Public Life" in *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens*. Ed Yvonne Tazbeck Haddad (Oxford University Press 2002) p. 171.

[30] Haddad, Yvonne and Robert Ricks. "Claiming Space in America's Pluralism: Muslims Enter the Political Maelstrom" in *Muslims in Western Politics*. ed. Abdulkader Sinno (Indiana University Press (2009) p. 21.

conscience of our government and provide the government a partner to dialogue with rather than one to fight with."[31]

As an organization, ISNA does not define religious requirements for membership and is open to a diverse group of Muslims. In contrast, the activists ought to define what they saw as *authentic* Islam. For example, in their initial years, they opposed interest-based mortgages[32]and had requirements for separation by gender at their events. Their suspicion of government, their focus on justice, and their strategic vision to work with the poor created a natural alignment of thinking between HSAAM and this group. However, three decades of tension between these two groups continues to keep them apart.

Establishing Muslim American Unity: Institutional Cooperation and Collaboration

In 1981, a few major Muslim American organizations, that included the three groups (HSAAM's, activists and cultural pluralists), came together to establish the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). The new organization's purpose was to serve as an umbrella organization, one that would provide a "platform of expression" for Muslims and Islam in America.[33]

This was not the first Muslim American organization seeking to serve Islam in Americas. Indeed, an Islamic presence has existed in America since the 1400s. Muslim organizations in the United States were focused on certain ethnic or ideological communities. However, major institutional building in the early twentieth century took

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[31] Quote from Dr. Sayyid M Syeed, former Secretary General of ISNA. But dialogue does not suggest not articulating disagreements. ISNA opposed both Iraq Wars despite while maintaining a relationship with the government.

[32] Smith, Jane I. *Islam in America* (Columbia University Press 1999) p. 134

[33] ISNA Annual Report (1983)

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place at the grassroots level, largely by the establishment of Islamic centers or organizations.[34] These institutions included ethnic and sectarian participation. In addition, organizations such as the Federation of Islamic Associations of the United States and Canada (FIA) was established in 1954 by World War II veterans but became less successful by the 1980s.[35] Each of these organizations sought to meet the needs of the Muslim community in the United States at that time.

The addition of a large number of Muslims from the Muslim world after 1965 dramatically changed the number and nature of Muslim Americans.[36] A new organization was needed to mediate the transition of this changing Muslim American population. Initially, the Muslim Student Association of the U.S. & Canada (MSA) addressed this need. Later, this task was taken on by other organizations (for example, ISNA). The MSA initially tried to become a part of FIA, and the MSA gained sufficient memberships to secure a seat on the FIA board for many years.[37] However, by 1978, it was clear that the MSA leaders and many of its members were not comfortable with the FIA's role as a national leader.[38] It would be a mistake to assume that MSA members were completely

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[34] For institutional building also see *Muslim Communities in America* ed. Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (SUNY Press 1994) & *Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream.* Ed. Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shyrock & *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* by Alixa Naff (Southern Illinois University Press 1985) & *The Arab Moslems in the United States: Religion and Assimilation* by Abdo Elkholy (Connecticut: College & University Press 1966)

[35] Howell, Sally. "Federation of Islamic Associations of United States and Canada" in *Encyclopedia of Muslim American History*, ed. Edward E. Curtis IV. New York: Facts on File, Inc., (2010) p. 193.

[36] Leonard, Karen Isaksen, *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation 2003) p. 10.

[37] "Letter to the Editor" *Islamic Horizons* (October 1978) p. 4

[38] "FIA Convention" Embarrasing and Disappointing" (sic) *Islamic Horizons* (October 1978) p. 4

opposed to the FIA, and *Islamic Horizons* continued to publish discussions both for and against FIA.

A compromise among three distinctly pious, conservative Muslim American groups (HSAAMs, activists and cultural pluralists) resulted in ISNA's founders designating it as an umbrella organization that would serve as a platform for Muslim Americans. Through ISNA, these three groups sought to develop a visible, powerful, and representative national presence for Islam in America.

History had taught all three groups that it would be difficult to achieve their goals unless they embraced diversity. But utility alone did not bring these three groups together. As pious Muslims, they sought to embrace the unity that Islam called for, while simultaneously embracing the diversity it taught.

However, distinguishing these Muslim Americans as conservative, progressive, liberal, or moderate would be a mistake. They had some fundamental unifying elements: All of them were religious and pious, they all embraced American ideals of democracy and pluralism, they all saw the great opportunity America presented to Islam and Muslims, and they all believed that the Islamic world was dysfunctional.

What separated them were their histories, their motivation to be a part of Islamic work, and their vision for Islam in America. For example, in 1986 the ISNA *Majlis Ash-Shura* (*majlis)* or board of directors voted to encourage Muslim Americans to engage in political and civic activities, including voting in elections. This was a historic position, but the organization's minutes noted dissenting voices within the board.[39] The fact that

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[39] Meeting Minutes, ISNA Majlis Ashura, June 5, 1986.

the final board minutes include both favorable votes and the voices of dissent suggests

the compromising nature of the deliberations.

These tensions and collaborations help explain ISNA today. They also shaped

immigrant and HSAAM Muslim American identity. However, we should not exaggerate

the differences between these groups. After all, they were able to come together, form an

organization, and help it become an influential Muslim American institution, despite the

fact that they recognized their diversity. As this *Islamic Horizons* editorial suggests, they

probably did not realize the depth of diversity or the intricacies of their differences:

> A quick look at . . . Muslims . . . in North America would reveal that there
> are three main streams:[40]
> (1)   Immigrants from the Muslim countries and mainly from the
> Middle East and Eastern Europe who came to North America due to
> political and economic reasons.[41]
>
> (2)   Students who are here for higher studies and many of whom stay
> permanently after graduation. Even for those who return home after
> graduation, the average length of stay is about five (5) years.[42]
> (3)   Native Muslims who have accepted Islam in increasing numbers in
> the more recent years, most of whom are Afro-Americans.[43]

Despite not fully comprehending their diversity, leaders of ISNA understood that

differences existed among them and that some groups weren't represented under their

umbrella.

The eventual success of the cultural pluralists pushed forward an ethnic-religious

group that is on the journey of integration (not assimilation) with which America is

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[40] "The Islamic Identity: A Myth or Reality" *Islamic Horizons* (November 1976) p.2

[41] International activists, cultural pluralists and FIA

[42] International activists and cultural pluralists

[43] HSAAM's and other African American Muslim groups

historically familiar. However, it's vital that we know the historical journey this Muslim American identity has taken in order to understand how Muslim Americans and ISNA have evolved.

ISNA's history helps us understand not only the development of a Muslim American identity, but also gives us a window into how the transitions and confrontations related to race and ideology affected Muslim America over the past three decades. Understanding this history helps us recognize that there is no homogenous Muslim American identity.

Research Methods and Sources

This dissertation required the analysis of primary source materials, including ISNA Annual Reports, *Islamic Horizons* magazines, ISNA board minutes[44] and articles in the mainstream American press. One unique source was the oral histories I conducted with six of eight secretaries general. I analyzed all these sources from the perspective of the scholarly literature on Islam in America and the American nonprofit sector.

Oral histories are vital in studying the history of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). Available documents such as annual reports, issues of *Islamic Horizons,* press accounts, and academic studies provide only one perspective into this organization's history. If numbers and graphs could sum up its history, these tools would work well by themselves. However, the forces that helped mold its identity and the identity of its supporters were affected not only by global events, but also by the

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[44] In 2010, I was appointed to the ISNA Narrative Committee formed by the ISNA Majlis Shura (Board) to look at ISNA's history and help craft a narrative for public dissemination. Membership in this committee provided me limited yet unprecedented access to ISNA records that were helpful in my research

personalities of its leaders. ISNA has developed during a period when Islam and Muslims have been under constant attack. Its publications and public statements are designed to emphasize a public persona that is open to little attack. That *public* ISNA is only one aspect of the organization I seek to examine.

ISNA has been influenced the most by its secretaries general. As the chief executive officers of the organization, these individuals have the greatest insight into the organization's day-to-day operations and long-term direction. Unlike elected board members, these secretaries general faced no mandatory term limits. None of the secretaries general have written memoirs, and because of their advancing age, their perspectives as eye-witnesses to Muslim American institutional history may soon be lost. Including their perspectives was vital in writing this history of the Islamic Society of North America.

These secretaries general faced firsthand the three competing visions of the leadership of ISNA. They were responsible for managing the organization while mediating among three founding groups (international activists, cultural pluralists, and HSAAM's). While each secretary general's religious identity may have aligned with a specific group, their role as the chief executive officer required working with all three groups. Many of the programs that they oversaw resulted from seeking common ground. Leaders who sought to sway ISNA in one direction or another found that dissension stymied their vision.

During this twenty-eight-year history, only one secretary general served for more than a decade. The second highest tenure was by acting secretaries general leaders who were trusted by all groups and were placed in the position until a new chief executive

could be hired. Only three of them left the position by their own choice. In the appendix, I include a detailed discussion about the six men I interviewed for this dissertation.

Literature Review

ISNA translated faith into practice using the nonprofit form. Therefore, it is important that we review the research related to Islam in America and philanthropic studies. This literature review consists of two sections. The first is an analysis of Islam in America research that is important to our examination of ISNA. The second section provides an overview of the philanthropic studies literature and frameworks necessary in order to understand ISNA.

Literature Review — Islam in America

This dissertation also seeks to place itself within the broader context of Islam in America scholarship. Until recently, this material focused on examining Muslims in America from the Islam versus West methodology. The seminal works in this area are focused on showing how Islam is compatible with American values. In doing so, they examine Muslims in America as external entities. These studies seek to examine how Muslim Americans are able to fare in America, rather than how they actually participate in America.[45] The focus of these studies is to see how Muslim Americans are able to mediate "foreign" values within an American context.[46] They either look at the ability of

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[45] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz. *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 4.

[46] See Yvonne Haddad, Jane Smith and Kathleen Moore *Muslim Women in America: The Challenge of Islamic Identity Today* (Oxford University Press 2006) and Jane Smith *Islam in America* (Columbia University Press 1999) & Yvonne Haddad and John Esposito *Muslims on the Americanization Path?* (Oxford University Press 1998). The last title of the last book even tends to suggest that Muslims may be on an "American path" which may be seen as distinctly non-Muslim.

Muslim Americans to take distinct Islamic values and translate them into a distinct American practice or they examine whether American society is open to these values. These books focus on convincing their audience that Islam is compatible with American society.

The second set of important works focuses on specific ethnic groups of Muslims in America.[47] With the exception of Curtis, each of these describes each ethnic group as though they stand in isolation in American society. Curtis examines how Black Muslims in the Nation of Islam sought to define themselves not only by how they saw themselves within their movement but also in conjunction with the larger Muslim community.

The third set of scholarship includes collections of works of Muslim Americans essays that aid in illustrating a range of issues related to Muslims in America. These collections are invaluable for the study of Islam in America, yet do not provide a comprehensive analysis or connect the dots for the reader.[48] Furthermore, this self-articulation by Muslim Americans, while vital, does not provide a global historical context.

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[47] See Edward Curtis *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam* (UNC Press 2006) & Adil Najam's *Portrait of a Giving Community: Philanthropy by the Pakistani-American Diaspora* (Harvard 2006) & Karen Leonard's *Locating Home; India's Hyderabadis Abroad* (Stanford University Press 2007) & *The South Asian American's* (Greenwood Press 1997) & Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shyrock *Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream* & Alixa Naff *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Southern Illinois University Press 1985) & *The Arab Moslems in the United States: Religion and Assimilation* by Abdo Elkholy (Connecticut: College & University Press 1966).

[48] See Yvonne Haddad *Muslim Community in North America* (SUNY Press 1994) & Yvonne Haddad's *Muslim in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens* (Oxford University Press 2002) & Yvonne Haddad and John Esposito *Muslims on the Americanization Path?* (Oxford University Press 1998) & see *Muslim Communities in America* ed. Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (SUNY Press 1994) & Edward Curtis' *The Columbia Sourcebook of Muslims in the United States* (Columbia University Press 2008) & Edward Curtis' Encyclopedia of Muslim American History (Facts on File 2010). The first Curtis book is an invaluable primary source tool while the second is the first encyclopedia on Muslim Americans.

These major works tend to examine Muslim Americans within the context of separate ethnic groups: African-Americans and immigrants. Those seeking to expand upon these groups see Islam in America through singular lenses of African-Americans, Arabs, Asians, and others.

ISNA has also been the focus of four important scholars. Steve Johnson examines ISNA in Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith's important book *Muslim Communities in North America.*[49] Johnson's work is based on available research and personal interviews of Muslims in Indianapolis prior to 1994. His work looks at ISNA from its inception to 1990. In 1990, he finds that "Islam at an institutional level in Indianapolis is in flux."[50] His study confirms that during that period around Gulf War I, the alliances and relationships had changed in nature. His work confirms my assertion that initial founders of ISNA included HSAAMs such as Dr. Ihsan Bagby and Umar Khattab.

Johnson also confirms the division between HSAAM and African-American Muslims such as the community of Imam W. D Muhammad. His chapter also shows the constant struggles among activist, indigenous, and cultural pluralist Muslim Americans. However, in his chapter, Johnson fails to comprehend the divisions between the two immigrant groups that were a part of ISNA. He understands the divisions to be either ethnic or religious. He argues that the divisions are generally along "conservative-liberal, socioeconomic, and immigrant-indigenous lines."[51] However, my dissertation will show that divisions exist among immigrants and within the non-immigrant Muslim American

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[49] Johnson, Steve, "The Muslims of Indianapolis" in see *Muslim Communities in America* ed. Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (SUNY Press 1994) p 259.

[50] Ibid, p. 274.

[51] Ibid, p. 274.

communities that cannot be placed simply within a socioeconomic or conservative-liberal framework. Muslim Americans who were similarly situated economically, religiously, and ethnically had different visions for Islam in America. Johnson's chapter is important in confirming the tensions between the groups that existed, but it fails to explain the nature of the disagreement.[52]

Gutbi Mahdi Ahmed attempts to study Muslim organizations in the United States around the same period as Johnson.[53] Ahmed helps confirm the initial development of ISNA as a continuation of the work by Federation of Islamic Associations (FIA) and the Muslim Student Association (MSA). He also shows how ISNA adopted the conference and publication format of the FIA. However, he fails to understand the important role that the FIA plays in the development of ISNA. He also fails to demonstrate that ISNA, like FIA, was meeting the needs of its constituent Muslim Americans at the time. FIA was formed by Muslim American World War II veterans who were placing their work and emphasis on the needs of a population that was largely born in the United States. ISNA was formed after the massive influx of immigrants from all over the Muslim world. He confirms my dissertation's assertion that in the early part of ISNA's history, its conventions generally featured international Muslim speakers.

Ahmed sees ISNA as a branch of the larger transnational, international, and diasporic Muslim movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood.[54] He fails to understand

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[52] Johnson, Steve, "The Muslims of Indianapolis" in see *Muslim Communities in America* ed. Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (SUNY Press 1994) p 259

[53] Ahmed, Gtubi Mahdi, "Muslim Organizations in the United States" in in *The Muslims of America*, ed. Yvonne Haddad. Oxford University Press (1991) p. 11 - 24

[54] Ibid, p 18

that these internationalist activists represent only one of the founding groups of ISNA. He

argues that ISNA is considered to be "the national Muslim organization and generally

represents the Islamic mainstream." However, he fails to define "mainstream," and by

virtue of his description of ISNA, he assumes that it excludes non-immigrants, non-

activists, and American-born Muslims. His chapter also fails to illustrate the rich

interaction between ISNA and Imam W. D Muhammad and other groups that existed in

the United States. While his work provides a good overview of the organization, it does

not probe the deeper interactions of its founders, the role of American history in ISNA's

development, or how ISNA is placed within the development of Muslim American

institution building. He views ISNA's role as an organization that came to America,

reformed Islamic work, embedded it in a "firm ideological structure," and then

incorporated enough American-born Muslims to become a national organization. This

analysis fails to show that, in fact, ISNA was the result of Muslim American participation

in institution building that was shaped by the changing landscape in the United States and

American religious history.

Karen Leonard helps us understand the important role of ISNA within the broader

context of Muslim American institution building.[55] Leonard also outlines the important

role that the changing Muslim American population played in the establishment of ISNA.

However, her analysis of ISNA supposes that a largely Arabic-speaking immigrant

community established ISNA. The role of HSAAMs and non-Arabs in ISNA is missing

from her analysis. Leonard also marks important changes in ISNA's positions but does

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[55] Leonard, Karen Isaksen, *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research* (New York: Russel Sage
Foundation 2003) p 12

not identify the tensions and transitions between the three founding groups within ISNA as a source of these changes.

Leonard tends to examine Muslim Americans within the context of separate ethnic groups: African-Americans and immigrants. She further separates immigrants based on their national or regional identities. Leonard specifically argues that in this post-1990 environment, South Asians had control of major Muslim American organizations.[56] In this analysis, I seek to show that, although this may seem true on the surface, an analysis based on ethnic or national identity does injustice to the deeper ideological tensions within those groups. Some of the ideological tensions were common across those national and ethnic identities. South Asians had become major funders of ISNA but still continued to elect a diverse group of Muslim American leaders who reflected the South Asians' ideology, not their ethnic identity. Had ethnic identity been the most important aspect in the calculus of these South Asian Muslims, ICNA would have served as a better host as an Indian and Pakistani organization. However, what we will see is that, although ISNA thrived with diversity, ICNA and MAS (an Arab organization) were either on a course of decline or stagnant growth until they changed their approach to diversity. However, Leonard's analysis provides us with insight on how different the leadership of Muslim American organizations appeared.

Finally, Kambiz GhaneaBassiri provides us with the most important framework of Muslim American history within which to place ISNA. GhaneaBassiri's work helps us move away from the historical perception of Islam as foreign to America. He argues that

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[56] Leonard, Karen Isaksen, *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation 2003)

Muslim American history should be seen as a relational history of a distinct people of faith over a period of time.[57] GhaneaBassirri suggests that rather than studying Muslim Americans as being distinct from America and its history, they should be studied through their participation in American society. American Muslims stand at the intersection of American religious history and modern Islamic history.

GhaneaBassirri provides us with the most comprehensive analysis of the history of Islam in America. His book shows how Muslim Americans have "defined themselves in relation to the changing conceptions of race, religious pluralism, and national identity in the Unites States."[58] GhaneaBassirri helps us place ISNA within the larger history of Muslim American institution building, specifically its relationship with grassroots institution building and institutions.[59] He argues, as I do, that American history played an important role in shaping Muslim American institution building. He also shows the diversity of Muslim American institutions such as Islamic Circle of North America, Nation of Islam, and Imam W. D. Muhammad's community that operated successfully at the same time as ISNA.[60]

Finally, he demonstrates that they all sought to reach out to a much broader audience than those who founded the organization. They had similar delivery methods: They all held conventions, published magazines, and provided speakers and materials to the grassroots organizations. They all delivered their programs and materials in English

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[57] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz. *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010)

[58] GhaneaBassiri p 2

[59] Ibid, p 274

[60] GhaneaBassiri, p 295

to reach out to a diverse Muslim American population. However, they did not act in a vacuum, and there was a great deal of interaction between these national organizations and ISNA.

GhaneaBassirri also shows the important role that movements like the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-i-Islami played in the development of these organizations. However, this fact does not mean that these organizations were simply branches of those movements.[61] His work fails to show that ISNA was a partnership among different groups. In fact, GhaneaBassirri incorrectly attributes its establishment to Islamic activists.[62] Although he correctly suggests that ISNA members represented a small part of the larger Muslim America, he incorrectly suggests that these people were mostly Islamic activists.[63]

His analysis also explores the debate within ISNA over the role of Muslim Americans in society.[64] ISNA's decision to urge Muslim Americans to become involved in politics created controversy. The debate within ISNA mirrored the debate among Muslim Americans at large. His work shows the establishment of important organizations such as the Muslim Public Affairs Council, the Council on American Islamic Relations, and the Muslim American Society[65]. However, his analysis does not show the reason why former leaders of ISNA established these organizations instead of implementing

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[61] Ibid, p. 296

[62] Ibid, p. 304

[63] Ibid, p. 305. Look at footnote 71

[64] Ibid, p. 313

[65] Ibid, p. 352

those programs within ISNA. Furthermore, his analysis fails to show that the interaction between these groups may have helped change minds. People who were former activists later joined the cultural pluralists, and vice versa. Muslim American ideological positions did not remain static and did not move in a singular direction.

The history of ISNA is an important chapter in the long history of Muslims in America. My dissertation will show how Muslims in America, rather than being a distinct and foreign element, are in fact shaped by the larger American society, as well as the inter-religious relationships within Muslim America. ISNA illustrates the need for a complex and deep analysis of Muslims in America.

Literature Review — Philanthropic Studies

ISNA mediated faith and practice using the nonprofit form. Therefore, ISNA's experience as an American religious nonprofit organization played an important role in the religious identity it helped develop and move into the mainstream. Its place among American nonprofit organizations influenced the way it translated faith into practice. As an American religious nonprofit organization, it sought to be the representative and leading Muslim American organization. Its quest for legitimacy was fueled by its vision of being the representative of Islam in America. Fundamental to that quest for legitimacy was its intent to be an effective and innovative religious nonprofit organization. However, issues of legitimacy, diversity, and power hindered its ability to be an effective nonprofit organization.

An analysis of ISNA would be incomplete without first reviewing the general literature relating to religious nonprofit organizations. Second, it is important to

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understand how nonprofit organizations gain and sustain legitimacy. Third, the role of

power in nonprofit innovation will provide a framework that we can use to review the

related challenges that ISNA faced. Fourth, we will introduce a framework and literature

on innovation and continuous learning that can guide our analysis of ISNA. Finally, we

will review the literature on diversity in nonprofit organizations to analyze ISNA's quest

for diversity.

Nonprofit Organizations in the United States

This dissertation seeks to add to the existing literature not only on Islam in

America, but also on philanthropy in America. The existing literature in the study of

religion and philanthropy lacks material on the role of Muslims in American

philanthropy. Existing works on philanthropy and Islam can be divided into two

categories: definition of the theory of Islamic philanthropy[66] and history of Islamic

philanthropy in the Muslim world.[67] Works on civil society in general and American civil

society also do not have sections that specifically pertain to Muslim Americans.[68] What is

missing is a study of Muslim Americans and philanthropy. Research on Muslim

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[66] In the *Philanthropy in the World's Traditions* ed. Edward Queen II, Warren Ilchman and Stanley Katz (Indiana University Press 1998) the two essays on Islamic philanthropy focus is on a legalistic and descriptive understanding of philanthropy. Both essays focus on the Muslim world with little reference to the Muslim American experience. For an indepth look at Zakat see Qardawi, Yusuf *Fiqh as-Zakat: A Comparative Study* (London: Dar AlTaqwa 1999). For an analysis of Islamic philanthropy in medieval times see Yaacov Lev's *Charity, Endowments and Charitable Institutions in Medieval Islam* (University Press of Florida 2005) & McChesney, Robert D., *Charity and Philanthropy in Islam: Institutionalizing the Call to Do Good* (IU Center on Philanthropy 1995).

[67] See Janine Clark's *Islam, Charity and Activism: Middle Class Networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan and Yemen* (Indiana University Press 2004); Murat Cizakca's *A History of Philanthropic Foundations: The Islamic World From the Seventh Century to the Present* (Istanbul: Bogazici University Press 2000) & Amy Singer's *Constructing Ottoman Beneficience: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem* (SUNY Press 2002).

[68] Although Ernest Gellners *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals* (Penguin 1996) chapters on Islam and ummah are helpful for theoretical conceptions on civil society and Islam.

Americans has focused largely on data gathering or on specific groups.[69] The bulk of

Muslim American philanthropy can be understood through studies on Muslim institution

building in the United States.[70] Therefore, what is lacking is an analysis of this institution

building and Muslim American philanthropy within the context of faith and giving. Also

missing is an analysis of Muslim American civic engagement within the context of

philanthropic studies.

In 1981, at the time of ISNA's inception, the nonprofit sector in the United States

was fertile ground for the establishment of a new Muslim American organization. Walter

Powell and Richard Steinberg's collection outlines the historical, religious, political,

social, and cultural influences that went into developing this sector.[71] Peter Hall's

overview of the history of the nonprofit and voluntary sector in the United States helps us

overlay the Muslim engagement in this sector.[72] Muslim American civic engagement in

general and ISNA's development in particular mirror the trends among nonprofits in

America during the same period.

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[69] See Adil Najam's *Portrait of a Giving Community: Philanthropy by the Pakistani-American Disapora* (Harvard University 2006) & Bagby, Ihsan, Paul M. Perl and Bryan T Froehle, *The Mosque in America: A National Portrait (A Report from the Mosque Study Project)* (Council on American-Islamic Relations 2001) & *Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream* (Pew Research Center 2007)& *American Muslim Poll* (Zogby 2001 and 2004).

[70] see *Muslim Communities in America* ed. Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith (SUNY Press 1994) & *Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream*. Ed. Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shyrock & *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* by Alixa Naff (Southern Illinois University Press 1985) & *The Arab Moslems in the United States: Religion and Assimilation* by Abdo Elkholy (Connecticut: College & University Press 1966).

[71] Powell, Walter W. and Richard Steinberg, Ed *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006)

[72] Hall, Peter Dobkin "A Historical Overview of Philanthropy, Voluntary Associations, and Nonprofit Organizations in the United States, 1600-2000" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006). P. 32

Economic theories like the "three-failures theory" have long been used to justify the existence of a nonprofit sector. However, as Richard Steinberg admits, these economic theories are incomplete.[73] Economic theories articulate why consumers want to donate to nonprofits but fail to explain why nonprofits exist in the first place.[74] In fact, organizations like ISNA were not established just to offer missing services; they also sought to shape the way Muslim Americans and non-Muslims think about Islam and Muslims. This perspective is missing from the economic theories, but Steinberg helps to integrate some of these questions in his chapter. ISNA fits within the framework of nonprofit theory within the United States. ISNA can be understood using the same lens that we use to study other American nonprofits. Far too often, scholars make the mistake of focusing on the increasingly foreign-looking nature of the organization's membership and leadership and then seek answers through a foreign lens. This dissertation seeks to frame ISNA within the American nonprofit sector's theoretical framework.[75]

However, as Wuthnow and Cadge point out, it would be a mistake to look at ISNA from the general prism of a nonprofit organization.[76] The role of religion is not understood as well in earlier philanthropic studies, despite the strong role it has played in

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[73] Steinberg, Richard, "Economic Theories of Nonprofit Organizations" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006). P. 128

[74] Ibid

[75] See Elisabeth Clemons; Smith & Gronbjerg and Brody chapters on Nonprofit and the Polity in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006). P. 32

[76] Cadge, Wendy and Robert Wuthnow "Religion and the Nonprofit Sector" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006). P. 485

American civic life. "Long before social scientists and policy makers identified 'nonprofits' as composing a distinct social sector, religion offered ways of carrying out social activities that differed from those of either the marketplace or government."[77] ISNA understood the important role that grassroots Muslim organizations played in the congregational, spiritual, and social lives of Muslim Americans and sought to harness that important resource by using the tools that the nonprofit sector used. ISNA, like many religious organizations, had to find a way to balance the special role of the nonprofit sector with its religious practices. Not all decisions that a religious nonprofit organization makes are based on nonprofit best practices. Organizations like ISNA rely on their religious values, which at times are in tension with the current political landscape.

ISNA established itself as a membership-based organization. This choice has traditionally been attributed to the fact that many of the founding leaders came from Muslim countries that were ruled by dictatorships. It is true that ISNA leaders consistently argued against dictatorships and monarchies in the Muslim world and that this was an important factor in selecting an open, democratic system, as embodied by a voting membership system. However, it would be a mistake to think this was the only factor. Many Muslim American organizations at the national, regional, and local level chose different models. These other Muslim American organizations have founding leaders who came from the same countries as the ISNA leadership.

It is important to consider the vision of these founding leaders and the role of the religious nonprofit sector in the United States. ". . . [R]eligious organizations generally fit the profile of voluntary associations that involve membership and support from members

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[77] Ibid. p 488

…"[78] In fact, membership-based organizations represent thirty-three percent of the nonprofit sector; when religious congregations are included, this number reaches sixty percent.[79] Therefore, to attribute ISNA's membership structure simply to the ethnicity of its founders would be a mistake; it is important to look at the complex structure of membership-based nonprofits and help situate ISNA within that subsector. ISNA's selection of a membership-based structure was largely influenced by its need for legitimacy to fulfill its vision of being the representative of the Muslim American community.

<div align="center">Nonprofit Legitimacy</div>

Neo-institutional theory explores how nonprofit organizations seek to establish, build, and maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of the public or the eyes of particular constituencies. The three types of legitimacy — pragmatic, moral, and cognitive — are relevant for this study. Specifically, we can understand ISNA's initial deliberations and decisions about funding, programming, and advocacy in terms of the efforts to satisfy its three founding constituent groups (pragmatic legitimacy). Over time, we see a growing concern for the organization's public standing in the United States as a whole (moral legitimacy). The quest for moral legitimacy elevated the cultural pluralist conception of ISNA over the other two founding identities. Ultimately, ISNA is seen externally and internally as a leading Muslim American organization and its key programs — *Islamic*

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[78] Ibid 485

[79] Tschirhart, Mary "Nonprofit Membership Associations" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006). P. 523

Horizons and the Annual Convention — as predictable features of Muslim American life (cognitive legitimacy).

The nonprofit sector is heavily institutionalized where organizations have various, interdependent relationships. The essence of institutional theory is that organizational legitimacy depends not only on how it performs but also on how it is perceived. Therefore, organizational practices are influenced by what their leaders perceive as signals of legitimacy.[80] However, this sociological framework is incomplete when we try to understand legitimacy within the nonprofit sector. Mark Suchman provides us with a helpfully more expansive review of the scholarship of institutional theories and organizational legitimacy.[81]

For the purpose of this dissertation, I adopt the definition of legitimacy provided by Suchman. "Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within certain socially constructed systems of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions."[82] ISNA's legitimacy did not depend on specific events alone. Rather, its long-term legitimacy depended on a collection of events or history. Nevertheless, we will see that ISNA's legitimacy was at times influenced by singular events. Legitimacy does not always reflect reality. It is the perception of the organization or reputation of the organization. It is "possessed objectively, yet created subjectively."[83] Legitimacy is a social construct and can vary based on the audience. Any

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[80] Zucker, Lynne G., "Institutional Theories of Organization" *Annual Review of Sociology* (1987) p. 443

[81] Suchman, Mark C., "Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches" *The Academic of Management Review* (July 1995) p. 571

[82] Suchman, p. 574

[83] Ibid

nonprofit organization, including ISNA, can be both legitimate and illegitimate, depending on the person or group making that judgment.

As I have stated, there are three broad types of legitimacy: pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy.[84] Pragmatic legitimacy is based on the self-interest of the organization's stakeholders. Support for ISNA depends on what value the constituent expects to receive from ISNA. This expectation can include direct personal benefit to the constituent or because the constituent believes that ISNA furthers the constituent's overall beliefs. This support also stems from the belief that ISNA cares about the constituent.

Moral legitimacy depends on whether ISNA's actions are the right thing to do, rather than whether they merely benefit the audience. ISNA achieved moral legitimacy by operating in socially acceptable ways. ISNA's structure and the charisma of its organizational leaders also influence its moral legitimacy. Nonprofit organizations' claims to resources are based on the demonstration of their moral commitments.[85]

Cognitive legitimacy is the most powerful form of legitimacy. ISNA attained cognitive legitimacy when people or institutions came to believe that ISNA is necessary or inevitable based on a taken-for-granted cultural framework.[86]

Organizations can affect their legitimacy through their structure, mission statement, programs, and outcomes.[87] Legitimacy can be a huge organizational asset

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[84] Ibid, p. 577

[85] Ostrander, S. A and Paul G Schervish. "Giving and Getting: Philanthropy as a Social relation." In J. Van Til (ed), *Critical Issues in American Philanthropy* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass 1990)

[86] Suchman, p. 582

when it encounters short- or long-term declines in its organizational outcomes.[88] Religious organizations demonstrate a stronger ability to survive and retain legitimacy.[89] Jeavons suggests that religious organizations' behaviors are influenced by their commitment to integrity, concern for the public good, and concern for the personal welfare of employees and volunteers.[90] Integrity requires organizations like ISNA to be transparent and accountable. Religious organizations' concern for the public good is broader than just their immediate stakeholders and donors. Religious nonprofits seek to serve all within their faith and provide services to humanity at large. Finally, these organizations seek to treat those who help make the organizational work possible with genuine respect. ISNA, as a religious organization, relies upon both nonprofit and religious forms of legitimacy. Therefore, both Suchman's and Jeavons' frameworks are essential in understanding ISNA's quest for legitimacy.

Power and Innovation

Nonprofits like ISNA struggle with the tension between systems and individuals. However, for ISNA to be a high-impact and innovative nonprofit, it had to find the right balance between individuals and systems and between ideas and actions. ISNA's innovations translated into its programs, its policies, and its course of action.

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[87] Oseewaarde, Ringo, Andre Nijhof and Liesbet Heyse. "Dynamics of NGO Legitimacy: How Organising (sic) Betrays Core Missions of INGOs" *Public Administration and Development* (28 2008) p. 42

[88] Candler, Gaylord George. "Transformations and Legitimacy in Nonprofit Organizations–The Case of Amnesty International and the Brutalization Thesis" *Public Organization Review* (September 2001) p. 356

[89] Walker, p. 334

[90] Jeavons, Thomas H., "When the Management is the Message: relating Values to Management Practice in Nonprofit Organizations" *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* (Summer 1992) p. 410

The distribution of power within organizations like ISNA has both a positive and a negative effect on innovation.[91] ISNA faced both episodic and systemic forms of power as it sought to mediate among the priorities of the three founding groups. ISNA leaders and secretaries general employed four strategies (influence, force, domination, and discipline) in trying to implement their vision for the organization. They embraced four processes (interpretation, integration, institutionalization, and intuition) to implement innovation in the organization. Different leaders have served as champions for ISNA, and each one has exhibited different abilities (evangelists, autocrats, architects, and educators) but none of them have been able to create the kind of harmony that would achieve a balance of power in the organization. In order for ISNA to achieve sustainable legitimacy through innovative practices, it needed to hit the sweet spot that allowed strategy, process, and leaders to intersect. ISNA's successes and failures can be attributed to whether or not it achieved an alignment in these three areas.

Management theory and research define power narrowly.[92] Research suggests that power and politics play a vital role in the way organizations identify, incorporate, implement, and continue innovation.[93] For the purpose of our analysis of ISNA, I use the broader definition of power proposed by Thomas Lawrence et al. Power operates in two modes — systemic and episodic.[94] Episodic power refers to discrete, strategic acts of

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[91] Dover, Graham and Thomas B. Lawrence, "The Role of Power in Nonprofit Innovation" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (41(6) 2012) p. 992

[92] Lawrence, Thomas B., Mauws, Michael K., Dyck, Bruno., and Roberty F. Kleysen. "The Politics of Organizational Learning: Integrating Power into the 4I Framework" *The Academy of Management Review* (Jan 2005) p. 182

[93] Lawrence (2005) p. 180

[94] Ibid, p. 182

self-interested actors. Examples of episodic power within ISNA include setting agendas for meetings, appointment of board members and committee chairs, editorial power over *Islamic Horizons,* and similar activities. Systemic power is employed through the routine and ongoing acts of an organization. Systemic power does not depend on individuals and is diffused throughout the organization. Examples of systemic power within ISNA include its by-laws, its system of communication, the location of its headquarters in Indiana, its policies, and its manuals.

To effectively use the two forms of power, individuals need to employ four strategies: influence, force, domination, and discipline.[95] Influence affects the costs and benefits that people attribute to specific ideas. Influence is an episodic form of power and is achieved through persuasion, negotiation, or ingratiation. ISNA's leaders used influence through their standing in the community and board members. Force is the restriction of available choices. Force is considered an episodic form of power and is achieved through agenda setting, limiting alternatives, and removing opponents. ISNA's leaders used force through their power to call board meetings and set the agenda. As we will see in chapter two, the budget was not brought to the ISNA board of directors for years. Domination also includes restricting available choices. Domination is a systemic form of power and can be achieved through information systems, material technologies, and the physical layout of the organization. As we will see, Dr. Iqbal Unus was relieved of his position as secretary general without any discussion with him or the board at large. The president of ISNA took advantage of the fact that the board was dispersed across the continent and the lack of effective means of communication. Discipline affects the costs

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[95] Lawrence (2005) p. 185

and benefits of behavior. It is a systemic form of power and can be achieved through socialization, training, and team-based work. ISNA sought to achieve discipline through its committee structure and by Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed's abandoning the traditional policy of hiring religious workers and, instead, hiring professional managers.

Lawrence et al. add power to the 4I framework that was developed by Mary M. Crossan, Henry W. Lane, and Roderick E. White, helping us further understand the effect of power on innovation.[96] Crossan, Lane, and White synthesized existing knowledge in strategic renewal and organizational learning to develop the 4I framework of organizational learning.[97] The 4I framework of organizational learning consists of four related processes (intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing) that occur at the individual, group, and organizational level.[98] These practices come together to drive an organization's quest for knowledge and best practices.

Intuiting is the process through which ISNA staff and leaders recognized new ideas. Interpreting is the process through which they explained the idea to others. Integrating is the process of developing a shared understanding of the idea among ISNA board members, staff, and volunteers for the purpose of embarking on a course of action. Institutionalizing is the process of ensuring that these actions continue to take place. Again, ISNA's success as a nonprofit organization depended on it following this process to establish and sustain innovative programs. As we will see in the next few chapters, ISNA either found difficulty in establishing a system that encouraged the recognition of

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[96] Lawrence (2005) p. 185

[97] Crossan, M., Lane, H., & White, T. "An organizational learning framework: From intuition to institution" *Academy of Management Review* (1999 24) p. 522-537

[98] Ibid, p. 524

new ideas or failed to institutionalize them. The three major exceptions were its convention and conferences, *Islamic Horizons,* and its governance structure.

For the purpose of this dissertation, Lawrence and Crossan frameworks are incomplete. Dover and Lawrence present additional tools that help us understand the organization form's effect on power and innovation.[99] They provide us with four characteristics associated with the nonprofit form that can influence the role of power and the innovation process.

They argue that where a nonprofit organization has an ambiguous goal or mission, the ambiguous mission or goal gives organizational leaders greater flexibility; however, this potential strength could also lead to inaction. In the case of ISNA, when influence was underdeveloped, Zarzour reported that ideas remained untapped. However, when influence was overdeveloped, ISNA became an idea factory but with little implementation of those ideas. When ISNA's secretary general and directors were uncertain of their legitimacy, force played an important role in the integration of ideas. When force was underdeveloped in ISNA, there was incomplete and inconsistent integration of new ideas. Whereas, when force was overdeveloped, ideas were put into practice but disagreements and resistance were artificially suppressed, leading to alienation, and eventually many of Hammad's and Syeed's programs were not sustained.

Because of ISNA's complex structure and its diverse stakeholder base, the organization used domination when it tried to institutionalize innovation. When systems of domination were underdeveloped, ISNA leaders or secretaries general were able to

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[99] Dover, Graham and Thomas B. Lawrence, "The Role of Power in Nonprofit Innovation" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (41(6) 2012) p. 993

ignore innovation, adopt it selectively, or actively seek to undermine it. When the system of domination was overdeveloped, short-term successes masked long-term problems, limiting the ability to sustain innovative ideas.

