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In the name of Allah,
most Gracious, most Merciful

Striving for excellence

When we meet non-Muslims and try to answer their questions in a beneficial way, we notice that we need to increase our knowledge in Islam and our iman. That is, we strengthen our faith. We all have heard of stories where people have reverted to Islam just by looking at the manners and characteristics demonstrated by a Muslim.

There was once a Muslim girl who wore a headscarf to work. One of her workmates asked her why she was wearing a scarf. She replied, "Because I am a Muslim." This prompted the man to ask her more questions with the intention of trying to understand Islam. In the end, the man converted to Islam and she is now happily married to him. Subhanallah! This is a perfect example of being an ambassador of Islam.

I am sure we have all heard similar stories that are equally inspiring. However, we cannot simply say the shahada, become Muslims, and expect others to respect our religion. Furthermore, the shahada alone will not guarantee a person a place in paradise!

Allah (swt) says in the Quran, "And (mention, O Muhammad), when your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.' They said, 'Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and

sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?' Allah said, 'Indeed, I know that which you do not know'" (Surah Al-Baqara, verse 30).

This verse confirms that we humans are placed on earth as "a successive authority" (khalifatullah). Another meaning of this word is "vicegerent" or "ambassador of Allah (swt)". So, for us to be good ambassadors, we need to know our Master so that we can perform our duties on earth adequately.

So, how do we get to know Allah (swt)? One way is to get to know his names, the asma ul-husna. By studying, rehearsing, reflecting on and remembering His beautiful names, we can get to know Him better. There are 99 such names.

Allah (swt) says in the Holy Quran, "He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to Him belong the



best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise” (Surah Al-Hashr, verses 22 to 24).

What a beautiful way of teaching us the description of our Master! He has chosen several names to describe Himself and has appointed us as ambassadors. What a privilege and honour! Should we not be thankful for it? Should we not be responsible for promoting it?

Knowing the names alone won't do enough to discharge our responsibilities. We need to change ourselves from what we are, to what Allah (swt) wants us to be. We cannot be perfect, as perfection belongs to Allah (swt) alone. But we can strive for perfection. This is not a destination but a journey that we all must strive for during our lifetime, a journey that includes not only us and our immediate families, but also our wider communities and non-Muslims.

Where do we start? It may seem like an impossible task. But like all things, our journey will need to start with a single step. Some may say that they lack the brilliant speech that moves people to

action. But it is not the speech that moves people. It is our actions and examples that we set forth that convince people. If people see that we are trustworthy, they will start to trust us. When people see that we control anger, they will see peace in us. And when people see our good manners, they will want to become friends.

We all have roles in our day-to-day lives. We are brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, friends, neighbours, and employees or employers at some time. As ambassadors of Allah (swt), we cannot settle for mediocrity. We must strive for excellence in what we do. And this excellence is achieved by displaying good character.

We all know the hadith narrated by Yahya from Imam Malik (ra) that he heard the Prophet (saw) say, “I was sent to perfect good character”. “Perfecting” means not to settle for the average or the mediocre. It is about striving for the highest possible standard in everything we do. Unlike some other religions, we are not asked to forsake our life to achieve nirvana or to live in seclusion. No. Islam

Ancient Quran may have belonged to Abu Bakr (ra)

In the September issue of *Rocket Science*, we reported the discovery of fragments of a Quran found in the University of Birmingham UK. Carbon-dating by the University of Oxford showed that the fragments date to between 568 and 645, with 95% accuracy. There is thus probably overlap with the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (saw), who lived between 570 and 632.

Further analysis^{1,2} has been carried out by Jamal bin Huwareib, managing director of the UAE's Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation for Islamic Studies. By considering the quality of the parchment, made of sheep or goat skin, and the quality of the handwriting, he has subsequently suggested that the 200-page document could only have been created for an incredibly important figure. And it is suggested that this could have been Abu Bakr (ra). Abu Bakr was a close companion of Muhammad, and was the first person outside Prophet Mohammed's family to convert to Islam. He was also the father of Aishah (ra), who became the Prophet's wife, and he became the

first caliph after the Prophet's death.

However, University of Birmingham professor of Christianity and Islam, David Thomas (a "doubting Thomas"?) said Huwareib's claims amounted to a "very big leap indeed", although he does concede that the scribe who wrote this manuscript may well have personally known Prophet Muhammad (saw).

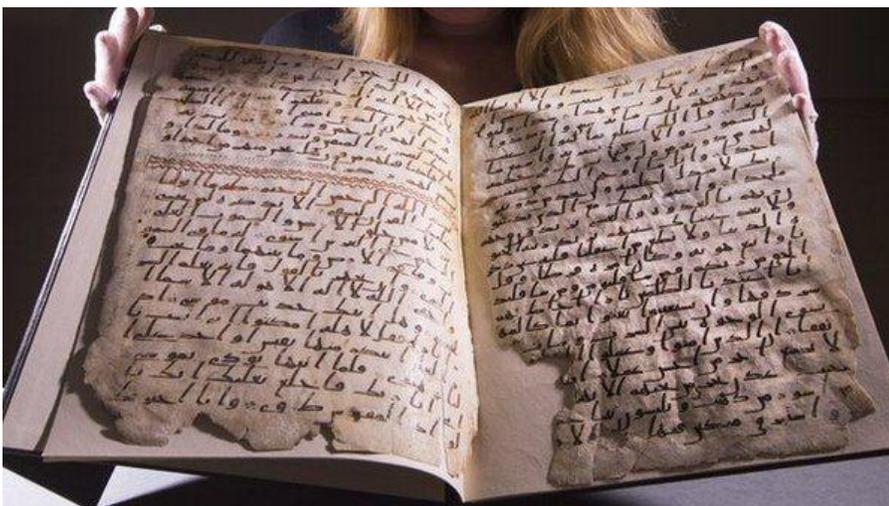
Academics are becoming increasingly confident that the manuscript has an exact match in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. That Quran is known to have once been held in the Mosque of Amr ibn al-As in Fustat, Egypt's oldest mosque, built in 641.

No doubt, further study will lead to further discoveries about the origins of these fragments. Nevertheless, all researchers agree that the discovery is of huge significance.

Also, we ought not to lose sight of the fact that the word *Quran* means "recitation", and that it is primarily a spoken text that has been memorised and recited, not only by Prophet Muhammad (saw) and his companions (ra), but also by millions of Muslims in the intervening 14 centuries.

1 Ancient Birmingham Koran 'could have belonged to world's first ever Muslim' RT 23 December 2015. www.rt.com/uk/326903-birmingham-koran-abu-bakr

2 David Chambers (24 December 2015). Ancient Birmingham Koran 'could have belonged to world's first ever Muslim' *Chronicle Daily* chronicledaily.com/2015/12/24/ancient-birmingham-koran-could-have-belonged-to-worlds



What did Jesus (Isa, as) look like?

