



# Muslims for Progressive Values 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Retreat

The Theology of Mercy:  
Putting Into Action the Islamic Principles of  
Compassion, Justice, Love and Service

*Saturday, July 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday, July 15<sup>th</sup> 2012*  
*Manhattan College*  
*4513 Manhattan College Parkway*  
*Riverdale, NY 10471*

## PROGRAM

*Muslims for Progressive Values' Annual Retreat -  
July 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> 2012 – New York, NY*



MANY THANKS TO  
OUR SPONSOR:

Manhattan College  
4513 Manhattan College Parkway  
Riverdale, NY 10471

And A Special Thanks To

Dr. Mehnaz M. Afridi  
Assistant Professor of Religious Studies  
Director: Holocaust, Genocide, and Interfaith Education Center

### Goals for this year's retreat:

To recognize, embrace and learn from the diversity present within our community.

To further develop our identity as progressive Muslims, both collectively and individually.

To create new friendships and networks of support and kinship.

To engage in meaningful dialogue around concerns facing our community.

To empower each other with vision, clarity and a sense of purpose.

To deepen our spirituality and commitment to social justice, while recognizing the various forms in which that may manifest for each of us.

### Basic Community Agreements

We will be spending a lot of time together this weekend, sharing personal stories, lots of laughs, and bonding as a group. In order to create a safe and welcoming space, we would like to outline a few basic community agreements. We will build upon these agreements together as a group during our first session on Saturday.

Listen actively and speak respectfully:

Be mindful of each other's feelings and differing perspectives and experiences. Do not judge.

"Step up and step back":

If you usually don't talk much, challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zone and speak up a little more. If you find yourself talking more frequently than others, challenge yourself to step back.

Enjoy yourself while participating at your own comfort level:

Our annual retreat is a unique and creative space to explore ideas, challenge yourself and share your authentic voice in a nurturing environment. Take care of yourself and engage at your own pace.

## Inclusive and Welcoming Spaces for Ritual Prayer (*Salaat*)

Welcome to the MPV Unity Mosque.

Our inclusive prayer spaces is a place of healing for everyone - for those who identify as Muslim, regardless of sect or tariqa. We also welcome those who do not identify as Muslim but need a space for healing, and those who are family, spouses/partners, friends, seekers and allies. We understand that women and men are equal agents of God in all aspects of ritual practice, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, race, class, dis/ability, HIV status, language, or any other grounds.

In setting up our prayer space, we strive to create a caring environment in which no one is segregated or excluded. This means that a man or a woman may lead prayers. Congregants are seated together and pray together as one community. Of course, individual men and women can choose to stand/sit to one side or the other if they prefer. Whether you pray regularly or not, we invite you to this open and welcoming space.

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**All presentations and activities will be at Hayden Hall.  
Lodging will be at the Horan.**

**In case of emergency, issues or concerns,  
contact Ani Zonneveld @ 323.842.2869 or [info@mpvusa.org](mailto:info@mpvusa.org)**

### Friday July 13<sup>th</sup>

6:00 – 9:00 PM: Reception at Hayden Hall Room 100

### Saturday, July 14<sup>th</sup>

9:00AM-9:30AM: Welcome by MPV Co-founder & President Ani Zonneveld

9:30AM-11:00AM: Updates by heads of MPV Chapters: Shahla Khan Salter (Canada), Kelly Wentworth (Atlanta), Imam Daayiee Abdullah (D.C.) and Ani Zonneveld (Los Angeles)  
Also an update from Europe: L. Zahed (France)

11:00AM-12:00PM: *Workshop I: What is religion?*  
Presented by Sultan Abdulhameed

12:00PM-1:00PM: *Workshop II: Discrimination, stigmatization, and mental health issues among ethnic, racial, and religious minority groups within the LGBTQ community.*  
Presented by Tricia Moscato

1:00PM-2:00: Zuhr Prayer at 1:15PM followed by lunch at the college cafeteria.

2:00PM-3:30PM: *Workshop III: Liberating the Palm Trees: A Progressive Muslim Teacher's Guide To Teenage Angst, Rebellion, And Even Atheism.*  
Presented by Yarehk Hernandez

4:00PM-6:00PM: 9-11 Memorial – reflection, closure with a silent prayer

*Evening: Optional/informal gatherings/dinner*

### Sunday, July 15<sup>th</sup>

9:00AM – 10:30AM: *Workshop IV: HIV and Islamic Ethics.*  
Presented by Kamal Fizazi and Matthew Simmonds

10:30AM-11:30AM: *Workshop V: Women's Shura Council: Generating a space in which Muslim women can actively dialogue and collaborate on pressing issues of social justice, in order to articulate an ethical and egalitarian Islam.*  
Presented by Daisy Khan

11:30AM-12:30PM: *Workshop VI: Community Organizing Workshop.*  
Presented by Muhammad Malik.