Because of the conflicts within ISNA over the values of the organization, especially over their prioritization, the organization was also affected by discipline. When discipline was underdeveloped, ISNA members considered their work disconnected from the broader aims and mission of the organization. When discipline was overdeveloped, the organization acted on new ideas but only in a limited fashion. ISNA was, therefore, constrained from divergent thinking, resulting in a very limited form of innovation, especially in the areas of diversity, interfaith relations, and community engagement.

This use of power within ISNA did not occur in a vacuum. Power requires people to adopt, incorporate, and implement these forms of power and strategy. I, therefore, also draw on later research by Lawrence on the kinds of people who can influence power and innovation. Lawrence et al. argue, in a different study, that in order for organizations to succeed, they need to provide conditions that allow four types of champions: evangelists, autocrats, architects, and educators.[100] Evangelists helped sell ideas, autocrats dictated practices, architects developed systems, and educators shaped an environment that helped the organization learn from its past. However, ISNA was unable to effectively distribute power to help each of these champions flourish.

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[100] Lawrence, Thomas B., Dyck, Bruno., Maitlis, Sally., and Michael K. Mauws. "The Underlying Structure of Continuous Change" *MIT-Sloan Management Review* (Summer 2006) p. 61

When specific champions (such as Syeed, Hammad, and Matson) had too much power, the organization was unable to sustain innovation or stability.[101] When there was an overreliance on systems within ISNA (architects and educators over evangelists and autocrats), the result was institutionalization without action. When the emphasis was on thinking (evangelists and educators over autocrats and architects), ISNA saw great ideas without implementation. Finally, when ISNA leaders emphasized doing (autocrats and architects over evangelists and educators), the result was change without strategy or sustainability.

<div align="center">Nonprofit Innovation</div>

ISNA's quest for legitimacy fueled its desire to be an innovative organization. ISNA's leaders sought to employ best practices in implementing the organization's competing visions. ISNA's internal power structure influenced which competing vision was implemented. However, ISNA was seeking internal and external legitimacy. This required the organization to act both internally and externally. Heather Grant and Leslie R. Crutchfield (see below) provide us with a framework that helps us analyze ISNA's success or failure in its quest to be an innovative nonprofit organization.[102] Nonprofit organizations are often innovators.[103] Nonprofits have been effective leaders in "doing

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[101] Ibid, p. 65

[102] Grant, H. M., & Leslie R. Crutchfield. "Creating High-Impact Nonprofits" *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Fall 2007) p. 32

[103] Dover, Graham and Thomas B. Lawrence, "The Role of Power in Nonprofit Innovation" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (41(6) 2012) p. 991

good."[104] Nonprofit innovation is the process through which ISNA transformed ideas into services that fulfilled its mission.[105]

Grant and Cructhfield have researched innovation in nonprofit organizations and have found that nonprofits are either focused on maintaining the status quo and lack innovation or are able to intuit and interpret but are unable to capitalize on those ideas.[106] Grant and Crutchfield argue that "greatness has more to do with how nonprofits work outside the boundaries of their organizations than how they manage their own internal operations."[107]

They help explain how ISNA became a high-impact organization by eventually taking the mantle of being the most preeminent Muslim American organization. When ISNA was able to advocate and serve; make markets work by designing programs that were self-sufficient and strong revenue generators; inspire new evangelists like the Founders Committee discussed in chapter three; nurture nonprofit networks and partnerships with Muslim and interfaith groups; master the art of adapting to global situations at key moments; and recruit its leadership from other Muslim American organizations it became a high-impact organization.[108]

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[104] Drucker, Peter. "What Business Can Learn from Nonprofits" *Harvard Business Review* (July 1989)

[105] Baragheh, A., Rowley, J and Sambrook, S. "Towards a multidisciplinary definition of innovation" *Management Decision* (2009 47) p.1323

[106] Grant, H. M., & Leslie R. Crutchfield. "Creating High-Impact Nonprofits" *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Fall 2007) p. 45-52

[107] Grant, H. M., & Leslie R. Crutchfield. *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits* (Jossey-Bass San Francisco, CA 2012), p. 35

[108] Ibid, p. 37

ISNA programs sought to advocate core values when it opposed the Iranian government and also Gulf War I. However, these public positions were influenced by what ISNA's leaders learned from their stakeholders through their individual work at the grassroots and regional levels. Under Syeed, ISNA sought to hire professionals and recruit leaders outside of the three factions that established the organization.

Crutchfield and Grant illustrate how organizations like ISNA need to adopt practices that are both external and internal. These practices require that these organizations and their leaders develop a balance between doing good and using and sharing power effectively. Although ISNA was committed to doing good, it had great difficulty sharing power among factions and with its chief executives.

Nonprofit Diversity

Nonprofit organizations like ISNA seek to work with diverse audiences. For the purpose of this dissertation, I apply a two-pronged representation-identity model of diversity theory[109] to ISNA's quest for diversity. This theory suggests that nonprofit organizations should first rely on a bonding type of social capital to increase the number of underrepresented members — simply to bring diverse groups of people together. The second prong suggests that the organization should structure mission-relevant activities that help to create bridging social capital and sustain diversity.

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[109] Weisinger, Judith Y., and Paul Salipante Jr. "An Expanded Theory of Pluralistic Interactions in Voluntary Nonprofit Organizations" *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* (Winter 2007) p. 158

I adopt Cox's definition of diversity. Diversity is "the representation, in one social system, of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance."[110] For example, affiliations can include race, gender, religion, culture, sexual preference, personality type, or political identity. Diversity management is the conscious commitment to and implementation of a practice to recruit, reward, retain, and foster diverse members and workers to help develop an effective organization.[111]

In support of this goal, Putnam argues that associations bridge social capital.[112] "Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals — social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them."[113] Social capital consists of bonds of trust and norms of reciprocity.[114] However, religious organizations reflect the bonding form of social capital.[115] This form of social capital relies on strong ties that work against the weaker ties that bridge across racial lines.[116] Therefore, ISNA as a religious nonprofit organization had a harder time bridging issues of diversity along racial and ethnic lines. This echoes research suggesting that diverse

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[110] Cox, T. H. *Cultural Diversity in Organizations: Theory, research and practice.* (San Francisco; Berret-Koehler 1994) p. 6

[111] Weisinger, Judith Y. and Paul F. Salipante, "A Grounded Theory for Building Ethnically Bridging Social Capital in Voluntary Organizations" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2005 34) p. 31

[112] Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone* (Simon and Schuster 2000)

[113] Ibid, p. 19

[114] Anheier, Helmut K. & Lester M. Salamon. "The Nonprofit Sector in Comparative Perspective" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006). P. 93

[115] Ibid

[116] Weisinger, Judith Y. and Paul F. Salipante, "A Grounded Theory for Building Ethnically Bridging Social Capital in Voluntary Organizations" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2005 34) p. 30

communities result in less altruistic behavior than homogenous communities.[117] Diversity has been associated with individuals giving less to education[118], becoming less philanthropic, and having lower rates of participation and volunteerism.[119] Diversity brings forth challenges to greater creativity and innovation,[120] while also creating conflict and delaying decision-making.[121] As we shall see, ISNA faced these challenges in its quest for legitimacy and becoming a representative organization. One study suggests that, although the diversity of board members does not significantly affect performance, it does ensure that the board remains committed to the organization's mission.[122]

Diversity has been an important goal for nonprofits like ISNA. Three aspects of social capital influence diversity: opportunity, motivation, and ability.[123] Nonprofits typically take three different paths toward managing diversity: (i) a discrimination and fairness approach that equates diversity to equal opportunity and affirmative action; (ii) an access and legitimacy approach focused on using diverse individuals to access new markets; and (iii) a learning and effectiveness approach in which diverse views challenge

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[117] Hungerman, Daniel M. "Crowd-out and diversity" *Journal of Public Economics* (2009 93) p. 729

[118] Miguel, Edward and Mary Kay Gugerty. "ethnic diversity, social sanctions, and public goods in Kenya" *Journal of Public Economics* (2005 89) p. 2325-2368

[119] Okten, Cagla and Una Okonkwo Osili. "Contributions in heterogeneous communities: evidence from Indonesia" *Journal of Public Economics* (2004 17) p. 603-626

[120] Brown, William A., "Inclusive Governance Practices in Nonprofit Organizations and Implications for Practice" *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* (Summer 2002) p. 370-372

[121] Choi, Sungjoo and Hal G. Rainey. "Managing Diversity in US Federal Agencies: Effects of Diversity and Diversity Management on Employee Perceptions of Organizational Performance" *Public Administration Review* (Jan/Feb 2010) p. 110

[122] Siciliano, Julie I. "The Relationship of Board Member Diversity to Organizational Performance" *Journal of Business Ethics* (Dec 1996) p. 1318

[123] Weisinger, Judith Y. and Paul F. Salipante, "A Grounded Theory for Building Ethnically Bridging Social Capital in Voluntary Organizations" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2005 34) p. 34

institutional assumptions, creating change in the organization.[124] The first two approaches

are quota-driven exercises, whereas the third approach is more likely to attract an

organization that is on a quest for continuous learning and innovation. ISNA adopted the

first two methods but was unable to achieve the third path.

Conclusion

There are three remaining substantive chapters in this dissertation. Chapter two

traces ISNA's story from the Iranian Revolution until 1990. ISNA's quest for diversity

and legitimacy influenced its ability to be a successful organization. However, its leaders'

focus on the organization's core values allowed it to emerge from this period as a

legitimate organization. This quest for legitimacy took a heavy toll on resources, almost

resulting in the death of the organization. During this period, the organization sought to

bridge the challenges of diversity by focusing on the HSAAMs. Chapter three begins

with Gulf War I and takes us to the election of the first female, Caucasian Muslim

American vice president in 2001. During this period, the organization sought to establish

an independent identity. It was no longer interested in global legitimacy and fought for

legitimacy among Muslim Americans. A powerful secretary general helped establish it as

a successful nonprofit. This success sometimes overlooked consensus and collaboration.

Chapter four begins with the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and ends in 2008 with

the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States. The organization sought

legitimacy in the interfaith community and with the United States government. It also

sought to broaden its definition of diversity to include gender and second-generation

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[124] Ibid, p. 32

immigrants, along both ideological and racial lines. Chapter five serves as the concluding chapter.

ISNA benefitted from the pluralistic, voluntaristic, noncollectivist ethos of the American nonprofit sector. Muslim Americans who were crucial for ISNA's development lived out the sector's "voluntary action for the public good" slogan. The group that finally emerged was helped by the fact that they fully accepted the idea of American individualism. They understood that if ISNA adhered to a narrow set of theological ideas, it would wind up representing a narrow niche of individuals. ISNA sought to promote itself as a collection of individual Muslim American identities, rather than as a homogenous identity.

American freedom and the nonprofit structure provided these leaders with advantages that were probably not available to their fellow Muslims in the Muslim world. Nonprofits in America face challenges in advocating, embracing, and sustaining diversity. ISNA faced this challenge in its own unique way. Religion and philanthropy came together to provide ISNA's leaders with challenges that helped shape its journey.

ISNA's quest to establish a Muslim American identity depended upon its journey as an American religious nonprofit organization. This journey is aided and abetted by issues related to diversity, legitimacy, power, and innovation that other American religious nonprofit organization face. ISNA's secretaries general helped navigate the organization through the challenges caused by current events, internal battles, and a rapidly growing community presence.

Chapter Two — Balancing Legitimacy and Idealism — Identity through Patchwork and Consensus (1979–1991)

On January 16, 1979, the Shah of Iran left his country for exile. By the end of 1979, Iranians, by a democratic election, adopted a theocratic constitution, and as a result, Ayatollah Khomeini became the Supreme Leader of the country. In November 1979, the United States government allowed the Shah to come to the country for medical treatment. In response, Iranian students invaded the American embassy in Tehran. They took fifty-two American citizens hostage for four hundred and four days.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the subsequent hostage crisis had a profound effect on the growing Muslim American community. Within this community, the Iranian revolution created a greater sense of Islamic identity and activism. Yet the hostage crisis spurred greater Islamophobia in the United States. During this same period, three distinct groups of Muslim American activists established a national Muslim American organization known as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) seeking to channel this energy in establishing an Islamic American identity and to combat Islamophobia. ISNA sought to play an internal and external role as the representative organization for all Muslim Americans. This establishment was a transition from a student led movement to a community-based organization.

This chapter focuses on the period beginning with the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and ending in 1991. As at least one former secretary general argues, ISNA was in a period of transition during this time.[125] While there was broad acceptance amongst the three groups that ISNA should serve as the national organization for Muslim Americans,

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[125] Interview with Dr. Ihsan Bagby, April 3, 2011.

they had competing ideas about the nature of its work. Moreover, Dr. Bagby argues that ISNA might have collapsed at this early stage if not for a broad consensus among its leaders.[126] The establishment of ISNA was a rejection of organizations like the Federation of Islamic Associations of North America (FIA), which I discuss later in this chapter — that sought to embrace culture, theology, and politics. Instead, ISNA aimed to become an Islamic polity in a nonprofit form. If ISNA leaders had a choice they would seek to establish the ideal Islamic state. However, they did not have such a choice in America and therefore chose the nonprofit form to establish their vision of an Islamic identity.

Many of ISNA's central organizing figures were scholars and academics whose idealism shaped the organization during its first decade. In establishing an organization seeking the mantle of national leadership and striving to be an international example, they placed idealism above pragmatism, values above self-interest, and diversity above unity. The search for consensus and idealism drove its quest for legitimacy and diversity.

To understand ISNA's quest to become the representative of Muslim Americans during this period (1979–1992), we must first understand the historical landscape that ISNA had to navigate. Second, examine how ISNA operated as a religious nonprofit organization. Third, take into account how it navigated the challenges of the immense diversity among Muslim Americans. Fourth, analyze its quest for legitimacy using international and then domestic resources. Fifth, we need to compare two different models of power (as demonstrated by Dr. Iqbal Unus and Dr. Ahmad Zaki Hammad) within the organization. Finally, we need to consider the implications of ISNA's failure

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[126] Ibid.

to deal with issues of diversity, legitimacy, and power by reviewing its budgetary crisis by the end of this period.

Setting the Stage

The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the Muslim Communities Association of the U.S. & Canada (MCA) were incorporated in the state of Indiana as nonprofit organizations on July 14, 1981[127] as the result of a consensus among the Council of Presidents.[128] Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, a future secretary general of ISNA, led the Council.

ISNA's incorporation came during a shift in American discourse on the Middle East that was propelled by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution. The latter, in particular, resulted in the rebranding of "Arab terrorism or fundamentalism" to "Islamic terrorism or fundamentalism" by the American media and public perception.[129] However, the need to engage with the Muslim community and the importance of distinguishing between Muslim terrorists and Muslim American citizens prompted the Carter administration to reach out to U.S.-based Muslim organizations. The United States Congress even adopted a resolution recognizing the fourteen-hundred-year

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[127] "New Organization Structure Takes Shape–ISNA and MCA Incorporated" *Islamic Horizons* (August 1981) p. 1

[128] The Council of Presidents consisted of the leaders of the Muslim Students Association of U.S. and Canada (MSA), the Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA), the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), and the Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers (AMSE).

[129] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 307

anniversary of Prophet Muhammad's mission.[130] Nonetheless, these national initiatives did not translate into a reduction of Islamophobia in the country.

Beginning in the 1960s, global Islamic organizations funded by Saudi petrodollars and the Muslim World League sought to engage with organizations like the Muslim Students Association of US & Canada (MSA).[131] This engagement signified heightened activity amongst Islamic organizations globally as well as in the United States.

I mention MSA specifically because it was the precursor or foundation upon which ISNA was established. MSA's leaders sought a national community-based organization to transition their work from a student-led movement. In fact, ISNA's establishment marked a departure from an earlier MSA strategy in which it tried without success to integrate with the Federation of Islamic Associations of North America and Canada (FIA). However, before examining this lack of success, I need to provide some background on FIA's development.

Muslim American veterans founded FIA in the aftermath of World War II. These founders were largely Arab-Americans born in the United States. They sought to engage a more diverse Muslim American population in order to unify this populace. During this time, FIA became an effective and politically engaged entity.[132] In its attempt to bridge the divide between those who were religious and secular Muslims, it needed to balance its activities. For instance, it annually hosted formal banquets featuring live entertainment

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[130] GhaneaBassiri, p. 309

[131] Ibid, p. 310

[132] Howell, Sally, "Federation of Islamic Associations of the United States and Canada" *The Encyclopedia of Muslim American History* (Facts on File 2010), p.193

and less formal sock hops and other youth dances.[133] At the same time, FIA hosted events

that focused on religious education.

By the 1970s, FIA became increasingly divided between those who valued the

organization's ethnic roots and social agenda and those who thought it should become a

strictly religious organization.[134] The founders of MSA saw FIA as too liberal and too

focused on socialization and cultural identity rather than on the need for Islamic work in

America. MSA's leaders considered educating Muslim Americans about Islam an

important first step. The next step in their view was to translate this educational mission

into an Islamic identity rather than a cultural one. In addition, MSA sought to build upon

the revival of Islam in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution. In their view, these

religious values needed to inform Muslim American political advocacy. These leaders

were opposed to a compromise that would allow the inclusion of more secular Muslim

Americans as they made the transition from students to community.

With a clearer understanding of the dynamics of the time — that is between MSA

and FIA and, in general, how national and international events affected America and the

Muslim American Community — we can move on to how these organizations and key

historical events played into ISNA's story.

ISNA was being established at the same time that the fall-out from the Iranian

revolution was affecting the United States. ISNA leaders initially had hoped that the

revolution in Iran was a "true Islamic revolution" that would rise above sectarianism and

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[133] Ibid

[134] Howell, Sally "Federation of Islamic Associations of the United States and Canada" *Encyclopedia of Muslim American History* (Facts on File 2010) edited by Edward Curtis. P. 193

hold dear the values of Islam, particularly because both activist and non-activist Muslims were energized by the revolution.[135] GhaneaBassiri argues that the Iranian revolution briefly helped invigorate the American-Muslim community. This invigorated spirit helped the push to establishing ISNA.

In November 1981, soon after ISNA's establishment, the organizations publication, *Islamic Horizons* countered arguments against the revolution:

> [T]hey presume that Islamic fundamentalism is tied … to a set of social, political, and economic conditions in whose presence there will be no upsurge of Islamic sentiments in a Muslim people. . . . On the contrary, the Islamic movement has an element of permanence in which it stems from its world view. . . . [E]ven if the Muslims are living under the best non-Islamic system, their lives will still be affected by the momentous call of Islam. . . . [I]t is the transcendental, all embracing Islamic movement which determines the Muslim destiny.*[136]*

As a result of the Iranian Revolution, Muslim Americans became more religious and felt a greater sense of Islamic solidarity with the struggles in the Muslim world.[137] This solidarity and the energy arising from it, offered ISNA great potential, provided it could harness and direct them.

ISNA Becomes a Religious Nonprofit

Having made the transition from being a student organization (MSA) to a community organization, ISNA's next step was to fashion itself as a religious nonprofit organization. As I alluded to earlier, the institutional launch of ISNA came from the combined efforts of Muslim American grassroots and national leaders, who consulted

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[135] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz, *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 321

[136] "Islamic Fundamentalism: Destiny or a Passing Phase?" *Islamic Horizons* (November 1981) p. 1

[137] GhaneaBassiri, p. 323

over a six-year period (1976 - 1981). More specifically, ISNA came about as a consequence of a task force established by the MSA Planning Committee in 1977[138] and, ultimately, was the product of negotiations among more than one hundred and fifty community activists and organizations.

The structure initially proposed for ISNA included a somewhat complicated constitution and set of by-laws that allowed for extensive representation of the various factions included in the task force. In the task force's view, this distribution of power enabled consultation and collaboration. Dr. Iqbal Unus states that this dispersal of power was also fueled by cultural distrust for a powerful central authority.[139] Research suggests that an organization with a dispersed power structure can create either a highly innovative organization or paralyzed one.[140]

The board of directors of the new organization was named *Majlis Ash-Shura (majlis).* When translated to English, the term means a "consultative assembly." Islamic leaders have historically brought together trusted individuals to give opinions on important issues. Although leaders make the final decisions, such consultations can provide invaluable advice. However, unlike boards of directors in American organizations like ISNA, these traditional *Majlis Ash-Shuras* lacked fiduciary responsibilities and oversight. ISNA's *Majlis Ash-Shura* consisted of forty-eight members, as follows:

- Four chairman of the boards for each service organizations of the MSA
- Five presidents of affiliated organizations
- Four additional executive committee members of affiliated organizations

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[138] "ISNA to Represent Muslims" *Islamic Horizons* (May 1981) p. 1

[139] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, January 16, 2014

[140] Dover, Graham, and Thomas B. Lawrence, "The Role of Power in Nonprofit Innovation" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (41(6) 2012) p. 998

- One president
- Two vice presidents
- Six executive council members of the ISNA
- Thirteen elected at-large members
- One member elected from each of the thirteen regions established in the United States and Canada[141]

The formal inauguration of ISNA occurred at its first annual convention, which took place at its 1982 Annual Convention in Bloomington, Indiana, during the Labor Day weekend in the presence of more than 5,000 Muslim Americans. It took ISNA an additional two years to become fully independent from MSA. A diverse group of immigrant- and African-American Muslims was elected to the *majlis* in 1983. These elections have occurred regularly ever since.[142]

ISNA inherited MSA's assets and much of its operating structure, staff, and accomplished work. ISNA also continued MSA's community and national activities. The executive council consisted of a president and two vice presidents (U.S. and Canada) elected by the membership of ISNA, the past-president of ISNA, and five members appointed by the ISNA president with the approval of the *Majlis Ash-Shura*.[143]

ISNA's comprehensive board sought to balance the needs of the general membership and the constituent and affiliated organizations that would embrace ISNA as their umbrella organization. The *Majlis Ash-Shura* was required to meet twice a year and was responsible for establishing the organization's policies. The executive council was made responsible for the oversight of the secretary general and the secretary general for

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[141] Ibid

[142] ISNA's elections have taken place on a regular basis since 1983 regardless of the financial and other turmoil the organization has been going through.

[143] Ibid, p. 8

the day-to-day management of operations and ultimately for implementing the

organization's mission.

The Secretariat of ISNA was located in Plainfield, Indiana. The 134-acre campus,

built at a cost of more than $3.4 million, was situated near the Indianapolis International

Airport where they remain to this day.[144] The steering committee stated in its

announcement:

> There is no longer any doubt, if there ever was, that Islam has come to
> North America to stay for good. . . . Islamic presence here must, therefore
> pervade all spheres of a Muslim's life in this societal environment and
> must exert a positive influence on the non-Muslim segments of society. To
> do so, Islamic work must continually grow and come to grips with new
> challenges and opportunities. This requires evolution and adaptation of the
> organizational structure of Islamic organizations so that they may provide
> the right type of leadership to an increasingly sophisticated and
> comprehensive economic order among Muslims in North America.[145]

The founders had ambitious goals for the new organization that went beyond just

serving as the national Muslim American organization with representation and advocacy

as its key purposes. The founders of ISNA believed that Islam was not just a religion of

rituals.[146] They believed it was a way of life that could be incorporated into every aspect

of an individual's daily life. They believed that ISNA could play that religious role for

the Muslim American community as well. In effect, they envisioned a combination of a

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[144] The project was made possible through a donation from the son of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia to purchase the land and the Emir of Qatar to pay for the construction of the building. The building consisted of a library, offices for staff, a prayer area and a basement for community activities. The campus consisted of four buildings (that existed at the time of purchase) and a lake to help host camps envisioned by the founders of the ISNA. These buildings were renamed: Ansar House, Huda House, Salam House and Muhajireen House. Ansar House was the ISNA's headquarter building until the main building was completed. Muhajireen House was designated as the guest-house for frequent national and international visitors to the ISNA.

[145] "New Organizational Structure Takes Shape–ISNA & MCA Incorporated" *Islamic Horizons* (August 1981) p. 1

[146] One of the five pillars of Islam requires that Muslims pray five times a day

Jewish Public Affairs Council, Union of Reformed Jews, American Israeli Political

Action Committee, and Jewish Federation relief organizations as one entity.

The steering committee's announcement also reflected an understanding of the

long history of Muslims in America. GhaneaBassiri documents how Islam was not able to

survive more than a generation of each time it was introduced to the United State because

of the hostility to the faith and the economic need to assimilate in America. ISNA's

founders took the view that "authentic" Islam had not survived in America because of the

lack of theologically grounded Islamic institutions. They wanted to ensure the

establishment and sustenance of mainstream Islam — one developed through education

and learning, rather than through compromise.

The stated goals of ISNA were to do the following:[147]

- Represent Muslim interests in North America.
- Present Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims and promote and solidify friendly relations.
- Procure and develop the necessary resources to achieve the stated aims.
- Develop Islamic institutions.
- Establish appropriate policies and priorities for Islamic work.
- Cultivate brotherly relations and foster unity among Muslims in North America and in other parts of the world.

These goals were ambitious and intentionally vague. The broad organizational

goals reflected many points of view. The ambition reflected the need for a comprehensive

strategy to further the cause of Islam in America.

The challenges the organization faced in its first two years surprised its leaders

and staff.[148] Dr. Iqbal Unus, who served as both the assistant secretary general and

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[147] "New Organizational Structure Takes Shape–ISNA & MCA Incorporated" *Islamic Horizons* (August 1981) p. 1

[148] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, May 2, 2011

secretary general from 1981 until 1990, stated that in those first years, ISNA's focus was survival and dealing with administrative headaches related to establishing a new office and organization.

In addition, local challenges from groups such as the Concerned Citizens of Hendricks County (CCHC) consumed much of ISNA's attention during its first few years. [149] The CCHC's opposition was an early indication of what Muslim Americans would face nationally. [150] The sign at the ISNA's entrance was knocked down and a sign with the words "KKK" was erected in its place. Although ISNA ultimately prevailed, these kinds of activities distracted it from its mission.

ISNA's founders sought to strengthen its constitutional unity by striving for diversity and *shura* or consultation[151]. In their second annual report, they stated, "[T]he *Majlis ash Shura* is poised to translate the *Qur'annic* injunction of *shura* into a practical course of organizational action for ISNA."[152] The founders selected the *Majlis ash-Shura* to serve as its board of directors as its governing board. The selection of the term *Majlis ash-Shura,* rather than board of directors, provided both opportunity and risk.

The opportunity was to define American nonprofit practice through Islamic faith. They sought to explain how an important governing principle from the Islamic tradition,

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[149] William D. Dalton, "Islamic Society of North America," in David J. Bodenhamer & Robert G. Barrows, eds*., Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, 834.

[150] CCHC was comprised of local residents of Hendricks County who opposed the building of ISNA headquarters in Plainfield for fear of Islamic militancy. Over 960 of Plainfield's approximately 9,000 citizens signed the petition opposing the building of ISNA's headquarters. Their case reached as far as the county Circuit Court where the CCHC lost.

[151] Muslims believe the Quran to be the word of God revealed to Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel. In the Quran one whole Sura (chapter) is dedicated to the concept of Shura. Surat Ash-Shura is the 42nd sura in the Quran and instructs humans to settle their differences in patience by mutual consultation.

[152] The ISNA Annual Report, *Islam and* You (1984) p. 1

the *majlis,* could be incorporated within an American legal entity — that is, a nonprofit

organization. However, American nonprofit law requires a fiduciary duty of a board of

directors that goes beyond a *majlis'* role as consultant. The selection of this term echoes

an idealistic worldview that those selected to serve are held accountable to a higher

Islamic law. Failure to grasp the need to understand religious and legal consequences by

selected leaders would have serious consequences, as I discuss later in this chapter.

In establishing ISNA, its founder's decisions followed the best practices and

models available within the nonprofit sector in the United States, including ISNA's early

adoption of a democratic structure. Research shows

> Where associations are permitted and even encouraged, their capacity to
> generate political socialization appropriate for a democratic polity depends
> upon a series of organizational features. As the legal framework for
> association developed in the United States, organizational constitutions
> required democratic practices such as the election of officers.[153]

However, as is evident by the state of national and local politics, democracy

depends upon the regulations that govern it and the engagement of its citizens. In ISNA,

the membership was not engaged with ISNA beyond its elections, and the leadership

seemed largely disengaged from the grassroots.[154] Unfortunately, the regulations

governing elections depended on the committee chairs who supervised elections and a

disengaged membership base.[155]

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[153] Clemens, Elizabeth S., "The Constitution of Citizens: Political Theories of Nonprofit Organizations" in
The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven:
Yale University Press 2006) p. 209

[154] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab, October 10, 2011

[155] "Is the Muslim Leadership selection mishandled?" *Islamic Horizons* (Summer 1992), p. 12

ISNA leaders adopted the ideas that would enable it to be a strong representative of Muslim Americans while also engaging them in activities important to citizenship. Religious organizations have been incubators of political activism.[156] The leaders I interviewed for this project were clear that the founders made a conscious choice to take this approach. In fact, ISNA's establishment was in keeping with other trends that allowed nonprofits to provide "arenas for political socialization that could then be expressed. . . . [T]hese associations . . . served as vehicles for political mobilization outside of the parties themselves."[157]

Political socialization is the idea that nonprofit organizations or associations help socialize citizens for democratic participation. Elizabeth Clemens proposes that associations play a role in political socialization.[158] She argues that through nonprofit voluntary associations, citizens can put into practice skills such as letter-writing, planning meetings, and making speeches that can prepare them to become politically effective.

ISNA's founders understood the concept of political socialization and realized that advocacy would be an important aspect of its contribution to the Muslim community. Some of ISNA's leaders felt that the organization's purpose was to be representative and a political advocate for Muslim Americans. Others identified with the community's general disagreement about being politically active and sought to define advocacy in terms of educational efforts designed to encourage community and political education. ISNA needed to adopt a broad definition of advocacy in order to bridge the differences

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[156] Clemens, Elizabeth S, p. 209

[157] Ibid

[158] Ibid

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between those who were opposed to and those who were supportive of political engagement, which they did by seeking to educate the community about political issues rather than actively participating in them.

J. Craig Jenkins defines advocacy as the act of pleading for or against a cause.[159] Since the 1960s, the United States has experienced an explosion of advocacy in both national and state politics.[160] Advocacy, more broadly, also includes civic engagement. Jenkins suggests that this broader view provides a strong rationale for nonprofit advocacy.[161] Therefore, a compromise by some of ISNA's founders may have created a stronger foundation for its long-term advocacy.

An illustration of this form of advocacy is the leadership's engagement with the Carter administration. In 1979, the Muslim Student Association of USA & Canada (MSA) was part of a twelve-member group of Muslim leaders who met with President James (Jimmy) Carter and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski to discuss the Iranian hostage crisis.[162] The group consisted of at least four organizations that would be a formal part of ISNA's establishment. In the meeting, the group's members expressed their disagreement with military intervention and their support for the release of the hostages and the normalization of relations with Iran, and they described attacks being made on Muslim Americans. They agreed to assist the government in any way

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[159] Jenkins, J. Craig "Nonprofit Organizations and Political Advocacy" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*.

Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006) p. 308

[160] Ibid, p. 309

[161] Ibid, p. 308

[162] Ibid, 312

possible. [163] Therefore, although there may have been a larger disagreement about engagement through American elections, there was unity around the idea that Muslim Americans needed to be "at the table" to ensure a channel of communication.

In terms of its hiring practices, ISNA focused its attention on people who were passionate about the organization rather than on people with specific managerial experience.[164] For example, Iqbal Unus had a Ph.D. in nuclear physics from Emory University, yet he was given the responsibility of leading the administrative aspects at the organization's headquarters.[165] According to research, this hiring practice matched those of fellow faith-based organizations, but differed from secular nonprofits.[166]

In terms of selecting its leaders, however, ISNA's method was unique among religious nonprofits in that its members elected the leaders, which is more common among labor organizations, social clubs, and business leagues.[167] Moreover, members of national charities usually were affiliates rather than individuals.[168] Nevertheless, it's not uncommon for religious organizations —in our case, ISNA — to model themselves after other nonprofit organizations and conform to the same tax codes and managerial

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[163] "Muslim Representatives Meet President Carter" *Islamic Horizons* (December 1979) p. 1

[164] Interview with Dr. Sayyid M Syeed, April 29 & 30, 2011

[165] It is important to note that regardless of the lack of formal training Dr. Iqbal Unus was an exemplary administrator and many of his administrative policy manuals were the governing administrative documents for nearly two decades.

[166] Cage, Wendy & Robert Wuthnow, "Religion and the Nonprofit Sector" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006) p. 492

[167] Brody, Evelyn "The Legal Framework of Nonprofit Organizations" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006) p. 248

[168] Ibid

styles.[169] According to Sayyid M. Syeed, ISNA founders looked to congregational religious organizations such as the Indianapolis-based Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the National Council of Churches as potential models.[170]

ISNA's founders sought to define the organization in terms of best practices of the nonprofit sector. They tried to fit it into the American fabric in such a way that it would permanently blend with and benefit from both Islamic values and American laws that incorporated freedom. In my view, if ISNA's founders had their ideal, they would have established a country. A nation would allow them to implement their vision of a "complete" Islamic system. However, such an alternative did not exist and they had seem through experience how little impact MSA leaders had when they returned to their home countries. Therefore, a faith-based nonprofit organization within the American context gave them the best substitute for implementing their vision of a Muslim polity.

ISNA and the Challenges of Diversity

ISNA leaders sought to bring three broad, diverse identities under the ISNA umbrella. These efforts were marked by three divides: the immigrant-Blackamerican Muslim divide, the ethnic divide that existed among immigrants based on national identities, and the ideological divide among cultural pluralists, activists, and HSAAMs. ISNA's leaders saw this great diversity among Muslim Americans as the biggest challenge to Muslim American unity.

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[169] Cage, Wendy & Robert Wuthnow, "Religion and the Nonprofit Sector" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006) p. 491

[170] Interview with Dr. Sayyid M Syeed, April 29 & 30, 2011

Embracing the Challenges of Diversity-Immigrant-Blackamerican

ISNA had both an external and an internal narrative. The external narrative came from the leaders of ISNA seeing their relationship with African-American Muslims as pivotal to the organization's unification of the diverse Muslim American community. That is to say, they needed to connect Muslim America with the African-American diaspora through Muslim American slaves. Scholar Sherman Jackson noted that "it is almost uniquely through Blackamerican conversion that Islam enjoys whatever status it does as a bona fide American religion."[171]

The internal narrative was that of the *muhajireen* and *ansar* of Medina.[172] When Muslims migrated from Mecca to Medina with the Prophet Muhammad in 622 AD, those traveling with him were known as *muhajireen* (or emigrants), and those Muslims who received them from Medina were known as *ansar* (or helpers).[173] The *ansar* and *muhajireen* distinction became less important in Medina within a generation through intermarriage and other close relationships.

This history became part of ISNA's internal narrative when its leaders sought to recruit and elect African-American Muslims to its *shura* and committees. In fact, they recruited the African-American scholar Dr. Ihsan Bagby to initially lead this effort and later serve as interim secretary general.

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[171] Jackson, Sherman A., *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking Toward the Thurd Resurrection* (Oxford University Press 2005) p. 131

[172] "Muslim Americans" *Islamic Horizons* (July/August 1989) p. 28

[173] Hodgson, Marshall G. S., *The Venture of Islam- Conscience and History in a World Civilization: The Classic Age of Islam"* (Chicago University Press 1974 Volume I) p. 174

When dealing with the immigrant-Blackamerican Muslim divide during this period, ISNA's leaders used both the discrimination and fairness approach and the access and legitimacy approach. As we discussed in the previous chapter these approaches are quota-driven. Organizations seek to address diversity by being inclusive. But these approaches fail to address the challenges of diversity at the programmatic level and are therefore less likely to result in greater diversity within an organization.[174]

Probably ISNA's only programmatic effort in bridging the immigrant-Blackamerican divide was a "forum on the future of the African-American Muslim Community" in 1989.[175] The president of ISNA at that time, Ahmad Zaki Hammad, invited four leading members of the African-American Muslim community to meet with the editors of *Islamic Horizons*. The forum, which was moderated by Dr. Ihsan Bagby as the director of the Islamic Teaching Center (ITC)[176], included Al-Amin Abdul Latif, imam of a *masjid* in Brooklyn, New York; Ishaq Abdul-Hafiz, a federal Muslim chaplain from California; and Jamil Abdullah al-Amin, formerly known as H. Rap Brown, imam of a *masjid* in Atlanta.[177]

The forum was designed to help the organization's diverse constituents understand the importance of engagement at the local level. Specifically, the forum

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[174] Weisinger, Judith Y. and Paul F. Salipante, "A Grounded Theory for Building Ethnically Bridging Social Capital in Voluntary Organizations" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2005 34) p. 32

[175] "Muslim Americans" *Islamic Horizons* (July/August 1989) p. 28

[176] The Islamic Teaching Center was a service organization of MSA and later ISNA that provided Islamic education to African American Muslims who were converting to sunni-Islam

[177] The proceedings of this historic event were published in the July/August 1989 issues of *Islamic Horizons*.

articulated how, at a national level, the ISNA leadership was attempting to remove the

ethnic barriers created by local communities. For example, Al-Amin Abdul Latif states

> I think it [the relationship between immigrants and African Americans] is
> getting better. We still have some obstacles to overcome. A lot of
> prejudices from different people. From both sides really. There's an
> attitude from African-Americans, "O ain't gonna take nothing from no
> foreigner." We have experienced that with brothers coming from overseas
> to disrupt our communities. And there are some brothers who are very
> bitter. On the other hand, we've had situations where brothers have come
> with a more humble approach and wanted to listen to what you say. And I
> think that is important. But overall the relationship is getting much better.
> We are able to operate on a level that we have today with the brothers.
> And that's a lot of progress. Shaikh Ahmad Zaki came to Brooklyn and
> stayed at my house. We can sit down with the immigrant brothers. I don't
> even like to use that term.[178]

It was vital for the community to unify under the umbrella of its faith, and it could

do so simply by way of mutual respect. Ishaq Abdul-Hafiz had another suggestion to

bring the communities together:

> We are having difficulties. But we can see that we are on course. Yes it is
> difficult to blend with the many Muslims who come here. Many of the
> immigrants who come here — we do have to look at this aspect — have
> been persecuted. Many never practiced Islam until they came here and saw
> there was another flow of the spirit of Islam. So now . . . to blend this . . .
> we have to implement the Quran and the hadith and see how the
> muhajireen . . . and the ansar . . . came together. Intermarriages, what role
> did that play when Islam spread to new lands? What was the effect of the
> immigrant Muslims marrying the indigenous? We have to start marrying
> each others' children.[179]

These African-American Muslim leaders resisted integration into American

"white" society but proposed a "blending" of Muslim Americans based on faith rather

than ethnicity. In building a coalition, they needed to find things that they had in

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[178] "Muslim Americans" *Islamic Horizons* (July/August 1989) p. 28

[179] "Muslim Americans" *Islamic Horizons* (July/August 1989) p. 28

common. Beyond their faith, they had the common experience of persecution by colonialists, so the state of Islam in the Muslim world and America was attributed to the legacy of colonialism. To truly build a united Muslim community, these leaders and ISNA advocated intermarriages to create a new ethnic and religious identity.