Most of us are familiar with Christian depictions of Jesus (Isa, as), as found in paintings, sculptures, stained glass windows, etc. He is most often shown as being taller than his disciples, lean, with long, flowing, light brown hair, fair skin and light-coloured eyes. However, as Fillon¹ points out, "A person with these features and physical bearing would have looked very different from everyone else in the region where Jesus lived and ministered." That is, this is not what Jews in 1st century Palestine typically looked like.

The Gospel of Matthew states that, when Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, Judas Iscariot had to point out to the soldiers which one was Jesus, which shows that he probably resembled his disciples. (In the Bible, this occurs before the alleged crucifixion, whereas in Islam, the Quran states clearly that this crucifixion of Jesus did not happen.)

Further, the physical appearance of Jesus is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible. There are no drawings of him dating from that period. Nor are there any skeleton or bodily fragments from which DNA could be extracted.

As a result, any depictions of Jesus are not based on any evidence, but simply come from the artists' imagination. Often these depictions of Jesus are heavily influenced by the culture and artistic tradition of the artists. Carlos F Cardoza-

Orlandi, associate professor of world Christianity at Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta, gives examples: "While Western imagery is dominant, in other parts of the world he is often shown as black, Arab or Hispanic."¹

Forensic anthropology

So, the question remains: "What did Jesus (as) look like?" An answer has emerged from an exciting new field of science: forensic anthropology. This specialist field intersects with other fields such as genetics, human growth and development, primatology (the study of primates including the great apes), palaeoanthropology (the study of primate and human evolution), human osteology (the study of the skeleton), nutrition (how what you eat affects your skeletal remains), dentistry (how what you eat affects your teeth record) and climate adaptation (how the climate of where you live affects your body).

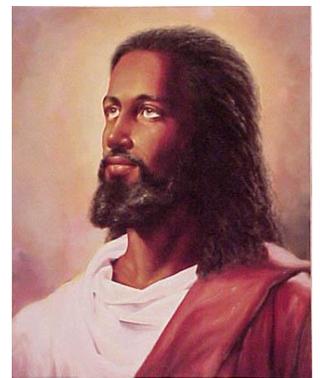
Richard Neave is a retired medical artist from the University of Manchester UK. Over the past two decades, he has reconstructed dozens of famous faces, including Philip II of Macedonia (the father of Alexander the Great) and King Midas of Phrygia. First, he and his team acquired Jewish skulls (three well-preserved specimens, in particular) from around 1st century Jerusalem. Then they used computerised tomography to create X-ray "slices" of the skulls.



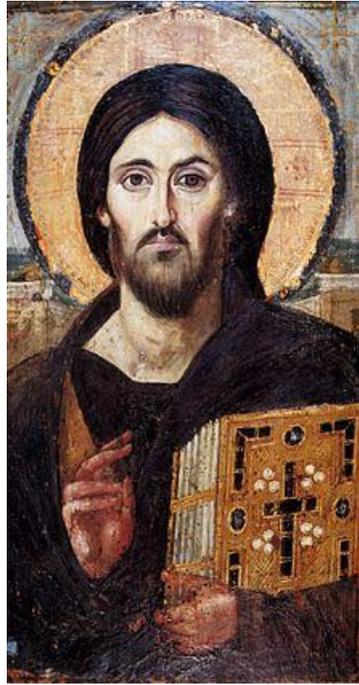
An Indian depiction of Jesus



A Chinese depiction of Jesus



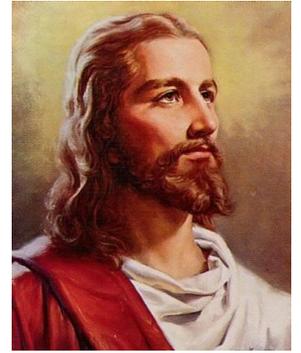
A black depiction of Jesus



Jesus from a 6th century icon



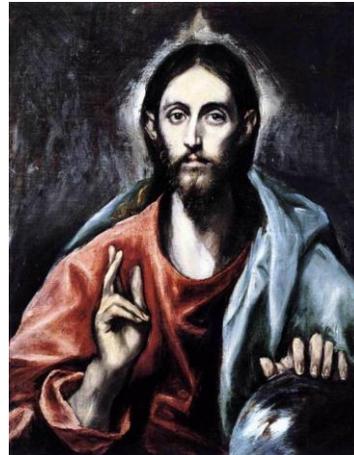
Jesus from The Last Supper by Michelangelo



Jesus by Michelangelo



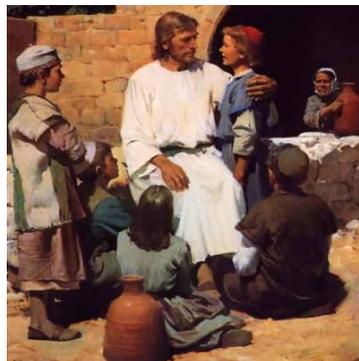
A typical church stained glass window



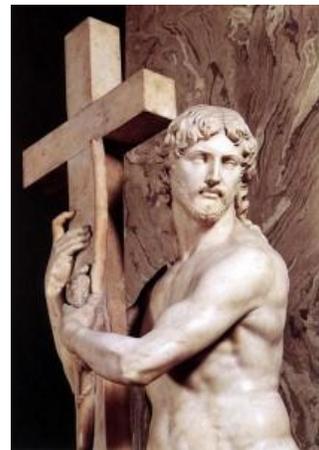
Jesus by El Greco



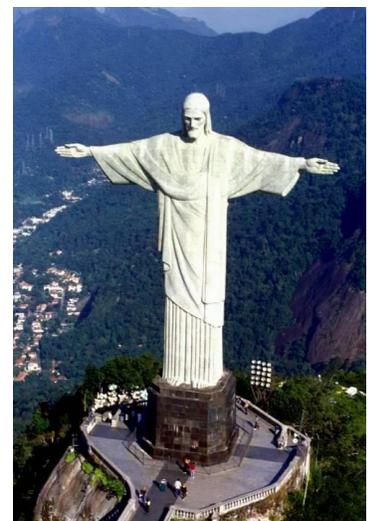
Jesus by Rembrandt



Jesus by Harry Anderson



Jesus sculpture by Michelangelo



Christ the Redeemer sculpture, Rio de Janeiro

This skull data was then combined with known information about the thickness of soft tissue at key areas on human faces, to re-create the muscles and skin overlying a typical Jewish skull. Next, from this digital 3D reconstruction of the face, they created a cast of the skull, with layers of clay matching the thickness of facial tissues, along with simulated skin. The nose, lips and eyelids were then modelled to follow the shape determined by the underlying muscles.

Some best guesses

There are several features that the skeletal remains shed no light on: eye colour, skin colour, facial hair, hair length, hair colour.