1:00PM-2:00: Zuhr Prayer at 1:15PM followed by lunch at the college cafeteria.

2:00PM-4:00PM: *Workshop VII: "Coming Out Muslim" a performance by Terna Hamida and Wazina Zondon followed by a workshop "Islamophobia & Homophobia: Two Sides of the Same Coin".* Presented by Imam Daayiee Abdullah

4:00PM-5:00PM: Wrap up & Closing Remarks – Presentation on Strategic 1-3 Year Plan & Group Discussion on Priority Issues By Board of Directors, Kelly Wentworth, Imam Daayiee and Ani Zonneveld

## PROGRAM DETAILS

### Report by MPV Chapter Presidents

#### Speakers' Bios:

Los Angeles: Ani Zonneveld is Co-Chief Editor of "Progressive Muslim Identities: Personal Stories from the U.S. and Canada". Ani is a songwriter, producer, and activist. As a songwriter/producer she has won many awards including a Grammy certification for her song contribution to Keb' Mo's album, "Keep It Simple". Post 9/11 she wrote and produced the first Islamic pop album by a female singer, titled "Ummah Wake Up", followed by "One", an interfaith album. Her latest project "Islamic Hymns: Celebration of Life" again is another first in Islamic songs. Uniquely blending her two worlds of music and social activism into one, Ani speaks and sings her message of social justice, human rights, and peace, from a Muslim's perspective. She also has her own column "Ummah Wake Up" for Aslanmedia.com. In 2006, she was named a Muslim Leader of Tomorrow by the American Society for Muslim Advancement. As co-founder and president of Muslims for Progressive Values, a national grass-roots organization, she has organized interfaith arts and music festivals, performs wedding services for mixed faith and gay couples.

Canada: Shahla Khan Salter chairs the new Muslims for Progressive Values Ottawa, soon to be Muslims for Progressive Values Canada. She is a lawyer by profession, having received her Call to the Bar from the Law Society of Manitoba in 1992. She has practiced family law extensively, served as counsel to the Islamic Education Foundation of Manitoba and assisted the Canadian Council of Muslim Women in its successful campaign to end faith based arbitration in the Province of Ontario. She has conducted seminars for the Canadian Council of Muslim Women on a comparison of Muslim Family Law and Canadian Family Law and for Crime Prevention Ottawa to raise awareness of domestic violence against women in Canada's Muslim community. She is also an executive member of the Community Council for Ethno-Cultural Equity, and an advisory committee to the Ottawa Carleton District School Board, on issues respecting discrimination.

D.C: Imam Daayiee Abdullah is a prominent sexuality rights activist within Muslim and interfaith contexts, and Imam of Masjid el-Tawhid An-Nur Al-Isslaah (Mosque for Enlightenment and Reform), and affiliated with the California-based organization MPV (Muslims for Progressive Values) as MPV-Washington, DC co-chapter leader. Daayiee is a scholar, a former public interest lawyer and a specialist in Shari'ah Sciences/Quranic Interpretation. He frequently lectures internationally on progressive Muslim concepts, interfaith networking and the development of inclusive revisions of Islamic theological thought and interpretations of shari'ah. He has also long been involved in actively promoting understanding and awareness of issues of racial, sexual and gender equality both within and beyond Muslim communities.

Atlanta: Kelly Wentworth was inspired by her strong belief in an open and inclusive worship space to create the American Islamic Fellowship (AIF) in Atlanta, GA in 2007. In 2011, AIF became a part of Muslims for Progressive Values and Kelly joined its board. In Atlanta, she has helped create a mosque space with weekly prayers, educational programs and chaplaincy and officiant services. Kelly received a Bachelor of Science in Electrical

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Engineering and a Bachelor of Arts in Foreign Language from Tennessee Technological University and is currently pursuing a Masters of Information Systems Management from Tennessee Technological University and is currently from Devry University. She spent two years in Yemen and worked as an EFL Instructor where she received a diplomacy citation from the U.S. Department of State. Kelly actively participates in human rights, women's rights and LGBT rights efforts everywhere she can. She is also a part of various projects that promote music and arts in the community.