Just as important was building legitimacy with these African-American Muslims. Al-Amin Abdul Latif stated, "In time . . ., the relationship will get better. Through these types of meetings and on a *national level different organizations* coming together interacting *mutually*, not one over the other, because I am immigrant and I studied here, and you are indigenous and you own this. We need to recognize each other." This recognition builds greater relationships and greater legitimacy. The most important admonition from ISNA's perspective at the time came from Jamil Al-Amin during this forum*:*

> We have to be careful in the usage of terms. Allah said that surely all believers are a single brotherhood. The general use of any of those words is not accurate because we're grouping everybody together. There have been brothers from abroad who have consistently benefitted the cause of Islam . . . here. And there have been brothers who become Muslims in America who have also benefitted the cause, and the contrary. There is no monolithic definition whereby when you say 'immigrant' that it should conjure up any negativity, no more than Muslims from this country should. We have to stay away from stereotypes and consciously stay away from falling into that kind of classification.[180]

Al-Amin, an African-American leader, was recognizing the important role MSA and ISNA had played in America. He was also rejecting the broad generalizations that stereotype Muslim Americans.

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[180] "Muslim Americans" *Islamic Horizons* (July/August 1989) p. 29

Ihsan Bagby summarized the conversation for the readers: "Actually the point that I was making is that there is no African-American agenda that is somehow completely different from the immigrant-Muslim agenda in this country, or whatever Muslim agenda."[181] In addition, the issue featured an article on the history of African-American Muslims going back in time to slavery.[182] It also featured an article about the first Conference on Political Awareness with speakers that included Imam Siraj Wahhaj and other African-American Muslim leaders.[183] It was not coincidental that the issue on African-American Muslims coincided with ISNA's push toward greater political involvement signified by the conference.

Through this forum, ISNA's leaders were attempting to use social capital to address diversity based upon ethnicity. They attempted to bridge this diversity by relying on a "bonding" type of social capital by bringing people from diverse groups together. However as we have noted in the previous chapter, bonding capital is only a first step in addressing diversity. The second step requires structuring activities across the organization to bring these diverse groups together towards a common cause. However, ISNA's leaders failed to take this second step. Had they taken this step, they may have been better able to achieve and sustain diversity.[184]

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[181] Ibid, p. 30

[182] Nyang, Sulayman "Islam & The African-American Experience" *Islamic Horizons* (July/August 1989) p. 38

[183] "Between Horizons" *Islamic Horizons* (July/August 1989) p. 10

[184] Weisinger, Judith Y., and Paul Salipante Jr. "An Expanded Theory of Pluralistic Interactions in Voluntary Nonprofit Organizations" *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* (Winter 2007) p. 158

Former secretary general Ahmed ElHattab notes that the failure of ISNA to bridge the divide between immigrants and African-Americans was due to the lack of a strong grassroots operation and outreach program. He argues that, although the existing programs were useful, they failed to permeate at the grassroots level.[185] According to ElHattab, the ISNA leaders' failure to bridge this relationship was due to two major problems.

First, African-American Muslims are not a monolithic group, and key people, including immigrant leaders, were missing from the conversation. Second, simply engaging with another group was not enough. These dialogues, to be effective, required sustained follow-through. To these observations, Iqbal Unus adds that the dialogues failed in part because ISNAs leaders did not pay attention to the economic agenda of HSAAMs.[186] However, in addition to having an economic agenda in the dialogue, African-American Muslims leaders wanted a voice in the larger set of issues that arose from the Blackamerican experience. In fact, this attempt to reduce the African-American Muslim issues to simply economic terms may have deepened the divide. The end result is that despite the best intentions of leaders like Unus, today there remains a fundamental misunderstanding of Blackamerican religion among Muslim American leaders. I need to note that this issue is not a uniquely Muslim American one. Michael Emerson and

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[185] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab, October 10, 2011

[186] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, May 1, 2011

Christian Smith detail in their research similar results in the evangelical Christian

community despite sustained efforts to reach across ethnic lines.[187]

Challenges of Diversity — Ideology and National Identity

ISNA was more successful in dealing with the ethnic (immigrant) and ideological

divides during this period (1979–1991). It sought to incorporate three methods aimed at

managing diversity: a discrimination and fairness approach that equates diversity to equal

opportunity and affirmative action, an access and legitimacy approach focused on using

diverse individuals to access new markets, and a learning and effectiveness approach in

which diverse views challenge institutional assumptions, thereby creating change in the

organization.[188] As we saw in chapter one, the first two are quota-driven approaches,

whereas the third approach is more likely to be attractive to an organization focusing on

continuous learning and innovation.

During this period, ISNA also successfully implemented the two-pronged

representation-identity model of diversity for the ethnic and ideological divide.[189] As we

noted in the previous chapter, this theory suggests that nonprofit organizations should

first rely on a bonding type of social capital to increase the number of underrepresented

members — simply to bring diverse groups of people together. The second prong

suggests that the organization should structure mission-relevant activities that help to

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[187] Emerson, Michael O & Christian Smith, *Divided By Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford University Press 2000) p. 169

[188] Weisinger, Judith Y. and Paul F. Salipante, "A Grounded Theory for Building Ethnically Bridging Social Capital in Voluntary Organizations" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2005 34) p. 32

[189] Weisinger, Judith Y., and Paul Salipante Jr. "An Expanded Theory of Pluralistic Interactions in Voluntary Nonprofit Organizations" *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* (Winter 2007) p. 158

create bridging social capital and sustain diversity. As we shall see, they succeeded in creating a consensus among some but drove away others.

Research suggests that diverse organizations face greater conflict, delayed decision-making,[190] and lower rates of participation.[191] ISNA leaders expressed these concerns to their membership: "Muslims in North America are truly at the crossroads. The most sincere and persistent effort of every Muslim is needed to forestall fragmentation and forge a united and enlightened front of Muslims to serve in the Cause of *Allah*."[192]

A look at ISNA's board and its staff suggests an even more diverse organization than scholars assume. In keeping with the affirmative action approach, its staff and leadership consisted of people of both immigrant and non-immigrant descent. Its leaders and employees came from all spectrums of the Muslim world resulting in a unique religious identity.[193]

However, as the public documents of the organizations illustrate, ISNA's leaders were opposed to being identified through ethnicity or ideology. Neither its annual reports, *Islamic Horizons*, nor other publications identified its members, leaders, and staff by their

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[190] Choi, Sungjoo and Hal G. Rainey. "Managing Diversity in US Federal Agencies: Effects of Diversity and Diversity Management on Employee Perceptions of Organizational Performance" *Public Administration Review* (Jan/Feb 2010) p. 110

[191] Okten, Cagla and Una Okonkwo Osili. "Contributions in heterogeneous communities: evidence from Indonesia" *Journal of Public Economics* (2004 17) p. 603-626

[192] Ibid

[193] Different parts of the Muslim world subscribe to different Islamic schools of thought. The largest Islamic school of thought is the Hannafee tradition because it is subscribed to by Muslims living in the most populous regions of the world.

national identity. Instead, the organization sought to identify membership by gender, location, profession, and education.

The only time ISNA publicly identified national origin was when it introduced international visitors.[194] Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed offers reasons for this departure from policy.[195] Dr. Syeed explains that at a time when ISNA did not have recognized Islamic scholars, such visitors gave the organization its religious legitimacy. Syeed suggests that ISNA leaders sought to teach Muslim Americans a new way of thinking of Islam in America. He calls this method "patchwork Islam," where you take "patches" or sections of a recognized international Islamic scholar or leader's ideas. In other words, ISNA took patches from the fabric of recognized scholars' work and stitched them into a non-ethnic, nonracial Muslim American identity. For example, they drew political engagement, democracy, and the need to build scientific organizations from the works of Hasan Al-Banna.[196] From Dr. Hassan Turabi, they drew on gender equality. These two scholars, among others, helped ISNA address a challenge that Muslim American institutions faced.

Syeed suggests that "patchwork Islam" helped the cause of institution building and thereby the rapid growth in mosque building. Syeed acknowledges that, in hindsight, this patchwork method created a problem: what to do about ideas that caused disagreements — for example, Al-Banna's opposition to the West and Turabi's compromises as a political leader. The larger population of Muslims lacked the ability to distinguish between the patches.

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[194] The ISNA Annual Report, *Islam and* You (1984) p. 6

[195] Interview with Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, May 1, 2012

[196] "Remembering a true guide" *Islamic Horizons* (March/April 1999) p. 34

ISNA's Quest for Legitimacy

ISNA's mixed results on navigating the diversity of Muslim Americans influenced its quest for legitimacy. Legitimacy was vital for being recognized as the representative for Muslim Americans. ISNA had three possible means to seek legitimacy: through external (international) recognition, through recognition by the U.S. government, and through internal recognition by Muslim Americans. ISNA embraced the first, debated the second, and tried to determine how to achieve the third step. ISNA sought to influence these interdependent institutional relationships not only by its performance and programs but also by how it was perceived.

Neo-institutional theory suggests that organizations like ISNA achieve their legitimacy through their structure, mission statement, programs, and outcomes.[197] We have already examined how ISNA's founders developed a democratic, inclusive structure and a mission statement intended to further legitimacy. The following sections illustrate how ISNA's leaders sought to develop programs and outcomes internationally and in North America to further the organization's legitimacy as the leader of Muslim Americans.

The Quest for Legitimacy: International

As I discussed earlier, ISNA embraced internationally recognized leaders to establish a "patchwork Islam." Another reason was to further its recognition as the premier Muslim organization in North America. Seeking international approval for internal legitimacy is not unique to ISNA. Curtis provides insight on how the Nation of

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[197] Oseewaarde, Ringo, Andre Nijhof and Liesbet Heyse. "Dynamics of NGO Legitimacy: How Organising (sic) Betrays Core Missions of INGOs" *Public Administration and Development* (28 2008) p. 42

Islam sought similar external sources as a way to seek internal legitimacy.[198] In fact, nonprofits routinely show the testimonials and partnerships that best communicate organizational legitimacy to constituents.

National origin and ethnic identity tied many of ISNA's members to the larger Muslim world. However, not all of ISNA leaders embraced a Muslim American identity. In reality, one of ISNA's stated priorities was to educate "the American people" about Islam. This was due in part to the propagation aspect of ISNA's mission, but it was also because some of ISNA's leaders did not accept that Muslim Americans were in fact a part of the "American people."[199]

During this period (1979–1991), roughly half the speakers at ISNA conventions were from outside North America. Many of these international speakers were representatives of the Islamic movement in the Muslim world — people like Dr. Hassan Turabi of Sudan, the leaders of *Jamaat-e-Islami* or India and Pakistan, and ministers of Muslim states. The majority of ISNA's charitable contributions came from the Muslim world, including the donation of land and funding for building ISNA's continental headquarters in Plainfield, Indiana.

Despite this outreach, ISNA remained committed to its values of pluralism, democracy, volunteerism and Islamic activism. ISNA's actions were consistent with Jeavons' argument that religious organizations' behavior is influenced by their integrity

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[198] Edward Curtis *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam* (UNC Press 2006)

[199] Interview with Dr. Ihsan Bagby,

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and concern for the public good.[200] Despite self-interest, ISNA refused to compromise on

its core values. For instance, when the Libyan government wanted to help disseminate

Gaddafi's *Green Book,* the organization refused to accept funding with any strings

attached.[201] ISNA was quick to raise concerns when they did not agree with international

leaders regardless of the consequences, as we see in the next chapter.

ISNA mirrored its constituencies' dissatisfaction with certain leaders that

governed the Muslim world. *Islamic Horizons* spoke out against "King Husain and the

other so-called leaders." ISNA criticized the Saudi government despite receiving funding

from the country.[202]

As I have noted, ISNA's leaders had high hopes for the Islamic revolution in Iran.

However, within a few years, they determined that these hopes were unfounded and that

Iran was developing alliances with Syria, Turkey, India, and Russia, all of which

oppressed Muslims. In the February 1982 issue of *Islamic Horizons,* the organization

took a critical stance against the Islamic Republic of Iran in its leading story.

> Three years are not a short duration for a revolution to set its policies,
> though one may say that in the post-revolutionary chaos its takes time for
> policies to evolve. . . . That is why we waited for some coherent
> expression of Iran's relation with other Muslim countries. . . . At the same
> time, we also wanted to give the Islamic Iran the benefit of the doubt,
> especially where motives are concerned. After all, the Iranian revolution
> was not an ordinary event. It appealed to the deepest urges of the Muslim
> world: it vindicated Islam as an instrument of change; it dignified
> Muslims. . . . For the last three years, Islamic Republic of Iran has been
> harboring close links with Syria . . . a country ruled . . . by a group . . . that

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[200] Jeavons, Thomas H., "When the Management is the Message: relating Values to Management Practice in Nonprofit Organizations" *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* (Summer 1992) p. 410

[201] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab, October 10, 2011

[202] *Islamic Horizons* (May 1982) p. 2

is neither Islamic nor democratic . . . which has unleashed a reign of terror against its people. . . . The past three years of Iranian foreign policy raises [sic] too many questions and offers too little comfort.[203]

In the minds of ISNA's leaders, if Iran were an Islamic state with a true Islamic revolution it would oppose tyrannical dictatorships like Syria rather than be its ally. Within a few years, ISNA's leaders determined that, by aligning itself with countries they perceived as opposed to Islamic values, Iran had abandoned the ideals of its revolution. ISNA aggressively attacked these regimes.[204]

Just as ISNA was critical of the Muslim governments, it also sought to correct the misuse of Islam by violent groups. In the May/June 1987 issue, *Islamic Horizons* published an article entitled "Islam Forbids Terrorism" to counter the misuse of the term *jihad* by violent Muslim groups.

Many Islamic terms like "Jihad" and "Islam" have been abused by violent groups. Nobody has power over such groups to force them to stop abusing such names. . . . Not only in peace but also in war Islam prohibits terrorism, kidnapping, and hijacking, when carried against civilians, and whoever commits that is a murderer in Islam and it be punished.[205]

ISNA's international outreach also stemmed from the direct needs of its members. Almsgiving, or charity, is enshrined in one of the five pillars of Islam — *Zakah*. All Muslims are required to donate a percentage of their wealth to one or more of nine prescribed causes.[206] Many immigrant Muslim Americans during this period stressed the

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[203] "Islamic Iran's Foreign Policy?" *Islamic Horizons* (February 1982) p. 1

[204] "Qaddafi's Achievements?" *Islamic Horizons* (October 1981) p. 3

[205] "Islam Forbids Terrorism" *Islamic Horizons* (May/June 1987) p. 15

[206] Siddiqui, Shariq A. "Giving in the Way of God: Muslim Philanthropy in the US," in *For The Sake of God,* ed. David Smith. Indiana: Indiana University Press (2010) p. 44

importance of maintaining a connection with their homelands. Again, this was not unique to Muslim American immigrants and studies of immigrant populations suggest a connection between charitable giving and countries of origin.[207] For example, as I noted in chapter one, Jewish identity was able to mediate international activism and American citizenship.

During the 1980s, there were few, if any, reliable Islamic American relief organizations serving the Muslim world. ISNA sought to fill this vacuum and established various relief funds to serve Muslim American needs to donate to relief work in the Muslim world. ISNA articulated the need:

> In reflecting its faith and conviction, the Islamic Society of North America extends humanitarian aid to Muslims worldwide. A great practical manifestation of this is the work of the relief and development funds of the organization. Through these channels, the Muslim community in North America is offered a viable opportunity to alleviate hunger and suffering of Muslims wherever they be through humanitarian aid. This duty is a historic one for ISNA, and has provided a good example and challenge for other Muslims and organizations around the world.[208]

In service to the community, ISNA was willing to continue this historic duty, which it carried over from its MSA days. The scope of ISNA's relief efforts in those early days was extensive. The largest proportion of the ISNA's budget was designated to relief efforts in the Muslim world. For example, in 1991, ISNA oversaw over forty-five relief funds with a distribution total of $937,427. ISNA's total budget outside of relief

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[207] Siddiqui, Shariq A "Philanthropy in Troubled Times: Muslim American philanthropy after 9/11" in upcoming book edited by Tom Davis: Indiana University Press, accepted and forthcoming

[208] ISNA Annual Report (1989) p. 37

work was just $615,354.[209] In 1988, twenty-six relief funds raised $1,357,000 compared to an overall organizational budget of $1,088,548.[210] In 1984, relief work in eighteen Muslim countries resulted in the disbursement of more than one-half million dollars compared to an organizational budget of $343,951.[211] In ISNA's first year of existence, it had eight relief funds totaling over $1.9 million compared to an administrative budget of $1.3 million. The amount of relief funds raised nearly doubled what was raised through donations, grants, and program fees for the organization's objectives.[212]

ISNA's programs, mission statement, and adherence to its values at the international level helped the organization establish legitimacy both internally and externally. Its international relief funds helped establish greater pragmatic legitimacy. Its positions against international regimes strengthened moral legitimacy.

The Quest for Legitimacy: Internal

ISNA's quest for legitimacy in America had two audiences during this period (1979–1991) — internal and external. Internally, the Muslim American community seeking the establishment of institutional Islam in America was the primary audience. External audiences included the American government and media. ISNA's programs were aimed at meeting the needs and expectations of the Muslim American community. Its public relation efforts focused on both the internal and the external audiences. Here

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[209] ISNA Annual Report (1991)

[210] Isna Annual Report (1988)

[211] ISNA Annual Report (1984)

[212] ISNA Annual Report (1982)

again, ISNA's leaders centered its programs on its core values and priorities — Muslim Americans.

ISNA sought legitimacy internally from Muslim Americans through implementing key values of democracy and transparency. Its programs were designed to further the establishment of Muslim American institutions that would benefit the community. It also illustrated its deep roots through the continuation of MSA's work. It sought to attract internal legitimacy by highlighting international legitimacy and the support of constituent organizations. Finally, its public statements and public relations efforts reflected the consensus views of many of ISNA's Muslim American constituents.

As I discussed earlier, ISNA sought greater engagement from its members through a democratic, consultative, and disbursed power structure. Democracy remained an important value. ISNA was not a closed organization. Anyone claiming to be Muslim, over the age of eighteen and willing to pay the annual membership dues could become an individual member.

ISNA's membership's embrace of diversity is reflected by the people it elected to lead. The leadership has included African-Americans, Caucasian-Americans, and immigrants from across the Muslim world with different ideologies.

From the time of its incorporation in 1981, ISNA has published annual reports. It has consistently had independent audits done by certified public accounts (CPAs) and has published those audits in its annual reports. It has consistently held elections and enforced term limits set in the ISNA constitution.

ISNA continued many of MSA's programs. The three major programs that I

highlight in this chapter are the annual convention, *Islamic Horizons* magazine, and the

Islamic Teaching Center.

The annual convention was an important gathering. As a consequence, the

leadership moved the convention from a cost-effective campus setting to city facilities

such as convention centers and hotels. The first convention was held at the Louisville

Convention Center.[213] The leadership explained this change in venue:

> The change to a non-campus site was an attempt at charting out an
> uncharted course. With the ISNA decision to emphasize the presence of
> Islam in North America, it was important to make Islam more visible in
> cities and other centers of urban population. The opportunity to foster
> understanding of Islam among non-Muslims, it was felt, would be a
> greater in predominantly urban areas where a larger cross section of life
> styles and backgrounds exists.[214]

Invitations to political leaders and the press were also important changes. As the

organization reported to its membership:

> ISNA's public relations efforts took a new turn with the holding of the
> Annual Convention in downtown Louisville, instead of a college campus.
> The Public Relations Office arranged newspaper, radio and TV exposure
> for Islam and ISNA through pre-conference interviews and on-site press
> conference. For the first time, the Convention featured specific sessions
> open to non-Muslims.[215]

The next annual conventions were held in Dayton, Columbus, Kansas City, and

Chicago. ISNA conventions remained in the Midwest until 2002 when they ventured to

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[213] The ISNA Annual Report, *Islam and* You (1984) p. 6

[214] "ISNA Convention Held in Louisville" *Islamic Horizons* (Sept–October 1983) p. 4

[215] The ISNA Annual Report, *Islam and* You (1984) p. 6

Washington, D.C. The annual conventions began to play a different role. For example, the bazaar, or exhibits, in the convention moved away from wives of students selling personal items, as it did under MSA, to commercial vendors marketing to the Muslim American population.[216]

In addition, convention themes reflected the main thrust of the organization's focus — the needs and values of Muslims in North America.[217] These themes sought to reflect the dual priorities of establishing a Muslim identity in America and achieving consensus between cultural pluralists and activists. They also reflected Muslim Americans' views on specific human rights issues in American foreign policy.

Finally, the convention helped ISNA achieve an important objective — gender equity. The MSA Women's Committee was very effective in advocating and pushing for greater rights for women in both the organization and the annual convention. These battles had been waged and progress was made by the time ISNA was established. During the times of MSA, women served only in secretarial positions. This was not the case in ISNA.

Although ISNA needed to improve on issues of gender, it did not have formal policies against women speakers, women workshops, or leadership roles for women. In

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[216] "Building a Movement: A Woman's Work" *Islamic Horizons* (May/June 2003) p. 24

[217] Some themes during this initial period (1981–1990) included;
- *Human Rights - An Islamic Perspective*;
- *Islam in North America: Approaches and Methods;*
- *Islam and You;*
- *Muslims in the West - Challenges and Solutions*;
- *The Quran–Guidance to Live By;*
- *Reaching out with Islam;*
- *Muslims in the 1990's and Beyond - A Community of Solutions*
- *Developing an Islamic Environment in North America*

fact, the role of women in building ISNA went far beyond secretarial help.[218] Most importantly, ISNA was an early advocate of gender equity. Its embrace of international scholars such as Dr. Turabi of Sudan helped to provide an international basis for the organization's support of women. Dr. Gamal Badawi, a Muslim American scholar and long-standing ISNA leader, consistently spoke and wrote about this issue.

The annual convention was not the only MSA tradition that ISNA wanted to continue. ISNA leadership also sought to continue the two publications of MSA: *Islamic Horizons* and *Al-Ittehad*. *Islamic Horizons* was a monthly magazine that fostered dialogue among readers through letters to the editors, news about organizational activities, and articles on international and national matters of importance; it also served as the organization's internal mouthpiece (at least in this initial period). To Muslim Americans, it was a mix between an organizational newsletter and *Time* magazine.

Al-Ittehad was the organization's biannual journal that sought to discuss the ideas of prominent Muslim intellectuals such as Abu al-Alal Mawdudi of Pakistan and Sayyid Qutb of Egypt.[219] While *Islamic Horizons* continued because it was seen as being important in trying to increase membership and donors, *Al-Ittehad* was eventually discontinued. ISNA's annual reports during this initial period (1981–1990) frequently cited financial reasons for not publishing *At-Ittehad*. The *Islamic Horizons* magazine eventually was reduced from monthly to six issues a year and remains at this level.

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[218] Ibid

[219] Bazzano, Elliott "Muslim Student Association" *Encyclopedia of Muslim American History* (Facts on File 2010) edited by Edward Curtis. P. 410

Islamic Horizons became an important tool for ISNA. For the most part, its format remained the same in its initial years. The "Letters to the Editor" section remained an important place to foster dialogue among the magazine's diverse audience. Its readership continued to include both immigrant and non-immigrant Muslims.

Islamic Horizons continued to focus on international issues but added an "Around and About Washington D.C." section. "The Muslimah Section" also became an important feature of the magazine. The first section sought to engage the Muslim American community with American politics. The second section was to further highlight issues faced by Muslim American women.

From 1981 through 1984, *Islamic Horizons* was published in a simple newsletter format before being launched in the more sophisticated *Times* magazine layout that included a cover bearing an overarching theme. The magazine's themes reflected a broader tension within the organization. Themes reflected international, national, and spiritual issues. Some examples of these themes included *A New dawn; Our Muslim Youth*; *al-Faruqi's Assassination — What does it mean for Muslim America?*; *Muslims "Under Siege" — Will the Media Shape Our Future?*; *Fasting is for Me, and it is I who give rewards for it*; *Terrorism: Lebanon to Libya*; and *Shaping Strategies for the Future.* Most issues focused on topics that were important to the diverse population of Muslim Americans in an attempt to gain internal legitimacy.

The Islamic Teaching Center (ITC) was another project that the ISNA leaders sought to continue from the MSA days. ITC was helpful in MSA's outreach to the African-American community. When Imam W. D. Muhammad became a sunni Muslim, he reached out to MSA to help the transition of his community. ITC provided training

about Islam to these new members of the Muslim community. ITC's primary audience was African-Americans, but during its MSA period, was led by directors from the immigrant community.

After ISNA was established, Dr. Ihsan Bagby served as the director for this project.[220] Adding a scholar and African-American like Bagby demonstrated a major shift within the organization. Bagby credits the Society's leaders for always trying to reach out to diverse groups, especially African-American Muslims.[221] Bagby also credits the leadership for recruiting people like him to help design projects such as the ITC and for enabling them to serve in the larger organizational structure. As the only African-American Muslim to serve in the secretary general position, he had the opportunity to make an even greater impact outside of his work at the ITC. His complaint was that he was appointed only as "Acting Secretary General" or interim role despite his years of service; he eventually left ISNA to pursue an academic career.

A majority of Islamic centers, mosques, and Islamic schools in America today were built after ISNA's incorporation. It assisted in fundraising for those institutions by means of its speakers bureau, constitution, and by-laws; by extending ISNA's group tax exemption to local *masjids;* by issuing letters of support to overseas funders such as the

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[220] Dr. Bagby received his doctorate in Islamic studies from the University of Michigan. Of African-American decent, he is originally from Ohio of African-American and became a Muslim through his personal interactions with religious individuals rather than the Nation of Islam. His parents were originally from Anderson, Indiana. His mother was white and father was black. They left Indiana because state laws did not allow inter-racial marriage. He became involved with the MSA through the auspices of Dr. Iqbal Unus. They both attended the same mosque in Atlanta, Georgia. He was later employed by the ISNA to lead the Islamic Teaching Center (ITC). A major arm of the organization, ITC was established to reach out to the African-American Muslim community in an effort to educate them and other new Muslims about Islam. Dr. Ihsan Bagby played a unique role in being the Secretary General of MANA while also serving as an elected member of the *Majlis Ash-Shura* of the ISNA.

[221] Interview with Dr. Ihsan Bagby, April 3, 2011

Islamic Development Bank; and through its financial-service institution, the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT), which provided loans and investment opportunities and allowed communities to place their newly acquired centers in trust.

ISNA also developed an Islamic education curriculum, the establishment of two model full-time Islamic schools in Chicago and Toronto (Canada), and teacher and administrator trainings. The two full-time Islamic schools were an important achievement for ISNA.[222] The Universal School in Chicago and the ISNA School in Toronto were models for other Muslim communities wanting to create private schools in suburbia. ISNA was again seeking to take an idea already rooted in North America, that is Sister Clara Muhammad Schools, and develop a model that it could disseminate.[223] In its 1988 Annual Report, it not only announced the establishment of the new schools but also stressed the importance of an open and engaged process in achieving this milestone.[224] ISNA explained

> How did they do it [establish an Islamic School]? From the beginning they made it very clear to people who was behind their effort. First they established a shura council for ISNA in Toronto, which has about a 100,000-strong Muslim community. Then they organized the youth, the women, and the children under the umbrella of ISNA in order to inspire confidence in the community and gain credibility, a critical factor for anyone petitioning a community to entrust their children's education to

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[222] The community of Imam W D Muhammad already ran full-time Islamic schools called Sister Clara Muhammad Schools. These schools were largely for members of the African-American community.

[223] Clara Muhammad was the first wife of Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad. They married in Georgia in 1917, before he changed his name from Elijah Poole. Between 1917 and 1939, Elijah and Clara Muhammad had eight children: six boys and two girls, including Warith Deen Muhammad.

Known as the First Lady of the Nation of Islam, Muhammad is credited with introducing her husband to the teachings of Nation of Islam founder W D Fard.

[224] ISNA Annual Report (1988) p. 20

them. Now open a school? Not yet. Next came an extensive survey of the community in 1982-83. . . . Finally, they recruited people who were truly leading figures in the community. In this way, parental trust was earned.[225] (emphasis added)

ISNA's leadership wanted to urge its community to follow a course of building sustainable institutions. However, at the same time, they were concerned about external influences and worried that external funders could hijack grassroots institutions.[226]

The ISNA School in Toronto was established in 1984. An office was established in Chicago in 1983, but it took longer for this school to come into its own.[227] It was eventually established through the efforts of the local Muslim community with ISNA playing a supportive role. The school was officially established in 1990 and was named Universal School: The Islamic Society of North America's Model Learning Center.[228] ISNA assisted in raising funds for this $2 million project by reaching out to local, national, and international funders.

In addition to these model Islamic schools, ISNA's education department conducted extensive workshops for Muslim parents and teachers on establishing part-time Islamic education programs. Specifically, these workshops were designed to meet the need for educating Muslim children about Islam.[229] ISNA's leaders also sought to establish these part-time and full-time schools within an American context. For example,

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[225] Ibid

[226] Interview with Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, April 29 & 30, 2011

[227] ISNA Annual Report (1984) p. 5

[228] ISNA Annual Report (1989) p. 21

[229] ISNA Annual Report (1988) p. 19

they publicly partnered with organizations like the National Council for Religion in Public Education (NCPRE).[230] Organizations like the NCPRE helped ISNA deliver effective programming, enhanced the organization's legitimacy, and validated the organization's ability to serve in a national role.

To create a stronger connection between grassroots community and ISNA, its leaders established the Muslim Community Association (MCA).[231] This connection between ISNA and the grassroots community (through MCA) also furthered institutional legitimacy. However, by 1984, ISNA was reporting that the MCA was struggling "with the task of organizing itself into a broad-based federation of local community organizations."[232] The original vision was that MCA's membership would consist of local Islamic centers and mosques and that members would come together in a house of delegates. This house of delegates would be responsible for directing the MCA's future and also for electing a number of people to serve on the Society's *Majlis Ash-Shura*. Unfortunately, ISNA and the MCA's founders did not foresee the amount of effort required to establish one new organization, let alone two. As a result, MCA ceased to exist.

In 1986, ISNA held a consultative public meeting to determine its priorities for the next decade. "The aims and purposes of ISNA shall be to advance the cause of Islam and serve Muslims in North America so as to enable them to adopt Islam as a complete

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[230] Ibid, p. 18

[231] ISNA Annual Report (1982) p. 2

[232] ISNA Annual Report (1983) p. 4

way of life."[233] Toward this aim, ISNA reaffirmed its six priorities referred to earlier

while abandoning the idea of the "American people" being separate entities from Muslim

Americans. The idea of community development was further defined as the involvement

in politics and public relations. The organization was now ready to embrace a more

specific definition of advocacy. "In order to exert influence on the political decision-

making and legislation in North America, ISNA should launch a campaign to educate

Muslim citizens about their voting rights and mobilize them on issues affecting Islam and

Muslims."[234] Nonetheless, opposition to political engagement had not ended and not

everyone supported the idea of engaging in politics. There was a fear that engaging in the

political process would "co-opt and adulterate the Islamic agenda."[235] An ISNA leader

stated

> Those people who insist on entering U.S. politics say it on the
> presumption as if they are some kind of Jews who have to work for some
> state of Israel. . . . Some people think that one can distance himself or
> herself from the process. But philosophically speaking it is not possible.
> The process will assimilate you, and then adopt you, and then change you
> to its own objective. . . . Even if you are ideologically very well
> indoctrinated, you will have to make compromises here and there.*236*

Those opposed to engaging in the American political process argued that the

process was corrupt. To be effective, the process would require ISNA to make

compromises that opposed the idealistic vision they had conceived. ISNA leaders had

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[233] Siddiqui, Shariq. "Islamic Society of North America," in *Encyclopedia of Muslim American History,* ed. Edward E. Curtis IV. New York: Facts on File, Inc. (2010) p. 297

[234] GhaneaBassiri, p. 313

[235] Ibid

[236] GhaneaBassiri, p. 314

initially sought to resolve this by broadly defining advocacy. However, by 1986 it was clear that ISNA needed to reflect community needs and follow in the footsteps of FIA in the area of political advocacy.

Seeking external legitimacy, ISNA developed relief funds that showed selective approval of American foreign policy. Two important funds during this period of time, the Afghan Relief Fund and the Indo-Chinese Resettlement Program, help illustrate how these programs fit within broader American foreign policy interests. For instance, the United States backed the *mujahideen* against the Soviets. There was implicit support from the Reagan administration to raise funds for Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. In addition, the American withdrawal from Vietnam opened up the opportunity for many Muslims in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam to receive refugee status in the United States.[237] Because of their geographic location and their minority status, it is very likely that these Muslim Vietnamese and Cambodians cooperated with the United States and earned refugee status. ISNA assisted the resettlement process through direct grants, religious materials, and preparation of materials in the Cham language.

During this period, ISNA successfully established its brand as a Muslim American organization. The legitimacy it developed through its programs, quest for diversity, public statements and positions, and adherence to its values helped in establishing this brand. However, as I note in the next section, its financial crisis and the inability of its leaders to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities as board members hampered the organization's ability to move beyond pragmatic and moral legitimacy.

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[237] Isna Annual Report (1982)

Dynamics of Power — Transformation, Tensions, and Crisis

Two key styles of leadership defined this period (1979–1991): The first leadership style emphasized consultation, consensus building, and collaboration. I consider this the Iqbal Unus era. This period relied on influence as the key form of power. Influence is an episodic power that works by affecting costs and benefits of behavior. Examples of influence include moral suasion, negotiation, and ingratiation.[238] ISNA was not able to achieve rapid growth through this style.

This leadership style ended when Ahmad Zaki Hammad became president of ISNA. The secretaries general's I interviewed all stated that Hammad was dictatorial, top-down, and selective in his collaborations. Force and domination were the key forms of power at this time. Force is an episodic power that works by restricting available choices.[239] Domination is a systemic form of power that also works through restricting available choices.[240] The result of both selective forms of power resulted in unbridled creativity, uneven or forced adoption of ideas, and open and repressive resistance.

In 1987, Ahmad Zaki Hammad, as ISNA's new president, addressed the *Majlis*.[241] The continuing financial difficulties and the organization's lack of direction concerned him. Consequently, in this initial address, he proposed the following solutions:[242]

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[238] Lawrence (2005), p. 185

[239] Ibid

[240] Ibid

[241] Dr. Ahmad Zaki Hammad is a scholar of Qurannic and Islamic Studies. He teaches Islamic Civilization and the Primary Disciplines of Quran Commentary, the Prophetic Traditions, and the Principles of Islamic Law at the foremost center of Islamic and Arabic learning in the Muslim world, AL-Azhar University (Faculty of Languages and Translations, Department of English). He is also a member of the Faculty of Shariah, Department of Juristic Studies. He received his early Islamic and Arabic training at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, and was awarded the graduate degree of Alamiyyah from the Faculty of Theology. He

- To focus on raising funds in the United States. He argued "that communities that have provided the needy in Somalia, Afghanistan, Syria, and India, can also support serious, striving, Islamic work here."[243]
- To focus on the education of the youth and adults on Islam.
- To help empower women and youth to become part of the leadership of the ISNA and other Muslim organizations
- To focus on developing *fiqh* of Islam that is "pure from sectarianism, distinguished from prevailing norms and cultural practices. . . . This should open a way for a living *fiqh*, that invites support from precedent, but is conscious of not being trapped into it."[244]
- To introduce Islam in North America and countering "the abused, stereotypical images projected by the media and Hollywood."[245]

This list of priorities was a signal by the new president to depart from the past and move forward in a new direction. At the same time, ISNA would maintain the important values on which the organization was founded. "To be fair, many among those who initiated the Islamic work in North America did not want to see the Islamic experience here as an extension of the bitter *shura* that has prevailed in recent centuries. . . . We find in the constitutions and charters of our organizations . . . statements that give the Muslim public . . . the right to select leadership." However, he continued, "[what] concerns me . . . is to remind that there is a genuine desire to reject all forms of monopoly or manipulation that keep the affairs of Muslims in the hand of a few. The door is open for every Muslim to assume a role based on his or her efforts — an investment that will

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holds a Ph.D, in Islamic Studies from the University of Chicago. For more about Hammad please see his brief biography in the appendix.

[242] "An Address to the ISNA Majlis as-Shura by Shaykh Ahmad Zaki Hammad Ph.D" *Islamic Horizons* (April 1987) p. 9

[243] Ibid

[244] Ibid

[245] "An Address to the ISNA Majlis as-Shura by Shaykh Ahmad Zaki Hammad Ph.D" *Islamic Horizons* (April 1987) p. 9

enhance Islam, and Muslim life, on this continent."[246] He was signaling to the

organization's leaders and members that although its values were important, it needed to

come to grips with the reality that, in America, Islam comprised numerous groups, some

of which did not want to come under one umbrella. Bagby states that whether ISNA

should be a platform or an umbrella organization was the subject of a major debate within

the organization.[247]

Hammad served two terms as president from 1987 to 1990. His tenure during this

period is the subject of controversy. Bagby takes a less favorable view of Hammad's

leadership. He notes that Hammad nearly ruined the organization. None of the former

secretaries general interviewed for this project had a positive opinion of him.[248] However,

Bagby and ElHattab both felt that he was a transformative figure. ElHattab argued that

Hammad pushed for a very focused action plan and one designed to help ISNA think of a

new reality. Bagby stated that despite Hammad's authoritative nature, he helped the

organization move forward. Bagby credits Hammad for expelling members of the

Muslim Brotherhood from the organization's leadership. ElHattab also concurs that

Hammad helped ISNA think of itself as an independent Muslim American organization

rather than an extension of the Islamist movements in the Muslim world.

When Hammad became president, he engaged some important people, such as

Ihsan Bagby, the African-American Muslims invited to the forum, and Dawood Zwink

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[246] Ibid

[247] Interview with Dr. Ihsan Bagby, April 3, 2011

[248] Only two were unable to provide interviews. Both served for brief periods but one of these, Amer Haleem, was appointed by Dr. Hammad and could have provided a different perspective. Unfortunately he did not respond to any of the requests for an interview.

who was ISNA's first Caucasian-American vice president. In addition, he argued through his writings in *Islamic Horizons* for a greater role for Muslim women within the organization and Muslim American leadership. However, the interviewees suggest his forceful and authoritative nature changed the organization's culture of consensus. Zarzour argues that such a style helps make short-term change within an organization but does not sustain such changes.[249] ElHattab also suggests that, although fundraising initially increased under Hammad, it started to decline as he drove more and more people away.

Syeed argues that Hammad made the cardinal false step — he used the organization to further his personal initiative, the Quranic Literacy Institute.[250] Hammad wanted to publish the first-ever Muslim American *tafsir* (explanation) and translation of the Muslim holy book, the *Quran*. It is clear how this would fit within Hammad's trajectory of distancing ISNA and American Muslims from the Muslim world and patchwork Islam. This project became important to him and was initially supported by leaders of ISNA.[251]

Syeed argues that to further consolidate power, Hammad retired Iqbal Unus as secretary general, who was in the hospital at the time. Perhaps because of the inefficient communication at the time ("snail mail") and the health of Unus, no one questioned his retirement. Hammad then started to move aspects of the organization away from Indiana to his basement in Illinois.[252]

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[249] Interview with Safaa Zarzour, October 22, 2011

[250] Interview with Dr. Sayyid. M Syeed, April 29 & 30, 2011

[251] "US Muslims work on New Koran Edition" *Los Angeles Times* (March 30, 1991)

[252] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab

Unus disagrees with Bagby that Hammad was transformative and stating that no one thinks of that period of time positively. He goes further to argue that very few think of Hammad as an effective president of ISNA.[253] Zarzour dismisses Hammad as a visionary leader.[254] In Zarzour's opinion, Hammad's greatest failing was to place his own success over the success of the organization. The product of Hammad's efforts during his time at ISNA and later at QLI was published in 2007. *The Gracious Qur'an : A Modern Phrased Interpretation in English* was released at ISNA's 2007 Annual Convention.