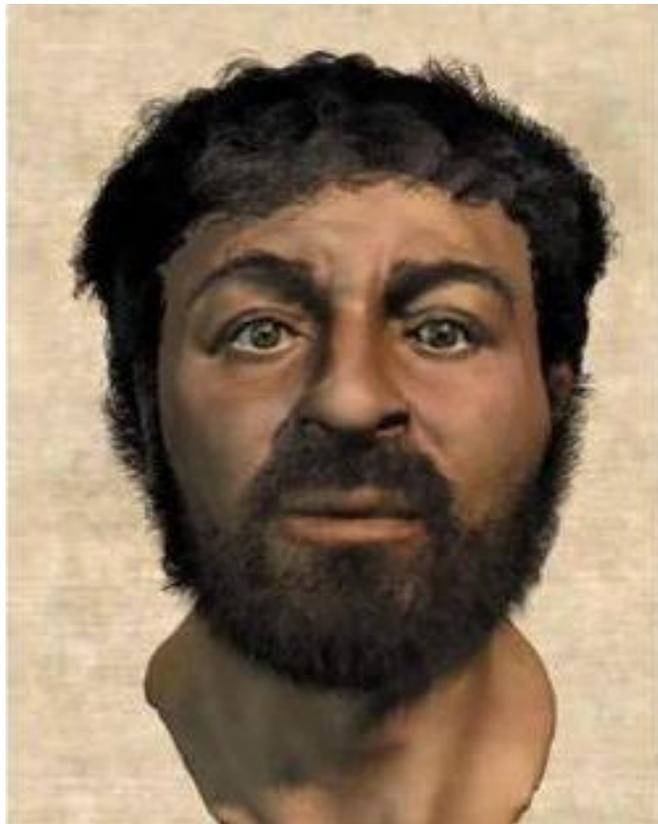
As for eye colour, Neave turned to drawings found at archaeological sites drawn before the Bible was compiled. These showed clearly that Jesus would have had dark-coloured eyes, and a beard.

In terms of hair, Paul, in 1 Corinthians, mentions having seen Jesus, and then he later comments that long hair on a man is disgraceful. Paul would not have written, "If a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him", if Jesus himself had had long hair. So, Jesus would have had short hair, appropriate to men of the time.

From an analysis of Jewish skeletal remains from that period, it is known that the average build of a male was 5 ft 1 in (1.55 metres), with an average weight of about 110 pounds (50 kilograms), shorter and lighter than nowadays. Fillon¹ reasons that, "Since Jesus worked outdoors as a carpenter until he was about 30 years old, it is reasonable to assume he was more muscular and physically fit than westernized portraits suggest. His

face was probably weather-beaten, which would have made him appear older, as well." The 3D reconstruction made by Neave and his team is shown in the picture. It is important to remember that this head, based on several archaeological findings from the time and place, is merely a reconstruction of what a typical Jew of that time and place looked like. Neave is not, of course, saying that this is an accurate model of the face of Jesus (as).

What is striking is how different this dark, swarthy Middle Eastern man is from the Jesus typically portrayed in paintings etc. Not surprisingly, there have been many people with reservations (as it would show the inaccuracy of much of western art).



Neave's model of a typical 1st century Jewish male. Jesus (Isa, as) probably looked like this.

Alison Galloway, professor of anthropology at the University of California in Santa Cruz, dismissing forensic depictions as not being an exact science, points to the fact that facial features, upon which we base our recognition of faces, are mostly to do with the soft tissue above the muscle and bone. The most recognisable features of faces, such as the folds of the eyes, structure of the nose and shape of the mouth, are left to the artist. Nevertheless, she concedes that "This is probably a lot closer to the truth than the work of many great masters."

Islamic descriptions of Jesus

The hadiths refer to the account by Muhammad (saw) of the Night Journey (Isra miraj), when he was taken up to heaven by the angel Gabriel (Jibril, as), where he saw Jesus and other prophets. Most versions of this say that "Jesus had curly hair and a reddish complexion". Others say his face was flushed as if he just had a bath ("a reddish man with many freckles on his face as if he had just come from a bath"). In another account from Bukhari, Jesus is seen in a dream near the Kaaba, as "a man of a wheatish complexion with straight hair." However, other narrations give variations in the colour. Salim ibn Abd-Allah reports from his father Abdullah ibn Umar that the Prophet "did not say that Jesus was of red complexion", rather he was "a man of brown complexion and lank hair". In contrast, Abd Allah ibn Abbas says that Jesus was of "moderate complexion inclined to the red and white colours and of lank hair."

Whichever of these hadith variations you take, it is clear that Jesus's physical appearance was very different from that shown in western art.

Conclusion

In short, we do not know for sure what Jesus (as) looked like. There is no such description in the Bible. We have three sources:

- The hadiths that contain such a description, since Muhammad (saw) claimed to have seen Jesus (as).
- This latest research, which merely claims to provide an idea of the appearance of a typical Jew of that period.
- The depictions of Jesus by various artists and sculptors, including famous ones such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. These are clearly figments of the artists' imaginations.

However, what is important about Jesus (as) is not his appearance, but the message that he brought, which Muslims believe to be tawhid, ie the oneness of God.

Similarly, we have verbal descriptions from the Companions of Muhammad's appearance. But again, what is important is the message rather than the messenger; that is, not his appearance, but the message that he brought, which was tawhid, ie the oneness of God. Although the descriptions of Muhammad's physical appearance are somewhat detailed, any painting would contain elements that are figments of the artists' imaginations. Moreover, they would detract from the message of tawhid. That is why Muslims do not produce paintings, sculptures, etc of Muhammad (saw).

1 Fillon, M. (23 January 2015). The Real Face Of Jesus. Popular Mechanics. www.popularmechanics.com/science/health/a234/1282186

“Welcome to our mosque, Mr Trump”

On 4 January 2016, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump released a television advertisement vowing to fight “radical Islamic terrorism”. This is especially being pushed in Iowa, which has an established Muslim community, and an early Republican caucus on 2 February. How did US Muslims respond to this?

The Muslims of Iowa responded by inviting him to their mosque. Imam Tawil, imam of the Mother Mosque in Cedar Rapids, a US citizen and a Palestinian Muslim originally from Jerusalem, told *Time* magazine¹, “As an imam and director of the first mosque of North America, I, Imam Tawil, declare that we would love to have our candidate Donald Trump to come and talk to his fellow citizens who have been born here, whose parents were born here, as Americans, to come talk to us about his plans, to come to tell us his philosophy, and to tell us how he can help us out as American citizens.”

Like most Iowan Muslims, Tawil says that he is a registered Republican. However, Trump’s stance is testing his allegiance. On 30 December 2015, the Islamic Center of Cedar Rapids held an open house with Democratic Congressman Keith Ellison of Minnesota, the first Muslim in Congress, who was campaigning on behalf of rival Democratic presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders. Tawil notes, “I cannot deny that the comments of Mr Donald Trump and Dr Ben Carson have been very hurtful and

very damaging. ... We are shaken. ... Right now I am sure I will not vote for him [Trump], that is 100%, but as a religious leader I cannot tell people what to do.”

