Funding Issues Faced
by a Muslim Nonprofit
in Post–9/11 America

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Introduction

The terrorist attacks on the United States committed on the eleventh of September, 2001 had repercussions for Muslims around the world because the terrorists claimed to have committed the attacks in the name of Islam. As a result of 9/11, the U.S. has invaded both Afghanistan and Iraq; the ongoing wars in both countries (each with Muslim majority populations) in addition to terrorist attacks committed by those claiming solidarity with the 9/11 perpetrators (al-Qaeda)[1], has cast radical Islam at the forefront of U.S. policy initiatives.[2] Muslims in America have been forced to reevaluate their communities and have faced more intense scrutinizing than any other group post–9/11. Muslim charities and other nonprofit organizations have come under the U.S. government's microscope the harshest in U.S. attempts to "ensure that both terrorists and their financiers meet the full justice of the United States of America.".[3] This paper will explore the effect that 9/11 has had on one such nonprofit organization's access to funding and their financial growth and stability. Analysis of this effect will be framed within the larger topic of the organization's general funding issues and examine

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[1] I refer to the attacks committed in Spain, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon to name a few in the months and years since 9/11.

"Since Sept. 11, 2001, al-Qaeda-inspired jihadists have carried out more than 20 major terrorist attacks not counting any in Afghanistan or Iraq – one almost every two months. Nearly a thousand have been killed, several thousand injured. Meanwhile, fighting continues in Afghanistan. The Iraqi resistance goes on." Jenkins, Brian Michael, "Four Years After 9/11, War on Terror Slogs On", in the *San Diego Union–Tribune*, 11 September, 2005, accessed 14 April, 2007, <http://www.rand.org/commentary/091105SDUT.html>.

[2] Rabasa, Angel, and Cheryl Benard, Lowell H. Schwartz, Peter Sickle, *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*, (Arlington: RAND Corporation, 2007), p.iii. <www.rand.org> accessed 18 April, 2007.

[3] "Chicago and Washington, D.C., Area Men among Three Indicted in Racketeering Conspiracy in U.S. To Finance Hamas Terror Abroad, Fugitive Hamas Official in Syria among Those Charged", *Department of Justice Press Release*, 20 August, 2004, U.S. Department of Justice. <http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2004/August/04_crm_571.htm> accessed 30 April, 2007.

For more information on the scrutiny that Muslim charities and other organizations have faced from the U.S. government post 9/11, see Nimer, Mohamed, "American Muslim Organizations: Before and After 9/11", *Muslims in the United States: Identity, Influence, Innovation*, Ed. by Philippa Strum, (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005), pp.5-17. Mohamed Nimer is the Research Center Director at the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the U.S.'s largest Muslim media watchdog organization.

the ways in which 9/11 has impacted that. First I will present a general overview of this organization.

Overview

The Islamic Schools League of America (hereafter referred to as the League) is a 501c3[4] nonprofit whose purpose is to serve K–12 Islamic schools in the U.S. The League's mission statement illustrates the organization's main function.

> "The Islamic Schools' League of America is committed to working in partnership with Muslim educators and Islamic organizations to foster the development and growth of quality education in an Islamic environment for Muslim children, primarily by enhancing the quality of instruction and the stability of school governance structures and finances."[5]

The League serves Islamic schools in America; the schools are the League's *raison d'etre*. The League was born out of a desire to benefit Islamic education; indeed one of the founders suggested that they start their own Islamic school, but it became apparent that instead of funneling resources into a new school (thus diverting resources from other schools in the community) it would be more beneficial to support existing Islamic schools rather than start another one.[6]

This network of support provided to Islamic education is enhanced by the nature of the League's operation. The organization is a virtual one with current board members in Michigan,

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[4] 501c3 IRS recognized, tax–exemption status is the "Internal Revenue Code" for a "public charity or private foundation, which is established for purposes that are religious, educational, charitable, scientific…" etc. "One of the primary benefits of being considered tax-exempt under IRC Section 501(c)(3) is the ability to accept contributions and donations that are tax-deductible to the donor." The Foundation Group, "501c3 Frequently Asked Questions", <http://www.501c3.org/faqs.html#q1> accessed 17 April, 2007.

