



CAIR
MASSACHUSETTS



Strength & Faith.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations - Massachusetts

2019
annual report

Strength & Faith.

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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Our Principles

- ❖ CAIR is committed to **protecting the civil rights** of all Americans, regardless of faith.
- ❖ CAIR **supports domestic policies** that promote civil rights, diversity and freedom of religion.
- ❖ CAIR **opposes domestic policies** that limit civil rights, permit racial, ethnic or religious profiling, infringe on due process, or that prevent Muslims and others from participating fully in American civic life.
- ❖ CAIR is **a natural ally** of groups, religious or secular, that advocate justice and human rights in America and around the world.
- ❖ CAIR **supports foreign policies** that help create free and equitable trade, encourage human rights and promote representative government based on socio-economic justice.
- ❖ CAIR **believes the active practice of Islam strengthens** the social and religious fabric of our nation.
- ❖ CAIR **condemns all acts of violence** against civilians by any individual, group or state.
- ❖ CAIR **advocates dialogue** between faith communities both in America and worldwide.
- ❖ CAIR **supports equal and complementary rights and responsibilities** for men and women.

Dear Friends & Supporters,

Asalamu Alaykum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatu.

This past October, I was honored to speak at the grand opening ceremony of the Islamic Center of Greater Attleboro. I spoke alongside the town's mayor, a local State Senator, and members of the interfaith community. **The founders described their joy at finally having a place to gather and pray in their own city, and were moved to tears by the profundity of the day.** It was a joyful time.

However, the occasion also reminded me of a less joyful experience. That Ramadan, just a few months earlier, our chapter learned of an **op-ed in the Sun Chronicle**, the North Attleboro newspaper, titled "Islam's Cruelty Should be Brought to Light." The article's **author smeared Islam, calling our religion "brutal" and "oppressive toward women,"** and described himself as a proud Islamophobe. But research into the author also revealed him to be a member of the North Attleboro Zoning Commission. As such, he had jurisdiction over whether a Muslim shopowner could open a halal market or make an addition onto his home, or whether the parking lot of this new mosque could be expanded once the community grew.

Thanks be to God, **CAIR-Massachusetts was able to get the letter retracted by the paper and the individual to resign his post** within a few weeks, along with securing a statement of solidarity and support for the Muslim community from the President of the City Council. Now, the local Muslim community can worship knowing that one barrier to their practice has been removed.

This episode highlights the critical work that CAIR-Massachusetts does every day in serving our community. In the past year alone we've been able to:

- ❖ Field and assist with **nearly 240 civil rights intakes**
- ❖ **File lawsuits** or lodge complaints against the TSA, security guards, employers, and individuals to ensure our community's safety
- ❖ Host the **second annual Muslim Advocacy Day** at the Massachusetts State House
- ❖ Host the **second annual Muslim Youth Leadership Program** to empower the next generation of our community's leaders
- ❖ Conduct **over two dozen Know Your Rights talks at mosques and community centers** throughout New England, reaching thousands of Muslims
- ❖ Conduct **over 30 press events and media interviews**
- ❖ **Advocate for our community** among local, state, and federal elected officials

We're grateful daily for the support of our community, donors, foundations, and mosque leaders for enabling us to continue standing up for the rights of Muslims in Massachusetts. History is varied and filled with joy and sorrow – present times not excluded – but we're grateful to be on the right side of it, together.

Sincerely,



John Robbins, Ph.D. / CAIR-MA Executive Director

Civil Rights

In 2019 we received **239 requests for legal assistance**, a slight (3%) increase from 2018. The most noticeable change from last year was the jump in **travel abuse calls, which increased by 140%**, no doubt due to our outreach efforts to encourage more complaints. Even then, we know that travel abuse complaints are greatly under-reported.

We received **20 calls about hate crimes and harassment** -- one less than in 2018, but those 20 cases are still 20 too many. **After two years of assistance to a grandmother who was attacked on the subway, we were glad to see her assailant convicted** in 2019 and sentenced to jail time.

We also handled cases involving bullying, surveillance or harassment by law enforcement, work place rights, discrimination in housing, education and places of public accommodation, and prisoners' religious freedoms.