It is ironic that Trump is campaigning in Iowa against Muslims, as Iowan Muslims have a longer place in US history than the Trump family.

The Iowan Muslims community dates back to Syrians who settled in the Cedar Rapids area in the late 1800s, and Mother Mosque, the USA’s first mosque, formally opened in 1934 in the midst of the Great Depression. Today Cedar Rapids is home to three mosques.

Donald Trump’s paternal grandfather, Friedrich Trump², was born in Kallstadt, Germany. He emigrated to New York City in 1885 and worked as a barber for six years. In 1891, he moved to Seattle, and established a “decadent” restaurant known as the “Poodle Dog”. Around this time, he anglicised his name to Frederick and became a naturalised United States citizen. He returned briefly to Germany around 1900, married German Elizabeth Christ and they returned to the USA. He made his first fortune operating boom-town hotels, restaurants and brothels.

Donald Trump’s father, Frederick Christ “Fred” Trump³, was born in 1905 in the Bronx, New York. Although both of his parents were born in Germany, Trump told friends and acquaintances for decades after World War II that the family was of Swedish origin.

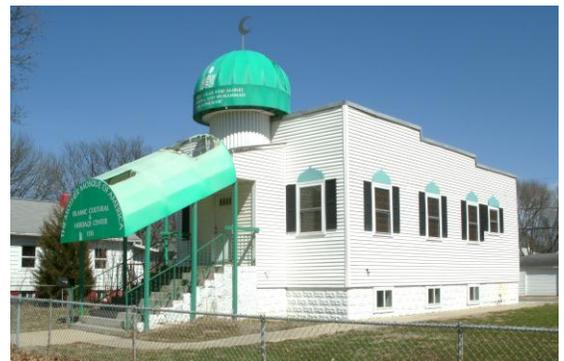
According to his nephew John Walter, "He had a lot of Jewish tenants and it wasn't a good thing to be German in those days." He married Mary Anne MacLeod, who was born at Tong, Stornoway on Lewis, one of the Scottish islands.

Donald Trump⁴ was born in Queens, New York, in 1946. In 1977, he married Ivana Marie Zelníčková⁵, who was born in the Moravian town of Gottwaldov (now known as Zlín) in Czechoslovakia (today in the Czech Republic). They divorced in 1992. Trump has since been married twice: to Marla Ann Maples⁶ (married 1993–99), with whom he had an adulterous relationship while still married to Ivana, and an illegitimate daughter; and Melanija Knavs⁷ (married 2005), who was born in Sevnica, in Slovenia's Lower

Sava Valley (then part of Yugoslavia).

In short, the ancestors of the Iowan Muslims arrived in the USA at about the same time as Donald Trump's grandfather, and far earlier (ie many Iowan Muslims have more established American roots) than Donald Trump's grandmother, mother, and first and third wives.

- 1 Maya Rhodan. Oldest mosque in America invites Donald Trump to visit. Time, 4 January 2016. time.com/4167859/donald-trump-mosque-visit-iowa
- 2 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Trump
- 3 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Trump
- 4 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Trump
- 5 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivana_Trump
- 6 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marla_Maples
- 7 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melania_Trump



Mother Mosque today

What have the Muslims ever done for the USA?

In a famous scene from Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, John Cleese's character, a member of the People's Front of Judea named Reg, rants against the Romans by asking "What have the Romans ever done for us?" A member of his audience pipes up with "Roads?" After several other contributions from the floor, Reg summarises, "All right, but apart from the sanitation, medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, the fresh water system and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us?" To which another member of the audience offers, "Brought peace?"

In a tweet in December that brought back memories of Reg, Donald Trump stated, "Obama said in his speech that Muslims are our sports heroes. What sport is he talking about, and who?" Or, to put it another way, "What have the Muslims ever done for US sport?" In an article in the *Guardian*¹, Stuart Jeffries points out, "One of those sports heroes is, Mr Trump, someone you've met before. Here are some clues. He was known as the Louisville Lip. He was three times World Heavyweight Boxing Champion. Oh yes, and in 1965 he changed his name from Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali and later gave interviews explaining his perspective on his new faith. Now you remember. He's the same guy you met in 2007 when he presented you with a Muhammad Ali award. In May, you posted a photo on Facebook posing with the great Muslim sporting hero and claimed then that he was your friend."

Here are some other Muslim US sports stars:

- Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, record six-time NBA Most Valuable Player (MVP), record 19-time NBA All-Star, 15-time All-NBA selection, and 11-time NBA All-Defensive Team member
- Shaquille O'Neal, 1999–2000 MVP award, the 1992–93 NBA Rookie of the Year award, 15 All-Star game selections, three All-Star Game MVP awards, three Finals MVP awards, two scoring titles, 14 All-NBA team selections, and three NBA All-Defensive Team selections
- Hakeem Olajuwon, the only player in NBA history to win the NBA MVP, Defensive Player of the Year, and Finals MVP awards in the same season
- Mike Tyson, the youngest boxer to win the WBC, WBA and IBF heavyweight titles at 20 years, 4 months, and 22 days old

Stuart Jeffries points out that without Muslims, the USA would be a different and poorer place. He gives a list of examples, which are summarised here. As he concludes, "Here, then, is a guide to some of the things Muslims have done for the US. It's not an exhaustive list – but it's still more impressive than what Trump has done for his homeland."



Donald Trump and his Muslim friend Muhammad Ali



Kareem Abdul-Jabbar



Shaquille O'Neal



Bangladesh stamp honouring Fazlur Rahman Khan



Willis Tower



Trump Tower

Creating America

Among those who served under the command of chief of the continental army, General George Washington, in the war against British colonialism were Bampett Muhammad², who fought for the Virginia Line between the years 1775 and 1783, and Yusuf Ben Ali, who was a North African Arab. Some have claimed that Peter Buckminster, who fired the gun that killed British Major General John Pitcairn at the battle of Bunker Hill, and later went on to serve in the Battle of Saratoga and the battle of Stony Point, was a Muslim American. This may be so, but the chief ground for the claim is that Buckminster later changed his surname to Salem or Salaam, the Arabic word for ‘peace’.

Building its cities

Fazlur Rahman Khan, or Fazlur Khan, as he was popularly known, was an iconic figure in structural engineering for his pioneering work on skyscrapers, particularly the “tubular designs” which formed the basic structural system in high-rise buildings. He was called the “father of tubular designs”, and has admitted that a bunch of pencils inspired him to design the Sears Towers now known as the Willis Tower in Chicago, at that time the tallest building in the world. Khan proposed a connected cluster of nine tubes, which he often described as a “group of pencils bundled together with a rubber band”. He believed that such a bundle could stand up by itself much more easily than a single pencil. It is also believed that his inspiration came from his

daughter, Yasmin Sabina Khan, holding a bunch of pencils in her hand as she was filling her colouring charts. Khan was such an influence to her that she also took up structural engineering as her career. Khan’s method of structural system became so popular that many of the tall buildings today adopt the technique, including the Trump Tower in Chicago built decades after Khan’s death in 1982. As a tribute to this 20th century renaissance engineer, who made tall buildings look graceful, the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat named their “lifetime achievement medal” after him. A road in Chicago is named after him, and postage stamps have been issued in his honour in Bangladesh.