Despite Hammad's failings as a leader, he took important steps to help ISNA chart a clearer course that included moving ISNA away from international partners, making difficult choices despite continuing debates, embracing ISNA's role as an American institution rather than an extension of international movements, bringing clarity to the organizational mission, and clearly departing from its MSA past. He aggressively sought to bring new people into the fold, such as Ihsan Bagby, Amer Haleem, and Daud Zwink. However, the costs of these unilateral actions were nearly catastrophic. By 1991, the organization had laid off most of its employees, was unable to raise funds, and had fallen behind in its programs and activities. ISNA's CPAs questioned whether it could remain a viable organization.

Failure of Idealism and Fiduciary Governance — Budgetary Crisis

Despite the legitimacy gained through its work, direct services, structure, and values, ISNA suffered from a lack of permanent leadership at its headquarters that

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[253] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, May 1, 2011

[254] Interview with Safaa Zarzour, October 22, 2011

resulted in successive 'acting secretaries general.' More damaging were *Majlis Ash-Shura* members who did not fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities.

Starting in 1990, ISNA's CPA, Ebrahim Lunat, raised two major concerns in ISNA's annual reports. First, the board (*Majlis Ash-Shura*) did not approve the organization's budgets between 1989 and 1991 as required by the constitution and the board's fiduciary responsibility. The expenditures during these years were made on the "implied authority" of the senior officers (presumably, Ahmad Zaki Hammad). Second, Lunat also raised the following concern for the future:

> The accompanying financial statements have been prepared assuming that ISNA will continue as a going concern. As discussed in note # 8 to financial statements, ISNA has suffered recurring operating deficits and has a net equity deficiency that would generally raise substantial doubt about its ability to continue as a going concern.[255]

As the chart below indicates, ISNA's expenses consistently exceeded its revenue. ISNA inherited this trend from its MSA past. In 1983, ISNA's auditors discovered that $657,294 of designated funds were mistakenly used to support general expenses. The organization was forced to return the funds to the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT). This resulted in a major financial hole in ISNA's first few years of operation.[256]

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[255] ISNA Annual Report (1990) p. 27

[256] ISNA Annual Report (1984) p. 21

Year	Overseas Donations	Donations USA	Total Revenues	Expenses	Accumulated Deficit	Endowment Fund	# of staff
1982	561839.18	112808	1153039	1431019.23	277980	0	10
1983	507849.17	252825.18	912013	1658280.06	1183798	0	10
1984	854852	147861	1081120	974954	1006200	0	NR
1985	Not Available						
1986	472220	278769	1101902	928639	1264471	0	NR
1987	204120	351784	867967	852506	1115379	0	NR
1988	288672	465938	1088073	1088548	1115854	0	18
1989	712910	495300	1517759	1594403	1192498	0	NR
1990	669455	232163	1215872	1350141	1326767	0	NR
1991	414886	401595	1027175	1150123	1464889	0	18
1992	268682	524597	1031799	1430397	1816505	0	9

The organization sought to undertake cost-cutting measures to reduce expenses, including closing offices in Los Angeles and Chicago.[257] The staffs were downsized and reorganized. ElHattab also reports that during these critical times, some staff members with dual incomes agreed to forego salaries or received reduced salaries while remaining committed to moving the organization forward.[258] These drastic measures made it more difficult for the organization to attract additional membership or donor revenue. Moreover, many Muslim Americans were receiving benefits from ISNA's work as free-

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[257] Ibid, p. 2

[258] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab

riders without contributing to the organization. Research suggests that free riding in

membership associations is only diminished when it is easy to monitor this behavior.[259]

The membership benefits to ISNA were not the kind that one can monitor to eliminate

free-riders. One did not have to be a member to benefit from ISNA's work.

The failure of the *Majlis* to meet and approve budgets, the lingering damage from

Ahmad Zaki Hammad's leadership, an accumulated deficit, and a major decline in

activities and staff gave doubt to the organization's continued existence. The staff was so

deeply frustrated that they publicly criticized the members' selection of ineffective

leaders in *Islamic Horizons*.[260]

> Muslims regularly complain about the inefficiency and lack of
> productivity they see in large Islamic organizations. . . . [O]ne reason for
> the lack of productivity is the conflict that exists between some elected
> leaders who sit on the Executive Council and Majlis ash-Shura; a lot of
> time gets wasted in fighting. Another problem is that some elected leaders
> aren't as serious as they should be about ISNA's projects; they skip
> meetings (which are infrequent) and ignore other responsibilities. There
> are certainly some dedicated elected leaders on these bodies, but with so
> much weakness at these levels, ISNA cannot be expected to adequately
> serve the community.[261]

The scathing article was a clear indication that the organization was near failure. The

issue also featured an article entitled "Islamic Obligations of Leaders and Followers."[262]

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[259] Tschirhart, Mary, "Nonprofit Membership Associations" Cage, Wendy & Robert Wuthnow, "Religion
and the Nonprofit Sector" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and
Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006) p. 532

[260] "Is the Muslim Leadership selection mishandled?" *Islamic Horizons* (Summer 1992) P. 12

[261] Ibid

[262] "Islamic Obligations of Leaders and Followers" *Islamic Horizons* (Summer 1992) p. 12

The budgetary crisis left ISNA very weak and at the brink of collapsing. However, just as devastating was its failure to deal with the divisions among its factions or to come to grips with the legacy of "patchwork Islam." Disappointed with ISNA's failure, HSAAM leaders such as Sherman Jackson and Dr. Ihsan Bagby established the American Learning Institute for Muslims (ALIM) in 1997.[263] Bagby and Jackson ran similar programs through ITC and ISNA, which were discontinued after 1991. The founders of ALIM

> made some critical observations regarding the Muslim communities around the nation. They observed that these communities, while rich and diverse, were fragmented and separated by artificial dams because of what were actually minor ideological streams of thought flowing into the same river of belief. They discerned a dogmatic trend towards self-righteousness and a scarcity of meaningful discourse and willingness to learn from others' point of view. These dams and scarcity of discourse are ailments that were not in the spirit of Islam as these scholars and students understood it. They believed these ailments to be early symptoms of a greater disease and possible future epidemics of extremism, religious voyeurism and self-destruction. The solution, at its root was the cultivation of critical thinking anchored by true belief. This communal aspiration was dubbed "Islamic Literacy" and ALIM was born. The American Learning Institute for Muslims was formally founded in 1998 in order to meet the need for Islamic Literacy and the empowerment of Muslims. It was the result of many detailed discussions between the core scholars and several of their students.[264]

The founding of ALIM was an indictment of ISNA's failure to live up to its goals. ISNA had failed to bridge diversity, move beyond "patchwork Islam," and realize a program that sought to educate its community about Islam.

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[263] https://www.alimprogram.org/about/history/

[264] https://www.alimprogram.org/about/history/

ISNA's financial troubles killed any chance for the Muslim Community

Association (MCA) to become a reality. ElHattab argues that without MCA, there was no

connection with the grassroots. Without structured grassroots community involvement

with ISNA, the organization was unable to take advantage of the grassroots momentum.

As a result, the grassroots and ISNA continued to grow further apart.

ISNA leaders started establishing independent organizations to fill the vacuum.

The 1990's saw the establishment of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), the

Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), and the American Muslim Council

(AMC). The Muslim Brotherhood and activist members eventually left the organization

and established their own organization called the Muslim American Society (MAS).

ElHattab argues that the MAS members were not asked to leave; instead, they chose to

leave ISNA. He suggests that MAS seeks to duplicate the work of ISNA.[265] The members

of ISNA and the MSA affiliated with the *Jamaat-e-Islami* in India and Pakistan separated

from the ISNA to form the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA).

Conclusion

Budgetary crisis left ISNA very weak and at the brink of collapse. However, as

we learn in chapter three, external events gave ISNA some important opportunities.

ISNA's leaders failed to capture the energy that arose after the Iranian Revolution and to

provide the appropriate direction for that time, thereby losing an important opportunity.

They set out to establish organizational systems and embarked upon some innovative

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[265] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab, October 10, 2011

programs to build upon their diversity. However, because of the inconsistent distribution of power and lack of continuity, ISNA was unable to sustain these innovative programs.

Moreover, many of those who helped establish the organization had left. Some departed because they thought ISNA did not fit their vision of Islam in America. These people were primarily activists and HSAAMs. Some left the organization because of what was perceived as the dictatorial style of leadership of Ahmad Zaki Hammad. Most left the organization because they thought ISNA was a sinking ship. Sayyid M. Syeed was surprised when he reached out to ISNAs leaders for advice about serving as the next secretary general. He was advised not to take the step because "ISNA was an experiment that had failed."[266] Some leaders sought other specialized national efforts that could fulfill their vision of Muslim American needs.

Compromise helped establish ISNA. It stitched together a patchwork of ideas. By the end of its first decade, these patches had started to fray. It would take external events to help revive the organization. For all these negatives, the organization started its second decade with many advantages that were not there at its inception. Most importantly, the debate about its identity was temporarily put to rest. Not due to consensus but because few considered ISNA to be viable. Why argue passionately over something that had little chance of success?

However, some ideas succeeded. First, Muslim Americans needed to be engaged with the political process, and ISNA could help facilitate that process. Second, ISNA's leaders realized that Islam was here to stay, independently — that is, not simply as an

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[266] Interview with Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed , May 1, 2012

extension of the Muslim world.[267] Third, the grassroots Muslim American community among ISNA's core constituents had matured. Muslim American religious scholars and motivational speakers had become household names. During this decade, these Muslim American scholars and speakers became equivalent to rock stars in the community displacing the need for international patchwork Islam. Fourth, legitimacy through an international stamp of approval became less important in North America. ISNA's role internationally had two dimensions in this decade: to serve as a bridge between the Muslim world and the West. ISNA's leaders sought to convey to the West that not everything in the Muslim world was bad. These leaders also believed that Muslim Americans had developed a model that needed to be shared with the Muslim world.[268] Finally, ISNA's leaders realized that nothing could be achieved without the organization being a viable entity.

If ISNA could survive its fiscal problems, it could move forward with a more cohesive identity and a national brand. As we will see in the next chapter, ISNA's refusal to abandon its values at times of crisis and strong centralized leadership provide it with the impetus to move forward.

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[267] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab, October 10, 2011

[268] Ibid

Chapter Three — Centralizing Innovation: Legitimacy through Effectiveness

(1990–2001)

In August 1990, Iraqi troops invaded and occupied Kuwait. This troop movement followed a breakdown in negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait that were brokered by the United States. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states immediately requested military assistance from the United States to Saudi Arabia. This request placed ISNA leaders in a difficult position. Saudi and Gulf donors of ISNA pressured the organization and other Muslim Americans to support American involvement in fighting Iraq. At a time when ISNA desperately needed funding, it had to choose between endorsing American intervention in the war, as supported by its Gulf donors, and siding with Muslim Americans' opposition to such intervention. In so doing, ISNA had to choose between pragmatism and idealism. ISNA stayed true to its values and its Muslim American constituents by opposing American military involvement in this conflict. In the short run, this decision further devastated the organization's financial situation.

The possibility that ISNA might cease to exist was not just a hypothetical one, as we saw in the previous chapter. The gravity of the threat explains why, from 1990 through 2001, ISNA leaders focused on building a viable and sustainable institution. ISNA's imminent demise had caused many of its leaders to leave the organization, which created both competition and opportunity. The competition arose when many of these leaders went on to establish independent organizations that assumed various roles previously associated with ISNA. The opportunity came from a chance for ISNA's remaining leaders to move forward in greater unity. ISNA leaders hired the trusted Islamic leader, Sayyid Syeed, to serve as a powerful, centralized leader. Ceding greater

control to the chief executive officer or secretary general was about necessity rather than a change of heart. The organization's pursuit of effectiveness and sustainability drove its quest for legitimacy and diversity. Establishing itself as an effective and sustainable nonprofit organization, ISNA ensured its role as the nation's preeminent Muslim American organization by 2001.

ISNA's programs during this period were designed to further Syeed's goal that ISNA become the Muslim American version of Billy Graham - an influential Muslim American organization that could be in dialogue and partner with government and interfaith partners. To be recognized as an influential organization, ISNA first had to become an effective nonprofit organization.

ISNA's programs during this period were organized by staff. Volunteers participated in the organization's programs, but their roles were redefined. Now, control remained with ISNA's staff. This centralization, however, produced mixed results in ISNA's quest for diversity. Engaging with grassroots volunteers allowed new blood into the organization. Nonetheless, because no African-American Muslims were on the staff and because programs were held largely in partnership with suburban mosques, centralization hampered ISNA's relationship with African-American Muslims.

In this chapter, I explain how ISNA's programs branded, transformed, and expanded its influence from 1991to 2001. ISNA's programs, especially its convention and magazine, resulted in greater internal and external legitimacy. The success of its programs allowed ISNA to attain cognitive legitimacy. Cognitive legitimacy is the most

powerful form of legitimacy and is attained when individuals and institutions consider the organization inevitable.[269]

I begin charting ISNA's journey from 1991 to 2001 by examining key events and trends. Next, we examine how ISNA's centralization of power and its embrace of a nonprofit identity helped the organization implement a cohesive vision as the Muslim American Billy Graham. Its centralized power structure enabled the organization to deliver effective programs and a disciplined communications strategy that, together, helped ISNA attain cognitive legitimacy both internally and externally. However, to attain this effectiveness, the organization had to be selective in its quest for diversity. Homogeneity may deliver programmatic success and legitimacy, but it limits the scope of diversity.

Setting the Stage

Major national events that directly or indirectly included Muslim Americans helped to define the period from 1990 through 2001. The first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 jolted the United States and caused it to associate the terrorist attack with the Muslim world,[270] which increased Islamophobia. In this situation, ISNA's Muslim American leaders reflected the views of their communities. Some pointed to American foreign policy as the underlying cause for this violence. Others, including ISNA, argued that it was a case of entrapment. In fact, the cover story of the December 1993 issue of *Islamic Horizons* magazine was "World Trade Center Bombing: Justice or

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[269] Suchman, Mark C., "Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches" *The Academic of Management Review* (July 1995) p. 577

[270] GhaneaBassiri, p. 337

Entrapment."[271] The story was based upon an interview with Michael Warren who served

as the legal advisor of Sheikh Abdur-Rahman (also known as *the blind sheikh*). The

World Trade Center bombing and Muslim American reactions increased prejudice and

hate crimes against Muslims.

During this period, interactions between the Muslim community and the United

States government were confusing. On November 16, 1993, President Bill Clinton invited

ISNA leaders to witness the signing of the *Religious Freedom Restoration Act* at the

White House.[272] The United States military inducted the first Muslim chaplain as well.[273]

Clinton also met with Salman Rushdie, creating disappointment among ISNA leaders.[274]

Moreover, when the Oslo Agreement was made between the PLO and Israel and brokered

by President Clinton in 1993, the U.S. government saw the agreement as a major political

accomplishment, but ISNA saw it as a political farce.[275] As a final point, the Oklahoma

City bombing in 1995 and the Centennial Olympic Park bombing during the Summer

Olympics in Atlanta were falsely attributed to Muslims.[276] These events profoundly

affected the narrative of a community under fire, and the newly formed Council on

American Islamic Relations (CAIR) published *A Rush to Judgment* to document over two

hundred hate crimes that occurred as a result of the bombing in Oklahoma City.[277] On the

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[271] "World Trade Center: Justice or Entrapment?" *Islamic Horizons* (December 1993) p. 30

[272] *Islamic Horizons* (December 1993) p. 2

[273] Ibid

[274] "Mr. President, it is a matter of respect" *Islamic Horizons* (December 1993), p. 43

[275] "Settlement or Political Farce?" *Islamic Horizons* (December 1993) p. 14

[276] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 344

[277] Ibid

other hand, American foreign policy in Bosnia and Kosovo met with Muslim American approval. A community that traditionally opposed military involvement in the Muslim world found itself allied with American foreign policy. This period was capped by the USS *Cole* bombing in 2000 followed by the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.[278]

Events like these spurred the need for active engagement of Muslim Americans in the public sphere.[279] Whereas in the past, American foreign policy in the Muslim world was the motivation for Muslim engagement in politics,[280] Muslim Americans were now a community under siege. As victims of religious hatred Muslim Americans were on the frontlines of America's Civil Rights Movement. Their religious identity was misunderstood and demonized because of the American media, public and political leaders' lack of understanding of the faith. As a result, self-preservation required political engagement, and ISNA was expected to be at the frontlines of this engagement.

However, the organization's revival was sparked by its position against American intervention in Gulf War I and the underlying value behind that position. Across the Muslim world, public sentiment seemed to support Iraq rather than the United States and its allies in the Gulf.[281] A long-time Baathist and secularist, Saddam Hussein suddenly sought to adopt an Islamic posture. However, American Muslims were not fooled by his rhetoric or his invasion of Kuwait.[282] "Disingenuous sloganeering that uses Islamic

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[278] We will discuss the impact of the terrorist attacks on 9/11/2001 in the next chapter.

[279] Nimer, p. 183

[280] Leonard, p. 106

[281] Greenhouse, Steven. "WAR IN THE GULF: North Africa; Pro-Iraq Sentiment Is Increasing in North Africa" *New York Times* (January 26, 1991) http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/26/world/war-in-the-gulf-north-africa-pro-iraq-sentiment-is-increasing-in-north-africa.html

[282] GhaneaBassiri, p. 333

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terminology in an attempt to legitimize personal ambition, regional power, and national

economic interests is hollow rhetoric that should deceive no one, least of all world

Muslims."[283]

American Muslims did not approve of Saddam, but they also thought that

American military involvement in the Gulf exposed a hypocritical U.S. foreign policy,

given its support of the regime during the Iran-Iraq War. ISNA and various Muslim

American leaders, including Imam Warith Deen (WD) Mohammed, were invited by

Saudi Arabia to a conference in Mecca to seek their endorsement of the U.S.-led war

against Iraq. The Saudis believed that their financial support for their Muslim American

brethren in the past would grant them influence in this matter. W.D. Mohammed

endorsed the war in a strong statement:

> We have Islamic interest first, and then other interests come second, not
> before Islamic interests. . . . I am comfortable with the decision which
> Saudi Arabia has taken to defend its borders and to accept the support of
> its friends — not only America but other friends, Muslim nations and non-
> Muslim friendly nations. As an American, I compliment my government
> for protecting its interest, the interest of the American people, the global
> interest, for being friendly to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and for
> respecting the religion of Al-Islam. I am convinced, for I have met with
> presidents myself; I met with two presidents in my life as a representative
> of the religion of Al-Islam in America, and I am convinced that President
> Bush has great respect for the major religions of the world, Al-Islam
> included. Also I am told that many Muslims are believing that the military
> of the United States, the American or US army is occupying the Sacred
> Places. This is not true. We arrived in Jeddah, and I haven't seen the
> military yet. We are now in Mecca, and I haven't seen the military.[284]

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[283] Ibid

[284] GhaneaBassiri, p. 335

ISNA and the other Muslim American organizations refused to support the war and issued an opposing statement.

> Worldwide Muslim sentiment rejects in principle the presence of foreign military forces in the birthplace of Islam. It is a dangerous precedent, sparking memories of colonialism, the lasting repercussions of which remain devastating to the life, liberty, and culture of the region and its ecology. It is more resented since it is seen as emanating from a principal ally of the Israelis as well as a superpower that cannot readily be compelled to withdraw. A continuing policy of categorical support for Israeli occupation, ambitions, and oppression of the Palestinian people, coupled with an overriding focus on controlling energy resources, opens a serious credibility gap between the American decision-makers and the Muslim and Arab peoples. Present concerted international measures [taken against Iraq] stand in clear contrast to actions taken against Israeli aggressions.[285]

This was a watershed moment in the organization's history. It chose to declare its independence and stay true to its idealistic values rather than succumb to the risk of losing foreign funding. This public pronouncement, while financially devastating, increased its standing in the Muslim American community and furthered its quest for internal legitimacy.

Taking this position reassured ISNA's membership that the organization would not sell its values based on funding. The short-term result was a decrease in funding, and the organization teetered on the brink of insolvency; the theme of its 1991 Annual Convention, *Will the Community Survive?* reflected the serious concerns of its leaders.[286] ISNA was blacklisted by Saudi funders, and the Saudi government made it more difficult

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[285] "A Statement on the Recent Conflict in the Middle East," *Islamic Horizons* (July/August 1990) p. 8 -9

[286] "ISNA's 28th Convention: Will the Community Survive?" *Islamic Horizons* (winter 1991) p.8

for individuals to make donations to the organization.[287] Of all the organizations that opposed this war, ISNA was the only one to pay this price. This price came in large part because of its national stature, but also because there was probably a higher expectation by the Saudis for support from ISNA leaders. However, in the long run, Muslim Americans received a clear and public message that ISNA was not an extension of an overseas movement or government. Ultimately, the Gulf War pushed Muslim American organizations away from overseas funding.[288]

As we discussed in the previous chapter, this period is also highlighted the fact that ISNA was no longer the only Muslim American organization.[289] Muslim Americans were under greater scrutiny and were subjected to Islamophobia, hate crimes, and prejudice.[290] As Muqtedar Khan states, "America has yet to free itself from the tyranny of prejudice."[291] Muslim Americans sought to dispel the notion that, as GhaneaBassiri puts it, they were part of "an 'external Islam' and an 'external America.'"[292]

In his hope to revive the organization, Abdalla Idris Ali, the ISNA president, urged unity quoting the *Quranic surah:* "So fear Allah and mend the relationships between yourselves: obey Allah and His messenger if you do believe."[293]

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[287] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab, October 10, 2011

[288] GhaneaBassiri, p. 335

[289] Nimer, Mohamed, "Muslims in American Public Life" in *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens* ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (Oxford University Press 2002) p.172

[290] Smith, Jane I., *Islam in America* (Columbia University Press: New York 1999) p. 176

[291] Khan, Muqtedar M. A., *American Muslims: Bridging Faith and Freedom* (AMANA Publications 2002) p. 38

[292] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 336

[293] Quran, Surah *Al-Anfal* 8:1

The spirit of this beautiful verse is reflected in the evolution of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) where Muslims coming from diverse cultural backgrounds have melded into one in their urge to direct the power of Islam for making a better America. . . . The seed that was planted over three decades ago has sprouted many strong trees that are serving the cause of Islam and Muslims not only in North America but overseas as well."[294]

ISNA leadership recognized that it was no longer the only Muslim American national organization. Organizations such as the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), American Muslim Council (AMC), Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), and Muslim American Society (MAS) were just a few of the national organizations assuming aspects of ISNA's previous work. In addition, grassroots and regional Muslim American nonprofits helped fill the void while ISNA floundered, and Muslim American institutions were being established across America through grassroots activism. As Karen Leonard states, "American Muslim institutions and organizations map themselves onto the American landscape in interesting ways."[295]

In light of this new Muslim American institutional landscape, ISNA's president echoed a new vision for ISNA — unity through cooperation and collaboration. ISNA would become a platform rather than an umbrella with a new and evolving role that depended on the organization's survival and rehabilitation. National and international events influenced this new direction, as did the new leader of the organization, Dr. Syeed.

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[294] ISNA Annual Report (1993), p. 4

[295] Leonard, Karen Isaksen, *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research* (Russel Sage Foundation: New York 2003) p. 72

The most important consequence of ISNA's troubles and national events of the time was realizing that it needed to reorganize successfully in order to serve Islam in America. By design and necessity, this reorganization resulted in a strong executive officer at the ISNA headquarters.[296] In 1993, ISNA announced that Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed would take on the role of secretary general. Commenting on the appointment of the new secretary general, ISNA President Abdalla Idris Ali said, "It was significant that the transformation would bode well for ISNA and inaugurate a new era at ISNA that stresses greater cooperation and service. I am convinced that Sayyid Syeed is one of the few who can revitalize ISNA at this critical juncture in its development."[297]

Secretary General Sayyid M. Syeed was uniquely qualified to serve in a leading role during a period of revival, rebuilding, and rebranding.[298] He was a trusted insider who commanded respect among diverse factions. He was a freedom fighter bearing the physical scars of his service and the leader of the Muslim Student Association when ISNA was established; he was also the leader of a worldwide Islamic student movement, a scholar, and a politically astute and charismatic leader and speaker.

Syeed was faced with a growing polarization within the Muslim American community. Muqtedar Khan notes how there is a growing polarization between "Muslim Democrats" and "Muslim Isolationists."[299] Muslim democrats focus on American democracy while isolationists on American foreign policy. He argues the latter are a

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[296] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, May 2, 2011

[297] "New ISNA Secretary General Looks Forward to Fresh Era" *ISNA Matters* (July 1994) p. 1

[298] For more on Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed's biography see the appendix.

[299] Khan, p. 27

minority but have a bigger influence in Muslim American organizations. Syeed had the unique ability to be a Muslim Democrat while being perceived, because of his personal Islamist-like history, to be an isolationist. Although he was a cultural pluralist, he was acceptable to the activists. His children married Muslim Americans of Egyptian, Syrian, Yemeni, and Caucasian ethnicity. His youngest children were named Jesus and Moses. Therefore, his personal legitimacy and the fact that ISNA was nearly defunct meant that Syeed enjoyed greater flexibility than previous secretaries general.

ISNA as a Religious Nonprofit Organization — Reframing Roles, Responsibilities, and Leadership

Syeed's position was strengthened by the facts that his position was not an interim one and that the organization was largely defunct. His position as secretary general paralleled that of a chief executive officer and made him spokesperson for the organization. This relative stability in his leadership role allowed Syeed to utilize both systemic and episodic forms of power, rather than only an episodic form. The *Majlis Ash-Shura* had the roles of policy-making and oversight. Syeed saw the roles of the *Majlis Ash-Shura* and the executive council as similar to those of the United States Congress while the secretary general was the commander-in-chief and his directors the cabinet. This perspective gave the position immense power.

In Syeed's view, the organization's past weakness was that the position of Secretary General was weak and driven by factional interests over institutional interests. Moreover, although members of the *majlis* and executive council were elected to their positions, they were volunteers. After each board meeting, they went back to their private lives where they had other priorities. If ISNA were to succeed, the secretary general's

position needed boldness, decisiveness, and power. Syeed's perspective came not only from the fact that he became secretary general at a time of crisis but also from his reputation and history, which I provide in the appendix.[300]

His experience with organizations such as Kashmiri American Council (KAC), American Muslim Council (AMC), and International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) enabled him to seek immediate funds from a core of Kashmiri, Pakistani, and Arab donors. He states he would recite a famous South Asian poem: "*ashiq ka janaza hai zara dhoom say nikal."* Translated it means: "If it is the funeral of a beloved let us do it in style." He argued that if ISNA should cease, its closure should come from the belief that it is no longer needed, not from a lack of trying.

He knew that for ISNA to succeed, it must have trained professionals, must implement successful programs, must be entrepreneurial, and must project its leadership in the interfaith and Muslim American community. He also needed a group of professionals who were committed to him as secretary general and the organization instead of factional interests. In the past, the emphasis was on hiring people who believed in the mission with the view that they could learn on the job. Syeed knew that employment and personnel policies differ between religious and secular nonprofits,[301] and he believed that he needed the best practices of nonprofits, businesses, and technology.

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[300] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, May 2, 2011

[301] Cadge, Wendy and Robert Wuthnow "Religion and the Nonprofit Sector" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006). P. 482

Syeed also looked outside the traditional factions that provided the organization's staff and volunteers. Although previous employees were from within the Islamic movement, the new generation of managers consisted of committed Muslims who had previously not been a part of the larger movement. Trained in management and program development in American colleges and universities, they had the skills required, although not the extensive Islamic knowledge of their predecessors. He reached out to his contacts in the Muslim community and academic institutions seeking Muslim professionals. Doing so also assured increasing the number of cultural pluralists at ISNA's headquarters where power was centralized. Not one of his initial recruits was part of the Muslim Student Association, the Muslim Youth of North America, or a regional Muslim organization.

In the 1990s, the majority of people on Syeed's staff were thirty years old or younger, and they held degrees in business administration, nonprofit management, public affairs, philanthropy, and information technology. In Syeed's initial days as secretary general, recruitment was very difficult. He helped stabilize the organization by promising immigration sponsorship for American-trained, foreign-born staff members. Opportunely, the Immigration Act of 1990, which became effective in 1991, significantly increased the number of employment-based visas.[302] By 1998, three of the five directors were people ISNA sponsored for H1 B1 visas so that they could work in the United States. Two of the four immigrant professionals had their permanent residence sponsored by ISNA. The process to sponsor an employee's permanent residence can take years, and these staff members were required to remain with ISNA for at least five years. A number of ISNA

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[302] Nwokocha, Paschal O., "American Employment-Based Immigration Program in a Competitive Global Marketplace: Need for Reform" *William Mitchell Law Review* (Vol 35: 1 2008) p. 42

employees who serve the organization today received their permanent residence through ISNA sponsorship. In the next decade, ISNA *majlis* prohibited immigration sponsorship for employees.

Lack of resources pushed Syeed toward innovative programs like the ISNA Fellowship in Nonprofit Management and Governance (Fellowship) in partnership with the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy. The program recruited professionals for a yearlong graduate program during which students took courses at Indiana University in nonprofit and philanthropic studies while interning for ISNA. Fellowships included tuition scholarships and a monthly stipend.[303] This program resolved two issues: It provided needed human resources, and it served the Muslim American community.

The community needed trained Muslim nonprofit professionals at the grassroots level for the ever-growing Muslim American nonprofit sector. Furthermore, ISNA got vital human resources through the internship program. Finally, this program brought the organization greater legitimacy. ISNA's partnership with a major university and a leader in the study of philanthropy enhanced the organization's legitimacy as a leading Muslim organization. This partnership was also an attempt to gain a form of pragmatic legitimacy known as *influence legitimacy.* Influence legitimacy occurs when constituents view the organization as being responsive to their issues (for example, human resource needs of grassroots Muslim nonprofits).[304]

This program was also another attempt to engage a more diverse audience in ISNA's inner workings. In this way, the organization could reduce the influence of

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[303] Advertisement, *Islamic Horizons* (January/February 1999) p. 59

[304] Suchman, p. 578

factions by broadening its base, thereby making its centralized organization more powerful. More than half the program's recruits where women. Program participants included immigrants and native Muslim Americans. African-American, Caucasian, and second-generation immigrants were part of this program. Finally, this program included primarily cultural pluralists.

Syeed sought to implement both prongs of diversity in the organization. Through the first prong, he first relied on a bonding type of social capital to increase the number of underrepresented members. This approach simply brings diverse groups of people together, as discussed in chapter one. The second prong included creating mission-relevant activities to bridge social capital and sustain diversity through the fellowship program.[305]

Similarly, ISNA first sought to engage underutilized populations (for example, women, cultural pluralists, second-generation immigrants, Caucasians, and African-Americans) by recruiting them into the program (the discrimination and fairness approach). Syeed hoped to reach out to new populations through these new recruits (the access and legitimacy approach). All of these fellows were given an opportunity to be a part of the organization's staff, which enabled them to foster change in the organization (the learning and effectiveness path).[306]

The success of the program is attributed to the fact that all graduates of the program went on to serve Muslim organizations at some level. In 2005, three of the five

[305] Weisinger, Judith Y., and Paul Salipante Jr. "An Expanded Theory of Pluralistic Interactions in Voluntary Nonprofit Organizations" *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* (Winter 2007) p. 158

[306] For more about these approaches see: Weisinger, Judith Y. and Paul F. Salipante, "A Grounded Theory for Building Ethnically Bridging Social Capital in Voluntary Organizations" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2005 34) p. 32

heads of ISNA departments were former ISNA fellows. In 2012, former ISNA fellows led the Convention, Programs, Interfaith, and Community Outreach departments, and a fourth graduate is responsible for annual fund and planned giving within the ISNA Development Foundation. A $500,000 donation from a former MSA member who returned to Saudi Arabia to run the family business made this program possible. Between 1999 and 2001, the program trained ten professionals. Six of these people went on to work for ISNA, and two went on to work for regional and local organizations and remained involved with Islamic organizations. The program was suspended in 2002 because of lack of funds but was revived in 2007 as the HRH Prince Talal Bin Waleed-ISNA Fellowship through a donation from the Kingdom Foundation.

Syeed benefitted from the fact that ISNA was nearly defunct when he became secretary general and, thus, many factions had disengaged or left. This turn of events left him free to recruit a diverse group of trained professionals and to further centralize power within ISNA's headquarters. Consequently, the organization's base became more diverse, which allowed him to look beyond traditional factions for support in efforts to revive the organization. This helped him seek legitimacy through building an effective, innovative, and sustainable organization.

Legitimacy through Effectiveness and Centralization

ISNA's programs during this period had two aims. First, to develop a sustainable financial base for the organization; second, to give staff leading roles in the programs so that they would be located at ISNA's headquarters, thus centralizing these activities.

Developing a Sustainable Financial Base

The organization sought financial stability three ways — by increasing its

American donor base, by reducing deficits through spending controls and prudent

budgeting, and by delivering revenue-based programs. Achieving these objectives was

made easier by the hiring professionals trained in business, nonprofit management,

philanthropy, and technology. This change in hiring practice suggests that the

organization began using best practices to spur its success.

To diversify its member and donor base in America, in 1996 ISNA launched the

Founders Luncheon Coordinating Committee, its Planned Giving program, an electronic

funds transfer program, an electronic database to track membership, dual membership

programs and an endowment. The Founders Luncheon Coordinating Committee (IFCC),

was, in essence, a development committee made up of some of the largest institutional

donors and people identified as major donor prospects. At that time, the IFCC primarily

consisted of Muslim American physicians. The IFCC members solicited support from

friends who attended the convention or were involved with Islamic work at the grassroots

level. This committee remains the cornerstone of ISNA's development program at the

time of this writing.

This committee played two useful functions in ISNA's pursuit to engage people

beyond the traditional insiders. First, it connected wealthy Muslim Americans to

structured fundraising activities while creating a stronger link between grassroots leaders

and ISNA. Second, these IFCC members were largely cultural pluralists who were

grassroots leaders in their local and regional Muslim American organizations. Despite the

financial success IFCC brought to ISNA its main failure was that it did not engage the

ISNA *majlis*. Development committees are generally a board of directors that engages board members in fundraising.[307] Within ISNA, the *majlis* was not engaged with raising funds for the organization in a formal structured manner.

In terms of ISNA's second goal — to reduce its deficit — although more than a thousand people had given money to ISNA, its *annual* donor base remained below two hundred and fifty donors. In 1998, the organization developed an Excel database to keep better track of donations. In 2000, ISNA expanded this database so that membership, development, conferences, and subscriptions were integrated. By 2012, the organization had moved to the industry's leading fundraising data base, Raisers Edge.[308]

The Planned Giving program launched in 1996 educated Muslim Americans about ways to donate, including Islamic wills and trusts. Planned giving experts gave presentations at ISNA's annual conventions. Between 1997 and 1998, financial planners met with more than one hundred families whose combined estates were valued at more than $250 million. ISNA was included as a beneficiary in the majority of these estates. Most of these people were relatively young, and those estates have continued to grow over time.

In 1996, the organization established an endowment fund. Soon afterward, the ISNA *Majlis Ash-Shura* mandated that ten percent of all undesignated funds raised in the United States and forty percent of all undesignated funds raised overseas would be placed in the endowment fund.[309] The fund was required to be invested through the North

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[307] Howe, Fisher, *The Board Member's Guide to Fund Raising* (Jossey-Bass 1991) p. 6

[308] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab,

[309] ISNA Annual Report (1996) p. 5

American Islamic Trust (NAIT). In 2000, more than $400,000 was taken out of the endowment fund and used to pay off the remaining debt on an NAIT loan that ISNA had received to cover debt it accumulated between 1981 and 1992.[310] In 2001, $865,078 remained in the endowment fund.[311] In 1993, the organization established the ISNA Development Foundation (IDF) with the vision of setting up an independent organization focused on raising revenue for the ISNA by way of fundraising, investment, and business ventures. ISNA appointed a board in 1998, but the organization was never able to operate independently and remained a department within ISNA.

In 1996, the organization launched a dual membership program.[312] The program allowed affiliated grassroots organizations to charge their membership an additional ten dollars per year and then pay that amount to ISNA. In that way, all members would be affiliated with both their grassroots Islamic organizations and ISNA. The membership numbers rose from over five thousand in 1996[313] to nearly thirteen thousand in 2001.[314] This increase diversified ISNA's membership pool, which became an important pillar in the organization's governance model.

By identifying themselves as ISNA members, these new members were embracing a bonding form of social capital. Once they became members, they had an opportunity to participate in ISNA elections, receive *Islamic Horizons,* and take part in

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[310] ISNA Annual Report (2000) p. 29

[311] ISNA Annual Report (2001) p. 27

[312] ISNA Annual Report (1996) p. 6

[313] ISNA Annual Report (1996) p. 6

[314] ISNA Annual Report (2001) p. 13

ISNA events. These new members were largely cultural pluralists who opposed funding from foreign governments and supported engagement with the U.S. government and interfaith world.[315]

Related to ISNA's third goal — to deliver revenue-based programs — were its annual conventions, which had been consistently a central focus in its programming endeavors. However, the conventions, managed by volunteers, repeatedly resulted in deficits. During this period, ISNA managed the event and worked to make the convention financially viable. By the end of this period, nearly half the organization's revenue came from its annual conventions. Moreover, the conventions secured a substantial surplus for ISNA by increasing the number of attendees and exhibit space and by attracting major sponsorships.

The 1993 Annual Convention revenue was $155,129, slightly more than twenty-eight percent of all revenues.[316] In 2001, revenue generated from the convention approached one million dollars, nearly forty percent of all revenues.[317] These percentages become even more meaningful when we consider that total organizational revenue went from just under $850,000 in 1993 to more than $2.6 million in 2001. The annual conventions remain a driving force in the organization's financial success.

As we have seen, the *Islamic Horizons* magazine was subject to the organization's financial challenges, and ISNA's final big thrust for financial stability was aimed at making the magazine a viable enterprise. The first step was to look at the staffing model

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[315] Interview with Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, May 1, 2011

[316] ISNA Annual Report (1993) p. 36

[317] ISNA Annual Report (2001) p. 26

of the program. Under Syeed, the magazine's only staff member was its manager, Omar

Bin Abdullah. Abdullah had served as Syeed's assistant in Virginia when he directed

IIIT. Abdullah managed the magazine's content and advertising himself through direction

by Syeed, which controlled costs but also continued a model of centralized power. A

graphic designer was hired on contract to assist Abdullah.

The magazine's mandate was to break even, or strive to break even, which

resulted in a strategic investment toward increasing circulation and advertising dollars.

Islamic Horizons clearly benefitted by the successes of the conventions. The idea was

that if ISNA could reach thirty-five thousand people through an annual event, it had the

ability to reach greater numbers through its publication. This attracted greater advertising

revenue for the magazine. As a result, by 1995 readers had to browse through as many as

six pages of advertising before reaching the magazine's table of contents, and nearly

every page had some kind of advertisement.