[5] Islamic Schools League of America, Mission Statement, www.4islamicschools.org, accessed 14 April, 2007.

[6] Keyworth, Karen, Personal interview, 11 April, 2007. Karen Keyworth is a board member and Director of Education with the Islamic Schools League of America. Ms. Keyworth also teaches developmental writing at Lansing Community College. She has spent over twenty years in the field of education, in writing and in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

Virginia, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, and Texas. The virtual nature of the League has both positive and negative aspects. The chief benefit is that there are no operating cost costs like leasing and maintaining an office building; the numerous costs of maintaining an office include items such as computers, fax machines, copy machines, desks, chairs, telephone lines, paper; the list is exhaustive. Staying virtual is key to the League's success for two major reasons. The first is that it is smart financially because they save thousands of dollars per year by having no overhead costs. The second reason being an online organization is advantageous to the League is due to the conditions of education. Education is a dynamic field and one that can be heavily regionally influenced. As previously mentioned, the League has Board members all over the country. Were the League to establish a headquarters in one particular location, then its Board members (a majority of them educators) would only be familiar with educational trends and situations in that one location. It is a great service to the League that it is able to facilitate its members reaching out to their local communities and sharing knowledge.

Being completely virtual does, however, carry with it some drawbacks. The natural day to day camaraderie of an office environment is missing from the League.[7] Being limited to phone and e-mail interaction also does not facilitate the most optimal work environment. For example, phone communication loses all of the face to face verbal cues necessary for issues like politely disagreeing with someone. Ultimately, however, most Board members feel that remaining an online organization is paramount to the League's success. In fact, it may be the case that was funding not an issue, and the League could secure the financial resources necessary to establish a headquarters, they would choose to remain virtual or at least semi–virtual.[8] Due to the overwhelming education–related and financial benefits as a result of the League being an

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[7] Keyworth, Karen, Personal interview, 25 September, 2006.
[8] *Ibid*.

online organization, it is this author's opinion that remaining a virtual organization truly is the best course for the League.

This essay will attempt to illustrate that the financial obstacles that the League faces are hampered by them being a Muslim nonprofit in post-9/11 America. This paper is not trying to say that 9/11 created financial obstacles for the League, but rather that 9/11 has exacerbated those obstacles. The finances of the League will be examined focusing on the issues of costs, fundraising, major donors and donations, goals and expectations, allocation of resources, and budget reports. I will show that in an atmosphere of fear perpetuated by United States' government policies, the League is effectively cut off from their sources of funding. The League is afraid to raise funds from overseas, Muslims in America are afraid to donate to the League, and also non-Muslim organizations in America are afraid to donate and/or partner with the League. This essay will then propose, based on the information provided, the best strategy to handle the League's financial future.

Overview of the League

So how much does it cost to start a nonprofit? For the League, the start up costs were less than $2000—that money was used to open a bank account, purchase a supply of checks, deposit slips, etc., open a P.O. Box so that the League would have a mail address, and to pay for the Federal Non-Profit filing and State Corporation filing, etc.[9] For the first two to three years or so the League had no paid staff, so the expenses were minimal. The founding members, Judi Amri, Ali Shwikhat, Ahmad Al-Wazir, and Karen Keyworth each contributed either labor or moderate amounts of money, or both, to cover expenses like web hosting, domain registration,

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[9] Amri, Judi, Personal interview, 22 April, 2007. Judi Amri is a founding board member and Director of Administration for the Islamic Schools League of America. She works for a contracting company with the Department of Defense in Falls Church, Virginia. Both of her children attended the K-12 Islamic Saudi Academy and Ms. Amri has always had a passion for the religious education of Muslim youth.

and minimal software that they didn't already have. Even the very first web site was all done with donated labor.[10]

The League's very first fund–raising effort was a dinner that was organized in Fairfax, VA. They invited about fifty to seventy–five Muslims from the local community; there were a couple of speakers, including Mohammed Al-Asi (who was associated with a local Islamic school) and Sheikh Abdalla Idris, who also committed to do the fund–raising at this event.[11] The League raised approximately $14,000 (in money and in-kind donations) from which they had to pay about $1,500–2,000 for the food and facilities. This established their first real bank balance–most of which was planned to use to try to more professionally develop the League's web site.[12]