Living the American dream

Shahid Khan³ is the personification of the American dream. The Pakistan-born billionaire arrived in the US aged 16 on a one-way trip to the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. “Within 24 hours, I had already experienced the American dream,” Khan said, by which he meant he had found a job for \$1.20 an hour washing dishes – more than the vast majority of the people back in Pakistan earned at the time. He started a car-parts business after university. Now, the 65-year-old – best known in the UK for owning Fulham FC – is the head of the \$4.9bn (in sales terms) auto-parts company Flex-N-Gate, the 360th richest person on the planet and three years ago Forbes magazine put him on its cover as the face of the American dream.

Fighting injustice

After the end of slavery in the US, many African Americans began to move to cities in large numbers. But because of restrictive housing and employment policies, the result was that many lived in troubled ghettos. In such a context, some African Americans returned to what they believed to be the religion of their ancestors, Islam. Many of them were attracted, during the 1950s and 1960s, to the brilliant oratory of a spokesman for the Nation of Islam, who was born Malcolm Little in 1925, but became famous as Malcolm X⁴. He changed his surname to "X", because "For me, my 'X' replaced the white slavemaster name of 'Little' which some blue-eyed devil named Little had imposed upon my paternal forebears." As a Muslim convert, he exhorted African-Americans to cast off the shackles of racism "by any means necessary", including violence – a message contrary to his fellow civil rights activist Dr Martin Luther King, who called for non-violent civil disobedience. "I don't even call it violence when it's in self-defence," he said once. "I call it intelligence."

Inventing the ice-cream cone

At the 1904 St Louis Worlds Fair, an ice-cream vendor ran short of dishes, on which he served his ice-creams. Thankfully, at the next booth was a Syrian Muslim immigrant, named Ernest Hamwi, selling zalabia, a waffle-like confection. He rolled a waffle into a conical shape to contain the ice-cream, thus inventing the world's first edible cone. What could be more American than the ice-cream cone? Also, the zalabia is so integrated into American society that Martha Stewart⁵ has a recipe for it.

Promoting diplomacy

Farah Pandith⁶, born in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir,

worked in the George W Bush administration at the National Security Council as a director for Middle East Initiatives and then in the Department of State as adviser on Muslim engagement in Europe. In 2009 she became Hillary Clinton's envoy to the world's Islamic communities.

Helping Hillary to the White House

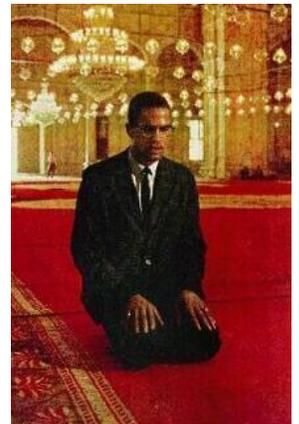
Huma Abedin⁷ may be America's most powerful Muslim woman. The 39-year-old Kalamazoo (Michigan)-born political staffer is a long-time aide to Hillary Clinton and was her deputy chief of staff at the State Department. She currently serves as vice chairwoman of Clinton's 2016 campaign for president. But can she be trusted? In 2012 five Republican Congress members wrote to the State Department inspector general and claimed that she had "immediate family connections to foreign extremist organisations". The claims were refuted and the allegations dismissed by the Washington Post as "paranoid", a "baseless attack" and a "smear".

Treating the sick

In 1963, Ayub Ommaya⁸, a Pakistani-born Muslim neurosurgeon, invented an intraventricular catheter system that can be used for the aspiration of cerebrospinal fluid or the delivery of drugs, that is, a soft, plastic, dome-shaped device placed under the scalp. This so-called Ommaya Reservoir is then connected to a catheter that is placed into the brain. The reservoir is used to provide chemotherapy directly to the site for brain tumours. He also developed the first coma score for classification of traumatic brain injury and developed the US's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, which, as part of its mission, focuses on traumatic brain injury.



Shahid Khan (right) owner of Fulham FC, with former owner Mohamed al-Fayed (in fake SK moustache),



Malcolm X



Farah Pandith



Ayub Ommaya



Egyptian stamp honouring Ahmed Zewail



Ice Cube



Aziz Ansari (left)



Dave Chappelle

Advancing science

Ahmed Zewail⁹ won the Nobel prize for Chemistry in 1999, becoming the first Egyptian-born scientist to do so. He is known as the “father of femtochemistry” and for doing pioneering work in the observation of rapid molecular transformations. He is professor of chemistry and physics at California Institute of Technology (Caltech), director of the physical biology center, and a member of President Barack Obama’s presidential council of advisers on science and technology. Postage stamps have been issued in Egypt to honour his contributions to science and humanity.

Giving hip-hop its greatest MC

For many music fans of the 80s and 90s, hip-hop was the first, thrilling, exposure to Muslim culture and the religion of Islam. After the early days of breakdancing and braggadocio, it found room for a spiritual and religious element. The range of Muslim rappers includes Yasiin Bey (the Artist Formerly Known As Mos Def), T-Pain, Nas, Andre 3000, Lupe Fiasco, Ice Cube and Busta Rhymes.

Bringing the laughs

Can Muslims be comedians? When Rupert Murdoch tweeted this January “Maybe most Moslems peaceful, but until they recognize and destroy their growing jihadist cancer they must be held responsible”, Aziz Ansari¹⁰ counter-tweeted: “Rups, can we get a step by step guide? How can my 60-year-old parents in NC (North Carolina) help destroy terrorist groups? Plz advise.”

(Ansari describes himself as an atheist, but he was born to a Tamil Muslim family in South Carolina.)

Dave Chappelle¹¹ converted to Islam in 1998 but doesn’t go on about it. Why? “I don’t normally talk about my religion publicly because I don’t want people to associate me and my flaws with this beautiful thing,” he told *Time* magazine in 2005. “And I believe it is beautiful if you learn it the right way.”

Conclusion

So, to answer Donald Trump’s question, “What have the Muslims ever done for the USA?” – apart from helping found the country, building its cities, overcoming racism against blacks, being leading political advisors, making world-class scientific discoveries and inventions, and being leading figures in popular culture, ...