Interestingly, the magazine also benefitted from the growing number of eligible

men and women seeking spouses. Muslim Americans were located across the country,

making matchmaking difficult. Religious norms forbade dating, which also made

searching for a spouse an uphill task. The "Matrimonial" pages became an important

resource for these people and their families. These classified listings slowly became an

important revenue-generating tool for the magazine. It became important enough to be

included by Edward Curtis in his sourcebook on Muslim Americans.[318] The magazine's

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[318] Curtis IV, Edward E., *The Columbia Sourcebook of Muslims in the United States* (Columbia University Press 2008) p. 166

revenue grew from \$13,840 in 1993[319] to \$179,778 in 2001[320]. Again, financial stability

helped the organization sustain this magazine; it also helped the organization move

toward being inevitable part of Muslim American life, which is a requirement for

cognitive legitimacy.

Interfaith outreach and political outreach were key priorities for Syeed. To

become the representative of Muslim Americans, ISNA had to attain external legitimacy

in the larger interfaith world. Despite the importance of this interfaith work, Syeed was

cognizant of the organization's financial situation. Unlike in the past when priorities

could be carried out without much thought to cost, Syeed sought a more moderate

approach. His interfaith programs started mostly as local initiatives in Indiana largely

because of the organization's fiscal reality. The location of the ISNA headquarters in

Plainfield made it a great resource for Indiana's interfaith community and local academic

institutions. Conversely, they were a resource for ISNA because it could not afford an

extensive outreach of interfaith activities in New York and Washington, DC. Holding

these interfaith dialogues and events in Indiana allowed the secretary general to engage in

such activities at a very small cost. Syeed also did not think ISNA leaders had a deep

commitment to or understanding of the local interfaith community. Spending precious

resources may have opened an unnecessary debate about whether ISNA should be

engaged in interfaith work.[321] This interfaith outreach included convention invitations to

interfaith leaders to ISNA's annual conventions — for example, to leaders of faith groups

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[319] ISNA Annual Report (1993) p. 36

[320] ISNA Annual Report (2001) p. 26

[321] Interview with Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, May 1, 2011

such as the National Council of Churches, Bread for the World, and the Council of Catholic Bishops.

Centralization of Programs

ISNA moved away from granting funds to the regions and allowing local grassroots organizations or leaders to deliver its programs. Instead, the primary program organizers were staff, which allowed the organization to centralize its services. The programs included conferences and events, *Islamic Horizons*, interfaith outreach, and political outreach.

In addition, the annual conventions were organized differently. In the past, volunteers determined the site, negotiated the contract, awarded the contracts, designed the program, and worked with other volunteers to implement the event. Syeed redefined these roles. His office selected the cities, negotiated the contracts, awarded the contracts, and established the budget. The Conventions Department developed and issued a detailed policy that outlined the roles and responsibilities of the volunteers. During the period 1995–2002, neither *Majlis Ash-Shura* nor the executive council selected where the convention was held. The ISNA *Majlis Ash-Shura* established a volunteer Convention Program Committee (CPC). Members of ISNA staff were ex officio and vocal members of that committee. Syeed was actively involved in selecting the theme for the conventions, and the CPC then designed the programs. The ISNA staff implemented the conventions. Volunteers in the local grassroots community helped during the actual events. The role of the chair of the conventions was redefined so that he was the liaison between the staff and the volunteer steering committee. Eventually, the chair's role was

further redefined to include mainly managing security and trouble-shooting the convention.

In 2000, the Convention Program Committee (CPC) and *majlis* made a significant change in the way the program was developed. The CPC requested proposals from the grassroots Muslim community.[322] The Convention Program Committee designed the main sessions. Each ninety-minute time slot could have one main session and as many as fifteen parallel sessions, and the committee sought grassroots input for the parallel sessions. As a result, the grassroots community and fellow Muslim American organizations became involved with shaping the convention programs. These changes came in part because of a concern that ISNA was increasingly disconnected from the grassroots community[323] and needed to become more engaged with them. However, the changes were also ISNA leaders' attempts for greater control. By 2000, certain members of the *majlis* were concerned about the power exerted by the secretary general's office. Now that the organization had survived and was considered a success there was a push for greater *majlis* control. Despite this tension at the end of this period, Syeed played a very strong role in determining themes, program content, location, and speakers for the conventions.

ISNA's financial stability and effective programs in and of themselves did not secure its legitimacy as the representative of Muslim Americans, although they did provide a platform for doing so. Legitimacy required acceptance internally and externally that ISNA could uniquely serve that purpose.

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[322] "Parallel Session: Proposal Guidelines" *Islamic Horizons* (March/April 2000) p. 52

[323] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab, October 10, 2011

Legitimacy through Branding and Ritualization

Branding and selective ritualization of its program also enabled ISNA to attain cognitive legitimacy. ISNA sought to brand itself as a successful organization that could serve Muslim Americans in their quest to integrate faith and practice. At the same time, ISNA offered to interact with the American interfaith initiatives and the political sphere as a key interlocutor for the Muslim American community. ISNA had already assured Muslim Americans of its independence through its stand against American intervention in the Gulf War. In light of that opposition, ISNA needed to show politicians and the interfaith community that it could legitimately partner with them on issues involving Muslim Americans. Doing so required an effective internal and external communications strategy and the ability to deliver equally effective programs. The keys to its success were its events (including the annual conventions), the *Islamic Horizons* magazine, and its outreach to interfaith and political leaders.

Legitimacy through Branding and Ritualization — Events

All religious organizations, including Muslim American organizations, have long recognized that events are potentially successful strategies. American religious organizations used conventions to bring churches together. In fact, according to Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, among black Baptists, the term *convention* has almost the same meaning as denomination.[324] Curtis argues that conventions were rituals of the Nation of Islam and an essential part of its religious identity.[325] The Federation of Islamic

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[324] Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks *Rightesous Discontent: the Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Harvard University Press 2003) p. 2

[325] Curtis IV, Edward E., *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam* (University of North Carolina Press 2006) p. 136

Associations (FIA) used this mechanism to convene Muslim Americans.[326] FIA held

annual conventions and meetings in partnership with local grassroots communities to

help establish Islam in America.[327]

Syeed repeatedly referred to ISNA's conventions as a "mini hajj."[328] Central to his

vision of establishing an Islamic identity was the ritualization of the annual conventions.

Annual conventions are very different from a denomination. Conventions require a

people to show up voluntarily without religious compulsion. A mini hajj and convention

involve the de-centering of central authority. This reinforced ISNA's core values of

pluralism and the voluntaristic nature of the American religious experience.

However, a mini-hajj must draw large numbers of Muslim Americans and be well

organized and sustainable. A small event would fail to result in the spiritual and

emotional experience that a pilgrimage like the hajj would.

The conventions had been held in cities such as Indianapolis, Louisville,

Columbus, Kansas City, and Dayton. The notion was that by holding the conventions in

different cities, the organization would influence different parts of the country. However,

most of these cities had relatively small Muslim populations.[329] To make the event a

success in terms of generating revenue, it needed a large audience. Therefore, during this

decade (1993–2001), the annual conventions were held in Chicago until 2002, with two

exceptions when it was held in Columbus, Ohio, and St. Louis, Missouri.

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[326] Smith, p. 168

[327] GhaneaBassiri, p. 240-241

[328] Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam. Muslims are required, if they can afford to and are able to, do perform a pilgrimage in Mecca once during their lifetime.

[329] Interview with Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, May 1, 2011

Chicago was a larger city than Columbus and St. Louis were and offered a greater potential for both volunteers and attendees. Because convention sites in Chicago are expensive, the 1997 event was moved to the Chicago Hilton and Towers,[330] which offered significant financial concessions for the event. In fact, there was a larger attendance than expected at the 1997 Convention in Chicago, where more than twenty-one thousand Muslim Americans were in attendance.[331] The sheer numbers resulted in the Chicago Fire Marshall becoming involved.[332] We can imagine the effect on attendees from small communities dealing with the crowded and almost suffocating halls during the convention. The event was branded as the largest gathering of Muslims in North America. Syeed immediately called the event a "mini-hajj." The organization built upon this success and continues to host the largest Muslim gathering in North America.

The ability to host the largest Muslim gathering in North America grants advantages. Within the Muslim community, ISNA clearly outpaced fellow Muslim organizations in its ability to assemble so many people. The convention would become an important vehicle for other Muslim organizations, leaders, and businesses, and ISNA had the great advantage of being in charge of this important stage. Muslim American organizations and individuals sought to collaborate with ISNA in order to gain access to the limelight the platform provided.

The convention helped fulfill the organization's quest for legitimacy as the leader of Muslim Americans. The fact that the organization did not represent all of the Muslim

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[330] "Chicago turns Bullish on ISNA again" *Islamic Horizons* (Eid 1998) p. 30

[331] ISNA Annual Report (1997) p. 12

[332] "Chicago turns Bullish on ISNA again" *Islamic Horizons* (Eid 1998) p. 30

American community, particularly a large number of African-American Muslims, did not deter the leaders of ISNA to declare success. Externally, interfaith organizations and politicians did not understand the deep diversity that existed among Muslim Americans. They saw ISNA as the organization that hosted the largest Muslim American event and published the largest Muslim American publication.

The conventions also helped the organization's quest for diversity. Social capital was created among the hundreds of volunteers and thousands of participants who were a part these events. This social capital was then translated into mission-relevant activities (programs) that helped bridge and sustain diversity.[333] It is important to note that these events were more successful in bridging social capital with ethnic immigrants and ideological groups than with African-American Muslims. Although African-American Muslims participated as volunteers and attendees, their number was minimal. This was mainly because the ISNA Annual Convention and Imam Warith Deen Muhammad's organization's annual convention were both held during Labor Day weekend every year.

The conventions were important branding tools for Muslim Americans and ISNA. Their themes reflected the need to change stereotypes about Muslims at a time of increasing prejudice, hatred, and violence against Muslim Americans. The following convention themes illustrate ISNA's attempt to change its narrative about Muslim Americans and Islam.

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[333] For more details on the Two prong theory I use for expanding and sustaining diversity see:

Weisinger, Judith Y., and Paul Salipante Jr. "An Expanded Theory of Pluralistic Interactions in Voluntary Nonprofit Organizations" *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* (Winter 2007) p. 158

1993	Muslims for a Better America
1994	Our Youth, Our Family, Our Future
1995	Islam: Our Choice
1996	Muslims for Peace and Justice
1997	Muslims for Moral Excellence
1998	Muslims for Human Dignity
1999	Islam: Guidance for Humanity
2000	Islam: Faith & Civilization
2001	Strength through Diversity

The themes from 1993 to 1995 were largely inward-looking and focused on helping the organization gain greater success with its constituent groups by emphasizing the need for identity and the fact that ISNA could make a positive contribution to the lives of Muslim Americans. The themes for 1993 and 1996 through 2001 sought to influence narratives about Islam and Muslims. Externally, they endeavored to redefine Muslims and Islam to politicians, media, and interfaith organizations. Internally, they sought to provide guidance to a deeper Muslim American identity.

Beyond the utilitarian advantages they gave the organization, the conventions played an important role in furthering the cause of Islam in America. The convention toward the end of this period featured more than two hundred speakers. These speakers shared best practices, community models, spiritual advice, and lectures on religion. The conventions featured babysitting for children, a children's program for elementary and middle school children, and a programmatic track for high school students, college students, and adults. It was a powerful tool to shape the identities of Muslim Americans who attended primarily to network, learn about their faith, and engage with their community. For Muslim entrepreneurs and causes alike, the convention was a great way to amplify their mission, cause, or product. For friends, the conventions became an

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annual meeting location. In fact, for some people the word "ISNA" represented an event not an organization.

The convention gave ISNA legitimacy in a number of ways. Self-interest among individuals and competing institutions (including CAIR, MPAC, AMC, AMA, MAS, and ICNA) sought to be a part of this large gathering brought the organization pragmatic legitimacy. Convention themes and programming gave the organization moral legitimacy. The themes helped to shine a positive light on Islam and Muslims. Finally, the conventions made the organization a *necessary* organization. That is, in the short-term, if the event were to disappear, no other entity would be able to fill the vacuum.

The success of the annual convention prompted the grassroots Muslim community to seek greater involvement with ISNA. Nearly every community wanted an event like the convention in its city. Although ISNA could not hold its annual conventions in small communities, it was open to holding regional events in them. During this period, these regional events used ISNA's brand and ability to arrange for speakers. These regional events were organized independently in large part, but they helped ISNA's brand grow.

Events remained ISNA's primary vehicle for delivering services. It sought to meet grassroots needs through specialized conferences. In 1999, ISNA organized the Education Forum, which brought together more than four hundred educators from more than one hundred full-time Islamic schools from nearly thirty different states. This event has become the largest gathering of Islamic school educators in North America.

The Community Development Conference was hosted concurrently with the Education Forum. The Community Development Conference brought together more than one hundred grassroots Muslim organizations from more than thirty states in order to

train them on areas of nonprofit management. This event continued for a few years but was eventually discontinued. This program was part Syeed's vision that members of the *majlis* did not share and is an example of how some innovations are not sustained due to conflicts over the proper balance of power within ISNA.

ISNA also hosted conferences such as Islam in America, Islam in American Prisons, and Islam Amongst Latino Americans. Islam in American prisons brought together prison officials from across the country who sought to contribute and share ideas regarding the growing population of Muslim Americans in prisons. The other events were mainly academic conferences that were unable to find a strong academic institutional partner. Also, the board was skeptical of these events, and they were discontinued in the following decade. However, these conferences were part of Syeed's efforts to brand Muslim Americans and understand key constituencies.

ISNA also held training conferences on domestic violence, counseling, conflict resolution, Zakat, Fiqh of Minorities, moon-sighting, Islamic banking, and the Internet. The conferences with the potential to attract financial sponsors and with the ability to raise revenue were held at hotels. However, most of these events were held at the ISNA headquarters in Plainfield.

All these events sought to further the organization's internal and external legitimacy, to engage a larger and more diverse group of Muslim Americans, and to ritualize the events in order to sustain ISNA as part of Muslim Americans' Islamic identity. These events were also an attempt to provide service and direction to Muslim Americans.

Legitimacy through Branding and Ritualization: Islamic Horizons Magazine

Publications play an important role among religious, advocacy, and nonprofit organizations.[334] Publications such as the *Christian Advocate* and *Christian Science Monitor* were important publications in American Christianity. The Muslim American community had a relatively long history of publications disseminating information about Islam, Muslims, and practice. For example, Alexander Russell Webb used publications in his quest to propagate Islam.[335] Edward Curtis outlines how important publications were in gaining religious legitimacy and identity within the Nation of Islam.[336]

Syeed's first act was to revive the *Islamic Horizons* magazine.[337] Rather than just mailing the magazine to its subscribers and members of ISNA, he acquired a larger mailing list. The magazine was an important mouthpiece for the organization. Confining the organization to a small group of members, donors, and subscribers would limit the growth of the organization, and publishing the largest Muslim American publication helped ISNA's brand as an influential organization and helped it achieve cognitive legitimacy. The organization continued to sell subscriptions, but even if a subscriber failed to pay for it, the magazine was still delivered! This decision was explained as follows:

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[334] DiMaggio, Paul, "Nonprofit Organizations and the Intersectoral Division of Labor in the Arts" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006). P. 442-443

[335] Abd-Allah Umar F. *A Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander Russell Webb* (Oxford University Press 2006) p. 162

[336] See generally Curtis IV, Edward E., *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam* (University of North Carolina Press 2006)

[337] Interview with Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, May 1, 2011

It was decided to mail the Islamic Horizons to everyone whose name was on our mailing list. The praise we received was flattering and overwhelming but these words were not transformed into action. Only a few of the readers undertook the effort of becoming subscribers. . . . This placed a great financial burden on ISNA. We will continue to strive to convert these readers into paying subscribers. We are confident that the new Islamic Horizons will regain the confidences of its readers and advertisers and will emerge as a news source from the Muslims of North America. We are also confident that by regaining the confidence of our advertisers, Islamic Horizons will emerge as a tool for promoting Muslim commerce. Thus . . . [Islamic Horizons]will develop eventually into a source of revenue for ISNA.[338]

The magazine's format was changed to become a newsmagazine in response to the concern of leaders, members, and donors that there was an anti-Muslim bias in the general American media. The organization revealed this change to its constituents in its 1994 Annual Report:

Islamic Horizons emerged in a new light . . . ISNA decided to revitalize the magazine and turn it into an effective communication tool, not only for Muslims but to serve as our outreach to our non-Muslim compatriots. We decided to transform it into a newsmagazine where news and events could be viewed from the Muslim perspective. Not only the format was changed but there was also an increase our print order to 25,000. Accordingly a decision was reached to publish it regularly as a bimonthly publication, and eventually as monthly publication with a print order of at least 100,000.[339]

Although some had envisioned a Muslim *Newsweek*, Syeed set his sights on the *Disciple,* a national magazine published by the Disciples of Christ, and the *Christian Science Monitor*. Within months of becoming secretary general, Syeed reached out to

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[338] ISNA Annual Report (1994) p. 9

[339] ISNA Annual Report (1994) p. 8 - 9

Robert Friedly, the editor of the *Disciple*, for advice. Friedly suggested economies of scale and even introduced ISNA to the *Disciple*'s printer.[340]

Another significant change was *Islamic Horizon*'s "Letters to Editors" section. Prior to 1994, this section was a vibrant and active part of the magazine. People with diverse views were permitted to air their views about the organization, the magazine, and national and international issues. Such openness was not consistent with an attempt to have a carefully crafted message or branding. The organization was already walking a fine line while trying to meet very diverse audiences: its constituents, interfaith organizations, the media, and politicians.

As were the convention themes, the magazine was a great opportunity to drive the internal narrative and rebrand Muslims and Islam externally. Libraries, interfaith organizations, political leaders, and media outlets were added to the mailing list. As one surprised recipient expressed:

> I want to express appreciation to you for being on your mailing list for Islamic Horizons. I am amazed at how much you have done for the magazine since you began to develop it not too long ago. . . . I teach a Christian Sunday school class and we spent five weeks studying Islam recently, reading passages from the Qur'an as well as the Bible. . . . One of the resources we used was your editorial about the Muslim commitment to peace and justice. The class members were very impressed with it. I think the overall understanding of the class was that the two faiths have more in common than not.[341]

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[340] Interview with Dr. Syeed, May 1, 2011

[341] "Letters to the Editor" *Islamic Horizons* (January/February 1997) p. 23

This mailing strategy was so extensive that ISNA routinely received requests to be removed from the mailing list.[342]

Islamic Horizons sought to educate America about Islam and the Muslim world. Having "brought together" an audience of Muslim Americans who received *Islamic Horizons*, the organization presented mission-relevant articles to sustain diversity and help develop a cultural pluralist Muslim American identity that was comfortable with both its American and its global roots. Malaysia[343] and the building of Petronas Towers[344] were examples of a functional Muslim country. The story of Pakistan's creation[345] and later the defense of Pakistan's decision to conduct a nuclear test[346] in response to India's were important to ISNA's Pakistani-American constituency. *Islamic Horizons* also served the organization's goal to educate fellow Americans about these critical issues from a Muslim perspective. The story about the suffering of Muslims in Chechnya[347] needed to be heard in America. Moreover, because the American media mostly seemed uninterested, the success in Tajikistan[348] and the authoritarianism in Uzbekistan[349] needed to be brought up. The past glory of Hyderabad needed to be shared with fellow Americans, and doing so would help connect ISNA with the affluent

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[342] Interview Dr. Sayyid M Syeed, May 1, 2011

[343] *Islamic Horizons* (January 1996)

[344] *Islamic Horizons* (July 1996)

[345] *Islamic Horizons* (August 1997)–Special issue for Pakistan Golden Jubilee celebration

[346] *Islamic Horizons* (July 1998)

[347] *Islamic Horizons* (January 1995)

[348] *Islamic Horizons* (May 1998)

[349] *Islamic Horizons* (May 1995)

Hyderabadi-American community.[350] Such great success stories of the Muslim past needed to be shared to help reframe the conversation about Islam and Muslims. Cover stories about the hijab (head scarves for Muslim women)[351], Ramadan (Muslim holy month when Muslims fast from sunup to sundown),[352] and Hajj (annual religious pilgrimage)[353] sought to demystify Islam. The cover story about Jerusalem sought to identify and advocate for the theological and historical connection with the city and Islam.[354] This issue helped reassure the large number of Muslim Americans who were frustrated by the lack of progress of Muslim American organizations on the issue of Palestine.

The magazine furthered the organization's quest for legitimacy by establishing Islam in American history. In 1994, a new book entitled *The Melungeons: The Resurrection of a Proud People* was published by Mercer University Press. ISNA reached out to its author, Brent Kennedy, to provide an article about the story of the Melungeons for *Islamic Horizons*. The article traces Islam's journey to America as a result of the Spanish Inquisition.

> Perhaps Nancy Hanks, the mother of Abraham Lincoln, was Melungeon. It somehow seems fitting that one of America's greatest Presidents should be of mixed race and probably Muslim heritage. But who are the Melungeons? Historical records document that from 1492 through the early 1600's, an estimated 500,000 Jews and Muslims were exiled from Spain and Portugal through a religious witch-hunt known as — the

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[350] *Islamic Horizons* (December 1998)

[351] *Islamic Horizons* (December 1994)

[352] *Islamic Horizons* (January 1997)–this theme was repeated several times during 1993 - 2001

[353] *Islamic Horizons* (March 1996)–this theme was repeated several times during 1993 - 2001

[354] *Islamic Horizons* (January 2001)

> Spanish Inquisition. The Spanish Inquisition, horrible as it was, accomplished something of great historical value for Islam.[355]

This story connects Islam to so many diverse American narratives. Muslims came to America as early as 1492 to escape religious persecution and were, therefore, pioneers in the efforts to build America. Melungeons intermarried with Native Americas. This one story helped ISNA leaders to illustrate the shared narratives between Muslim Americans with fellow Americans whose identity was informed by the *Mayflower*, religious persecution, slavery and oppression, and Native Americans.

In 1998, the magazine dedicated articles to Muhammad Ali[356] and to Muslims in the National Basketball Associations (NBA)[357]. In 1999, ISNA featured the unveiling of the Malcolm X stamp for its cover page for Black Heritage month.[358] This issue featured a whole section on "Islam and the Emancipation of America."[359] This section included seven different articles that generally traced African-American history and slavery and then connected this history to Islam through leaders like Malcolm X. This issue also intertwined the civil rights struggle with Islam. More broadly, it connected the African-American struggle with Islam.

> If you recognize the name: Malcolm-Jamal Warner, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Jamal Wilkes, Muhammad Ali, Ahmad Jamal, the singer Kashif,

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[355] Kennedy, Brian, "The Melungeons: An Untold Story of Ethnic Cleansing in America" *Islamic Horizons* (November/December 1994) p. 24

[356] "Always the Champion" *Islamic Horizons* (January/February 1998) p. 49

[357] "Another Star Joins the NBA Muslim Galaxy" *Islamic Horizons* (January/February 1998) p. 54

[358] "Malcolm C: An Islamic Legacy–A Hero's Recognition is Stamped" *Islamic Horizons* (May/June 1999) p. 16

[359] Ibid, p. 3

the sports commentator Ahmad Rashad. . . . The Islamic influence among African-Americans is an acknowledged fact and growing. These names only reflect the phenomenal growth, saturation and permanency of the Islamic movement in America. . . . What is little known, however, is about Islam or its true relationship to the African-American thrust for freedom and equality.[360]

ISNA understood that winning the new struggle against prejudice required connecting it to the struggles of the past. But perhaps most importantly, this historical connection to African American Islam gave new generations of Muslim Americans born of immigrant families a connection between their identity and America that went further than their parents and grandparents.

Islamic Horizons was another strategic tool and program of the organization. The magazines themes from 1994 through 2001 sought to achieve the following goals: brand Islam and Muslims for an external audience, build a bridge between the Muslim world and America, reframe the narrative within the Muslim community in America, advocate on behalf of Muslim issues, amplify the Muslim American perspective on issues of national and international concerns, and finally, identify key issues and solutions that affected Muslim Americans. *Islamic Horizons* succeeded in achieving cognitive legitimacy for the organization by expanding its readership to include Muslims and non-Muslims and by making it the most circulated Muslim American publication. Because legitimacy, diversity, and the organization's mission could not be achieved simply by sending the magazine to members and subscribers, *Islamic Horizons* extended ISNA beyond the faithful following.

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[360] "Islam and the African-American Struggle" *Islamic Horizons* (May/June 1999) p. 22

Legitimacy through Branding — Political and Interfaith Outreach

ISNA sought to further its mission to serve Muslim Americans through greater engagement with political leaders. Referring to the close relationship that Christian evangelical preacher Billy Graham developed with U.S. presidents from the time of Eisenhower to the time of Clinton, Syeed told his staff that the mission of ISNA was to become "the Muslim Reverend Billy Graham." He went on to say, "ISNA should serve as the conscience of our government and provide the government a partner to dialogue with rather than one to fight with."[361]

ISNA sought to work with the administration. Syeed was appointed to the White House Commission on Race. Ahmed ElHattab, acting secretary general, met with President Clinton in 1992, Syeed met with President Clinton on at least two occasions, and ISNA leaders attended numerous functions at the White House and other federal agencies on behalf of the organization.

In 1998, ISNA sought to educate political leaders about Muslim Americans and ISNA. ISNA issued invitations to the White House, members of the Senate and House of Representatives, and state governors to either attend the convention or to send proclamations or letters to the attendees of that year's convention. Syeed realized that most would not attend; however, the invitation would educate these individuals and their staff about ISNA and its ability to convene the largest Muslim American gathering in the country. Most would send letters or proclamations responding to the invitation. These

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[361] "Islamic Society of North America," in *Encyclopedia of Muslim American History,* ed. Edward E. Curtis IV. New York: Facts on File, Inc. (2010) p. 449

documents were collected and re-printed in the convention's event program. These efforts bolstered ISNA as a national leader internally.

ISNA understood its convening role. It never sought to displace Muslim American organizations that focused on politics, advocacy, or civil rights. ISNA gave space in its magazine and events to organizations such as the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), American Muslim Alliance (AMA), American Muslim Council (AMC), and American Muslim Taskforce (AMT). Syeed's vision of being a "Muslim Rev. Bill Graham" required that ISNA not be overtly partisan. These organizations could play the antagonist and endorsers, whereas ISNA would open its platform to all sides of the political debate.

However, Muslim Americans lacked political unity. According to a 2001 poll, twenty-three percent of Muslims identified themselves as Republicans, forty percent as Democrats, and twenty-eight percent as independents.[362] The number of Democrats was bolstered because at least one-third of the Muslim American population was African-American. Pakistani Americans tended to identify themselves as Republicans because they perceived President Reagan and President Bush as being supportive of Pakistan.

In 1996, five national Muslim organizations met with Clinton and Dole's campaign staff members to determine which candidate they would endorse in the presidential election.[363] The organizations were not able to agree upon whom to endorse. Two organizations endorsed Clinton, one organization endorsed Dole, whereas the remaining two abstained. ISNA was invited to participate in both party conventions. The

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[362] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 348

[363] Ibid, p. 347

reality was that although these five organizations chose to focus on politics, they lacked the grassroots connections and national reach of an organization like ISNA.

In 2000, Muslim American organizations again tried to establish a Muslim American voting bloc by establishing the informal American Muslim Taskforce on Civil Rights and Elections (AMT).[364] AMT included a broader group of organizations as well as ISNA. AMT endorsed Texas Governor George W. Bush rather than Vice President Al Gore in the 2000 presidential election despite strong overtures by the Democrats. For example, President Clinton had reached out to ISNA by sending video messages to the convention.[365] In addition, the Democratic candidates' wives, Tipper Gore and Hadassah Lieberman, campaigned at the ISNA Annual Convention that year.[366] Moreover, Representative David Bonier, a surrogate for Gore, had a close relationship with the Muslim community and was a regular speaker at ISNA's conventions.

In contrast, the Bush campaign did not have a major or visible representation at the 2000 Annual Convention. The support for Governor Bush was based upon a belief of shared values. Many Muslim Americans identified with Republicans on social issues and fiscal conservatism. There was also deep concern about the Clinton administration's use of "secret evidence" laws to prosecute Muslims for issues related to terrorism. In the presidential debates, Governor Bush mentioned that he found these laws objectionable. Furthermore, Vice President Gore's running mate, Senator Joe Lieberman, was seen as a

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[364] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 348

[365] "Joining the Mainstream" *Islamic Horizons* (November/December 2000) p. 64

[366] "Faith is the essence of civilization" *Islamic Horizons* (November/December 2000) p. 32

strong supporter of Israel. Muslim Americans felt that American foreign policy already favored Israel and that adding Lieberman would make that policy even more one-sided.

Governor Bush's narrow victory over Vice President Gore was hailed as Muslim America's first political success. According to a poll, sixty-nine percent of Muslim Americans indicated that the AMT endorsement was important in their decision-making.[367] Florida had a large Muslim American population, and in the tight election, that endorsement made a huge difference.

AMT's endorsement of Bush created a rift between the immigrant organizations and African-American Muslims. A third of the Muslim American population are African-Americans, who tend to vote for Democratic candidates. African-American Muslims were concerned when they heard organizations like ISNA trumpeting, "Muslim Americans endorse Governor Bush." After all, they were Muslim Americans as well and did not agree with that endorsement. This situation exemplifies how external legitimacy can hurt internal legitimacy.

Interfaith outreach was also an important element of the organization's efforts during its second decade. Interfaith activities were already taking place within the Muslim community at the grassroots level.[368] The Muslim Student Association and later ISNA's vision of such relationships were within the framework of *dawah*.[369] *Dawah* is the inviting of non-Muslims to Islam. Therefore, ISNA inherited a missionary perspective on interfaith relations. However, the grassroots Muslims had already moved past this

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[367] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 348

[368] Smith, p 163

[369] Poston, Larry A., "Da'wa in the West" in *The Muslims of America* ed. Yvonne Haddad (Oxford University Press 1991) p. 131-133

vision of interfaith relationships. Although they continued missionary work, they also sought to educate their neighbors about Islam and Muslims. Syeed rejected the missionary vision of interfaith relationships as being too narrow and sought a broader definition of interfaith relationships. However, constrained by ISNA's elected leaders and budgetary issues, he focused on developing interfaith relationships through local partnerships and through his relationships with national interfaith organizations.

Again, this interfaith work helped ISNA achieve both internal and external legitimacy. Internally, grassroots Muslim Americans wanted ISNA to develop alliances that would create a strong defense against Islamophobia. Externally, ISNA sought to be the bridge to Muslim Americans.

This interfaith program of cooperation benefitted from the fact that the ISNA's headquarters were based in Plainfield, Indiana, located near Indianapolis. If they were located in a larger city, ISNA would have to compete with many local Islamic centers. Because the headquarters' design included offices, a library, and a mosque, ISNA was able to take advantage of the unique local interfaith and academic communities.

> The ISNA Headquarters, as usual, received not only Muslim scholars from across the North America and overseas, but also several non-Muslim scholars, leaders and activities seeking Muslim contribution. Besides this the Headquarters routinely received student groups from area schools and colleges who sought an introduction to Islam and Islam in America.*370*

The 1997 Annual Convention featured an interfaith luncheon.[371] The local Chicago community, seeking to use the convention for its efforts, proposed and organized

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[370] ISNA Annual Report (1999) p. 6

[371] "Chicago turns Bullish on ISNA again" *Islamic Horizons* (Eid 1998) p. 30

the luncheon with the assistance of the ISNA staff at the convention. Syeed states that at these initial interfaith luncheons, some leaders misunderstood interfaith work and were so hostile toward it that the luncheons were invitation-only and were held in closed rooms, and were not even mentioned in the organization's publications or reports.[372]

After the first few luncheons, the interfaith luncheon eventually became an important feature of the conventions and was eventually organized by the staff. This important organizational facet was mentioned in the 1997 Annual Report:

> In keeping with our commitment to introduce Islam to mainstream America to build bridges among religious communities, ISNA pursued a vigorous interfaith program. Such interfaith activities included the Midwest Islamic Catholic Dialogue held in collaboration with the Council of Catholic Bishops of America. . . . One such interfaith effort was the ISNA Secretary General's address to the Faith in Action Seminar at Christian Theological Seminary and the Interfaith Alliance of Indianapolis dinner and program. . . . ISNA also hosted the meeting of the local chapter of National Association of Church Business Administrators.*[373]*

Local relationships resulted in international invitations bolstering ISNA's quest for both internal and external legitimacy. In 2001, ISNA announced that the United States Conference on Catholic Bishops had formed a subcommittee on interreligious dialogue. It pointed to its annual hosting of the Midwest Muslim-Catholic Dialogue and meetings with leaders at the Vatican.

> ISNA has actively pursued a policy of seeking international recognition for Muslims as an effective American minority. Towards this end, ISNA has participated in events such as the Vatican Religious Assembly in Rome, the Parliament of World Religions in Cape Town, the White House Initiative on Race.*[374]*

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[372] Interview with Dr. Sayyd M. Syeed, May 1, 2011

[373] ISNA Annual Report (1997) p. 6

[374] ISNA Annual Report (1999) p. 7

ISNA sought a deeper connection with the academic world, from speaking at local conferences, to seeking institutions, to jointly hosting ISNA's conferences.

> Our contact with academic institutions continue to grow — providing better representation of Islam and Muslims in academia. Such contacts have included events like the fall, 1998 Butler University Seminar on the teaching of the Qur'an, and addresses by ISNA's President and Executives at various universities. Our contacts with academia led to the hosting of the Third Islam in America conference by Ohio State University. . . . Last year, the University of Indianapolis cooperated in the same conference and published its proceedings. One of the achievements of our program of cooperation with American academia is the ISNA Fellowship Program recently launched in collaboration with the Indiana University Center of Philanthropy.[375]

This work became such an important focus that Syeed hired a Christian, Carey W. Craig, in 2000 and named him special assistant to the secretary general.[376] Craig became Syeed's chief of staff and coordinated the headquarters' operations, particularly interfaith and political outreach. Elevating a non-Muslim to such a high position resulted in great friction among certain members of the staff, local community, and national leadership. The increasing hostility resulted in Craig resigning from the organization on September 10, 2001. Craig and Syeed remain close friends. Craig went on to serve Indiana Governors Frank O'Bannon and Joe Kernan. Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels retained Craig for both his terms as governor and, by 2012, had appointed him as the deputy director of the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

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[375] ISNA Annual Report (1998) p. 8

[376] ISNA Annual Report (2000) p. 4

Implications of Centralization — Institutional Stability and Hampering Diversity

Centralization of power at ISNA's headquarters had both positive and negative consequences on the organization's quest for legitimacy. Financial stability created a period of growth for the organization. This stability also helped it to further its quest for cognitive legitimacy and to reach out to Muslim Americans who were not part of the three founding groups. However, this centralization hurt ISNA's efforts to bridge diversity with HSAAMs, activists, and other African-American Muslims.

The following chart illustrates the organization's financial stability and growth between 1993 and 2000.

Year	Overseas donations	Donations - USA	Total revenues	Expenses	Deficit	Endowment fund	# of staff
1993	274701	361997	844950	707655	1678228		7
1994	524767	662808	1580705	872286	969809		11
1995	30000	545263	1076508	1130038	1023339		12
1996	228318	665001	1443415	1177119	893743	253000	NR
1997	136610	753621	1512946	1199231	702028	375000	12
1998	498818	965571	2097242	1457111	346702	696000	13
1999	628434	1147223	2870816	2652176	417062	1038071	23
2000	231608	1396953	2898392	2655916	0	624433	21
2001	259796	1142548	2664148	2476064	0	865078	15

With the exception of 1995, ISNA never spent more than it was able to generate. The 1995 deficit was due a mandate from the *majis* that ten percent of donations from the United States and forty percent of donations from overseas were to be placed in an endowment fund. ISNA's success as a religious nonprofit organization gave it greater legitimacy internally and set it up for external legitimacy.

The annual reports during this period reflect how each unit was meeting a matrix of success that emphasized financial sustainability. Every program during this period needed to be self-sufficient. Therefore, a program for training imams on domestic violence was expected to pay for itself. This was fine for a successful suburban mosque with adequate financial resources but was almost impossible for urban communities that struggled financially. This financial reality frustrated the organization's quest for diversity because the largest proportion of African-American mosques were located in urban centers.[377]

To avoid the cost of holding the events at a hotel, many training programs took place at ISNA's headquarters and, therefore, in the Midwest. This location limited the number of participants from the East and West coasts, again frustrating ISNA's quest for geographic diversity.

Furthermore, Syeed's quest for legitimacy through success of centralization may have hurt his goal to be a more diverse organization. He sought the affirmative action approach by ensuring that leaders from different groups (including HSAAMs and Warrith Deen Muhammad) were elected to the leadership. However, Syeed's intention was to have diverse voices within the organization. He looked beyond the ISNA insiders who populated the ISNA *majlis* and executive council. Muslim American grassroots had produced effective leaders, and these leaders included people of both genders and of various ethnic origins. Syeed failed to create sustainable investments with the African-American Muslim community beyond the affirmative action approach to help build upon work accomplished in the past.

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[377] Leonard, p. 75

From 1993 through 2001, no African-American Muslims were members of the senior staff. In fact, during this period, only one African-American was employed at ISNA's headquarters. In addition, ISNA recruited one member of the African-American Muslim community through the ISNA Fellowship program but was not able to retain him as an employee.

However, ISNA sought to bridge this divide by strengthening its external relationships with groups such as the Shura Council of North America (SCNA). SCNA consisted of ISNA, ICNA (primarily South Asians affiliated with Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan and India), Imam Jamil Al-Amin (HSAAM), and Imam WD Muhammad. Including these different voices met ISNA's first prong to attaining diversity — that is, bringing together diverse voices and using the affirmative action approach in order to achieve social capital. However, ISNA did not invest sufficient resources to achieve the second prong — that is, it did not develop programs needed to build upon the affirmative action approach.

Syeed also offered scholarships to schools affiliated with Imam Muhammad and the Nation of Islam for the Education Forum. Again, this was an attempt to bridge social capital by bringing these groups into the same event with fellow Muslim American educators. From 2000 through 2001, nearly fifty educators from these two groups attended the Education Forum. After attending a few forums, they thanked ISNA for its hospitality but stated that the issues being discussed did not relate to the concerns that they faced in their schools. No one from ISNA followed up to determine what issues would have made these events more inclusive, which illustrates its failure to go beyond the affirmative action approach in sustaining diversity.

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ISNA also sought to elect African-American Muslim leaders to its *Majlis Ash-Shura.* Siraj Wahhaj, an African-American imam from New York and popular speaker at the ISNA Conventions, was elected vice president of ISNA for two terms. Imam WD Muhammad was elected to serve on the *Majlis Ash-Shura* of ISNA. More importantly, when reviewing the names of ISNA's *Majlis Ash-Shura,* we can see that only two people shared a common ethnicity. Such elections, although important, again reflect only an affirmative action approach.

ISNA also sought to include African-American Muslims in its programs. It was agreed that leaders from ISNA would speak at the Imam Muhammad Convention, and vice versa. Representatives of Imam Muhammad were appointed to the ISNA Convention Program Committee but never attended those meetings.[378]

Discussions with Imam WD Muhammad pointed to the fact that, although he was a spiritual leader, he did not have a formal organization. However, he sought ISNA's assistance in establishing a formal institution, and Ahmed Elhattab was appointed as an advisor to Imam WD Muhammad. In 2001, they travelled together to the Middle East hoping to leverage ISNA's contacts to raise funds for WD Muhammad's organization. The trip was deemed successful with various pledges made to further Imam WD Muhammad; however, none of the pledges were ever fulfilled. It is unlikely that anyone from ISNA followed up after September 11, 2001, to explain the situation to Imam W D Muhammad. This event further cemented the narrative among some African-American Muslims that immigrants sought to use them to further their own goals.