For a more complete description of our legal work, please see **our 2019 Civil Rights Report:** https://www.cairma.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CAIR-MA_CivilRightsReport2019-Interactive-1.pdf

Community Advocacy & Education

Second Annual Muslim Youth Leadership Program

This August, we were **so proud to welcome our second cohort of thirty incredible Muslim Youth Leadership Program participants!** Our Muslim Youth Leadership Program this year was four days and three nights at Suffolk University filled with storytelling, civic engagement, coalition building, media literacy, social justice, and community organizing. We're so proud of our young people that gave their all to this program. **At the end of the program, participants said they wished it was a week long instead of just four days.**





Teacher Trainings

This year, we also **partnered with the Muslim Justice League to develop a new set of tools for educators that explore systemic, structural, and interpersonal Islamophobia** and the relationships that exist between all of these things. This partnership has increased our network of educators as well as our impact. These new trainings are in addition to the regular professional development we provide to a number of school districts statewide.

Fall Ambassadorship Program

Our high school students are one of our most powerful networks. This year, **we tasked fifteen Junior Marketing Ambassadors to spread the word about our first bullying survey** which is slated to be published in the summer of 2020. Our Junior Marketing Ambassadors have leaned on their high school networks and the power of social media to heavily increase our number of survey results.

College Outreach

College outreach has been an intentional goal of the Community Advocacy and Education department. This year we've **expanded our network of Muslim college student activists and organizers** through our college visits. This network is setting the foundation for our first annual inter-collegiate conference in May.

“Press Pause” Campaign

We often forget how closely democracy impacts our lives. Even though at times it may seem like all the action is happening in Washington D.C., what happens in our local state offices is just as exciting. Earlier this year **CAIR-MA joined the “Press Pause” campaign, which aims to limit the technology possessed by law enforcement to track and harass minority populations** across the State, including Muslims. Part of this campaign involves passing bills S.1385 and H.1538, legislation to establish a moratorium on government use of face recognition and emerging biometric surveillance technologies.

We believe that rather than investing limited resources in facial surveillance technology, Massachusetts should be focusing on creating services to nurture its relationship with undeserved communities.

Pilgrimage to Manzanar

At the end of April, **our Government Affairs Director, Nazia Ashraful, had the privilege of attending the 50th pilgrimage to Manzanar, in California,** with colleagues from CAIR chapters across the country. **During World War II, Manzanar was one of 10 camps created to incarcerate Japanese-Americans.** Most of those incarcerated were American citizens, whose only crime was having ancestry to a country the United States was at war with. The Manzanar pilgrimage started 50 years ago when children of those incarcerated went searching for the history of the “camp” their parents vaguely referenced. Their parents were so ashamed of the 4-5 years spent in an open-air prison that they silenced themselves. The history of the camps is hardly acknowledged by the government, or even in schools. For 50 years,

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<< *Manzanar, continued from the previous page* survivors, relatives of survivors, and allies have been visiting and rebuilding the camp site to ensure that this awful chapter of history is not forgotten or repeated.

CAIR visited the camp this year to reflect on the **intersectionality of the Japanese-American experience of xenophobia during World War II to the islamophobia Muslim-Americans experience today**. It was important to acknowledge that the **xenophobia did not start with camps: it started with bullying of young people and employment discrimination**. Japanese-Americans were also targeted with policies of exclusion and surveillance. Through this pilgrimage Nazia became renewed in our mission to protect civil liberties of not only Muslim-Americans but anyone that is marginalized. CAIR-MA will ensure that the dark histories of this country are not forgotten so that the future of upcoming generations may be bright.

CAIR-MA's Participation in Conferences & Socials

The **Muslim Caucus Education Collective Conference** was an historical gathering of Muslim civic leaders across the country in the nation's capitol. Organizers, elected officials, and political experts came together and we developed best practices to create policy and push against bigotry.

Presidential candidates spoke directly to attendees and answered how they would address issues such as surveillance programs and the watch list, issues that disproportionately affect the American-Muslim population. Difficult topics such as anti-black racism and internalized Islamophobia were brought to the surface, and we all benefited from self reflection of our own biases.

It was an especially empowering moment to see our board member Tahirah Amatul-Wadud speak about her experiences running for Congress. Her inspirational message was that although she didn't win, she was able to show



people in her district that true patriotism doesn't have a just one look or voice. True patriotism is having the ability to hear and embrace all voices so that everyone feels that they belong.



In 2019, CAIR-MA hosted **Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha socials** at the State House. We connected with over 20 State House offices, in the House and the Senate.