- 1 Matthew Grimson ‘Donald Trump forgets Muslim champions during Obama criticism’. NBC News, 7 December 2015. www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/donald-trump-forgets-muslim-champions-during-obama-criticism-n475306
- 2 Did Muslims fight in the continental army? www.loonwatch.com/2011/01/did-muslims-fight-in-the-continental-army
- 3 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahid_Khan
- 4 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malcolm_X
- 5 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martha_Stewart
- 6 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farah_Pandith
- 7 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huma_Abedin
- 8 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayub_Ommaya
- 9 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Zewail
- 10 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aziz_Ansari
- 11 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dave_Chappelle

Islamophobia in the USA

Donald Trump has called for a temporary ban on Muslims entering the USA, and for a national register of Muslims. As Chalabi¹ points out, "It's not clear whether rhetoric like that expressed by Donald Trump fuels anti-Muslim sentiment in the US or merely taps into existing negative feelings towards Muslims." How great is this Islamophobia? Here are some research findings.

According to a YouGov poll² conducted in 2015, 55% of surveyed Americans had an "unfavourable" opinion of Islam. Islamophobic sentiments are more common among Americans who are 45 and older, those who are Republican and those who are white (ie are like Donald Trump).

A 2014 Pew Research Center³ study of over 3,000 US respondents found that, on a "feeling thermometer" scale of 0 (cold) to 100 (warm), Muslims only scored 40, the same as atheists. However, there are far more atheists in the USA (3%, along with 4% agnostic and 16% "nothing in particular") than Muslims (1%). This makes Muslims an easy target for people like Trump. As Chalabi notes, "Those two percentages – the number of Americans who dislike Muslims and the number of Americans who are Muslim – suggest that Trump would not have had the same receptive audience had he singled out members of any other religious group."

Possible Muslim identity is used as a slur. When (often white, often Republican) individuals were trying to undermine Barack Obama's credibility in 2004 (before he became president) and claim that he could not be trusted, they said

he was a secret Muslim. According to a September 2015 poll⁴ by CNN and the Opinion Research Corporation, 29% of Americans (and 43% of Republicans) believe that Obama is a Muslim. In fact, his father was Kenyan, and he was given Muslim names: Barack (Arabic for "blessing") and Hussein (after the Prophet's grandson, ra). However, "In January 2008, Obama told *Christianity Today*: 'I am a Christian, and I am a devout Christian. I believe in the redemptive death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.'"⁵

Islamophobia is thus alive and well in the USA. Unless things change, Islamophobia is likely to become more of a problem, as the Pew Research Center estimates that by 2050, the percentage of Americans who identify as Muslim will grow from 0.9% to 2.1%.

1 Mona Chalabi 'How anti-Muslim are Americans? Data points to extent of Islamophobia' *The Guardian*, 8 December 2015.

www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/08/muslims-us-islam-islamophobia-data-polls

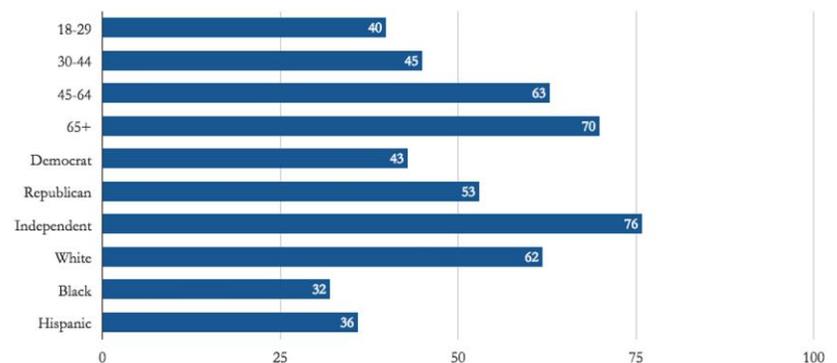
2 yougov.co.uk

3 pewresearch.org

4 i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2015/images/09/12/iranpoll.pdf

5 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama

Percentage who say they have a somewhat/very unfavorable opinion of Islam



Based on 997 US respondents interviewed by YouGov March 6 - 9, 2015

“No, I don’t hate Muslims”



Chris Herbert

A BBC News report¹ concerns Chris Herbert, a former soldier from Portsmouth, England, who served in Iraq with the Yorkshire Regiment. He lost his leg in a roadside bombing in Basra. You would therefore think that he would have every reason to hate Muslims. An Islamophobic group tried to recruit him as a “poster boy”.

However, he sees the bigger picture and, rather than focussing on the person who took his leg, he praises the Muslims who served next to him in Iraq and helped him recover from his injuries. That is, you cannot blame a whole group for the actions of a few.

In a Facebook post, he wrote, “Blaming all Muslims for the actions of groups like Daesh [so-called Islamic State] and the

Taliban, is like blaming all Christians for the actions of the KKK or Westboro Baptist Church.”

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) are an American white supremacist group using terrorism against others. As Wikipedia notes, “Though members of the KKK swore to uphold American values and Christian morality, virtually every Christian denomination officially denounced the KKK.”

Westboro Baptist Church is an unaffiliated Baptist church known for its hate speech. Again, as Wikipedia notes, “The Baptist World Alliance and the Southern Baptist Convention (the two largest Baptist denominations) have both denounced the WBC over the years.”

His Facebook post is reproduced below.



Chris Herbert

Yesterday at 11:07 · Dodworth · 🌐

Getting frustrated by some people expecting racism from me, because I got blown up. Here it is:

Yes. A Muslim man blew me up, and I lost my leg.

A Muslim man also lost his arm that day wearing a British Uniform.

A Muslim medic was in the helicopter that took me from the field

A Muslim surgeon performed the surgery that saved my life

A Muslim Nurse was part of the team that helped me when I returned to the UK

A Muslim Healthcare Assistant was part of the team that sorted out my day to day needs in rehabilitation when I was learning to walk

A Muslim taxi driver gave me a free ride the first time I went for a beer with my Dad after I came home.

A Muslim doctor offered my Dad comfort and advice in a pub, when he didnt know how to deal with my medicines and side effects.

The Facebook post went viral, being shared nearly 80,000 times and was also shared extensively on Twitter, including by MP for

Plymouth and former soldier Johnny Mercer, who told BBC Trending that Chris's comments “reflect the views of many many soldiers.”

1 ‘A wounded soldier's response to people who expect him to hate Muslims’

www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-35054442

More on Hamtramck

In the January issue of *Rocket Science*, we reported on the city of Hamtramck (pronounced "ham-tram-ick") near Detroit, that had elected a Muslim-majority council, the first of its kind in the USA. About 41% of inhabitants are immigrants, although their religion cannot be confidently given as this is not recorded in the census.

An RT report¹ states that some people suspect there is a divide between migrants and locals, and between the various religions. However, in December about 100 people held a demonstration near City Hall to express unity in diversity. This was a policy on which Muslim candidates campaigned in the council election. Three of the successful Muslim candidates explained.

Saad Almasmari, who garnered most votes in the election, said, "Our major thing in the plan was to target everyone in Hamtramck, Muslims or non-Muslims, so we knocked [on] all the doors in Hamtramck, and we asked for everyone in Hamtramck to vote for us regardless of their religion, ethnicity, or their colour of skin." Similarly, Councillor Mohammed Hassan said, "We work with everybody, we help everybody, and we cooperate with everybody in other religions. So, no question, and there is no problem." Councillor Abu Musa added, "We are doing something better [with the result] that people are moving to Hamtramck, [they] feel more

secure and [that they will have a] better life."