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[378] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab, October 10, 2011 and Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, May 1, 2011

Another important overture was to reach out to Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. Many within ISNA considered believers of the Nation of Islam to be heretical and non-Muslims. By the late 1990s, Farrakhan started making overtures to ISNA. He hired a Sunni Imam, Shaikh Tijani, as an advisor. Ahmed ElHattab was assigned to serve as liaison between Farrakhan and ISNA.[379] Farrakhan then announced that the Nation of Islam would fast during the month of Ramadan rather than during December. Finally, severely ill, he reached out to ISNA to share that he had converted to sunni Islam but needed the organization's help to ensure that his community would make the transition.[380] On February 27, 2000, Farrakhan announced that his conversion and that the Nation of Islam's formal acceptance that there was only one God and that Muhammad was his final messenger.[381] Despite these conversations at the level of leadership, however, no programs were developed to take this engagement to the next step.

Ample evidence shows that from 1993 to 2001, ISNA leaders sought to engage with diverse groups of Muslim Americans. Muslim Americans have sought greater unity within the community. However, it is clear that by the end of 2001, the divisions had not been healed. In fact, the AMT endorsement, ISNA's failure to complete the pledges to Imam W. D. Muhammad's initiatives, and not having leaders like Bagby as part of the staff leadership at ISNA's headquarter hurt those efforts. Bagby is critical of Syeed's inability or unwillingness to effectively engage with this issue.[382] Much of the control

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[379] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab, October 10, 2011

[380] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab, October 10, 2011

[381] "The Family Grows" *Islamic Horizons* (March/April 2000) p. 10

[382] Interview with Dr. Ihsan Bagby, April 3, 2011

during this period was at the staff level. Not having more diverse voices at that level hurt ISNA's efforts to connect with the diversity within the Muslim American community. A common complaint was that too many conversations at ISNA's headquarters were in Urdu, thereby excluding non-Urdu speakers.[383] ISNA was successful in recruiting and engaging more grassroots leaders who enhanced gender- and age-based identities. ISNA was also successful in providing the organization with new voices that articulated a more cultural pluralist perspective. However, ISNA failed to build upon relationships with the two founding groups (HSAAM and activists) that had left the organization or African-American Muslims in general.

Conclusion

The branding of ISNA was of vital importance during this period. However, this branding was broader than just organizational identity. The organization sought to help frame an American-Muslim identity. As we have already seen, the community had a divided political identity. *Islamic Horizons* sought to broadly define Muslim identity during this period. A broad analysis of the magazine suggests that ISNA and *Islamic Horizons* saw an identity that married various points of views. *Islamic Horizons* published articles against gay marriage and President Clinton's policy in favor of gays in the military. ISNA sought out and hosted the annual convention of the Prohibitionist Party to support the prohibition of alcohol. *Islamic Horizons* largely spoke favorably of the Contract with America and was critical of the nation's inability to live within its means. ISNA also argued against a policy that would result in lowering taxes. It was in

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[383] Interview with Ahmed ElHattab

favor of anti-tobacco and anti-gun measures. It also endorsed nuclear disarmament and was cautiously supportive of school prayer, charter schools, and school voucher programs. It opposed secret-evidence prosecutions but supported affirmative action, civil rights, and hate crime legislation. ISNA and *Islamic Horizons* sought to highlight a Muslim American community that was engaged with issues at the heart of the American political debate. They fought against the stereotype that Muslim Americans were concerned with only American foreign policy. By the end of 2001, ISNA had established its brand as an influential Muslim American organization. It was financially stable and viable. It had developed relationships with interfaith organizations and political leaders.

In its first decade, ISNA failed to take advantage of revival of Islamic activism in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution. The second decade was marked by hard work and choices that helped build a stable and viable institution. In September 2001, ISNA elected the organization's first female vice president. Dr. Ingrid Mattson was a Canadian born convert and a scholar of Islam. Mattson's election signified a clear challenge to Islamaphobic stereotypes.

By the time of Mattson's election, ISNA had achieved internal and external cognitive legitimacy. It was perceived as the leading and most influential Muslim American organization in the United States. By centralizing power at the ISNA headquarters, it was better able to deliver programs and create financial stability. Furthermore, it had partially succeeded in its quest for diversity by broadening its base from the three founding groups, which it did by engaging with more women, with grassroots leaders, and with young second-generation Muslim Americans who would

bring about internal change. However, ISNA failed to build upon and sustain

relationships with the African-American Muslim community.

Chapter Four — Navigating Islamophobia through Legitimacy, Diversity, and Decentralization (2001–2008)

September 11, 2001, marked a new era in American history. On the morning of that day, terrorists hijacked four airplanes, and while Americans watched in horror, the terrorists crashed two of the planes into the Twin Towers in New York City. A third plane crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and a fourth plane, en route to Washington, D.C., was forced down when passengers tried to overtake the plane. More than three thousand people were killed that day, including people on the planes and in the buildings that were hit.

At the time of these attacks, ISNA's outgoing president, Muzammil Siddiqi, was in Washington, D.C., with leaders of various Muslim American organizations.[384] As part of the American Muslims Political Coordinating Council (AMPCC), they were in Washington to meet with the George W. Bush administration to raise concerns about the government's increasing hostility toward Islam and Muslims. Major Muslim American organizations had endorsed President Bush in his close election with Vice President Al Gore and polls suggested that their vote had made a difference in states like Florida where the results had been close.[385] They felt that President Bush "owed them" for his victory and were seeking reaffirmation of assurances and promises made during the Bush campaign about his support on Muslim American issues. However, because of the terrorist attacks, this meeting never took place.

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[384] http://www.islamicity.com/articles/Articles.asp?ref=AM0109-335

[385] Hanley, Delinda "Historic Muslim- and Arab-American Bloc Vote a Coveted Political Prize" *Washington Report of Middle East Affairs* (December 2000) p. 6

There was little immediate information about the terrorists on the morning of the attacks. However, ISNA quickly worked with fellow Muslim American organizations and released a statement.[386] Within hours, national Muslim American leaders organized a united press release condemning the attacks and requesting quick apprehension of the perpetrators, while also urging restraint on the part of the media until the hijackers could be identified.[387]

The national organizations' ability to coordinate such a united and timely press release and public statement condemning terrorism was a remarkable achievement and speaks to the partnerships and collaborations that were initiated by ISNA. ISNA's search for representative status had moved in a new direction in the last decade. Unity would be attained through collaborative relationships. Just as striking was the willingness of these organizations to be listed in alphabetical order in the press release. Perhaps the call for unity was too urgent to negotiate the order of the listings. This unity was not unprecedented in the Muslim American community. Previous partnerships included the Bosnian crisis and the Gulf War. However, these previous incidents of unity were over foreign policy, not instances within the United States.

ISNA's statement read as follows: "ISNA condemns these senseless acts of terrorism against innocent civilians, which will only be counterproductive to any agenda the perpetrators may have had in mind. No political cause could ever be assisted by such immoral acts."

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[386] *Islamic Horizons* (November/December 2001) p. 9

[387] http://www.islamicity.com/articles/Articles.asp?ref=AM0109-335

This simple statement was very different from the one after the 1993 World Trade

Center bombing, because the two statements reflected different times and different

leaders. In 1993 under the leadership of an activist leader, ISNA published a cover story

alleging that those attacks were entrapment by the United States government. By 2001

cultural pluralists had prevailed over activists and set the right public tone during the

initial hours after the terrorist attacks.

A new narrative and focus took priority, as shown in Kambiz GhaneaBassiri's

following argument:

> [N]ational Muslim organizations, which were predominantly led by
> Islamist activists, began to function less as intermediaries between the
> United States and Muslim causes abroad and more as intermediaries
> between American Muslims and their local and national governments and
> the media. Put differently, they went from being Islamist activists in
> America to being American Muslim activists.[388]

For the time being, ISNA's mainstreamed cultural pluralist identity and narrative

ruled. As I argue in previous chapters, activists had largely left ISNA, and cultural

pluralists had succeeded as the leaders prior to September, 11, 2001. GhaneaBassiri's

term "activist" encompasses both these groups, whereas I use the term "activist" in a

more limited manner. I would amend GhaneaBassiri and suggest that the activists who

remained no longer challenged the transformation to a cultural pluralist identity. As

GhaneaBassiri himself points out, "*Islamic Horizons* . . . had begun 'to envision itself as

a vehicle of Americanization. Even as it warned its readers against succumbing to 'anti-

Islamic' Western influences, *Islamic Horizons* encouraged themselves as full-fledged

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[388] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz. *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 350

Americans, and to invest, both on a personal and a political level, in their adopted country."[389]

Leaders of Muslim American organizations understood their pivotal role in helping their constituents weather the onslaught of Islamophobia that accompanies tragic events, such as those in 1993 and 2001. The events of September 11, 2001, resulted in a new paradigm for Muslim Americans and their institutions. As GhaneaBassiri states, ". . . 9/11 tested the mettle of American Muslim institutions at both the local and national level. These institutions played a fundamental role in helping American Muslims weather the backlash of 9/11."[390]

The importance of a Muslim American Billy Graham was no longer a hypothetical question. Like the rest of the nation, Muslim Americans were afraid. Their fear was not from foreign terrorists but from the backlash of the American population. Fear brought about greater unity and silenced narratives that were seen as inflammatory. This unity and silencing of opposing narratives gave ISNA an opportunity to sustain its mainstreamed cultural pluralist identity. The terrorist attacks refocused ISNA's efforts on combating an anti-Muslim and Islamophobic narrative.[391] The public image of Islam and Muslim Americans became ISNA's central priority, eclipsing all other initiatives, as shown in Syeed's statement to the membership:

> Although we often hear how Muslims in North America are living in a
> momentous era, at a crossroads in the history of Islam, the past year has
> only *clarified and amplified* the reality that the future of Islam both in this

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[389] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz. *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 351

[390] GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz. *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 362

[391] *Islamic Horizons* (November/December 2001) p. 6

continent and around the world is intimately tied to the success Muslims in North America have in promoting a moderate and positive understanding of Islam.[392] (emphasis added)

Syeed was clarifying that this was not a new direction. Cultural pluralists had been a part of ISNA for a long time. However, going forward, they were clearly the voice of the organization. He was also warning activists that their international goals would only succeed if a cultural pluralist Muslim American vision of Islam in America succeeded.

This period of ISNA's history was framed by three major themes. First, ISNA had achieved cognitive legitimacy both internally and externally prior to 2001. Cognitive legitimacy is the strongest form of legitimacy and is attained when an institution is seen as part of the fabric of society. An organization that attains cognitive legitimacy does not exist because it provides a specific benefit (pragmatic legitimacy) or espouses an accepted value (moral legitimacy); instead, it exists because it is considered an inevitable institution. ISNA had passed those tests by hosting the largest gathering of Muslim Americans, publishing the largest Muslim American magazine, and creating collaborative relationships in the interfaith world. Its cognitive legitimacy was reinforced by Muslim Americans' fear of Islamophobia and by its push for a moderate Islamic identity. Therefore, its cognitive legitimacy was reinforced by pragmatic legitimacy (fear of Islamophobia) and moral legitimacy (moderate Islamic identity).

ISNA had established an American-Muslim identity that could serve as a Muslim American Billy Graham. This identity was strengthened through pragmatic and moral

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[392] ISNA Annual Report (2002) p. 6

legitimacy. This identity could embrace government while disagreeing with it. ISNA used this legitimacy to create alliances, fight Islamophobia, and help raise the Muslim American community's voice on policy. ISNA used its cognitive legitimacy to steer Muslim Americans away from a compassionate conservative agenda to a civil rights-based, social justice agenda. Muslim American identity would place a stronger emphasis on social justice as a core principle. Social justice had long been important to Muslim Americans. However, it also was important to display this value publicly. This established cognitive legitimacy is the proper context in which to understand the other two themes of this period.

Second, because of the high-stakes events on September 11, 2001, the organization's past success as a nonprofit had established an important Muslim American institution — something worth being a part of and fighting for. Paradoxically, this reality, coupled with the leaderships' continued distrust of a powerful chief executive resulted in power being removed from the secretary general and being dispersed among the *majlis* and the executive council. This dispersal of power created dysfunction and impeded innovation. Finally, ISNA's quest for diversity continued to rely on an affirmative-action approach with African-Americans, but its primary concerns regarding diversity shifted to gender- and youth-based issues. This realignment was due to its recognition of gender rather than racism as being part of the Islamophobic narrative. In addition, American-born children of immigrants would be more effective in fighting against an Islamophobic narrative that argued Islam was "foreign" to America. The Second Gulf War and sectarian violence also required ISNA to focus on the Sunni-Shiite divide.

This chapter is divided into four sections. First, the driving national issues of this period were the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States and the Global War on Terrorism and the Islamophobia that followed those attacks. These events made the relationship between the American government and ISNA a complicated and necessity-driven one.

Second, ISNA's cognitive legitimacy was reinforced by moral and pragmatic legitimacy because of the post-September 2001 Islamophobia. This legitimacy was initially gained through effective programs and fiscal responsibility resulting from centralized leadership at the staff level. In the past, factions had little reason to fight over a declining ISNA. However, ISNA's attainment of cognitive legitimacy and its programs and direction now gave people a reason to reengage, which created both obstacles and opportunities for the organization.

Third, the reassertion of board control dispersed power within ISNA. ISNA's leaders, like many fellow Americans, have long been suspicious of a centralized and powerful chief executive. However, not having an empowered chief executive can be troublesome for nonprofits, and this was the case for ISNA as it faced the consequences of reframing the roles of the secretary general and the various factions within its board.

Finally, Islamophobia also framed ISNA's quest for diversity. The need for unity allowed ISNA to use the affirmative-action approach with HSAAMs and activists. However, the organization's need for a new public image and a new generation of spokespersons resulted in a greater emphasis on women and second-generation immigrants. After all, Islamophobia was pushing the message that Muslim Americans

were misogynists, and foreign and the quest for diversity was influenced by this narrative.

Setting the Stage

This period is marked by a number of important events. The period begins with the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and ends with the 2008 election of Barack Husain Obama as the first African-American president. Punctuating these events were the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, the Global War on Terrorism, and a sustained Islamophobia. Muslim American institutions were forced to realize that a mainstreamed identity was no longer a luxury. Rather, it had become a necessity to navigate a post-September 2001 America.

Immediately after the attacks of 9/11/2001, President Bush went to a mosque in Washington, D.C., and sought to differentiate between Muslim Americans, Islam, and the terrorists.[393] ISNA's immediate past-president, Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, was invited to the White House Prayer at the National Cathedral to mourn the deaths of innocent civilians.[394] These were the administration's attempts to respond to the unprecedented attacks. Also, possibly recalling the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, the government may have wanted to avoid repeating this kind of fear-based history.

The administration and interfaith organizations realized the necessity of building a relationship with Muslim Americans and their organizations,[395] and participants in the African-American Civil Rights Movement embraced the fight against Islamophobia. This

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[393] *Islamic Horizons* (November/December 2001) p. 8

[394] *Islamic Horizons* (November/December 2001) p. 9

[395] GhaneaBassiri, p. 360

outreach is a broad testament to an American identity of pluralistic inclusion. Attacks upon Muslim Americans were perceived by many Civil Rights leaders as attacks on American identity.

Despite this outreach to Muslim Americans by the US Government, interfaith organizations and civil rights organizations, the instances of prejudice, Islamophobia, and hate crimes continued to rise. It became politically expedient by some politicians to attack Muslim American organizations as extremists.[396] Polling showed that many Americans viewed Muslims and Islam negatively. This tension between prejudice and acceptance of pluralism was not uniquely focused on Muslim Americans. It simply incorporated Muslim Americans into a deeper narrative of race relations and prejudice in America.

Striving for greater unity and trying to shun discord during this period, ISNA signed an agreement between Shia and Sunnis in America.[397] ISNA also met with newly elected Pope Benedict XVI and in 2007 became a signatory to "A Common Word Between Us and You."[398] More than three hundred Christian scholars and organizations and one hundred and thirty-eight Muslim scholars and organizations signed this document in an effort to create better relationships between the two faiths. The crowning achievement of ISNA during this period was the "Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign."[399] This campaign brought interfaith groups together to defend Muslim Americans. The

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[396] Curtis, Edward *Muslims in America: A Short History* (Oxford University Press 2009) p. 100

[397] ISNA Annual Report (2007) p. 10

[398] ISNA Annual Report (2008) p. 14 & ISNA Annual Report (2007) p. 7

[399] ISNA Annual Report (2010) p. 4

campaign, funded by the Open Society Institute, was in response to the controversy of the proposed building of an Islamic cultural and recreation center near Ground Zero.

Fear Strengthening Institutional Legitimacy

In chapter three, I noted that ISNA had attained cognitive legitimacy through the effective implementation of power. Its annual convention was labeled as the largest gathering of Muslim Americans. Tipper Gore and Hadassah Lieberman (wives of the Democratic candidates for president and vice president, respectively) and Muslim American emissaries of the Bush Republican campaign visited its 2000 event. As scholar John Esposito noted in a promotional video about the event, "ISNA has arrived!"[400] In addition, ISNA's publication, *Islamic Horizons,* was the most circulated Muslim American publication. ISNA's legitimacy was strengthened by the stability that resulted from fiscal responsibility because an organization that is perceived as viable and stable is more likely to attain cognitive legitimacy.[401]

This legitimacy and stability presented both opportunities and challenges for the organization. Being perceived as the most influential and largest Muslim American organization raised ISNA to the status of being the representative force of Muslim Americans in the eyes of government and interfaith partners. Even those who understood the complicated and diverse Muslim American landscape wanted an organization of ISNA's stature at the table. After all, could a group of Muslim Americans be truly representative if the largest Muslim American organization — in terms of its convention,

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[400] ISNA Promotional Video about the 2000 Annual Convention

[401] Suchman, Mark C., "Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches" *The Academic of Management Review* (July 1995) p. 582

magazine circulation, membership, and affiliated organizations — was missing from the coalition?

Another important element in ISNA's legitimacy was the extent of its interfaith outreach over the past decade. Such external legitimacy helped ISNA respond to the Muslim American community's fear of Islamophobia. In 2002, the newly elected ISNA president, Shaikh Muhammad Nur Abdullah, explained the importance of this work:

> The tragedy [of 9/11] revealed who we really were inside. Those who were good drew upon that good to help others, while others exploited the event for their own selfish reasons. One example of this outpouring of goodwill and sympathy was the almost immediate arrival of people visiting our headquarters in Plainfield, IN and bearing bouquets to express their support and solidarity with ISNA and Muslim Americans.[402]

This local reaction was a far cry from the Committee of Concerned Citizens of Hendricks County. But more broadly, this decade of work ensured that the organization was ready for a new phase in organizational and American history.

> Since September 11, the epoch making interfaith outreach ISNA has done for years has come to fruition. Today, ISNA has an established reputation as a Muslim organization dedicated to promoting interfaith understanding has been widely recognized and appreciated. The Secretary General was given a lifetime achievement award at the Kentucky festival of faiths for promoting interfaith understanding.[403]

On January 15, 2002, Syeed was invited to attend Indiana Governor Frank O'Bannon's State of the State address and was honored by the governor, who noted, "Your [ISNA and Syeed] work to educate Americans about the Muslim faith in the wake

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[402] ISNA Annual Report (2001) p. 5

[403] ISNA Annual Report (2001), p. 6

of the September 11 terror attacks, along with your life's work to encourage tolerance

and racial healing has marked you as a great leader in Indiana."[404]

Interfaith outreach became the primary activity for ISNA because of its internal

and external legitimacy. No longer was this interfaith effort secondary in the work at the

ISNA headquarters; therefore, a recognized national leader within the interfaith

community was needed to take on the program.

> Considering the importance that ISNA and Muslim Americans attached to interfaith engagement, the ISNA Secretary General Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed relinquished his position as Secretary General to serve as the first National Director of the IOICA [ISNA National Office of Interfaith and Community Alliances]. As National Director . . . Syeed will build on the relationships ISNA has *already developed* with diverse interfaith, religious and social service organizations to engage American Muslim communities in addressing the spiritual and ethical challenges of the twenty-first century. . . . Syeed . . . *has been actively involved* in fostering understanding among the world's religions and has developed significant interfaith alliances at different levels in the US, Canada and internationally.[405] (emphasis added)

ISNA's leaders were embracing Syeed's efforts in the interfaith arena. No one

questioned that Syeed had the credentials to articulate the importance of this office to the

organization. However, the preceding quotations also highlight the leaders' attempts to

mask an underlying reality that this change also indicated the organization's inability to

deal with the internal and external power bases as I explain in the next section. ISNA's

greatest programmatic success during this period was the establishment of an office in

Washington, D.C., as stated here:

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[404] ISNA Annual Report (2001) p. 6

[405] ISNA Annual Report (2005) p. 15

> ISNA has decided to establish an Office of Interfaith and Community Alliances (IOICA) in the nations capital. Interfaith activity has been the cornerstone of ISNA activities, and has been wholeheartedly endorsed by ISNA affiliates and other Islamic organizations across the US and Canada. The . . . office . . . is in response to the *emerging realities and new opportunities* for ISNA to build greater strength in fulfilling its mission. The IOICA will further work to increase good relations and understanding between Muslim Americans and their government agencies and Congressional representatives.[406] (emphasis added)

This was a powerful statement bearing on a number of important realities in the new ISNA. First, it was a declaration that the leadership affirmed Syeed's vision of being a Muslim Billy Graham. To foster good relationships between Muslim Americans and the government was an important aspect of that vision. Second, the statement highlights emerging realities and opportunities. It is important to note that this statement came during the Bush administration at the height of the War on Terrorism. Muslim Americans did not view President Bush in a positive light. However, the statement is an acknowledgement of the administration's willingness to partner and dialogue with Muslim American organizations. President Bush received little credit for his personal attempts to engage with Muslim Americans despite his initial visit to a mosque after September 11, 2001, his invitation to ISNA's president to the National Prayer after September 11, and the sustained interactions between the administration and the ISNA office in Washington, D.C.[407]

The organization was also acknowledging Syeed's past interfaith activities. Prior to this, activities like the interfaith banquet had not even shown up on the annual

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[406] ISNA Annual Report (2005) p. 15

[407] *Islamic Horizons* (November/December 2001) p. 8 -9

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convention programs, but were now seen as part of an important long-term narrative. The realities created by the September 11 attacks made it imperative to acknowledge and own activities that Syeed had pursued without board approval. A post-September 11 reality helped embed the interfaith outreach program in the organization. The new reality allowed him to use discipline, influence, and domination and to embed them into the organization's past narrative and current priorities. As I previously noted, discipline in the form of power helps organizations form new ideas, influence helps organizations translate those ideas into programs, and domination helps organizations institutionalize programs quickly into their operations.[408] This use of power represents a balanced approach that applies the various forms of power in a way that makes both staff and board leadership willing to accept the final outcome and that ensures the long-term continuity of the program.

The Washington, D.C., office during this period sustained and furthered ISNA's internal and external legitimacy through its connections with major interfaith organizations. This was especially evident when President-elect Obama was attacked for inviting Dr. Mattson to the National Prayer Breakfast prior to his inauguration in 2009.[409] At that time, a broad coalition of organizations (including Common Cause, the National Council of Churches, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Union for Reformed Judaism, the Interfaith Alliance, American Baptist Churches, the Arab American Institute, the Hartford Seminary, the Georgetown University faculty, and the Foundation

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[408] Dover, Graham and Thomas B. Lawrence, "The Role of Power in Nonprofit Innovation" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (41(6) 2012) p. 993

[409] ISNA Annual Report (2008) p. 13

of Ethnic Understanding) stood up to defend ISNA and urged President-elect Obama to continue to dialogue with ISNA.[410]

Through the Washington, D.C., office, Dr. Mattson, Vice President Imam Magid and Dr. Syeed aggressively reached out to media and interfaith institutions to push for an accurate portrayal of Islam and Muslims. During this period, ISNA remained consistent in its condemnation of terrorism and helped cosponsor a fatwa against terrorism by the Fiqh Council of North America.[411] ISNA swiftly responded to acts of terrorism in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world. At the same time, it continued to speak out against torture, civil liberty violations, and Guantanamo Bay. ISNA was especially fortunate to have a spokesperson like Dr. Ingrid Mattson to articulate clearly its moderate view points. As a scholar of Islam, a trainer of Imams, and a Muslim convert, she was able to engage the national media and interfaith organizations with great credibility.

Despite its challenges, ISNA's work for the Muslim American community did not diminish during this time. Many of the projects developed after 1994 continued, but ISNA's most urgent focus was on reaching out to its interfaith partners and developing partnerships with government and law enforcement entities. ISNA worked with the political left on social justice issues, such as opposition to nuclear proliferation and torture and matters that affected uninsured and homeless populations; it joined the political right on social issues such as marriage, alcohol, and tobacco.

ISNA leaders' efforts to sustain its legitimacy created significant changes in its programs. For example, fear of Islamophobia led it to discontinue its Group Tax

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[410] ISNA Annual Report (2008) p. 13 - 16

[411] ISNA Annual Report (2005) p. 14 - 15

Exemption program. ISNA, although not a national denomination, was able to offer its

group tax exemptions under the IRS code 501(c)(3) without applying to the Internal

Revenue Service. In doing so, it had offered more than three hundred Islamic centers and

schools group tax exemptions. However, after September 11, fear arose that ISNA might

be held accountable for an affiliated organization's possible misconduct, especially after

the 2002 raids of Islamic charities in Virginia. These affiliated organizations were largely

independent, and ISNA had little supervision over them. ISNA announced this change to

the membership:

> Due to recent events, the ISNA Executive Council as well as many
> affiliated communities agreed to discontinue with the IRS Group Tax
> Exemption Program for affiliates. ISNA is assisting communities to apply
> for and receive their own 501(c)(3) tax exemption status from the Internal
> Revenue Service. The affiliation program will continue to create a link
> between ISNA and the communities.[412]

The IRS tax exemption program was the core element of the ISNA affiliations'

program. As noted in chapter two, the Muslim Communities Association (MCA) had

failed to continue and therefore deprived ISNA of a valuable link with the grassroots

Muslim American community. The IRS group tax exemptions were the remaining formal

link between ISNA and the grassroots communities, so by discontinuing this program,

another formal link was severed.

Only one formal link remained between ISNA and these affiliated organizations.

That is, many of these communities had placed their congregational properties (Islamic

centers, schools, and similar real estate) in trust with ISNA's constituent organization, the

North American Islamic Trust (NAIT). These communities saw NAIT as an arm of

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[412] ISNA Annual Report (2002) p. 16

ISNA. In fact, the perceived close relationship between ISNA and NAIT was the reason many of these communities had placed their properties in trust with NAIT in the first place. However, by this time, though ISNA and NAIT were tied together constitutionally, they had drifted apart. Local congregations did not know of this rift and left their by-laws (which stated that they were affiliated with ISNA) unchanged.

However, the discontinuation of the group exemption resulted in a less focused affiliations program. Moreover, group tax exemptions had required ISNA and its affiliates to maintain communication throughout the year, so without this legal necessity, less urgency was placed on these relationships. Despite the importance of this program to ISNA's leaders' strategic plan, it was because ISNA's leaders sought to protect ISNA's external legitimacy that they sought to make this change. They believed that ISNA's legitimacy from hosting successful events and publish a successful magazine would sustain the relationship with the affiliated organizations.

ISNA's legitimacy was important when responding to challenges to the Muslim community. When Muslim American charities were raided in March 2002, ISNA worked with the organization, Independent Sector, and Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill to call for greater transparency among charities as well as government. This outreach resulted in Assistant Secretary of Treasury Juan Zarate attending the 2002 Annual Convention and regional conferences.[413] ISNA worked with the Treasury Department to obtain a "best practices for charities" document and organized a community response to the document. ISNA responded to the U.S. Senate Finance Committee's investigation on Muslim charities, including ISNA, by hiring Foley and Lardner, a national legal and public

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[413] ISNA Annual Report (2002) p. 17

relations firm to advocate on its behalf. The committee later concluded, privately, that it had found no wrongdoing by ISNA.[414]

ISNA's internal and external legitimacy was important for Muslim Americans in the aftermath of September 11 because it could immediately provide a credible, moderate national voice for the Muslim community. Also, ISNA's legitimacy formalized its commitment to being the Muslim American Billy Graham. In chapter three, we saw how there was little reason for factions to fight over the organization's identity or direction because of the organization's decline. However, since that time, institutional stability, financial solvency, and cognitive legitimacy had created new reason for the organizational factions to reappear.

Role Reversal and Power Shift

Research suggests that executive directors are responsible for the critical events in their organizations and hold a place of "psychological centrality."[415] Boards traditionally play a governance role, whereas the chief executive implements the organization's vision. Boards have four primary functions: to determine a vision, to hire a chief executive, to raise funds, and to provide fiduciary oversight (including budgeting).[416] The chief executive officer's role is to implement the vision by hiring staff and developing programs.

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[414] ISNA Annual Report (2005) p. 12

[415] Ostrower, Francie and Melissa M. Stone, "Governance: Research Trends, Gaps, and Future Prospects" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006). P. 617

[416] Pynes, Joan E., *Human Resources Management for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* 2nd Edition (2004 Jossey-Bass) p. 138

Within ISNA, the secretary general had performed the role of chief executive officer. However, the realignment in power within ISNA resulted in the following changes. First, the board leadership took an active role in articulating the organization's mission, similar to the way boards for other nonprofit organizations function. Second, Syeed was asked to step down from the position of secretary general to serve in the Washington, D.C. office to further interfaith relationships, after which the secretary general's role was redefined. However, as we will see, the change created greater instability, which made it difficult for the organization to retain a permanent secretary general. This instability is best illustrated through the failure of an important new program, the ISNA Leadership Development Center, and a return to budget deficits.

Sheikh Muhammad Nur Abdullah, former president of ISNA, notes that the key people in power at this stage were the two ISNA vice presidents: Dr. Ingrid Mattson and Dr. Syed Imtiaz Ahmad.[417] Ahmad was a former president who succeeded Ahmad Zaki Hammad. Both sought stronger roles for the board and committees and a return to the organization's collaborative values.[418] They pushed for a decentralized and open decision-making process that incorporated the *majlis*. Although these were important values, they created a vacuum in leadership at the staff level.

The internal and external legitimacy spurred the need for greater soul-searching and a formal redefining of the organization. Over the past decade, this had been done by the secretary general. However, the organization's leadership sought to reassert a formal strategic planning process that would guide the direction of the organization's programs,

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[417] ISNA Annual Report (2004) p. 5

[418] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, May 2, 2011

which was in keeping with the practices of most nonprofit boards. The fact that the board sought this role is not remarkable in and of itself. Instead, the remarkable thing is that such a role in strategic planning was absent for more than a decade.

In 2003, after surveying more than one hundred ISNA leaders and donors, ISNA's leaders convened a Strategic Planning Committee meeting of more than sixty Muslim American leaders in Kansas City.[419] The results were a new mission statement and six priorities for the next decade. "ISNA is an association of Muslim organizations and individuals that provides a common platform for presenting Islam, supporting Muslim communities, developing educational, social and outreach programs and fostering good relations with other religious communities, and civic and services organizations." ISNA's new role was to be a visionary leader for Muslim Americans rather than a provider of direct services. It would supply tools and knowledge for grassroots organizations that would then provide direct services. It was now a collaborative organization rather than a representative organization. Its six new strategic priorities were as follows:[420]

- Imam Training and Leadership Development
- Youth Involvement
- A Sound Financial Base
- The Public Image of Islam
- Interfaith and Coalition Building
- Community Development

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[419] ISNA Annual Report (2003), p. 5

[420] The formal stated goals for the organization in the first decade were:

- Represent Muslim interests in North America.
- Present Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims and promote and solidify friendly relations.
- Procure and develop the necessary resources to achieve the stated aims.
- Develop Islamic institutions.
- Establish appropriate policies and priorities for Islamic work.
- Cultivate brotherly relations and foster unity among Muslims in North America and in other parts of the world.

The organization did not have formal goals in the second decade (1993–2003)

ISNA's new vision statement was "To be an exemplary and unifying Islamic organization in North America that contributes to the betterment of the Muslim community and society at large."[421] It remained faithful to its *Islamic* identity rather than to a *Muslim* identity. The organization's leaders sought to define it in terms of Islamic theology rather than Muslim American practice. A "Muslim" organization would have signified an association of Muslim Americans unified under a specific message. However, an "Islamic" organization held a similar status to an archdiocese or other similar national religious organizations. Despite this being an important goal, as we have seen, Islamophobia and the need to sustain its legitimacy trumped the organization's strategic objectives when ISNA discontinued its Group Tax Exemption program.

Like the two other founding groups, cultural pluralists consisted of religiously pious individuals. Despite their focus on social justice and their interactions within the interfaith community, they refused to abandon the conviction that ISNA's fundamental role was to reconcile faith and practice in the United States. Therefore, despite its ability to influence public policy and fight Islamophobia, ISNA's top two strategies were to influence its religious congregations and the new generation of Muslim American youth. ISNA's leaders were unwilling to diminish ISNA's role to simply being a public policy or civil rights organization like the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) or the Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR), although it engaged in these activities because of religious convictions, moral leadership and the desire of the Muslim American community for it to be engaged in these areas.

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[421] ISNA Annual Report (2005), inside front cover

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In addition, the organization's leaders sought to exert greater control over its operations by the board. Syeed had been a successful and powerful secretary general, but he did not always agree with the board's decisions, and as the person running the office, he could slow down things that, in his opinion, were not beneficial to the organization.

Historically, ISNA's leaders distrusted strong chief executives.[422] This distrust was based primarily on two factors: the dysfunction in the Muslim world caused by strong dictatorial rulers and the impact of Ahmad Zaki Hammad's leadership style on the organization when he was president. However, distrust of a powerful, centralized chief executive is not unique to Muslim Americans, and in fact, this distrust has helped frame American political discourse.

The board's disagreements with Syeed were due to both this distrust and his perceived administrative and strategic weakness.[423] In their interviews, Bagby, Fareed and Unus were critical of Syeed's management style.

Moreover, Syeed's centralization of power had removed many of ISNA's elected leaders from its inner workings. Several of his successful programs and innovations were the result of his entrepreneurial ability to make key decisions at the staff level. His implementation of the annual conventions and *Islamic Horizons* owed its success to this centralization. Although excluding ISNA's leaders at this level made it easier for Syeed to make critical decisions, by doing so, he failed to help them understand the reasons for the programs' success. That is, they thought success came because of the organization's mission and values rather than from successful project management. It was only a matter

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[422] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, January 16, 2014

[423] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, January 16, 2014

of time before the leaders would seek to re-exert their influence. As Machiavelli states, "For he who innovates will have enemies of all those who are well off under the old order of things, and only lukewarm supporters in those who might be better off under the new."[424]

The ISNA's leaders suspicion of a centralized and powerful chief executive coupled with their lack of understanding for the reasons behind the organization's success led them to the conclusion that power needs to reside at the board level rather than with the secretary general. Iqbal Unus states that the leaders believed that leaving power in the hands of one person can have troublesome implications, especially in regard to hiring staff.[425] Syeed's perceived administrative weakness gave the leaders an excuse to take power away from him. A few administrative and strategic mistakes furthered this perspective.

One of his mistakes was not effectively responding to a female employee's charge of sexual harassment by another employee. Although an internal investigation by the *majlis* and a later investigation by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) showed no wrongdoing, the *majlis* criticized Syeed's handling of the incident and held him responsible in a public document.[426] Another strategic mistake was ISNA joining the Alliance for Marriage in its opposition to gay marriage. Muslim Americans are largely conservative and Syeed sought relationships with social conservatives. After 9/11/2001, gay activists opposed to the Alliance for Marriage tried to discredit the

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[424] Dover, Graham and Thomas B. Lawrence, "The Role of Power in Nonprofit Innovation" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (41(6) 2012) p. 995

[425] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, January 16, 2014

[426] ISNA *majlis* Ash-Shura archives

organization by pointing out that a "terrorist" supporting organization like ISNA was represented on the board. The use of Islamophobia was a helpful tool in forcing ISNA to withdraw from this organization.[427] This controversial alliance was seen as a strategic mistake. By 2013, ISNA would be allied with those who used Islamophobia as a tool and came out in opposition to discrimination against the gay community.[428]

Syeed's perceived administrative and strategic weaknesses helped confirm the leadership's distrust of a centralized powerful chief executive officer. They failed to understand the success such leadership brought to the organization because they were not involved in implementing the successful programs. Also, this shift in perspective did not reflect an understanding of the important role a powerful chief executive officer can play when supervised by appropriate board oversight. As Graham Dover and Thomas Lawrence point out, "[O]rganizations in which some forms of power are under- or over-developed may be unable to complete the whole organizational learning cycle."[429]

In the past, the secretaries general, as the chief administrative officers, had the ability to manage their staff. However, a series of incidents made it clear that the ISNA secretary general did not have the power to hire or fire employees. In 1998, the Personnel Committee took over hiring of all director-level positions. Furthermore, in 2002, when Syeed sought to fire a staff member who was well connected with ISNA leadership his decision was overturned. In 2004, the secretary general was stripped of the ability to hire

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[427] Gahr, Evan, "Outed and Out" *Jewish World Review* (January 16, 2014)

[428] **"**Largest U.S. Muslim Organization Supports LGBT Anti-Discrimination Bill" Human Rights Campaign Blog. http://www.hrc.org/blog/entry/largest-u.s.-muslim-organization-supports-lgbt-anti-discrimination-bill

[429] Dover, Graham and Thomas B. Lawrence, "The Role of Power in Nonprofit Innovation" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (41(6) 2012) p. 993

any employees other than temporary and secretarial staff. From 2002 to 2010, only three staff members were laid off and only one staff member was fired. All three staff members lacked connections with the leadership, and one staff member was fired because he violated his employment agreement. Despite the clear violation of trust, there was considerable debate about whether that staff member should be fired because of his connections at the leadership level. The distrust of a powerful secretary general coupled with a failure to implement a balanced power structure affected the secretary general's ability to manage his staff.

The secretary general's inability to hire and fire his employees resulted in a dysfunctional ISNA.[430] Staff members created alliances with ISNA leaders that they perceived would ensure stability in employment, thus limiting the organization's ability to sustain innovation or establish effective financial controls. These alliances with key leaders and the secretary general's inability to discipline employees made that position ineffective.