Media & Communications

Visibility in Traditional Media

CAIR-MA conducted over **thirty separate press and media interviews** during the course of the past year, on topics such as Islamophobic campaign rhetoric, mosque vandalisms, voter registration efforts, and Muslim civic engagement. Our metrics indicate that this media was seen by over 300,000 people throughout the United States. One such example of media exposure is the **2019 Open Mosque Day**, which CAIR-MA helped organize and publicize to the general public. The event was **attended by over 1,000 people, the majority of whom had never been inside a mosque.**

Social Media

Our social media efforts this past year have focused on **user engagement, of which we have seen a 25% increase over 2018**, primarily via Twitter. We hope to continue using strategies such as short videos, direct conversations, messaging, and tagging with affinity groups to continue to actively engage in the online space.

Financial Summary

CAIR-Massachusetts is an efficiently run, high-performance nonprofit organization. In 2019, our fourth full year of operations, we successfully raised **\$538,000 to support the Massachusetts Muslim community.**

Over 95% of these donations were from local donors in Massachusetts and New England, while the remainder were from local nonprofits and mosques eager to support our work, as well as from donors across the United States. **100% of CAIR-MA's income is and has always been domestic.** The average donation to CAIR-MA in 2019 was \$257, but we also saw gifts of \$1 per month by dedicated supporters. Finally, we're grateful to have been the **recipients of a grant from the Hyams Foundation, and are in year two of our cycle as winners of a Cummings Foundation \$100k for 100 award.**

Supermarket Project

While monthly supermarket advertising circulars routinely include messages for Easter, Christmas, Hanukkah, and Passover, they have not traditionally recognized Muslim holidays. Thanks to a group of dedicated volunteers, in 2019 **CAIR-Massachusetts was again able to reach out to leading supermarket chains** in New England and **successfully encourage them to include holiday wishes for Muslims.** Based on market shares, we estimate that these messages reached over 10 million individuals and families throughout the region.



Meet CAIR-Massachusetts

CAIR-Massachusetts is a nonprofit 501(c)(3), grassroots civil rights and advocacy organization and is a chapter of The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). **CAIR is America's largest Muslim advocacy and civil liberties organization**, with 35 regional offices nationwide. The national headquarters is located on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

CAIR-MA was incorporated in June of 2015 by a core group of dedicated local Muslim leaders who saw the need for greater representation and defense of their community. Since its incorporation, the chapter has grown to four full-time staff, and has assisted hundreds of Muslims in their pursuit of justice.



Our Vision

To be a **leading advocate** for justice and mutual understanding.

Our Mission

To enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote **justice and mutual understanding in Massachusetts**.



Our Staff

Dr. John Robbins, Executive Director. Dr. John Robbins is the Founding Executive Director of the Massachusetts chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the largest Muslim civil rights organization in the United States. His office has jurisdiction over more than 120,000 Muslims in the Commonwealth. He has made over 100 TV and radio appearances, and his writings have appeared in numerous outlets including Fortune, Time, Muslim Matters, the Hill, the Jewish Journal, the Boston Globe, the Boston Herald, and the Huffington Post. He received his Ph.D. in Literature from Cornell University at the age of 27, and completed postdoctoral fellowships at Tufts University and the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Robbins sits on the board of directors of Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries, the greater Boston area's oldest interfaith social justice network.

Nazia Ashraful, MPH, Government Affairs Director. Nazia Ashraful is a committed advocate and organizer for minority populations and women's rights. She was formerly the Legislative Affairs Coordinator of NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts, where she focused on government *Nazia's bio, continued on the next page >>*



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relations. She has a sound understanding of the inner workings of the Massachusetts State House and the necessary steps to turn a community concern into a solution in the form of a law on the Governor's desk. Ms. Ashraful holds a Masters of Public Health from Boston University where she specialized in minority women's reproductive health, and a bachelor from Drake University, where she was President of the Muslim Students Association.

Boston Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, representing the victims of hate crimes, police misconduct, and discrimination in housing and public accommodations. Most recently, she ran the Massachusetts office of Families Against Mandatory Minimums, whereas the Massachusetts Project Director her legislative advocacy helped to reform harsh drug sentencing laws that overwhelmingly impacted minority communities. She was one of the organizers of a 9/11 legal response network in conjunction with the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the ACLU, and National Lawyers Guild, where she presented Know Your Rights talks at mosques and developed attorney referral lists and a help hotline. Along with a team of attorneys, she litigated one of the first post-9/11 airline cases (*Alshrafi v. American Airlines*) on behalf of a US citizen from Jordan. In 2010, Ms. Dougan was named one of the "Top Women in Law" by Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly and has been honored by the NAACP, National Lawyers Guild, Community Change, and Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston.