Chester Kasprzak, owner of Hamtramck Drugs, said everyone is "concerned about terrorism, but I feel completely safe here in Hamtramck, without any kind of ... fear at all."

Bill Meyer, an activist with One Hamtramck, explained a positive aspect of culture shock about the Muslim population: "We were known for having more bars per acre in this city than any other place in the country, and Muslims don't drink. ... So, that right there is a cultural shock for people who have always drunk and always partied and did all this stuff, and now they see people being peaceful and quiet and walking around, no crime, no swearing, none of that kind of - it's a culture shock."

1 1st US town with majority Muslim city council unites around diversity. RT, 16 December 2015.
www.rt.com/usa/326070-usa-town-muslim-city-council/



Academic suspended for pointing out religious similarities

An RT report¹ is about Dr Larycia Hawkins, an associate professor of political science at Wheaton College in Chicago, a Christian liberal arts college "in the evangelical Protestant tradition" with around 3,000 students. She felt she wanted to stand in "human solidarity" with Muslims "because we are formed of the same primordial clay", pointing out that Muslims, like Christians, are "people of the book ... and as Pope Francis stated last week, we worship the same God." So, she put on hijab, and posted a photo of herself to highlight the similarities between Muslims and Christians (cf paintings of hijab-wearing Mary, Mariam ra; hijab-wearing nuns; etc). "I invite all women into the narrative that is embodied, hijab-wearing solidarity with our Muslim sisters – for whatever reason. A large scale movement of Women in Solidarity with Hijabs is my Christmas #wish this year."

The college authorities did not see it that way, saying that the episode had "generated confusion about complex theological matters.". They suspended Hawkins, but claimed that that Hawkins' decision to wear a headscarf had nothing to do with her suspension.

Ahmed Rehab, Executive Director of the Chicago chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), is calling for Hawkins' reinstatement, describing the college's move as "unfathomable": "This was a genuine act of human solidarity, rooted in her sense of theological compassion, with those who are subjected to an onslaught of bigoted expression."

1 Chicago college suspends hijab-wearing professor for citing similarities between Christians, Muslims. RT, 17 December 2015. www.rt.com/usa/326339-professor-suspended-muslim-solidarity



Dr Larycia Hawkins in hijab



Wheaton College

Women's lib in 9th century Islam

The University of Oxford has announced that Prof Louise Richardson^{1,2} has been appointed Vice-Chancellor (equivalent to chief executive officer in corporate terms), the first female Vice-Chancellor in the university's nine centuries of existence (the exact date of founding is not known for sure, but is thought to be around 1096). This comes after 271 male Vice-Chancellors. At the official installation, the Chancellor (ceremonial head) of the University, former Conservative Minister and Governor of Hong Kong, Lord Patten of Barnes, remarked, "I know that you would wish to be judged primarily not on the glass ceilings you have smashed, but on your achievements as an academic leader on both sides of the Atlantic." A "glass ceiling" means an "unacknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities"³. From 2009, Prof Richardson was Principal (equivalent to Vice-Chancellor) of the University of St Andrews, the first woman to occupy the position. The fact that she is the first female CEO of two British universities is being hailed as a triumph for women's liberation. In terms of academic background, she is an Irish political scientist whose specialist field is the study of terrorism.

Let us contrast this with the Islamic world.

The Qarawiyyin mosque and madrasa in Fes, Morocco⁴, was

founded in 859. Today it is part of the University of Qarawiyyin, and the mosque is one of the largest in North Africa. It therefore predates the University of Oxford by over two centuries, and is recognised as the world's oldest university by UNESCO and Guinness World Records. Even this is disputed, as the Ez-Zitouna Mosque in Tunis⁵, which hosted a university, was built in the early 8th century.

The Qarawiyyin mosque and madrasa was founded by ... a woman. Fatima Muhammad Al-Fihri Al-Quraysh⁶ was the daughter of a wealthy merchant, whose family had emigrated to Fes from the town of Qayrawan in modern Tunisia. Her sister Mariam, was the sponsor of the Al-Andalus mosque, also in Fes. Both the Qarawiyyin mosque and Al-Andalus mosque were part of a larger tradition of women founding mosques. Did this mean that there were no glass ceilings in their time? Not really, because, despite being founded by a woman, the Qarawiyyin madrasa did not admit women until the mid-20th century.

Another famous university that vies with the Universities of Qarawiyyin and Ez-Zitouna as "the world's oldest university" is Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt⁷, which was established in 970, over a century before the University of Oxford.

So, in the Islamic world, there were universities at least a couple of centuries before the West, and female tertiary educational leaders nearly a millennium earlier.



Louise Richardson



Qarawiyyin mosque



Ez-Zitouna Mosque

- 1 Scott Harker First woman Vice Chancellor installed at Oxford. Oxford student newspaper, 17 January 2016. oxfordstudent.com/2016/01/17/69367
- 2 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louise_Richardson
- 3 Oxford Dictionaries online. www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/glass-ceiling
- 4 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_al-Qarawiyyin
- 5 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Ez-Zitouna
- 6 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatima_al-Fihri
- 7 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Azhar_University

Running the Hillary Trail for charity

Br David Blocksidge, who sometimes prays Jumuah at Rocket Park, undertook a sponsored run in January to raise funds for WTG's Orphanage-cum-Foster Home project. This is his account of it.

Every year on the first Saturday of January, our running group tackles the Hillary Trail in the Waitakere Ranges. The runners opt for various stages and are supported by a minibus driving between the five stopping points. Some complete the entire 72km.

Last year in blazing hot weather, a friend and I ran a total of about 36km. This year was a very different story. I had organised some sponsorship to raise funds for Working Together Group's Orphanage-cum-Foster Home Project and wanted to complete 50km. But the weather was wild.

We met at Arataki Visitor Centre on Scenic Drive at 5 am and drove off for a 6 am start at Goldie Bush Walkway. It was still dark under the trees and we all used torches. Most of us wore water-resistant jackets.

Once we were out in the open, along the Te Henga Walkway, the strength of the wind became obvious. At one point on the clifftop, I grabbed a fence wire to prevent myself getting blown off my feet. I couldn't hear myself think, the wind was so loud.

Later, heading towards Lake Wainamu in near gale-force winds, sand came whipping off the sand dunes at the back of Bethells Beach, stinging any part of the skin that was exposed.

At Piha, the support vehicle was waiting. We discussed tactics. They generously agreed to drive me to a point from which I planned to run to the end, at Arataki. Whilst driving to a track near Whatipu, I changed into my spare, mercifully dry, socks and shoes.