The League's second fund-raising effort came about when the former director of a major Islamic organization donated that organization's mailing listing of over 16,000 addresses.[13] At that time the League had received their first grant from an organization called the Foundation for the Advancement & Development of Education and Learning (F.A.D.E.L.) (about $3,000) so they took the risk of sinking most of their resources into the development of a fund-raising brochure, mailing envelopes (outside and return envelopes) and the postage to reach all 16,000 addressees. They persuaded the company that was designing their web site to design the materials and set aside 50% of the cost until the League began to receive donations.[14] They were very gracious to agree to that arrangement as it was evident that 50% of their payment might be at risk. Of course, the company is Muslim owned so such agreements are not

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[10] *Ibid*.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid*.
[13] *Ibid*.
[14] *Ibid*.

uncommon and they had great faith in the League's effort. Interestingly, this tech website design company still works with the League this way.[15]

The League's first major donor was F.A.D.E.L. and they continue to be the organization's only consistent source for a yearly grant.[16] Other sources of funding are individual donations–mostly collected during the annual Ramadan mailing. Judi Amri, the League's Director of Administration, agrees that it is very important to diversify an organization's donor base; however,

> "That takes some time to reach the point where your organization has a solid track record that you can present to other potential donors and have a reasonable chance for success. The League is probably, after seven to eight years of hard work, finally at the point where we may be able to begin to cultivate some additional private donors."[17]

Amri elaborates that the work that the League does at best has a very small potential donor base–99% Muslim, and of that 99% probably only a small percent are willing to support an 'education' organization.[18] Most Muslims are much more likely to donate to a political action organization or an organization with a focus other than education. This is an unfortunate reality and is directly linked, the League believes, to the lack of confidence the Muslim population in general has in Islamic private schools.[19]

The League assesses how much it needs based on the minimum amount it would take to maintain our two or three core services – the Islamic Educators Communication Network, [IECN] (the free listserv that the League sponsors), the web site, and recently, a Leadership

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[15] *Ibid*.
[16] *Ibid*.
[17] *Ibid*.
[18] Amri, Judi, Personal interview, 22 April, 2007.
[19] *Ibid*.

conference (that will become annual). Because the League is a virtual organization, the base or core expenses are minimal. As they develop projects, they would create a budget for that project and then try to raise the money to cover it–thus they operate a little differently than an organization that is bigger, and has overhead costs.[20]

The League's main expense is the salary of the Director of Education. This goes toward the salary of their single employee.[21] Next is the cost of their minimal organizational expenses: web hosting, PO Box, yearly state filing fee, annual Ramadan mailing, and a little bit for miscellaneous expenses. Whatever is left over after these expenses are covered goes towards travel and other important but non – essential that might arise. Amri says that, "In a sense you can say we decide on how our resources are allocated just like a family would when maintaining their family budget."[22] The League doesn't really do a budget report per se; as Amri notes, "we're still much too small to expend energy on things that really add very little value at this point."[23] However, that is not to say that these expenses are not valuable and necessary. The League is always watching for points in their development where they need to become more formalized in how they do business and how they are accountable.

As indicated, the League does not really have a regular budget report (their total annual income is only about $45,000 – for the past two years). Their expenses run slightly less than their income (which is about par for a non-profit at their stage of development).[24] However, Amri does create an annual budget each year when the League re-applies for the FADEL grant. That budget has two aspects—a minimum operational budget and a growth budget. Amri says that they have yet to achieve their growth budget but that they always meet their minimum

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[20] *Ibid*.
[21] *Ibid*.
[22] Amri, Judi, Personal interview, 22 April, 2007.
[23] *Ibid*.
[24] Amri, Judi, Personal interview, 22 April, 2007.

operational budget.[25]   To my mind the League has always just slightly exceeded their expectations. Amri believes that the League is reaching a point organizationally where they need to see some growth, such as a major grant, the cultivation of one or two new donors, etc.[26] Amri says that, "We are at a plateau now so we should be in a building phase as we go forward the next couple of years. The verdict is still out…"[27]