Barbara Dougan, Esq., Civil Rights Director. Barbara Dougan brings over 20 years of experience as a civil rights attorney in Boston. She was formerly Director of the Project to Combat Racial Violence at the



Sumaiya Zama, Director of Community Advocacy and Education.

Sumaiya Zama is an educator, community organizer, youth advocate, and civil rights activist from the Boston area. Prior to joining CAIR, Sumaiya was a youth worker for the City of Cambridge, working primarily with children of color from immigrant and refugee communities. She is currently serving as the youngest board member of the Praxis Project, a national public health organization aimed to empower grassroots organizing in communities of color. Currently, she works as the Community Advocacy and Education Director at CAIR-MA working to provide all young people, community members, educators, and youth workers with the tools to self-advocate, implement inclusionary practices, build power, and hone leadership skills. She holds a degree in Political Science with minors in Human Rights and African Studies from the University of Massachusetts in Boston. She is also a writer and believes in our ability to teach others and build bridges through storytelling and art.

Our Board Members

Tahirah Amatul-Wadud is a litigator licensed to practice in Massachusetts state and federal courts, as well as the federal court in the Northern District of New York. Her practice areas are civil rights and domestic relations law. She is general counsel for a New York Muslim congregation, regularly develops and chairs continuing education courses for legal professionals and members of the non-legal community, sits on a panel for her local bar association, and has served on boards for Western Massachusetts non-profit organizations. Ms. Amatul-Wadud is also an appointed volunteer commissioner for the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women; her biography on the Commission's page can be found at: www.mass.gov/service-details/commissioners-staff

Mouaad Lebeche is a Civil Engineer by trade, specializing in Multi-Family/Commercial Construction. A life-long resident of the South Shore, he has spent the past 17 years serving his local Muslim community at the Islamic Center of New England. He began volunteering for various committees at age 16, and has now been serving as a member of its Board of Directors for the past 5+ years. Coupling technical skills with a widely developing network, Mouaad is committed to justice for those in need and protecting their civil, American rights.

Nadeem Mazen is a local business owner, civic activist, educator, and innovator. After moving to Cambridge for undergraduate and graduate work at MIT, Nadeem fell in love with the city and opened two small businesses in Central Square. Both provide community access to cutting-edge technology, services, and job training. Nadeem also holds a faculty position at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, where he teaches entrepreneurship and small business practices to emerging artists. He currently serves as a Cambridge City Councilor.

Sarfraz Nistar is President of CAIR-MA. Entrepreneurial by nature, she has started and managed businesses in the design and healthcare space. Her interests are in civil rights, healthcare, and disruptive technologies. She holds BA and MBA degrees.

The **Rev. Corey J. Sanderson** is the minister of The Second Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Greenfield Massachusetts. Corey is past President and a member of The Interfaith Council of Franklin County and has worked closely with a number of area social service organizations such as The Literacy Project, The Communities That Care Coalition, and The Opioid Task Force. On the state level, he currently serves as the chair of the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, the largest Protestant denomination in the state. For the past twelve years, Corey has been an adjunct instructor at Northwestern Michigan College where he has taught Philosophy, Ethics, and Religious Studies courses, both in the classroom and online. Corey is interested in fostering a healthy religiously diverse democracy in our country and finding places where the three Abrahamic faiths can work together on issues that affect the common good.

Zahid Siddiqui is a Braintree native working for Pricewaterhouse Coopers in Boston as a corporate tax CPA. He completed his Masters in Taxation from Northeastern University in Boston, MA and his Bachelors in Accounting from Bryant University in Smithfield, RI. He has been working in the accounting industry for over 10 years, specializing on the reporting of business income taxes to regulatory agents such as the SEC and IRS. He serves as the CFO for the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center in Roxbury, MA. He is also the co-founder of the Fasting 5K, a charity run during Ramadan for underprivileged children.

How to Support Us

Show Your Support

- ❖ Sign up for our **mailing list**: www.cairma.org
- ❖ Follow us on **Facebook**: www.facebook.com/cairmassachusetts
- ❖ Follow us on **Twitter**: www.twitter.com/cairmass

Give Your Time

- ❖ **Volunteer** your talents: www.cairma.org/employment
- ❖ **Intern** with CAIR-MA: e-mail info@ma.cair.com

Financial Contributions

Make a general donation to support our legal and advocacy work at www.cairma.org

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