Special Guest – France: Ludovic Lotfi Mohamed

Zahed, during his adolescence in Algeria, studied Qur'an exegesis-Tafsir al-Qur'an - and the pillars of the Islamic orthopraxy-usul al-fiqh. He is now master of cognitive psychology, graduate from the Ecole Normale Supérieure in cognitive sciences and currently a PhD candidate in anthropology of religion matters at the EHESS on the theme of Islam and homosexuality. He is the founder and spokesman of the association of Homosexual Muslim de France organization - HM2F. He was a founder of the first association of young people living with HIV/AIDS in France-JHs+, and he is also president and founder of the of AIDS Children World Tour organization - TDMES.

### Workshop I: What is Religion? By Sultan Abdulhameed

It is commonplace for people to think of religion as mandating a large number of rules and commandments that must be followed in order to be in the favor of God. But Sura 98 points out that the requirements of religion are very few: faith in God, regular prayer and charity with the condition that we be sincere. Implications of this teaching will be discussed in this meeting.

#### Speaker's Bio:

From 1992 to 2000 Sultan Abdulhameed organized classes for adults and children at the Islamic Center of Long Island in Westbury. During this time he also taught interpretation of Hadith to adults. He served as president of the Islamic Center during 1994-1996.

From 2000 to the present Sultan Abdulhameed has been teaching at the Muslim Reform Movement Organization in their weekly meetings in Brookeville, NY. His method of teaching the Quran focuses on one *aya* at a time and replaces the *khutba* with an interactive discussion with the audience.

His book "The Quran and the Life of Excellence" was published in 2010

Workshop II: Discrimination, Stigmatization, and Mental Health Issues Among  
Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Minority Groups Within the LGBTQ Community  
Presented By Tricia Moscato

Discrimination and hate crimes toward the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) population are still prevalent in the United States and across the globe, despite recently improved societal attitudes and behaviors. However, there remains a dearth of knowledge regarding the mental health of LGBTQ persons of ethnic, racial, and religious minority groups. This study is the first to fill the gap in the literature. A cross-sectional survey method collected data from randomly recruited participants in seven states (New York, New Jersey, California, Florida, Hawaii, Michigan, and Texas) through a compiled list of community organizations, colleges, and universities. Results found that participants experienced high rates of depression, and that minority status can serve as both risk and protective factors for discrimination and stigma in LGBTQ individuals. Findings could lay the foundation for future studies by helping healthcare providers realize the mental health implications that multiple minority statuses can have on the identity of LGBTQ individuals and communities. Mental health providers and policy makers can better address these issues by designing programs to specifically address the unique needs of the minority LGBTQ community.

Speaker's Bio:

Tricia Moscato has worked as a research assistant with Dr. Wahiba Abu-Ras since 2010. Ms. Moscato has assisted Dr. Abu-Ras in several research studies on a range of topics including chaplaincy and spiritual care services in New York City hospitals, the civic involvement of Muslim physicians in American society, the mental health of Muslim military personnel fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, and war veterans' access to health services. Ms. Moscato has worked with other researchers (Dr. Rose Perez and Dr. Zulema Suarez of Fordham University) on issues of loss among the Cuban American community. Ms. Moscato has been acknowledged in four scholarly articles submitted by Dr. Wahiba Abu-Ras of Adelphi University, played an active role as Project Manager in the development of two government grant proposals, and has presented at a national conference of the Council on Social Work Education in Atlanta, GA (2011). She also took an active role in conducting individual face-to-face and telephone interviews with participants for studies on military personnel and LGBTQ populations. Currently, Ms. Moscato is collaborating with Dr. Abu-Ras, as a co-author, on mental health issues among LGBTQ individuals of minority groups.



Workshop III: Liberating the Palm Trees: A Progressive Muslim Teacher's Guide to  
Teenage Angst, Rebellion, and Even Atheism.  
By Yarehk Hernandez

This workshop is designed to demonstrate teaching strategies and pedagogical philosophies that are implementable within a Progressive Muslim curriculum. Participants will be asked to physically manifest their spirituality through the act of creation, while tapping into their inner child. Through this process we will channel the creative forces of the Divine that envelop us daily and share within a safe space our core beliefs both through art and verbal descriptions.

