

# Local and Special-Purpose BAR ASSOCIATIONS

## Who is the Muslim Bar? By Dewnya A. Bazzi

There are hundreds of Muslim attorneys in the state of Michigan. They work in every practice area. Muslim attorneys can be found in government, large firms, small firms, solo practice, and every other type of organization. They practice on the plaintiffs' side, on the defendants' side, and in transactional work.

Muslim attorneys are city and county prosecutors and assistant U.S. attorneys who prosecute Muslim defendants if the need arises. They are criminal defense lawyers who defend non-Muslim clients with zeal. They are judges in several courtrooms throughout the state. They are law professors. Muslim lawyers have leadership positions in civil-rights organizations, bar associations, and every grouping of attorneys imaginable. In other words, Muslim attorneys are an integral part of the fabric that is the practice of law in Michigan.

To provide support for the large and growing community of Muslim lawyers in our state, the Michigan Muslim Bar Association was incorporated in 2006. The association experienced fits and starts as it attempted to define itself as an organization; after a few years of minimal activity, it was basically dormant. In late 2011, after becoming licensed as an attorney, I sought to revive it. The association soon grew to more than 300 members.

I teamed up with attorneys Moheeb Murray and Tariq Hafeez, one of the association's founding members, to develop our major annual event, the scholarship dinner. Attendance has increased in each of the three years we have held the dinner, and includes judges, attorneys, heads of business, civic and bar organization members, elected officials, community leaders, students, and friends of the Muslim Bar Association. Nearly \$20,000 in scholarship funds has been distributed to Muslim students with a demonstrated interest in law.

In 2014, the association created its Board of Directors, setting the stage for its continued growth. The Board is comprised of Muslim attorneys representing a diverse cross-section of the Michigan legal community, including:

- President Dewnya Bazzi; plaintiffs' personal injury; At Law Group
- Chairman Kassem Dakhllallah; business litigation; At Law Group
- Vice President Moheeb Murray; insurance coverage litigation; Bush, Seyferth & Paige
- Secretary Tariq Hafeez; healthcare law; Fausone Bohn
- Treasurer Afan Bapacker; bankruptcy law; Law Office of Afan Bapacker
- Board Member Fatina Abdrabboh; director; ADC Michigan
- Board Member Farayha Arrine; commercial litigation; Dickinson Wright

With the creation of the Board, the association has instituted a host of services, such as creating an online message board and e-mail system so members can exchange ideas about legal matters and refer cases to one another. The association also hosts social gatherings and CLE seminars on various types of law.

The Muslim Bar Association's exclusive purpose is to promote the common interest of Muslim attorneys, specifically by supporting the advancement and development of Muslim attorneys; providing business and professional networking opportunities; supporting, guiding, and mentoring Muslim law students; offering a referral service to the Muslim community and supporting the provision of legal services to the community; enhancing awareness and encouraging resolution of legal issues of concern to the



Front row, left to right: Camellia Shaaban, scholarship recipient; Sarah Hazimi, scholarship recipient; Dewnya Bazzi, president; Nehme Bazzi, scholarship recipient; and Fahd Haque, scholarship recipient. Back row: Farayah Arrine, board member; Moheeb Murray, vice president; Tariq Hafeez, board member; Afan Bapacker, board member; Kassem Dakhllallah, chairman; and David Knezek, state congressman.

Muslim community; increasing the involvement of the Muslim community in civic affairs; coordinating activities and exchanging ideas and information with other Muslim bar associations; and providing an avenue for professionals, community leaders, and others to take an interest in matters of concern to Muslim attorneys.

Although the association's main focus is promoting the common interest of Muslim attorneys, its members pride themselves on having an inclusive organization. Any licensed attorney or law student can become a member. Diversity is important to any organization, and our association's leaders invite all attorneys and law students to consider being part of its worthy cause. ■



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