In 2005, after serving as secretary general for more than twelve years, Dr. Sayyid Syeed was asked to step down as secretary general and to relocate in Washington, D.C., to establish ISNA's National Office of Interfaith and Community Alliances. His tenure as secretary general had resulted in fiscal restraint, budget surpluses, a growing endowment, and a national reputation as Muslim Americans' most influential organization. ISNA's board then selected Dr. Muneer Fareed, a former Imam, Islamic scholar, and entrepreneur as its new secretary general.[431]

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[430] Interview with Safaa Zarzour, October 22, 2011

[431] ISNA Annual Report (2006), p. 7

The period between 2005 and 2013 saw two permanent secretaries general (Dr. Muneer Fareed and Safaa Zarzour) and three interim secretaries general or administrators (Ahmed ElHattab, Dr. Iqbal Unus, and Habibe Ali as the chief operating officer). This constant reframing of the position of secretary general and a more dispersed power structure created a period of instability. In 2002, the position of secretary general was essentially the organization's chief executive officer and spokesperson. By 2005, with the election of Dr. Ingrid Mattson, the spokesperson role was assumed by the president of the board, and the administrative role of the secretary general was unclear. During ISNA's 2012 strategic planning retreat, the position of secretary general was reframed as chief operating officer, and the elected president took on the role of chief executive officer and spokesperson.[432]

Since 2005, ISNA has had budget deficits every year taking it back to its fiscal situation during the early 1980s and 1990s. In 2008, Dr. Muneer Fareed stepped down as secretary general, which left a leadership vacuum in the ISNA headquarters.[433] Although Fareed strongly believed in the organization's mission, he was frustrated by the new definition of his position and states that he was never told that his position would be so different from the one advertised.[434] He was especially frustrated that two key programs established after September 11 (the ISNA Leadership Development Center and the Interfaith Office in Washington, D.C.) did not fall under his oversight. The Washington, D.C., office eventually came under the oversight of two future presidents, Imam

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[432] Interview with Safaa Zarzour, October 22, 2011

[433] ISNA Annual Report (2008), p. 4

[434] Interview with Dr. Muneer Fareed, November 20, 2011

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Mohamad Hagmagid and Dr. Ingrid Mattson, whereas the Leadership Development

Center was established as an independent organization within ISNA's headquarters, and

did not even fall under the oversight of the *majlis* and the executive council.

Power and politics are inevitable within a nonprofit organization[435] and can have

both a positive and a negative impact on a nonprofit organization.[436] In ISNA, the power

of innovation helped it achieve cognitive legitimacy. That legitimacy spurred greater

engagement among the organization's leaders. However, as we will see, they failed to

provide oversight for what is generally considered a core responsibility — the budget.

Instead, they micromanaged issues related to staffing and programming. Thus the

attainment of legitimacy resulted in a dispersal of power. This dispersal of power made it

difficult for ISNA to effectively exercise the power needed to bring about a complete

innovation cycle by creating and sustaining successful programs. Mary Kay Gugerty and

Aseem Prakash suggest that "accountability is not normatively 'good' in and of itself,

that is, more 'accountability' (or more rules and procedures) is not necessarily better."[437]

In 2008, Ahmed Elhattab replaced Fareed as the interim secretary general.[438] In

January 2010, Safaa Zarzour followed ElHattab and remained in the position for three

years.[439] When Zarzour stepped down at the end of 2012, he was initially replaced by the

chief operating officer, Habibe Ali, the first woman in an administrative leadership

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[435] Dover and Lawrence, p 992

[436] Dover and Lawrence, p. 996

[437] Gugerty, Mary Kay and Aseem Prakash, "Voluntary regulation of NGO's and nonprofits: an introduction to the club framework" *Voluntary Regulation of NGO's and Nonprofits: An Accountability Club Framework* ed. Mary Kay Gugerty and Aseem Prakash (Cambridge University Press 2010) p. 7

[438] ISNA Annual Report (2008) p. 4

[439] ISNA Annual Report (2009) p. 7

position at ISNA's headquarters, and then by Dr. Iqbal Unus who served as a volunteer interim secretary general.[440] The organization has sought to hire both a secretary general and an assistant secretary general. On both occasions a committee was established, positions were advertised, and candidates were selected and interviewed. However, the committee was unable to arrive at a consensus on an assistant secretary general. One of the candidates, a long-time staff member, has been a finalist for the top job on three occasions.[441] As of 2014, Dr. Iqbal Unus continued to serve as a volunteer Interim secretary general and was commuting from Virginia.

These leadership changes affected the organization's finances. It is vital for innovative nonprofit organizations to achieve a balance between creativity and stability resulting in fiscal success.[442] Past success in innovation (gaining legitimacy through successful programs) can hurt organizations when power is dispersed as this past success may push the organization towards complacency and inertia.[443] Because ISNA had successfully achieved legitimacy, its leaders sought to retain what they believed was an ideal situation, but without understanding *how* that legitimacy were achieved. Key to Syeed's success was the ability to maintain fiscal discipline. He based his vision of a sustainable ISNA on the annual conventions and the magazine.

Dr. Syeed's departure at the end of 2005 brought back a pattern of the past — uncontrolled spending that created annual deficits for the organizations. As we have seen,

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[440] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, January 16, 2014

[441] Interview with Safaa Zarzour, October 22, 2011

[442] Dover and Lawrence, p. 995

[443] Ibid

when power is dispersed, an organization's ability to establish controls over its operations

is affected. Although Dr. Syeed's model of strong centralized power increased

innovation, those innovations were fiscally sustainable. When this power was

redistributed in favor of the board, by the time President Barack Obama was inaugurated,

the organization had a deficit of nearly one million dollars. (See the following chart,

which shows the organization's financial condition from 2001 to 2008.)[444]

Year	Donations	Total Revenues	Expenses	Deficit/Surplus	Accumulated Deficit	Endowment	# of staff
2001	1403301	2671105	2497113	173992	0	865078	
2002	1327242	2622014	2200944	421070	0	1076078	18
2003	1575263	3173298	2855057	318241	0	1226078	20
2004	1802038	3421251	3016648	404603	0	2939868*	22
2005	**1415946	2959191	3064526	-105335	-19744	1532056	31
2006	1578199	2917069	3169641	-295443	-315187	1754031	36
2007	1987699	3661516	3735122	-73606	-421269	2128966	37
2008	1726678	3272096	3717855	-445759	-992028	1872230	36

*Donation from a Saudi donor for an ISNA Youth Camp to be built at the ISNA HQ in Plainfield

**From this point, donations are listed as domestic contributions and no listing for overseas contributions.

Beginning in 2003, the board implemented programs such as the ISNA

Leadership Development Center (ILDC), and these programs required greater strategic

investments. (I discuss the ILDC a little later in this chapter.) However, there was not a

balance between the growth of these programs and a growth in funding. Although

donations continued to rise because of ISNA's cognitive and pragmatic legitimacy, proper

oversight of the budget was missing. Dr. Muneer Fareed attributes this increased giving

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[444] ISNA Annual Reports (2001–2008)

to "sentimental giving."[445] He defined sentimental giving as giving to the organization because they had always done so or knew someone in leadership. He explained how people who had never given to ISNA started to do so because they knew him and wanted to support him. As in the past, the board made no attempt to control spending. Public finance expert Woods Bowman states, "Deficits are dangerous, so operating revenue should usually equal or exceed operating expenses. . . . Constructing a budget that includes a surplus is an insurance policy against a deficit and allows the organization to remain nimble and responsive to constituents."[446]

It is clear that something went wrong in the budgeting process after Syeed was no longer in charge. Bowman suggests that budgets are both control documents and also a tool for analysis and planning.[447] Although ISNA did a great job raising revenue through its programs and fundraising — for example, since 2005, ISNA fundraising and program revenue showed an annual increase — the sharp increases in expenditures in programming, drove its budget deficits. Consequently, it is logical to assume that the *majlis* and the executive council failed to use the budget as a tool for planning and analysis.

Bowman states, "The board is a critical component of what accountants call the control environment, which reflects top management's awareness and commitment to the importance of controls throughout the organization, and encompasses management

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[445] Interview with Dr. Muneer Fareed, November 20, 2011

[446] Bowman, Woods *Finance Fundamentals for Nonprofits* (John Wiley Press 2011) p. 51

[447] Bowman, p. 53

integrity, ethical values, and operating philosophy."[448] Boards are charged with three

fiduciary duties. The duty of care requires them to be diligent in their oversight of the

organization, especially its finances and investments. These recurring deficits illustrate a

failure of oversight by the *majlis*. Dr. Muneer Fareed expressed astonishment on realizing

that reports being presented to the *majlis* were largely copies of previous reports. His

opinion was that the organizational governance was very immature. The staff simply was

following formalities by copying old reports to present to the *majlis* and the *majlis* simply

either didn't read or notice the same reports being recycled.[449]

A review of ISNA's finances shows that budget deficits were the norm when

Syeed was not the secretary general. This budget deficit and dysfunctional power

structure is best illustrated through the implementation and failure of a new program

established by ISNA after its strategic planning — the ISNA Leadership Center (ILDC).

By 2003, the organization's vision of community development changed. The

Community Development department organized training programs for Muslim American

community-based organization, intellectual conferences highlighting important questions

for Islam in America, and regional conferences. This department was seen as one of

Syeed's major initiatives because he was able to engage many communities at a relatively

low cost. Syeed established the Community Development department to create greater

engagement with grassroots communities and to manage the organization affiliations

program. The department trained more than one thousand participants annually in

nonprofit management, conflict resolution, domestic violence prevention, counseling, and

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[448] Bowman, p. 150

[449] Interview with Dr. Muneer Fareed, November 20, 2011

similar community issues.[450] These training events involved twenty contact hours in a weekend. However, the *majlis* wanted a deeper engagement on issues of community development. In fact, at the strategic planning retreat mentioned earlier, the lack of domestically trained imams and community leaders was identified was a leading challenge. Under the new strategic plan, a bolder and more aggressive vision of community building was sought.

In 2004, the Community Development department was discontinued along with its training programs. Programs that were perceived as successful, such as the Education Forum and regional conferences, became programs of the Convention and Marketing department. The academic conferences were discontinued as the purview of academia rather than of an organization like ISNA. As I have stated earlier, because board members weren't involved in innovations like the Community Development department, they did not fully understand the mechanisms of its programs.

One of the programs that Syeed discontinued when he became secretary general was the Islamic Teaching Center (ITC). ITC was instrumental in engaging with leaders of the African-American Muslim community. ITC was established to meet a specific need of the community — Imam W D Muhammad had requested assistance with training his imams about Sunni Islam. By 1991, Syeed considered this need had been met, and the WD Muhammad community had moved beyond the training that ITC provided. However, this program was seen as an important one, and disappointment arose among

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[450] ISNA Annual Report (2003) p. 17

ISNA's leaders when it was discontinued. However, the strategic planning in 2003 gave the ITC concept new life.[451]

ISNA's reorganization of community development also lacked input at the staff level. In the new realignment of power, the *majlis* micromanaged program development and delivery with little scrutiny at the staff level. ISNA announced the creation of the new organization in 2004.

> During the Strategic Planning Retreat in March 2003, imam training and leadership development were identified as the most vital and pressing needs of the American Muslim community. ISNA responded by founding the . . . ILDC . . ., a *revitalization and renewal* of . . . ITC . . . ILDC is designed to foster well-rounded and capable imams, chaplains, and community leaders within North American Muslim community.[452] (emphasis added)

There was no question that Muslim American communities were facing the challenge of recruiting imams who understood Muslim Americans. A large majority of imams in ISNA-affiliated mosques were imported from overseas. But the fact that this need was identified in 2003 as the most vital and pressing need of Muslim Americans shows that this strategic plan was designed and developed largely by ISNA insiders. At a time when Muslim charities had been raided, Islamophobia was evermore prevalent, and civil liberty violations through the PATRIOT Act were a growing concern of Muslim Americans, it is unlikely that a representative sample of Muslim Americans or even ISNA members would have selected recruiting imams as their top concern. ISNA's vice president for the United States, Dr. Ingrid Mattson, was the director of the Muslim

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[451] ISNA Annual Report (2003) p. 6

[452] ISNA Annual Report (2003) p. 6

chaplaincy program at Hartford Seminary, and the vice president for Canada, Dr. Syed

Imtiaz Ahmed, was the last ISNA president to preside over a functioning ITC. ISNA's

leaders sought to rise above the short-term fear caused by Islamophobia and look for

long-term solutions for the community, particularly because the financial security and

institutional legitimacy provided the luxury for that broader reflection.

ISNA hired Dr. Louay Safi, president of the American Muslim Social Scientists

(AMSS), a *majlis* member, and a task force leader, as the first executive director of the

ILDC.[453] Contrary to established ISNA policies (largely designed to take power away

from the secretary general, as noted earlier), an ILDC Planning Committee hired Dr. Safi,

not the ISNA Personnel Committee, because Mattson and Ahmed argued that the ILDC

was a separate organization. The dispersed power structure allowed a contradictory

application of policies. As one secretary general expressed, the development of

procedures doesn't necessarily suggest an organization is following proper

governance.[454] These procedures have to be followed by an engaged staff and board

leadership. However, ISNA institutional funds, facilities, and administrative functions

were used to establish the ILDC. The ILDC remained part of ISNA's budget and

operated as a department until it was discontinued in 2010.

The ILDC had an ambitious program that included a training facility at ISNA's

headquarters in Plainfield, Indiana, along with the following programs:

- A three-week Summer Leadership Institute
- Local training programs, conferences, and workshops
- Print, audio, video, and electronic support materials

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[453] ISNA Annual Report (2003) p. 6

[454] Interview with Dr. Muneer Fareed, November 20, 2011

- Certification of Leadership Training Programs

Despite this ambitious agenda, the ISNA Leadership Development Center did not succeed in meeting its primary objectives listed above. However, it established a more effective procedure for endorsing chaplains in the military and in prisons in the United States. The ILDC also produced a number of publications. In February 2009, the ILDC announced a Compassionate Leadership training program in a book published by Safi.

The ILDC also tackled issues related to Muslim American women in mosques. Gender diversity, as we see in the next section, was important to ISNA during this period. The ILDC was able to engage effectively with the media when the Asra Nomani crisis occurred. Asra Nomani, a West Virginia-based journalist who was with Daniel Pearl at the time of his disappearance in Pakistan, raised a concern about the treatment of Muslim women in mosques. In 2003, Asra Nomani walked through the main entrance of a mosque to pray in Morganstown, West Virginia.[455] The entrance was designated for men only, whereas a separate entrance was designated for women. When asked to leave, she refused, and the incident became a national story. ISNA responded by having Dr. Safi engage in work with various mosque leaders, which resulted in an ILDC publication entitled *Women Friendly Mosques and Community Centers: Working Together to Reclaim Our Heritage.* At times of crisis, ISNA always sought to return to its values, and during this national crisis, it sought to reaffirm its belief on the issue of gender equity.

> Muslim women are working to be fully included in the masjid, at every
> level. They want to participate in governance as well as the development
> of educational programs. . . . Now is the time for community leaders to

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[455] Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, Jane I Smith and Kathleen M Moore, *Muslim Women in America: The Challenge of Islamic Identity Today* (Oxford University Press 2006) p. 61

seize the opportunity to create vibrant mosques and Islamic centers that honor the contributions of both men and women. . . . There is no one in the constituents that our institutions serve — especially our women and youth — will ever have to find themselves asking the question: "what are we fighting to be a part of anyway?!" By transforming women's access and participation in the masjid, we will show by example the liberation and gender harmony that Islam for all!**[456]**

The publication drew upon the experiences of women during the time of the Prophet Muhammad when women participated in the mosque and conversed with him as their imam. But most important, the ILDC was raising the alarm that if Islamic centers and mosques did not change, they would lose vital parts of the community. Moreover, this engagement illustrates the kind of programs Syeed sought to implement. Engaging Safi to develop the publication and engage with mosque leaders did not cost as much as trying to initiate a three-week training program with fourteen faculty members for twenty-five participants — many of them through the assistance of a scholarship. Therefore, Safi's engagement gave the organization the public relations success it needed without a high cost to its budget.

ISNA also released another publication that resulted from a survey of participants at the 2005 ISNA Annual Convention. The publication warned Islamic center leaders that its congregants felt that their centers lacked best practices and educational value and were not inclusive in terms of women and youth. In addition, only one-third of the participants of the survey said that governance of their Islamic centers was satisfactory.[457] Safi's

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[456] *Women Friendly Mosques and Community Centers: Working Together to Reclaim our Heritage* (ILDC 2005) p. 9

[457] *The State of Islamic Centers in North America: Attitudes towards Islamic Center of Participants in ISNA Annual Convention 2004* (ILDC 2005) p. viii

academic training with surveys helped ISNA better understand the dissatisfaction with the leadership of Islamic centers.

Despite these important contributions, the ILDC failed to achieve its goals. There was extensive acknowledgement among the ISNA leadership that the ILDC had failed, but no one was willing to make that admission.[458] ILDC was perceived to have failed to accomplish its articulated goals—which included training imams and community leaders—proportional to the budgetary investment made by the organization. At the time Safi left ISNA there was no road-map or plan that could help ILDC continue on a course to achieve the goals outlined in the strategic plan.

Safi had come to the director's role from within the leadership ranks of ISNA. He had an activist background and had key supporters within the *majlis*. It wasn't until a Texas newspaper released the information that Safi was under investigation by the U.S. Department of Defense that the organization looked into how Safi was operating the ILDC. The newspaper report divulged that trips ISNA had assumed were part of his work with the ILDC were, in fact, being done as a contractor for the Department of Defense.[459] Although the news report framed Safi in terms of the larger Islamophobic narrative, it raised enough issues for ISNA's leaders to look deeper into the situation. For these and undisclosed reasons, ISNA fired Safi and closed the ILDC in 2010.[460][461] The ILDC's

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[458] Interview with Safaa Zarzour, October 22, 2011

[459] "US torn over whether some Muslims pose threat or offer insight" *Dallas Morning News* (February 12, 2010)

[460] Interview with Safaa Zarzour, October 22, 2011

[461] Safi went on to work in Qatar and became involved with the Islamists fighting against Syrian President Assad. In 2013, Safi was nominated but not elected to become president of Syria by the Syrian National Council in Qatar.

ultimate failure was further attributed to the fact that no attempt was made to continue the project. Moreover, despite being key priorities of the organization, no attempt was made to bring back either the Community Development department or the ILDC by the end of this period.

Diversity Driven by Islamophobia and Institutional Legitimacy

ISNA had been successful in an affirmative-action approach to diversity. ISNA found it advantageous to implement diversity at the *majlis* and the executive council levels. As William Brown states, "The primary way to include underrepresented individuals is through recruitment. . . . [I]f the board is concerned with minority or categorical composition, using systemic recruitment strategies could help identify potential members."[462] ISNA's leaders had been successful in maintaining ethnic and racial diversity through recruitment of its board. African-Americans had served in its *majlis* and once also as vice president, but ISNA had greater difficulty attracting more of African-Americans as members, donors, and participants in its programs.[463]

The terrorist attacks of 2001 redirected ISNA's quest for diversity. As we have seen, ISNA has had different approaches to diversity. However, September 11, 2001, made it clear that Muslim Americans needed to counter an Islamophobic narrative. The narrative comprised three themes: Islam degraded women; Islam promoted violence; and Islam was a foreign religion.[464] Missing from this narrative was the notion that Islam was

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[462] Brown, William A., "Inclusive Governance Practices In Nonprofit Organizations and Implications for Practice" *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* (Summer 2002 vol 12 no 4) p. 371

[463] Interview with Dr. Iqbal Unus, April 2011

[464] For Islaophobia broadly please review:

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a racist religion; therefore, ISNA's refocused quest for diversity was influenced largely by an effort to counter the anti-Muslim narrative. To offset the idea that Islam was an immigrant and foreign religion, it had used the history of African-American Islam. ISNA's immigrant leaders had children who were born in America, and these children embraced their American identity. ISNA's response to the "foreign religion" narrative was to focus on the many Muslim American children born to immigrants in the United States. This approach built upon the larger immigrant narrative within the United States. That is, other than Native Americans, all other Americans had connections to an immigrant past.

The attacks on Muslim Americans created greater unity among the various Muslim American groups helped ISNA to bridge diversity. Divisions existed among cultural pluralists, HSAAMs, and activists; however, Islamophobia required that they work together and present a unified front. Although ISNA did not go beyond the affirmative-action approach to African-Americans, it sought to go further on issues of gender and youth

To counter the Islamophobia portrayal of Islam as being against women, ISNA brought more women into its leadership positions, staff, and volunteer force. Also, as we have seen, the ILDC dealt with the issue of gender by releasing important position statements and publications to help the grassroots Muslim community become more inclusive.

Ernst, Carl Ed. *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance* (2013 Palgrave Macmillan)

In 2001, ISNA's leadership nominated and its membership elected the first

woman vice president, Dr. Ingrid Mattson.[465] Mattson was the third American-born

convert to Islam to be elected to the position of vice president of ISNA. Although women

had served on the *majlis,* this was the first time a woman was elevated to such a high

position. American-born Ameena Jandali and Khadajee Haffajee, who was originally

from South Africa and living in Canada, had been repeatedly been elected to the *majlis* in

the past. In addition, the *majlis* had appointed women to serve on the boards of leading

constituent organizations, such as Muslim Youth of North America (MYNA) and the

Council of Islamic Schools of North America (CISNA).

Mattson's election was remarkable in that she was unopposed for the position. In

fact, she ran unopposed and served twice as vice president and twice as president. Many

credit ISNA's membership for electing Mattson. However, the ISNA Election Committee

consisting largely of insiders and ISNA Secretary General Syeed, nominated Mattson.

Mattson represented a desire among leaders and members to elect a female to its

leadership. It is significant that her election took place prior to the terrorist attacks on

September 11, 2001.

ISNA approached gender diversity in an affirmative-action manner but then

moved to incorporating gender diversity at the staff and programmatic levels. Among

MSAs and MYNAs across the country, women were already in positions of leadership,

but they hit roadblocks when they reached the level of community leadership. However,

ISNA's bold and direct position on gender equality paved the way to creating greater

acceptance of women in Muslim American institutions.

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[465] *Islamic Horizons* (November/December 2001) p. 14

On the other hand, not everyone believed ISNA was going far enough. ISNA's approach was to take a balanced position to ensure that it led in a way that didn't compromise its values or make it an outlier in the Muslim American community. Critics such as Asra Nomani, Irshad Manji, and Amina Wadud criticized ISNA and Mattson for not embracing a more revolutionary approach to gender equality. They also criticized ISNA for not endorsing female imams and female-led prayer, and in fact, when Amina Wadud and Pamela Taylor, an ISNA staff member, delivered a Friday sermon and led a mixed prayer, ISNA was among the organizations that did not support those actions. The ILDC even went further by sending a statement saying that such acts were opposed to the Islamic theological tradition and, therefore, were not orthodox Islam. Not all ISNA leaders shared this belief, but they refused to voice such an opinion because it was outside the mainstream of belief within ISNA. Mattson, a religious scholar, opposed female imams and was criticized by feminists for these conservative religious, yet mainstream, theological positions.

Mattson's election helped make ISNA relatively immune to attacks about gender bias. In addition, the U.S. government was seeking a Muslim partner at the time, and Mattson, in addition to being a woman, was an American-born Muslim convert, she was highly educated and articulate, and she was reassuring to people who were afraid of the growing Muslim American population.

Mattson's conservative theological beliefs made her a great intermediary for ISNA's leaders, who, again, sought to retain its values while boldly approaching a community problem. ISNA's leaders endorsed gender equality but wanted women who shared their theological values. Therefore, someone like Mattson was a good foil for the

feminist narrative of Manji and Nomani that many community leaders opposed. Mattson, in effect, helped ISNA reframe feminism by drawing from the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad and illustrating the important role women had played in Islam's history.

ISNA took a similar approach in terms of second generation Muslim Americans. Young people had always been represented on the ISNA *majlis*. The president of MSA and the chair of MYNA, both youth, were members of the ISNA *majlis* because of the organization's constitution. However, ISNA sought to recruit a new generation of young Muslim American leaders to serve on the *majlis* and the executive council.[466] The executive council included regional representatives who were mainly under the age of forty. In addition, ISNA's Election Committee nominated young leaders to the ballot, and in each election between 2001 and 2012, the membership consistently sought to elect the youngest members on the ballot. The organization's committees also recruited many young people to serve in leadership roles, and ISNA made another bold statement by elevating young grassroots leaders to the national stage.

ISNA went even further and established a Youth Department that helped to institutionalize the notion of youth inclusiveness in the organization's infrastructure in 2004.[467] These young Muslim Americans, who were born in America, countered the idea that Islam and Muslims were foreign to America.

ISNA developed, implemented, and institutionalized its innovative Youth Department through the appropriate use of force. That is, supported by its strategic plan,

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[466] Dr Muneer Fareed expressed this as the key "mission ahead" in his opening remarks in the ISNA Annual Report. ISNA Annual Report (2006) p. 6

[467] ISNA Annual Report (2004) p. 21

in which youth involvement was one of its six priorities, ISNA used the *discipline* form of force to help members identify new patterns and insights. The development of these new insights were "learned" by the organization through intuition. ISNA's leaders then interpreted these insights by connecting the new ideas to existing ways of thinking by institutionalization this new program by establishing a new department. It successfully used the influence of its leaders to establish a new program. ISNA's leaders used the force and domination forms of power inherent within the *majlis*'s power to establish a department and institutionalize it within ISNA.

ISNA's 2003 strategic plan also called for greater *engagement* with youth. ISNA had two youth wings — the Muslim Student Associations of the United States & Canada (MSA) and the Muslim Youth of North America (MYNA). MSA was the national organization of Muslim American college students, whereas MYNA was the program for children between the ages of twelve and eighteen. The MSA president and the MYNA chair were members of the ISNA *majlis*. Both organizations held their annual conventions during ISNA's annual conventions. Both organizations developed their own programs (using the ISNA speaker pool), arranged for volunteers to run their events, and raised funds to supplement their activities.

The MSA was established in 1963 in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, and moved its offices to Washington, D.C., in the early 1990s. It was largely an independent organization with its own governing board elected by its membership. The MSA was able to sustain its role on college campuses. However, because of the diverse group of Muslim American students it encountered on college campuses and because aligning its identity with only one national organization would prevent it from diversifying its membership,

during the 1990s, it sought to become fully independent of ISNA. Because of its independence and the fact that it had young college students to call upon, it was able to sustain itself throughout ISNA's period of instability.

The MYNA was formed in the 1980s and operated as a program of ISNA, and its alumni often went on to lead MSA chapters. However, ISNA's financial instability and the vacuum left when its alumni base became involved in careers and other activities resulted in a decline in MYNA activities. Syeed did not include youth in his priorities during the 1990s, and by 2003, MYNA essentially consisted of the activities at ISNA's annual conventions and its regional conferences and chapters across the country.

As I said earlier, ISNA's 2003 strategic plan identified youth as one of the six priority of ISNA (in fact, it was the second highest priority). At that time, the ISNA *majlis* created a youth coordinator position, which was initially housed in the Community Development department. After that department's discontinuation in 2004, the youth program became the Youth Department.

In 2003, prior to the establishment of the Youth Department, ISNA hired a youth coordinator, Taneeza Islam, to oversee its youth activities and to help create a framework for this work at its headquarters.[468] Islam was unique to the ISNA staff in a number of ways. She was a second-generation Muslim American, and by hiring someone who could understand their experiences, ISNA reaffirmed its commitment to youth. Also, at the time, she was the first Bengali American hired to the staff. Islam had not been involved with MYNA, MSA, or ISNA prior to being hired and came from outside ISNA's

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[468] ISNA Annual Report (2003) p. 8

traditional factions. Finally, Islam became the second female to lead a department at ISNA's headquarters.

The Youth Department's initial tasks were to take over the ISNA internship program, become an advisor to MYNA, organize youth aspects of the national and regional conferences, and reach out to interfaith partners such as the Boy Scouts of America and the Interfaith Youth Core.[469] Islam also organized a MYNA conference under the theme "Painting Our Future With Colors of the Past" in the hope of reenergizing the MYNA alumni base. She also coordinated a series of national Islamic entertainment events in four cities across the country. Islam's role was to help initiate the revival and to develop a framework for MYNA. In 2004, Islam left ISNA to attend law school.

The organization selected Taslima Khaled as the new Youth Coordinator in 2004. Khaled was a first-generation Bengali American immigrant.[470] She had a degree in childhood education and had raised two sons who were both in college at the time. She brought a different skill set to the organization than Islam brought. The expectation was that Khaled would create greater stability in MYNA, and as a parent, she would understand what young Muslim Americans were going through. Khaled was a long-time ISNA member and participant in ISNA's annual conventions. She reached out to various MYNA alumni and started working in conjunction with a committee called "the MYNA working group." The *majlis* also established an interim youth committee to advise and direct the activities of the youth program.

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[469] ISNA Annual Report (2003) p.8

[470] ISNA Annual Report (2004) p. 21

In 2005, the organization announced the establishment of the Youth Department

under the headline, "ISNA's Fountain of Youth Restored."

> In addition to creating new youth programs, the Youth Department is
> working with the Muslim Youth of North America (MYNA). Started in
> 1985, MYNA was a vibrant wing of ISNA run completely by elected
> Muslim youth leaders too young for MSA that offered local youth
> activities, national conferences and camps. After ten years of prosperity,
> MYNA began a decline that saw the national leadership dissipate and
> national association dwindle. Today, small groups in various cities still
> carry the MYNA name but are in no way organized by or affiliated with
> MYNA as a national organization.[471]

MYNA's twentieth anniversary occurred in 2005, so it was only fitting that a

department was created that year to focus on the revival of the organization. In 2005,

Khaled resigned from ISNA and returned to her university position in Minnesota.

In 2005, ISNA hired Iyad Alnachef as the new Youth Director.[472] Alnachef was a

Syrian American who immigrated to the United States to pursue his education. He had

academic training in youth development and was also a former schoolteacher in an

Islamic school. Alnachef was hired through the recommendation of the newly formed

majlis Youth Committee, whereas the previous two directors had been hired by Syeed in

consultation with the Personnel Committee. Alnachef instituted a more active *majlis*

Youth Committee. During the previous few years, there was friction between the young

MYNA advisors and the *majlis* because of the MYNA's leaders push for greater

independence, similar to that of MSA. However, in 2005, the *majlis* resolved that MYNA

would be a program of ISNA and that a new board of advisors (called the National Board

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[471] ISNA Annual Report (2005) p. 13

[472] ISNA Annual Report (2006) p. 4

of Advisors) would be selected by the ISNA *majlis*. The National Board of Advisors

included a mix of people from ISNA's leadership and the younger interim Youth

Committee.[473] This compromise accomplished two goals: It assured ISNA leaders that

MYNA would remain an ISNA program, and it gave the new young leaders an

opportunity to provide a direction for MYNA.

The Youth Committee selected the first set of leaders for MYNA. The goal of the

Youth Department was to consolidate MYNA activity at the grassroots level under the

umbrella of MYNA. MYNA's leading priorities were defined as follows:[474]

- Provide a platform for expression.
- Foster an engaging North American Muslim Culture.
- Promote Islamic principles grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah.
- Spark youth involvement in community development and dialogue.
- Establish a diverse, supportive network for youth and the greater community.

Alnachef remained director of the department between 2005 and 2013. During

this period, he successfully consolidated MYNA at the grassroots and regional levels,

developed an institutionalized process for managing national and local elections, and

organized youth camps across the United States.

Finally, ISNA also recruited a series of American-born Muslims to work and lead

departments. Taneeza Islam for Youth, Fawad Siddiqui and later Deana Othman for

Islamic Horizons, Sarah Thompson for communications, Urooj Qureshi for convention

programs, and Nida Saleem within the ISNA Development Foundation are just a few

examples of this growing trend. In fact, the majority of the people hired after September

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[473] ISNA Annual Report (2006) p. 14

[474] ISNA Annual Report (2006) p. 14

11, 2001, were born in America. Having these individuals at the heart of ISNA's operation brought the perspective of youth to ISNA's activities.

The election of Dr. Ihsan Bagby as a member of the *majlis* was an important step in the organization's continued attempts to include African-Americans. Bagby was an ideal candidate to further ISNA's efforts toward greater diversity and inclusiveness for a number of reasons.[475] He had previously served as an acting ISNA secretary general. He knew firsthand about the organization's opportunities, limitations, and dysfunctions, and he knew how to successfully navigate its bureaucracy. In addition, he had personal relationships with many of the ISNA leaders and could use his personal influence to enhance relationships between African-American Muslims and ISNA. Furthermore, he was the secretary general of the Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA). MANA was a HSAAM organization that sought to energize the grassroots Muslim communities through greater focus on social justice. MANA was also an important vehicle for creating an institutional identity for HSAAMs that could help them negotiate a national role among Muslim American organizations. Finally, Bagby was a scholar of mosques in America, and he had a unique insight about diversity issues occurring at the grassroots level.

In 2010, ISNA expanded its efforts on diversity by hosting its first Diversity Forum in Detroit, Michigan.[476] This event was slated to become a national event seeking to bring a diverse group of leaders and scholars together to discuss the challenges and opportunities of diversity among Muslim Americans. This forum was yet another attempt

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[475] ISNA Annual Report (2006) p. 5

[476] ISNA Annual Report (2011) p. 11

to go beyond the affirmative-action approach to diversity and to build a deeper framework. This project was championed by Bagby and the new secretary general, Safaa Zarzour. It was held for two years with some positive results. Whether the organization can institutionalize and embed this conference into the organizational framework remains yet to be seen. Zarzour stepped down in 2012, and Bagby's term as a *majlis* member ended the same year.

In 2012, Zarzour also sought to further enhance the organization's approach to diversity by pushing a proposal to hire Bagby as a part-time director of a mosques related program. His vision was to institutionalize diversity as a pillar of community development and mosque management. This proposal focused strongly on systemizing ISNA's attempts to further the cause of diversity within the organization. However, with Zarzour stepping down as secretary general, this project has moved forward with the hosting of a "Mosque Forum" rather than a full-fledged department as he envisioned.

Conclusion

By the time of the September 2001 terrorists attacks in the United States, ISNA had benefitted from achieving cognitive legitimacy. This cognitive legitimacy and the organization's stability as a nonprofit organization allowed it to increase its mainstreamed cultural pluralist identity.

The September 2001 attacks and the ensuing state of heightened Islamophobia created an opportunity for ISNA to consolidate its gains from the previous decades. Due to fear and necessity, Muslim Americans initially united around a cultural pluralist identity. This initial unity gave ISNA the opportunity to sustain its role as the most

influential and leading Muslim American nonprofit organization. By the time President Obama declared in his inauguration speech that "We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Hindus and Jews," ISNA was able to secure a front row seat to history.

ISNA continued on its quest for diversity. It aggressively brought new blood into the organization. The organization created innovative programs to include a greater number of younger, American-born Muslims in all aspects of the organization's structure. It also promoted greater gender equality. It used both the affirmative-action approach and a strong programmatic approach to advocate for greater inclusiveness of women and youth in Muslim organizations.

ISNA's pursuit of diversity during this period has focused on the idea of bringing Muslim Americans under ISNA's umbrella through an open membership. This was also the strategy pursued by FIA prior to ISNA. More recently, a new approach to diversity is being pursued by other Muslim American organizations. This new strategy was expressed by Dr. Ihsan Bagby as first establishing homogenous organizations that can represent certain Muslim American groups and then, having established an organization, to reach out to others "as equals."

For example, MAS largely included Arab-speaking Muslim Americans who have an affinity for the Muslim Brotherhood; ICNA largely included South Asians who have an affinity for the Jamaat-e-Islam; MANA largely consists of HSAAMs.[477] In 2002, ICNA and MAS established a partnership that brands their annual conferences as joint events (even though one is held in December and the other in May). In 2014, ten Muslim

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[477] However, as mentioned earlier this homogeneity should not be over-stated as organizations like MAS and ICNA have publicly distanced themselves from those international organizations.

American organizations came together and formed the U.S. Council of Muslim

Organizations (USCMO). This new council includes ICNA, MAS, and MANA, along

with Mosque Cares (W. D. Muhammad's community) and CAIR. Missing from this

council are ISNA and the Muslim Public Affairs Council; both organizations are largely

cultural pluralist organizations. This new strategy and Council may challenge ISNA's

role as the most influential Muslim American organization.

ISNA's leaders also sought to consolidate power at the *majlis* level and to reduce

the role and influence of staff in the organization. This blurring of roles between the staff

and the board created dysfunction in some instances. The shift of power from the

secretary general to the board and a more episodic use of power by certain leaders did not

allow the organization to make gains in new, innovative programs such as the ILDC, the

Community Development department, or the Diversity Forum. This change in its power

structure created a new challenge for the organization. Cognitive legitimacy and

Islamophobia made the organization successful. This past success can be attributed to a

centralized chief executive officer and successful nonprofit organization. However,

during this period, ISNA failed to achieve success as a nonprofit organization, which was

the basis for the legitimacy.

The organization's dysfunction is reflected in the decade-long stagnation of its

annual conventions in terms of number of attendees and revenue, despite its being the

largest Muslim American gathering in America as illustrated in the revenue charts that I

present in this chapter. In contrast, the annual conventions of ICNA and MAS are

showing considerable growth moving from hotels to larger convention centers. In

addition, organizations like MAS have outpaced ISNA in terms of contributions.[478] In

2010, ISNA received nearly $1.8 million in contributions compared to MAS raising more

than $4 million. In addition, while ISNA received $81,610 in revenue through

membership, MAS received more than $300,000 in membership revenue. MAS and

ISNA received approximately the same amount of revenue from their annual conference.

MAS's total revenues for the year were over $6 million compared to ISNA's nearly $3.6

million. Just as important, over the past few years, MAS has consistently maintained an

annual surplus of more than $500,000.

ISNA, in terms of membership and conference attendance, is stagnant at best and

in decline at worse due to its inability to effectively manage the distribution of power

needed to establish effective nonprofit management and governance. It is yet to be known

whether the organization can sustain its legitimacy and institutional success without

strong leadership at the staff level and without best practices at the budgeting level.

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[478] MAS 990 2011 and ISNA Annual Report (2011)

Chapter Five — Conclusion

In this dissertation, I presented a case study of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the largest Muslim American organization in North America, in order to examine Muslim American institution building, management and governance. By means of this account, I challenged misconceptions about ISNA and dispelled a number of myths about Muslim Americans and their institutions. In addition, I provided nonprofit research relating to issues of diversity, legitimacy, power, and nonprofit governance and management. I also investigated the experiences of Muslim Americans as they attempted to translate faith into practice within the framework of the American religious experience.

This dissertation analyzes the development of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), a Muslim American religious association, from the Iranian Revolution to the inauguration of our nation's first African-American president. This case study of ISNA, the largest Muslim American organization in North America, examines the organization's institution-building and governance as a way to illustrate Muslim American civic and religious participation. Using nonprofit research and theory related to issues of diversity, legitimacy, power, and nonprofit governance and management, I challenge misconceptions about ISNA and dispel a number of myths about Muslim Americans and their institutions. In addition, I investigate the experiences of Muslim Americans as they attempted to translate faith into practice within the framework of the American religious and civic experience. I arrive at three main conclusions. First, due to their incredible diversity, Muslim Americans are largely cultural pluralists. They draw from each other and our national culture to develop their religious identity and values. Second, a nonprofit association that embraces the values of

a liberal democracy by establishing itself as an open organization will include members that may damage the organization's reputation. I argue that ISNA's values should be assessed in light of its programs and actions rather than the views of a small portion of its membership. Reviewing the organization's actions and programs helps us discover a religious association that is centered on American civic and religious values. Third, ISNA's leaders were unable to balance their desire for an open, consensus-based organization with a strong nonprofit management power structure. Effective nonprofit associations need their boards, volunteers and staff to have well-defined roles and authority. ISNA's leaders failed to adopt such a management and governance structure because of their suspicion of an empowered chief executive officer.

This dissertation illustrates that due to their incredible diversity, Muslim Americans are largely cultural pluralists. They draw from each other and our national culture to develop their religious identity and values. Religious identity does remain constant or uniform. Instead it is shaped by the interactions between the diverse groups that comprise Muslim America.