Comparisons to the League

The Islamic Schools League of America is truly the only organization of its kind. There are other Muslim organizations that seek to assist Islamic education, but the problem with these organizations, according to the League, is that they are 'top down' whereas the League is 'bottom up'.[28] One example is the Council of Islamic Schools of North America (CISNA) which was an outgrowth of the large Muslim umbrella organization ISNA, the Islamic Society of North America. Additionally, these other organizations have suffered from the personnel crisis created in the wake of 9/11 which will be explored further. There are also not many Christian or Jewish organizations that function similarly to the League. This is due to the organizational nature of many of these organizations, mainly that they are hierarchical whereas Muslim organizations (and [Sunni] Islam in general) are not. One such organization that Karen Keyworth has been in contact with is the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools, MANS. Although their name does not denote any religious ties, the group is a Christian organization. Their vision is, "In order to foster a just and educated society for the public good, our schools, homes, and churches prepare children to be servants of God in contemporary society."[29] The

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[25] *Ibid*.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Keyworth, Karen, Personal interview, 16 March 2007.

[29] Our Vision, Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools, <http://www.m-a-n-s.org/about/index.php> accessed 28 April, 2007.

group's logo consists of children holding hands around a cross with a caption below, "Partners In Christ Called to Serve".[30] MANS is a regional organization; they serve only Michigan schools, including the Michigan region of the Association of Christian Schools International.[31] Because their organization is regional, MANS is able to devote all of their resources to schools in Michigan; the League is a national organization whose resources are allocated to all 235 Islamic schools across America.

Additionally impacting the League which further separates it from similar non-Muslim organizations are the attitudes and beliefs of Muslims regarding parochial education. As previously mentioned, most Muslims would rather donate to charities or public action organizations instead of an organization for Islamic education. The reasons for this are much more complex than just the fear of donating to a Muslim organization, which will be explored later. The Islamic Schools League of America has conducted research on Islamic schools in the U.S. Karen Keyworth has written the analytical report of that data, entitled, "Islamic Schools Data Based Profiles", and presented the report at Georgetown University's Conference on Islamic Education in America.[32] In her report, Keyworth highlighted the contrast between the percentages of non-Muslim students who attend private schools (most of which are religious) and the percentages of Muslim students who attend Islamic schools. Keyworth writes,

> "According to the National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, "Approximately 5,953,000 students attend 27,223 non-profit schools. This comprises 11% of all students and 23% of all schools in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000)

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[30] Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools. <http://www.m-a-n-s.org/index.php>
[31] *Ibid*.
[32] Keyworth, Karen. "Islamic Schools Data Based Profiles." Islamic Education In America. Conference of the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding and Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. Georgetown University, Washington DC. 6 April 2006.

Most non-profit schools are small, located in urban centers, and possess a religious affiliation. (NCSPE)".[33]

"Based on an estimate of six (6) million Muslims (Strum & Tarantolo) with approximately 50% under the age of 25 (Ba-Yunus), one can estimate that the percentage of Muslim children attending full time Islamic schools is in the neighborhood of 2%. This is well below the national figure of approximately 10% of U.S. children attending private schools. (Broughman & Swaim)"[34]

The League is in a radically different situation that other similar non-Muslim organizations because of their constituency. Although the focus of this paper is not on private and parochial school trends, the argument can be made that these statistics serve to illustrate that the community in which the League operates, the Muslim community in America, is more unreceptive and even hostile to the notion of Islamic parochial schools. This is based on the statistical estimate, in Karen Keyworth's research report, that Muslims in America send their children to Islamic schools at a rate of five times less than non-Muslims send their children to private and parochial schools of their own religious affiliation. The complex reasons behind these negative attitudes have yet to be fully explored. In the recommendations of her report she stated that, "Whether or to what extent this is impacted by immigrant-held attitudes towards Islam informed by the social and societal milieu of a history of colonialism in their countries of origin has yet to be studied."[35]

In an interview with Ms. Keyworth, she explained that these negative attitudes impact the League's funding because people will not donate to organizations whose work they do not value.

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[33] *Ibid*, p.5.
[34] *Ibid*. p.6.
[35] *Ibid*, p.10.

Additionally, League funds cannot and do not come from the schools themselves because the Islamic schools in America are overwhelmingly young, small, and under-funded themselves. The letter below illustrates the financial struggles of Islamic schools and demonstrates that they are unable to provide funding for the League.