At Huia, we met up with the support vehicle again. Darrell kindly handed out cans of creamed rice and someone made a joke about them probably being out of date – delicious! Matsuru joined us a few minutes later. It was his fifth attempt at completing the notoriously tough Hillary.

We arrived at Arataki at 7.50 pm (alhamdulillah!), where spouses and fellow runners (five of whom had completed the full run) were waiting with food and dry clothing. Matsuru completed his first full Hillary. I had managed – just – to do 50 km and raised a couple of thousand dollars in the process.

Next year, insha Allah, I aim to plan it better and run for longer and raise a lot more money for a project that desperately needs completing: we do not have an orphanage-cum-foster home in New Zealand and we need about a million dollars to establish one. Currently there's something over \$100,000 in the fund.

Don't wait until next year to donate. The Working Together Group's Kiwibank account dedicated to this project is 38-9006-0434628-04.

I'd also love your support and sponsorship next year!



David (right), with Matsuru (centre)



SeekersHub

STUDY CIRCLE

ONE BODY:

Strengthening Bonds of Love & Community
with *Ustadh Amjad Tarsin*

LIVE CLASS STARTS SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 2016
AUCKLAND STUDY CIRCLE STARTS FEBRUARY 5, 2016

This SeekersHub Study Circle will give students a deeper understanding of the centrality of love and mercy within Islam. Students will be empowered to be ambassadors of goodness through learning about the love of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, the duties of brotherhood and sisterhood, and the signs of a healthy community in a world suffering from hatred and division, spreading love and respect is needed with the utmost urgency.

Where: New Lynn Islamic Centre. 13 Ward St, New Lynn
Starting: Friday's from 5th of February. 7pm- 9pm
Contact: Rameez 021 208 6010 | Afsar 027 577 8888

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Mufti Ismail Menk

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VOI delivers the message of Islam based on the teachings of the Noble Quran and the Sunnah (practices) of the Prophet Muhammad (saw).

VOI television is broadcast on:

- APNA TV (Freeview channel 36)(10.30 am Sun)
- SKYTV channel 83 (Face TV) in New Zealand (11.30 am Sat & 9.00 am Sun)
- CTV in Christchurch (see TV guide for times)
- Channel 9 in Dunedin (see TV guide for times)
- Fiji Broadcasting Corporation in Fiji (9.00 am Sun)
- METRO TV in Ghana, West Africa (see TV guide for times)

6 February

Quran 8: 2 Increase in faith.

LECTURE: Important ingredients for enriching your faith part 1 by Bilal Dannoun.

DOCUMENTARY: The miracle in plant leaves part 2.

Tid Bits: Jihad by Yusuf Estes.

13 February

Quran 8: 2 Increase in faith.

LECTURE: Important ingredients for enriching your faith part 2 by Bilal Dannoun.

DOCUMENTARY: The miracle in plant leaves part 3.

Quran Weekly: Humility of the Prophet by Nouman Ali Khan.

20 February

Quran 8: 2 Increase in faith.

LECTURE: Women in Islam – subjugated or liberated by Abdur Raheem Green.

DOCUMENTARY: The miracle in plant leaves part 4.

Quran Weekly: Abusive relationships by Nouman Ali Khan.

27 February

Quran 1: 1-7 Al Fatiha the opening.

LECTURE: Opening bridges between faiths by Sheikh Yusuf Estes.

DOCUMENTARY: Never forget your only deity is Allah part 1.

Quran Weekly: Health and free time by Mufti Ismail Menk.

Watch VOI online, or order a free copy of the Quran: www.voitv.org

Auckland prayer timetable for February 2016

(from www.islamicFinder.org. For other cities in New Zealand, see www.fianz.co.nz).

Date	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr 1	Asr 2	Maghrib	Isha
1	4:57	6:35	1:35	5:23	6:30	8:33	10:06
2	4:58	6:36	1:35	5:23	6:30	8:32	10:05
3	5:00	6:37	1:35	5:23	6:29	8:31	10:04
4	5:01	6:38	1:35	5:23	6:29	8:31	10:03
5	5:03	6:39	1:35	5:22	6:28	8:30	10:01
6	5:04	6:40	1:35	5:22	6:28	8:29	10:00
7	5:06	6:42	1:35	5:22	6:27	8:28	9:59
8	5:07	6:43	1:35	5:22	6:27	8:27	9:57
9	5:07	6:43	1:35	5:22	6:27	8:27	9:57
10	5:09	6:44	1:36	5:22	6:26	8:26	9:56
11	5:12	6:46	1:36	5:21	6:25	8:24	9:53
12	5:13	6:47	1:36	5:21	6:24	8:23	9:52
13	5:15	6:48	1:36	5:20	6:24	8:21	9:50
14	5:16	6:49	1:36	5:20	6:23	8:20	9:49
15	5:18	6:50	1:36	5:20	6:22	8:19	9:48
16	5:19	6:51	1:35	5:19	6:21	8:18	9:46
17	5:20	6:52	1:35	5:19	6:21	8:17	9:45
18	5:22	6:53	1:35	5:18	6:20	8:16	9:43
19	5:23	6:54	1:35	5:18	6:19	8:14	9:42
20	5:25	6:56	1:35	5:17	6:18	8:13	9:40
21	5:26	6:57	1:35	5:17	6:17	8:12	9:39
22	5:27	6:58	1:35	5:16	6:17	8:11	9:37
23	5:29	6:59	1:35	5:16	6:16	8:09	9:35
24	5:29	6:59	1:35	5:16	6:16	8:09	9:35
25	5:30	7:00	1:35	5:15	6:15	8:08	9:34
26	5:32	7:02	1:34	5:14	6:13	8:06	9:31
27	5:34	7:03	1:34	5:13	6:12	8:04	9:29
28	5:35	7:04	1:34	5:13	6:11	8:03	9:28
29	5:36	7:05	1:34	5:12	6:10	8:02	9:26

Asr 1: Maliki, Shafii and Hanbali schools (single shadow length)

Asr 2: Hanafi school (double shadow length)

“The prayer of a person is (in reality) a light in his heart, so whoever desires, can illuminate his heart (by means of prayers).” (hadith)

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Why attend Rocket Park jumuah?

Prayers are held at the **Senior Citizens' Association building, Rocket Park, New North Road, Mount Albert.**

- ✓ Central location
- ✓ Plenty of free parking
- ✓ Facilities for ladies
- ✓ Heating and air-conditioning
- ✓ Bayan (religious talk) before jumuah prayers
- ✓ All bayans and khutbahs in English

NB We are only open for Friday prayers – not for the five daily prayers.

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Swt, saw, as, ra

SWT: subhanahu wa ta'ala "Glory to Him, the Exalted" (when mentioning Allah)

SAW: salallahu alaihi wassalam "May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him" (when mentioning Muhammad)

AS: alaihis salam "Peace be on him" (when mentioning other prophets)

RA: radi allahu anhu/ha/hum "May Allah be pleased with him/her/them" (when mentioning members of Muhammad's family, companions, etc)