Speaker's Bio:

Yarehk Hernandez is an educator, poet and progressive Muslim activist. He completed his undergraduate studies at the City University of New York, where he majored in Middle East History and minored in Comparative Religion. He completed his graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania, where he received a Master of Science in Education and majored in Secondary Social Studies/Citizenship education. Yarehk has also spent time traveling and studying Ilm al-Tassawuf (Sufism).

Workshop IV: HIV and Islamic Ethics  
By Kamal Fizazi and Matthew Simonds

What does Islam say about HIV/AIDS (the Qur'an, Imams, your grandmother the Hajja, your brother or sister)? What are the ethical questions that Muslims should consider vis-à-vis HIV & AIDS? How should Muslims treat people living with HIV/AIDS? Are any Muslims infected or affected by HIV/AIDS? Is there a Muslim way to do HIV-prevention work? What would a Muslim contribution to the fight against HIV-infection look like? How do we help our brothers and sisters protect themselves and reduce rates of HIV-infection in our communities? What relationship exists between the stigma of being infected or affected by HIV/AIDS and the stigma of being Muslim in the West today? What does Islam have to say about fighting oppression that can apply to people living with HIV/AIDS? These are some of the questions that this workshop will explore and address. Join us, add your knowledge and awareness to the conversation, share your favorite Qur'anic verses or hadith, your questions and concerns, and help us strategize ways to dispel myths, accept realities, and build inclusive, safe, just, and healthy communities for all.

Speakers' Bios:

Kamal Fizazi is an independent public policy professional, who provides advisory services to businesses and non-profit organizations in strategic planning, program development, and talent management and diversity initiatives. Kamal has content expertise in human rights, diversity, public health, urbanization, interfaith efforts, and regional expertise in the US, the Middle East and Africa. Kamal also provides technical assistance in fundraising and development, public education and media advocacy (including social media), general research and writing and community organizing.

Matthew Simonds has a PhD in Near Eastern Studies from the University of California, Berkeley with primary areas of study in Sufism, medieval Islamic history, and Islamic law and theology. He grew up in France, England, Spain, and Germany, has travelled extensively in the Middle East and lived in Cairo for three years where he studied Arabic at the Center for Arabic Study Abroad and did research at the American Research Center in Egypt.

He has also been living with HIV for approximately 30 years. As an HIV+ gay identified Muslim, he is particularly sensitive to the intersection of faith and health, particularly as it relates to how people with HIV/AIDS find ways to live meaningfully with the disease through their Muslim faith, and how the challenge of living with the disease sometimes creates challenges to faith.

Matthew currently lives near Palm Springs, California with his partner of 14 years, their dog, two cats, a Moluccan cockatoo, and a 250 gallon fish tank.

### Workshop V: Women's Shura Council By Daisy Khan

We, members of the Global Muslim Women's Shura Council, declare gender equality to be an intrinsic part of the Islamic faith. As Muslims, we affirm our conviction that the Muslim woman is worthy of respect and dignity, that as a legal individual, spiritual being, social person, responsible agent, free citizen, and servant of God, she holds fundamentally equal rights to exercise her abilities and talents in all areas of human activity. Furthermore, we insist that these rights are embedded within the Qur'an and six objectives of Shari'a - the protection and promotion of religion (al-din), life (al-nafs), mind (al-'aql), family (al-nasl), wealth (al-mal), and dignity (al-'ird). As the Shura Council, we embrace our collective and individual responsibility to work towards building a unified change movement of Muslim women - driven by compassion and justice - that will enable Muslim women to realize their full potential as individuals and in relationship to family, community, nation, and globe.

#### Speaker's Bio:

Daisy Khan is Executive Director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA), a New York-based non-profit dedicated to strengthening an expression of Islam based on cultural and religious harmony and building bridges between Muslims and the general public. At ASMA, she has led numerous interfaith events like the theater production Same Difference and the Cordoba Bread Fest banquet. She has launched two groundbreaking flagship programs: the Muslim Leaders of Tomorrow (MLT) and Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE), global movements to empower Muslim youth and women.

Khan regularly lectures around the globe and has participated in panels with Christians, Jews, and Buddhists. She has appeared on numerous media outlets, including CNN, Al Jazeera, and BBC World's Doha Debates, and she often contributes to documentaries on Islam and Muslims. She is a weekly columnist for the Washington Post's "On Faith" and is frequently quoted in print publications such as Time Magazine, Newsweek, Chicago Tribune, and the New York Times.