There was a consistent drive towards Muslim American national unity and consensus that required compromise. At the grassroots level, Muslim Americans practice faith, convene social gatherings, organize interfaith and political events in diverse Muslim American settings. Numerical realities make it difficult for there to be a Pakistani-mosque, a Bengali mosque, a Syrian Mosque. Similarly, ideological purity is difficult to achieve at the local mosque. Muslim American institutional faith and practice requires compromise and consensus building.

At the national level, ISNA has elected some important leaders that helped in its quest for external legitimacy. However, these leaders express the desire of ISNA's membership for a diverse, broad-based leadership. These leaders were elected — not selected. Furthermore, these leaders were embraced at the national conventions of other Muslim American organizations as important speakers.

At the national level organizations are seeking ways in which they can present a united front (externally) and an umma (internally). As I have noted, Muslim American organizations have used two major approaches to bridge diversity. The first approach, followed by the FIA and ISNA, sought to establish a national organization and then to bring Muslim Americans from different persuasions under the organization's umbrella has been the focus of this dissertation. The second, more recent, approach was to establish institutions that are largely (though not completely) homogenous based on a specific type of Muslim American diversity. Having established a homogenous organization to then partner with another Muslim American to develop national unity. As I noted in chapter four, in 2014 the US Council of Muslim Organizations (USMO) was established. This Council consists of ten organizations but does not include ISNA. This organization seeks to institutionalize the second strategy. Although this organization falls outside of the scope of this dissertation, it illustrates the challenges ISNA faces in the future of maintaining its legitimacy if it doesn't resolve the issues related to nonprofit governance and management.

The two preceding strategies adopt the affirmative-action approach to diversity. Organizations such as ISNA and FIA found it difficult to accomplish the second prong of diversity, which requires developing mission-relevant joint activities that will bridge

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social capital among diverse participants. Only time will tell whether the USMO will be able to implement the second prong of diversity.

However, whether the strategy adopted by ISNA and FIA will succeed or not is unclear at this point. Both organizations had mixed results because of issues related to legitimacy, power, and nonprofit effectiveness. FIA failed to secure legitimacy in the eyes of ISNA's founders because of its secular past and focus on a political identity. On the other hand, ISNA failed in its attempts to implement the second prong because of its inability to disperse power effectively within the organization. ISNA's fiscal and budgetary crisis coupled with the lack of clarity over the role of the chief executive officer (secretary general) and board did not provide the organization with the stability it needed to implement a well-designed, sustainable, and effective program that could bridge social capital among diverse constituents. Luckily, for national organizations, local and regional organizations have been comparably better able to implement both prongs of achieving diversity. Muslim Americans have embraced their diverse identity and work towards achieving unity.

This consistent quest to bridge diversity has drawn these disparate groups together. National conventions have adopted the ISNA model of mixed gatherings, female speakers, Muslim entertainment and political and interfaith speakers. In fact the majority of the speakers at the national conventions of organizations like MAS, ICNA, CAIR tend to be the same speakers that speak at the ISNA Annual Convention. The exhibit halls of these conventions have the same businesses and nonprofit organizations. Each organization may have a distinct identity they have been drawn together through a

consensus based cultural pluralist identity. National recognition requires that each of these entities strive towards such an identity to attain cognitive legitimacy.

Like ISNA's founders, Muslim Americans in general are not a single, monolithic group. Their diversity goes beyond race, ethnicity, national origin, and sectarianism. Muslim Americans have commonalities and differences based on their ideology, their definition of a Muslim American identity, their politics, their personal histories, and their understanding of the role of Muslim organizations in America. Many Muslim American scholars have tried to label and cluster Muslim American organizations in terms of the dominant ethnicity or ideology, not recognizing the deeper nuances that exist.

In fact, my own attempt to use labels like activists, cultural pluralists, or HSAAMs is only one effort to highlight the nuances in Muslim American diversity. The reality is that the diversity goes much deeper than one study can illustrate. Immigrant-native; conservative-secular; moderate-Islamist labels are too simplistic and do not accurately describe a community of individuals.

Organizations I have labeled as HSAAM, such as the Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA), include immigrants like Dr. Altaf Hussain. Dr. Hussain, a cultural pluralist, serves on both MANA and ISNA boards and has served as vice president and president of MSA. Organizations labeled as immigrant activists, such as the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) and the Muslim American Society (MAS), include, among others, cultural pluralists and African-Americans. ISNA's board has included African-Americans such as Ihsan Bagby, Siraaj Wahhaj, Umar AlKhattab, WD Muhammad, and Caucasian-Americans such as John Sullivan and Ingrid Mattson. The religious identity of Muslim Americans has not remained static, and this move toward a

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consensus identity that embraces diversity has resulted in a cultural pluralist Muslim American identity.

Second, a nonprofit association that embraces the values of a liberal democracy by establishing itself as an open organization will include members that may damage the organization's reputation. I argue that ISNA's values should be assessed in light of its programs and actions rather than the views of a small portion of its membership. Reviewing the organization's actions and programs helps us discover a religious association that is centered on American civic and religious values.

As I state in chapter one, I adopt David Craig's approach to institutional values. Values are more than aspirational but are an "articulated limb that has a specific structure related to its operations and purposes." ISNA's values should be examined through its policies, programs and public positions.

As I noted, the election of ISNA leaders like Dr. Ingrid Mattson challenged the external notion that Muslims were misogynists. Bagby and Siraj Wahaj (along with second-generation Muslim American immigrants) challenged the notion that Islam was a foreign religion. However, when examining the external benefits to these leaders we must not lose sight of the fact that these leaders were elected — not selected. ISNA had developed a process that allowed these leaders to rise to national prominence. ISNA's members embraced these leaders as representative of their religious identity.

In addition, as I note in chapter two, ISNA's public stands against terrorism, dictatorships, and Iran's taking of hostages challenged the notion that Islam was opposed to peace. ISNA's positions favoring Muslim Americans' participation in the military and elections disputed the idea that Muslim Americans were unpatriotic. Also, the fact that

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these positions were all taken prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, gave the organization even greater legitimacy both internally and externally.

Muslim Americans have long recognized their diversity and sought to bridge this diversity through a broad Muslim American religious identity. ISNA, in particular, has recognized that the Muslim American community comprises many disparate Muslim American individuals and has embraced that diversity through an open membership process. Therefore, there is only one class of individual membership, and any self-defined Muslim American over the age of eighteen can become an ISNA member simply by completing a form and paying a fee. This embrace of values of a liberal democracy opens up the organization to Muslim Americans of all ideologies, ethnicities and nationalities.

This dissertation challenges the notion that Islamists affiliated with global movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami established institutions like ISNA. By all means, individuals in these groups were part of ISNA at its inception. However, from the very beginning, ISNA's founders brought diverse groups of Muslim Americans under its umbrella, and its founders included, among others, activists, cultural pluralists, and HSAAMs who were seeking a representative Muslim American organization.

Furthermore, this dissertation opposes the belief that all mainstream "establishment" Muslim American immigrants were Islamist activists.[479] ISNA's

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[479] As we noted in chapter one, I define "establishment" Muslim American's as sunni Muslim American's who embrace Islamic institutions as central to an Islamic identity. They also adhere to a more traditional form of Islam. The Nation of Islam, secular Muslim groups and Shiite groups are not included in this term. Organizations like ISNA, Islamic Circle of North America, Council of American Islamic Relations,

founders included individuals who, although religiously devout, had no interaction with

Islamist organizations in their native lands. For example, ISNA's founders included

cultural pluralists who were also devout Muslims seeking to live their faith as Muslim

Americans. As I note in the appendix, people like Dr. Iqbal Unus became involved with

ISNA because of their personal need to continue congregational religious practice while

in the United States as a student. MSA and later ISNA gave him a unique opportunity to

be involved in an Islamic institution that was open, pluralistic, democratic, and diverse.

ISNA leaders and members were drawn together by events like the Iranian Revolution,

Gulf War I, and the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

Third, ISNA's leaders were unable to balance their desire for an open, consensus-

based organization with a strong nonprofit management power structure. Effective

nonprofit associations need their boards, volunteers and staff to have well-defined roles

and authority. ISNA's leaders failed to adopt such a management and governance

structure because of their suspicion of an empowered chief executive officer.

As we have seen in this dissertation, ISNA's greatest challenge is nonprofit

governance. The challenges that impede ISNA are not because of its core values. ISNA

has fought for values that fall broadly within the mainstream of American society and

specifically within the Muslim American community. ISNA's challenges are issues of

nonprofit management and governance. To further its core values of democracy,

pluralism, diversity, and individualism, ISNA needs to implement a system that disperses

power effectively within the organization. As its chief executive officer, the secretary

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Muslim American Society, Muslim Public Affairs Council, Muslim Alliance of North America, Islamic
schools and centers are a few examples that would be included in this group.

general must be trusted to manage the organization and staff and to implement the organization's mission. It must define clear roles for its board that will ensure appropriate oversight, as is done within other successful American nonprofit organizations. Embracing those defined roles will lead to a successful and sustainable nonprofit organization, and such success as a nonprofit will ensure that ISNA's core values and identity will thrive.

Its leaders' distrust of an empowered and strong chief executive officer resulted in inadequate nonprofit practices. As I show, research for this dissertation shows that chief executive officers have a central role in implementing an organization's mission. That is, whereas an organization's board hires and fires the chief executive officer, the chief executive officer hires staff and implements programs. Dr. Iqbal Unus stated that ISNA did not consider an empowered chief executive officer to be a good model. Therefore, what resulted was power based on personality. Hammad, Syeed, and Mattson were all popular leaders with great personal credibility. As I note in chapter one, they were able to implement programs based on their personal credibility, using evangelist leadership styles. Consequently, the ability to implement and sustain nonprofit programs and practices rested with ISNA's leaders and was not institutionalized throughout the organization.

The lack of clear roles and established practices made both the board and staff dysfunctional. The board's dysfunction is best illustrated by its inability to deal with the organization's recurring deficits, except when Syeed served as secretary general. In addition, ISNA's inability to hire a permanent secretary general since Syeed's departure in 2005 through 2014 illustrates the frustration and dysfunction at the staff level. The

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organization's dysfunction is reflected in the decade-long stagnation of its annual

conventions in terms of number of attendees and revenue, despite its being the largest

Muslim American gathering in America as illustrated in the charts that I present in the

chapter four. As I note in chapter four, organizations like ICNA and MAS are resurging

as nonprofits in comparison to ISNA.

Without investigating MAS, I cannot state the reasons for their success.[480] In

ISNA's case, my dissertation shows that ISNA has been unable to implement a system

that allows its secretary general to be the leader of its staff and its board to have an

oversight role. Accordingly, the blurring of roles created dysfunction and possible

stagnation. There is only one exception to this rule — Sayyid Syeed's appointment to that

role.

This dissertation shows how ISNA became a successful nonprofit organization

during Syeed's term as secretary general. The organization was able to implement

affective programs and sustain surplus budgets. After it became an effective nonprofit

organization during Dr. Sayyid Syeed's term as secretary general, ISNA achieved

cognitive legitimacy and had greater success in becoming the national representative

organization for Muslim Americans. By implementing a successful annual convention,

publishing *Islamic Horizons,* and achieving fiscal stability, it was able to achieve

cognitive legitimacy. ISNA's success provided the foundation for its legitimacy.

This legitimacy was strengthened because of its commitment to democracy

through regular elections and term limits, because of the transparency provided through

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[480] I will note that as we saw in chapter one research shows that largely homogenous groups, like MAS, have fewer challenges in decision-making and program implementation. While more diverse organizations, like ISNA, face greater challenges in decision-making and consensus building.

its financial audits and publishing of its annual reports, and because of the pluralism

achieved through its open membership and diversity among its leadership. These values,

in turn, gave the organization moral legitimacy. Additionally, at a time when Muslim

Americans needed a public entity to change the Islamophobic narrative, ISNA provided

them with many of the narratives they needed, which effectively gave the organization

pragmatic legitimacy.

Finally, this dissertation illustrates how national events matter. Islamophobia that

followed the Iranian Revolution, Gulf War I, and the terrorist attacks on September 11,

2001, presented Muslim Americans with both opportunity and challenges. Internally,

these events provided a greater sense of Islamic identity and activism. In addition, they

created greater unity among a diverse Muslim American population. However, a

community under siege is less likely to deal with the real differences that exist within.

The fear of Islamophobia masked some important fault lines that still need to be

addressed, and because issues of race, ideology, and religious identity remain less urgent

when the community is fighting an external challenge to its identity, these fault lines are

likely to increase over time.

Externally these events, especially after the attacks on September 11, resulted in

the United States government, interfaith organizations, and civil rights advocates to

increase their efforts to interact with Muslim Americans, as noted in chapter four. This

external outreach created greater legitimacy for ISNA and a greater understanding about

Islam and Muslims.

Externally, Islamophobia was a powerful political tool that was used for multiple

purposes. For example, as we saw in chapter four, the antigay marriage organization,

Alliance for Marriage, included a representative of ISNA on its board. However, proponents of gay marriage, who were part of a new civil rights movement and political left used the Islamophobic narrative to discredit the Alliance for Marriage, which resulted in ISNA's representation to end on the board. When Dr. Ingrid Mattson, ISNA's president at the time, was invited to take part in President Obama's 2008 inauguration, the political right used Islamophobia to attack President Obama.

Islamophobia makes it difficult for ISNA and Muslim Americans to determine which positions are centered on their religious values and which positions are based on political necessity. The problem arises from the fact that, when they feel as though they're being attacked, ISNA and Muslim Americans are deprived of the opportunity to define their values and religious beliefs. For example, in 2003, ISNA was opposed to gay marriages, but now ISNA is part of a coalition working in favor of gay marriage.

This dissertation examined ISNA through interviews with its secretaries general and public reports. Therefore, although my research addresses some essential issues, some perspectives and questions are yet to be addressed and could be done through additional studies. For example, what are the views of ISNA's elected leaders, members, and donors? The answer to this question may be found through the investigation of additional oral histories or surveys. Moreover, what are the views of those who choose not to be part of ISNA or other Muslim American institutions — for example, Muslim Americans who are not affiliated with a national or grassroots Muslim American institution that are not affiliated with ISNA? In addition, although ISNA is the largest Muslim organization in America, it does not represent the majority of Muslim Americans, and a number of other important Muslim American organizations rival

ISNA's work. Further research could examine how their histories and experiences compare with ISNA's. However, the unavailability of data may hamper such institutional research, particularly because many of these organizations are designated as religious organizations and, therefore, are not required to file 990 reports with the Internal Revenue Service. Also, unlike ISNA, many do not publish annual reports or audited financial statements. Also, fear of Islamophobia makes them suspicious of research into their operations. My hope is that, over time, more organizations will embrace ISNA's values of transparency and openness and that further research of such organizations will be able to build upon the institutional research provided in this dissertation.

APPENDIX

In this section, I introduce in greater detail the six men that I interviewed for this dissertation and also provide more detail about a controversial leader of ISNA, Ahmad Zaki Hammad. ISNA has been served by eight men as secretaries general or acting secretaries general. I was able to locate and interview six of these individuals. The two remaining secretaries general were unavailable for interview, and their perspectives will be sorely missed. One of them was the first secretary general, Rabie Hasan Ahmad. He served for less than one year in this position. He returned to Sudan and later served as ambassador to Rome. He lives in Sudan and was unavailable, though willing to be interviewed. The second secretary general was Amer Haleem. Amer Haleem served for less than one year. He served under the controversial ISNA President, Ahmad Zaki Hammad. He lives in Wisconsin and did not respond to any of my requests for an interview. His perspective will be missed because ISNA went through some controversial transitions, and he was seen as President Hammad's supporter. Most of those supporters are no longer part of ISNA. However, during both those periods, I was able to interview their assistant secretaries general and subsequent acting secretaries general who served under those individuals.

I interviewed the following six men who served in this important role. I note in brackets the years that they were employed at ISNA. Collectively, the years of their employment shows that there are no periods between 1977 to the present day during which I do not have an oral history to help explain what was happening within ISNA. For each of these individuals, I identify which founding group I believe they represent (activist, HSAAM, or cultural pluralist). These terms are explained in chapter one.

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Dr. Iqbal Unus (1977 through 1989 and 2013 to 2014)

I label Unus as a cultural pluralist.[481] Dr. Iqbal Unus was born in the city of Agra in Colonial India. His family moved to Karachi, Pakistan, on August 14, 1947, upon the declaration of Pakistan. He completed his early schooling in a Catholic school and then enrolled in the Air Force Academy. He then moved to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to study physics at Dhaka University. He received bachelors and masters in physics from Dhaka University and graduated in 1967. This was a tumultuous time in East Pakistan, with constant student demonstrations. These political differences would eventually lead to East Pakistan separating from Pakistan and becoming Bangladesh. Unus returned to his family in West Pakistan. Upon his return, he started a search for scholarships in the United Kingdom, the United States, or Canada to pursue higher education. He received an offer from Georgia Tech that would enroll him into their masters program.

Unus arrived in the United States in March 1970. He received his Ph.D. in physics in 1977. His involvement with the Muslim Student Association of US & Canada (MSA) began soon after his arrival in the United States. He was seeking a place to pray and the organization arranged regular Friday congregational prayers. It was during this period that Unus met Dr. Ihsan Bagby, who would later also serve as acting secretary general of ISNA. He was later elected as the chapter president, then the regional representative of the MSA, and eventually served as vice president and then president of the national organization.

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[481] The terms of cultural pluralists, activists and HSAAM's will be described and discussed later in this chapter.

It was during this period that MSA sought to establish a full-time national office to coordinate its work. As part of its leadership, Unus was involved with these discussions and helped shape the new ISNA. In 1976, as he was completing his Ph.D., he was approached to take up employment at the new MSA offices. The leadership of MSA argued, ". . . anyone can become a nuclear physicist but there are only a few people who understand our vision and what we need to accomplish." Unus found this argument convincing and became the director of administration on January 3, 1977, in Indianapolis, Indiana. Prior to Unus coming to the United States, Unus was not involved in Islamic work. His involvement with MSA was born from the necessity to arrange prayer; later he was attracted to helping establish a Muslim American identity.

Unus was also the leader of ISNA that selected the name of the ISNA publication *Islamic Horizons*. Unus went on to become assistant secretary general and then secretary general. Unus became ill in 1988 and took a leave of absence in 1989. He attributes his illness to tension and stress. His illness was never diagnosed. It is during this period of time that ISNA President Hammad announced Unus's retirement and appointed his own secretary general.[482]

Unus eventually moved to Virginia with his family to work at the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). He serves on ISNA's Majlis Ashura (board) and came into the public limelight after September 11, 2001, when his home and offices were raided by the FBI in 2002. The press were tipped off prior to the raids and were present at all of them. Unus was never implicated in any wrongdoing, and the FBI never publicly apologized for the highly public event. In 2013, he volunteered to serve as interim

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[482] More discussion of this incident and Hammad is included in Chapter 2.

secretary general without pay to help with the transition period until a new secretary general was hired to lead the organization.

Dr. Ihsan Bagby (1985 through 1991)

I label Bagby as an historically Sunni African-American Muslim (HSAAM).[483] Bagby is originally from Ohio. He is of African-American descent and became a Muslim through his personal interactions with religious individuals rather than with the Nation of Islam. His parents were originally from Anderson, Indiana. His mother was white, and his father was black. They left Indiana because state laws did not allow interracial marriage. Bagby was exposed to Islam through the prism of the Civil Rights Movement. He remembers Malcolm X speaking at his church. While he was not in attendance to listen to the speech, he remembers the huge crowd outside his church. Later, he would read the biography of Malcolm X, and it drew him closer to the religion of Islam, eventually leading to his conversion.

He states that the book initially influenced him to be involved in social change. His conversion to Islam took another couple of years. Bagby became a Muslim during his senior year in college. Bagby describes this as not just something that impacted African-Americans. He shared experiences with white converts like Dr. John Sullivan (a future vice president of ISNA) who were affected similarly. Bagby was drafted after college to serve in Vietnam. He applied for a deferment as a conscientious objector and was approved.

Upon graduation in 1970, Bagby went to Atlanta, Georgia, to work in the city's planning department. It was there that he met with Unus and helped establish a mosque.

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[483] HSAAM will be described in more detail later in this chapter.

It was during this phase that Bagby met other immigrant Muslims like Unus. Bagby describes Unus as being different from some of the others he encountered. He experienced discrimination by other immigrant Muslims at the mosque. These immigrant Muslim Americans would constantly come to the mosque trying to show the African-American Muslims the correct form of worship, but often one would contradict the other. This experience led him to the conclusion that he needed to learn more about Islam. He also realized that Muslims had different understandings of the faith based on experience and culture. He enrolled in a doctorate program at the University of Michigan in Near Eastern studies with a specialty in Islam law. He became more involved with MSA and later ISNA through his university experience. MSA had a strong chapter in Michigan along with a publishing house. MSA purchased a house in Ann Arbor and many of the MSA leaders also lived in the area. He clearly recalls activists from Egypt and Lebanon that he worked with in furthering MSA's activities in the area.

Bagby received his Ph.D. in1986, although he was hired as director of the Islamic Teaching Center in 1985. A major arm of ISNA, ITC was established to reach out to the African-American Muslim community in an effort to educate them and other new Muslims about Islam. Bagby was the first nonimmigrant hired to lead the IRC. Bagby was appointed as acting secretary general upon Unus's forced retirement and was later replaced by Amer Haleem. Bagby left ISNA in 1991, because of frustration with the organizational leadership and particularly its president, Ahmad Zaki Hammad.

Bagby is a professor at the University of Kentucky and studied Muslim Americans and their mosques. Bagby played a unique role in being the Secretary General

of the Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA),[484] while also serving as an elected member of the *Majlis Ash-Shura* of the ISNA. He recently stepped down as a member of the ISNA *Majlis Ash-Shura* to lead the ISNA Mosque Forum project.

Ahmed ElHattab (1983 to Present)

I label ElHattab as an activist. ElHattab was born in Port Said, Egypt, in 1951. ElHattab completed his high school education and early college education in Port Said. He initially studied electrical engineering, but was greatly involved with the Islamic movement in Egypt. He describes dreaming about the opportunity of taking Islam's message to the West. In 1974, while a student in college, he attended a summer program in Switzerland. He worked in a factory and lived with a local family. He found other Muslim youth at that same time and started organizing study and prayer circles. During this time, he saw the impact of sharing Islam with non-Muslims. During a visit to Zurich, he met Adel Marzouk, a friend from Egypt who was similarly stimulated by the possibilities of Islam in the West.

This friend drew ElHattab's attention to the possibility of coming to America to serve Islam. Marzouk then moved to America and was teaching Muslim children in America about Islam. In 1978, ElHattab came to the United States on a student visa in search of Marzouk. He was also seeking to become engaged in Islamic work. ElHattab remembers working in a pizzeria in New Jersey while also working at a local mosque. He eventually found Marzouk in Plainfield, Indiana. He contacted him by phone and visited the MSA offices where Marzouk worked. ElHattab then returned to New Jersey where he

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[484] MANA is the Muslim Alliance in North America and is an organization of Historically Sunni African American Muslims.

later met his first wife. His wife was a new convert to Islam. They married in 1980, and ElHattab found out about a job at ISNA through Marzouk.

In 1983, ElHattab joined the organization's Public Relations and Fundraising departments. ElHattab rose swiftly through the ranks of the organization. In 1986, he became president of the Muslim Arab Youth of America (MAYA). MAYA was established for Arabic-speaking youth. In 1986, ElHattab also joined Indiana University as a student in the Communications Department. However, because of the intensity of work in a growing organization and the frequent overseas fundraising trips, he was unable to complete his education. ElHattab eventually became the fundraising director of the organization. After Unus and Bagby, he served as acting secretary general under Ahmad Zaki Hammad, and then again after Hammad's departure. It is during this period that he was divorced from his first wife and married his current wife Amira Mashour. Mashour was the niece of the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Mustafa Mashour. ElHattab remains the longest serving staff member at ISNA.

In 1994, Dr. Sayyid Syeed was appointed secretary general of ISNA. ElHattab was appointed as the executive director of the ISNA Development Foundation (IDF). IDF would be responsible for raising funds for ISNA. While incorporated as a separate organization, it has acted as a department within ISNA, and ElHattab reports to the secretary general. ElHattab would again serve as acting secretary general on two more occasions after the departure of Dr. Sayyid Syeed and then again after Dr. Muneer Fareed. ElHattab traveled the Islamic world as ISNA's ambassador.

I consider Sayyid Syeed as both an activist and a cultural pluralist. Dr. Sayyid Muhhammad Syeed was born in Kashmir, India. [485] He came from a deeply religious family. His family was influential and was part of India and Pakistan's bid for freedom from Great Britain. He remembers how at the age of six his father took him to meet with Gandhi. Gandhi took him into his lap as he stressed the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity. At that time, those words had little impact on a future Kasmiri freedom fighter. He attended Kashmir University and received an MA in English literature and linguistics. Upon completing his education, he became a lecturer at the University of Kashmir. Like many young Kashmiri men at that time, he was opposed to the idea that Kashmir was a part of India. He considered himself to be living under occupation.

In 1965, India and Pakistan went to war again. Kashmiris opposed to India had allied themselves with Pakistan at that time and saw this war as yet another opportunity for freedom. As a young lecturer, he became an organizer among Kashmiri separatists. In 1966, he was identified as a leader of the young group of agitators and was arrested by the Indian Army. This arrest was probably made possible by the betrayal of a fellow Muslim Kashmari.

While in captivity, he was tortured and kept in seclusion. He remained in captivity until Amnesty International was able to secure his release. One condition of his release was that he could not live in Kashmir. As a young idealistic Muslim, he sought to go to the province of Uttar Pradesh, which was home to the great Muslim institution, Alligrah

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[485] Interview with Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, May 1, 2011–the biographical information comes primarily from this interview

Muslim University. The state of Muslims in Alligarh was a disappointment to him. He had assumed that the place that gave birth to this great Muslim institution would be an enlightened one. He had a romanticized vision of Aligarh. In his mind, it was the foundation of Muslim activism that resulted in freedom from the British and the establishment of Pakistan.

He was eventually granted permission to leave the country through the efforts of Amnesty International. He initially came to the University of Illinois at Urbana. He received his masters in South Asian linguistics. He then was admitted to Indiana University in Bloomington, where he received his Ph.D. in sociolinguistics in 1984.

Indiana University and the University of Illinois were important bases for the leaders of the Muslim Student Association (MSA). MSA was established at the University of Illinois at Urbana. Many of the activities of the MSA took place in Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. As a Muslim student, Syeed became involved with the MSA and quickly rose to leadership. He was the president of MSA at the time that ISNA was established.

Upon the establishment of ISNA, he moved to Washington, D.C., to serve as the director of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). IIIT was a Muslim think tank. IIIT sought to engage modern scholars of Islamic theology to help frame this knowledge within a modern and American context. While at IIIT, he helped establish the peer reviewed *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (AJISS) and helped IIIT establish research offices across the world.

He also served as the secretary general of the Association of American-Muslim Social Scientists. He later became the head of the International Islamic Federal of Student

Organization (IIFSO). IIFSO had special consultative status with the United States. It is also important to note that many of activists in the Muslim world are primarily active through their student organizations. He was also the founder of the Kashmiri American Council (KAC) and the American Muslim Council (AMC). Both KAC and AMC were political advocacy organizations.

Therefore, by the time Syeed was tapped to serve as secretary general, he had some truly unique qualifications. He was a freedom fighter bearing the physical scars of his service, was the leader of the Muslim Student Association when ISNA was established, became the leader of Islamic student movement worldwide, was a scholar, was politically astute, and was a charismatic leader and speaker. He was a trusted insider who commanded respect among the diverse community. His children married Muslim Americans of Egyptian, Syrian, Yemeni, and Caucasian ethnicity. His youngest children were named Jesus and Moses. In 2005, Syeed was appointed as the national director for Interfaith and Community Outreach in a newly established office in Washington, .D.C. He continues to serve in that role.

Dr. Muneer Fareed (2006–2008)

I consider Fareed to be a cultural pluralist. Muneer Goolam Fareed, born in 1956, is a Muslim scholar and the former secretary general of ISNA. Muneer Fareed is a South African citizen of Indian descent. He studied Arabic Language and Literature at King Abdulaziz University, Mecca, and got a theological license in Islamic Studies (Ijazah) from the Darul Uloom Deoband in India. Fareed moved to the U.S. in 1989 and obtained his Ph.D. in 1994 from the University of Michigan, with his dissertation entitled, "Legal Reform in the Muslim world: The Anatomy of a Scholarly Dispute in the 19th and the

early 20th centuries on the Usage of Ijtihad as a Legal Tool." He worked as an imam of the Islamic Association of Greater Detroit from 1989 to 2000 and was an associate professor of Islamic Studies at Wayne State University until 2006. He succeeded Sayyid Syeed as the new secretary general of the Islamic Society of North America in late 2006. Fareed is also a member of the Fiqh Council of North America. Fareed was the first secretary general who came to his position without being involved with the organization prior to this opportunity.

He was known nationally as a scholar but had never engaged with the organization. His tenure with the organization was brief.

Safaa Zarzour (2010–2013)

I consider Zarzour to be a cultural pluralist. Zarzour was born in Damascus, Syria, to a deeply religious family. Zarzour completed his early schooling and enrolled in Damascus University to study electrical engineering. He explains that, in Syria at that time, if you were from a middle class family, you either became a doctor or an engineer.

However, the 1980s were very difficult times for young Syrians. President Assad was in power, and his regime was very oppressive. A close family member and friend was arrested and imprisoned. Zarzour was frustrated with his parents' willingness to accept social order. The corruption and oppression were very difficult for him to accept. His friend was arrested because he was deeply religious. Zarzour states that, at that time, people who were deeply religious were targeted regardless of whether they were political because of the government's fear of Islamic activists. Zarzour sought to escape Syria and applied to a number of Western countries.

Zarzour was accepted at Wichita State University to study engineering. He met his future wife at the university. She was raised Christian, but started exploring other faiths in college. She lived in the same dorm as Zarzour, and their friendship started from her questions about religion and faith. They were married a few months later. Zarzour was not involved in Islamic organizations. However, a few years later he became a member of his local mosque. Through his mosque, he became interested in education.

In Syria, he could never have dreamed of becoming a teacher, but in the United States, this was a respectable and well-paying profession. His wife graduated a year earlier than he did and found employment in Arkansas. Zarzour chose to transfer into math education, as there was a shortage of math educators in Arkansas at the time. He received a degree in math from Arkansas State University. He enrolled in education courses in Louisiana and started teaching math at a local high school near the Barksdale Air Force Base, where his wife was employed. A couple of years after their marriage, his wife converted to Islam, and they decided to apply for teaching jobs at a new Muslim school called Universal School in Chicago. Initially, he taught there, but he was eventually recognized as a leader and became principal. Zarzour continued his education and received a masters degree in education from the University of Illinois and later a J.D. from DePaul University School of Law.

Chicago was the site of Zarzour's first involvement with Islamic work. He became active with local organizations, including the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago (CIOGC), and the ISNA Education Forum. Zarzour became politically active and became the administrator of the city of Bridgeview. He became an influential leader in Bridgeview,

Chicago, and Illinois politics. He was also a recognized national Muslim leader through his involvement with CAIR, the ISNA Education Forum, and as chairman of the Council of Islamic Schools of North America (CISNA). Prior to being appointed secretary general of ISNA, he served on the *Majlis Ash-Shura* of ISNA for many years. Zarzour stepped down from his position to return to Chicago, where his family continued to live during his three years as secretary general at the ISNA headquarters in Plainfield, Indiana. During his tenure as secretary general, he elevated a female, Habibe Ali, to the number two position in the organization — chief operating officer. He was replaced by Dr. Iqbal Unus as interim acting secretary general. A new secretary general is expected to be announced in 2014.

Dr. Ahmad Zaki Hammad — President of ISNA (1987–1990)

Dr. Ahmad Zaki Hammad is a scholar of Qurannic and Islamic Studies. He is considered to have activist roots but later became identified a cultural pluralist. He teaches Islamic Civilization and the Primary Disciplines of Quran Commentary, the Prophetic Traditions, and the Principles of Islamic Law at the foremost center of Islamic and Arabic learning in the Muslim world, AL-Azhar University (Faculty of Languages and Translations, Department of English). He is also a member of the Faculty of Shariah, Department of Juristic Studies. He received his early Islamic and Arabic training at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, and was awarded the graduate degree of Alamiyyah from the Faculty of Theology. He holds a Ph.D., in Islamic Studies from the University of Chicago and is the author of a study on the translation of Abu Hamid al-Ghazalis Al-Mustasfa min Ilm al-Usul, The Quintessence of the Science of the Principles of Islamic Law; and also

Islamic Law: Understanding Juristic Differences, a Primer on the Science of al-Khulaf al Fiqhi in Light of the Shari ah Sources.[486]

Hammad was born and raised in Egypt. He lived in the United States until shortly after September 11, 2001. The organization that he led upon departure from ISNA, the Quranic Literacy Institute (QLI), was established to interpret the Quran. In 1998, the U.S. government seized QLI's $1.4 million in assets as part of a terrorism probe.[487] Hammad no longer lives in the United States.

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[486] Hammad, Dr. Ahmad Zaki, *The Gracious Qur'an : A Modern Phrased Interpretation in English* (Lucent Interpretations 2007)–taken from dust cover

[487] "Terror Funding Probe Touches Suburban Group" *Chicago Tribune* (9/8/1998)

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Shariq A. Siddiqui

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Philanthropic Studies, Indiana University. November, 2014.

Doctor of Jurisprudence, Indiana University McKinney School of Law, May 2005.

Master of Arts in Philanthropic Studies, Indiana University,August 2004.

BA in History, University of Indianapolis, May 1996.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Executive Director, Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, June 2013 to present.

Associate Faculty, Indiana University School of Social Work, August 2008 to present.

Muslim Philanthropy Consultant, Lake Institute on Faith and Giving at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Indiana University, August 2013 to present.

Associate Faculty, Lake Institute on Faith and Giving at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Indiana University, August 2010 to present.

Associate Faculty, The Fund Raising School at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Indiana University, November 2013 to present.

Director of Development, Indiana University School of Education, November 2011 to June 2013.

Off counsel, Saeed and Little, November 2011 to present.

Director, Legal Services, Julian Center, September 2005 to Nov 2011.

Executive Director, Muslim Alliance of Indiana, November 2006 to May 2011 and October 2011to June 2012.

Director, Special Projects, Islamic Society of North America, January 1999 to October 2004.

Civil Rights Specialist, Indiana Civil Rights Commission, April 1997 to January 1999.

Clerk, Forfeiture Division, Marion County Prosecutors Office, September 1996 to April 1997.

BOOK CHAPTERS

"The Influence of Mosque Attendance on the Probability of Giving and Volunteering." In *Muslim American Life: Reflections and Perspectives*, ed. Iqbal Unus (Indianapolis: University of Indianapolis Press, 2014), 45.

"Myth vs Reality: Muslim American Philanthropy since 9/11." In *Religion and Philanthropic Organizations: Family, Friend, Foe?* ed. Tom Davis: (Indiana University Press, 2013), 203.

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"Muslim Charitable Organizations." In *Wisdom of Generosity: A Reader in American Philanthropy,* ed. William J. Jackson (Baylor University Press, 2008), 354.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Review of *A History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order* by Kambiz GhaneaBassiri (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Review of *Middle Eastern Studies*. Forthcoming.

PRESENTATIONS

"Navigating Identity through Philanthropy During Crisis and Transformation: Legitimacy, Diversity, Power and Innovation in the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)" at the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, November 20–22, 2013, in Hartford, Connecticut.

"Impact of 9/11/2001 on Muslim American Philanthropy" at the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, November 20–22, 2013, in Hartford, Connecticut.

Presented "Philanthropy in Troubled Times: Muslim American Philanthropy After 9/11," at *Family, Friend, Foe? The Relationship of Religion and Philanthropy in Religious Philanthropic Organizations* at the Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis Department of Religious Studies Symposium, October 7, 2010, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Served as a respondent to Reza Aslan talk on "The Future of Islam" at the Butler University Seminar on Religion and World Civilization, September 29, 2010, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Presented "Giving in the Way of God: Muslim Philanthropy in the US" at the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving at Indiana University School of Philanthropy, January 10, 2008, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Presented "Islamic Rules of War—Looking Back to Find the Future" at the Joint Board Meeting of the Common Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ, April 4, 2008, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Presented "The Influence of Mosque Attendance on the Probability of Giving and Volunteering by Muslim Americans" at the Conference on Islam in America, April 16, 2006, in Chicago, Illinois.

Presented "State Government Design and Incentives for Local Codes of Ethics" at Program on Law and State Government Symposium on *Integrity in Public Service: Living Up to the Public Trust?* September 29, 2005, at Indiana University McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis, Indiana.

PAPERS IN PROGRESS

"Integrity in Public Service: Living Up to the Public Trust?" In preparation for submission to the *Public Integrity Journal.*

"The History of the Red Crescent Society Movement." In preparation for submission to the *Review of Middle Eastern Studies*.

"The Covenant of Medina and the Rule of Law." In preparation for submission to the *Journal of Islamic Law and Society.*

"Islamic Rules of War—Looking Back to Find the Future." In preparation for submission to *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture.*

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Andrews University
    Nonprofit Management and Leadership (graduate course) in Ghana, July 2014.

Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy
Civil Society and Philanthropy (graduate course), fall 2013.

Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana
World Religions, spring 2012.

Indiana University Bloomington Department of Religious Studies
Islam in America, fall 2008.

Indiana University Bloomington, School of Public and Environmental Affairs
Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector, fall 2008.

Indiana University School of Social Work
Collective Bargaining and Labor Unions, 2008 to present.
Introduction to Labor Studies and Collective Bargaining, 2008 to present.
Labor and Society, 2008 to present.
Immigration and Labor Studies, 2008 to 2011.

ACADEMIC AWARDS

Certificate of Teaching for Valuable Teaching Contributions.
Labor Studies Program, Indiana University School of Social Work, 2009.
Program on Law and State Government Fellowship.
Indiana University McKinney School of Law, 2005.

SERVICE

Member, Common Cause Interfaith Delegation to Vietnam on Agent Orange (2010).
Member, Steering Committee, World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists (2008),
Istanbul, Turkey.
Member, American Muslim Peace Mission to Darfur (2004).
Mediator/Arbitrator, Islamic Society of North America (2010 to present).
Member, Muslim Alliance of Indiana Board (2011 to present).
Member, Global Interfaith Partnership Board (2011 to present).
Member, Circles Out of Poverty-Indiana Advisory Board (2012 to present).
Member, Spirit and Place Advisory Board (2011to 2012).
Vice Chair, ISNA Narrative Committee (2012 to present).
Member, Interfaith Delegation to Kenya (2012).
Member, Heartland Pro Bono Council Board of Directors (2009 to 2011).
Advisor, Pakistani Students Association, Indiana University Purdue University-
Indianapolis (2011to present).
Member, Stanley K. Lacy Executive Leadership Series (2010 to 2011).
Member, Indianapolis Bar Leadership Series Class (2009 to 2010).
Member, University of Indianapolis Alumni Association (2002 to 2008).
Director, School of Knowledge Board of Directors (2004 to 2006).
Director, Islamic School of Plainfield Board of Directors (2000 to 2004).

Board Member, OBATHelpers (2006 to 2012).

LANGUAGES

      Fluent in English
      Fluent in Urdu
      Intermediate Arabic