Born in Kashmir, Khan spent twenty-five years as an interior architect for various Fortune 500 companies before committing to full-time community service. She is the recipient of

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numerous awards, including the Interfaith Center's Award for Promoting Peace and Interfaith Understanding, Auburn Seminary's Lives of Commitment Award, the Annual Faith Leaders Award, and 21 Leaders for the 21st Century.

Workshop VI: Community Organizing Workshop  
By Muhammed Malik

Speaker's Bio:

Muhammed Malik is a human rights advocate and social commentator, born and raised in Miami, Florida. He is the former Executive Director of CAIR (South Florida) and recently worked for the ACLU Florida as its Racial Justice and Voting Rights Specialist. Mr. Malik also works as a Co-Producer of the acclaimed "Let's Talk About It" weekly radio program, serves as a Boardmember of South Florida Interfaith Workers Justice, and sits on the Green Party's International Affairs Committee. A recipient of SAALT's "Changemaker Award" and BORDC's "Patriot Award," Muhammed was recently selected as a "2011 Profile of Courage," along with Amy Goodman and Glenn Greenwald, by Loonwatch.com, a popular satirical website that monitors and exposes bigots and reactionaries.

Workshop VII: Performance: "Coming out Muslim"  
Workshop: Islamophobia & Homophobia:  
Two Sides of the Same Coin  
By Terna Hamida, Wazina Zondon and  
Imam Daayiee Abdullah

This workshop is divided into two parts. *Coming Out Muslim: Radical Acts of Love* captures stories and experiences of being at the intersections of Islam and queerness and its relationship to family, lovers, one's sense of self and relationship with our faith.

Terna Tilley-Gyado and Wazina Zondon utilize traditional storytelling and conversation as the medium for exploring the broad range of their experiences as queer Muslims. The stories *Coming Out Muslim* tell range from tales about other people's theories about where queerness comes from, the gifts of being queer and Muslim, the tension between one's culture and religion, and love - romantic and spiritual.

Islamophobia and Homophobia: Two Sides of the Same Coin. Islamophobia and Homophobia promote misinformation, misrepresentation and broad-based misunderstanding. "Broad brush" negative language, applied and implied in the media, express theological, societal and political views that increase feelings of being lost in unfamiliar terrain. People end up fearing "others" visually and intellectually different than themselves. Where an individual represents several identities, e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, non-Western culture, just to name a few, how people respond to these "differences" unveils for the observer many an underlying fears of the unknown / unfamiliar. Are we stuck in the middle of this exchange or do we have the tools to reshape the dialogue? Workshop participants will discuss two frames: (1) Does Islamic orthodoxy restrict "liberation" for non-Muslims and LGBT communities? (2) Does progressive Muslim theology liberalize, under freedom of speech, Islamic and Homophobic tenets via UNDHR

standards in the modern world.

#### Speakers' Bios:

Terna Tilley-Gyado is a Nigerian/Liberian/American artist, educator and healer currently living in Philadelphia. She was an NYC public school teacher for five years, has worked at the UN, holds an MA in International Conflict Analysis and an MST in Adolescent Education. She is the proprietor of Evolutionary Hands, a Jin Shin Jyutsu enterprise. She currently works for the anti-bullying non-profit the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN). She is interested in (r)evolution, the relationships between fierce and tender, hard and soft, seen and unseen. She believes that occupying queer and Muslim identities is one such (r)evolutionary relationship. Terna is a dervish in the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Sufi Order.

Wazina Zondon is a sexuality & social justice-minded educator. She has worked in a variety of dynamic settings and communities on issues related to holistic sexuality and its intersections at the crossroads of race, class, gender and religion. As an organizer and educator, she has trained in settings from multi-national corporations to elementary schools around the nation.

Wazina is an Afghan working class queer committed to and inspired by the self-determination and power of the people. A proud daughter of Nematullah and Zarmina and sister to Adam, Zarina & Sangina; currently a Sex Ed teacher at a school in downtown Brooklyn.

She believes "Queer + Muslim = Possibility".

Imam Daayiee Abdullah: Please see bio given earlier in the Program for D.C. Chapter President.

MPV Board Presentation on  
Strategic 1-3 Year Plan &  
Group Discussion on Priority Issues  
By Board of Directors: Kelly Wentworth, Imam Daayiee and Ani Zonneveld

In this workshop, the presenters will recap and solicit feedback on MPV successes and lessons learned over the last several years and priority areas for the next 1-3 years. Through group discussions, we will engage in a group conversation regarding community issues, areas of growth and a shared, strategic vision for the Progressive Muslim movement.

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