> "From League
> Tuesday, 25 April 2006:
> "To follow up on our conversation regarding membership, I just want to confirm that for schools with over 500 students, we are offering a flat membership fee rate of $500. Perhaps your Board will be willing to revisit their decision based on the new information."
>
> Response from School
> Friday, 19 May 2006
> "Not really, but the teachers are interested. We are trying to raise the $500 independently."
>
> Follow up from School
> Wednesday, 21 June 2006
> "Our senior Class of 2006 donated money to have <Name Deleted> School join the League. Please resend me information on membership. Thanks. Hope it isn't too late."
>
> The fee schedule was revisited by the League Board, and it was revised in an effort to bring in larger schools that cannot afford the previous fee of $1 per student. The new fee schedule is now $1 per student up to 250 students; $250 flat fee for schools with 250+ students."[36]

This is very different from the organization discussed above, the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools; their website states that "Our work is possible because of the voluntary support

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[36] Keyworth, Karen (kkeyworth@4islamicschools.org). "Membership." E-mails to principal of Islamic school (anonymous). 25 April 2006, 19 May 2006, 21 June 2006.

of our 500 schools with more than 7,000 teachers educating more than 105,000 students in the state of Michigan."[37] More children in more parochial schools mean more funds for this type of organization.

Issues that impact financial growth and stability

9/11

During the horrific attacks of September 11 on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, most American Muslims had one thought in addition to sharing the collective outrage, horror, and sadness of their fellow Americans: "I hope it's not Muslims who did this."[38] American Muslims knew when it was discovered that the attackers had claimed to be acting in the name of Islam, that they would be doubly targeted as perpetrators, both by Osama bin Laden and his ilk, and the non-Muslim American public.[39] The fear of retaliatory attacks was not irrational; a Sikh man in Arizona was killed because his attackers thought he was Muslim.[40] "Balbir Singh Sodhi was shot to death on Sept. 15, 2001 in Mesa, Arizona. Sodhi's killer spent the hours before the murder in a bar, bragging of his intention to "kill the ragheads responsible for September 11.'"[41] Muslims in America were harassed, many Islamic schools temporarily closed their doors, and there was a general sense of fear, both from the 9/11 attacks and the outcome of the attacks.[42] On the other hand, there were hundreds of outpourings of solidarity from non-Muslims towards Muslims in the wake of September 11th. These included holding candlelight vigils at mosques and other interfaith gatherings, shopping for groceries if Muslims were afraid to go out, wearing

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[37] Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools, <http://www.m-a-n-s.org/>
[38] Brian Handwerk and Zain Habboo. *National Geographic News*
10 September, 2002. http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/09/0910_muslimkids.html accessed 19 April, 2007.
[39] *Ibid*.
[40] <http://www.hanania.com/hatevictims.html>
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] Keyworth, Karen, Personal interview, 16 March 2007.

headscarves in solidarity with Muslim women, and letters of support.[43]   The United States government, like its people, also issued statements of encouragement to Muslims, especially American Muslims. The government also countered their measures of support by scrutinizing American Muslims after 9/11.

One of the ways that American Muslims were targeted as perpetrators by the U.S. government was the intense scrutiny that they faced in the aftermath of the attacks. Many Muslims in America are immigrants.[44]   Individual Muslim immigrants face similar issues as non-Muslim immigrants, such as visa and green card issues, stereotypes of immigrants from the larger American community, etc. However, post-9/11, Muslim immigrants as a group were treated extraordinarily harshly in roundups, detainments, and deportations that brought to mind the World War II American internment of the Japanese.[45]   The September 11th attacks fostered an atmosphere of fear and suspicion towards Muslims in America from the non-Muslim majority.[46]   The U.S. government, a government 'of the people', was certainly not above such fear and suspicion.

9/11 and issues of fund raising

Not only did individual Muslims fall under the watchful eye of the government, but so did institutions and organizations. As previously discussed, charities and other nonprofits directed by Muslims and/or which served Muslims were viewed as guilty before proven innocent. The hostile position taken by the U.S. government towards Muslim charities and nonprofits was due primarily to the financial network of al-Qaeda, the group that claimed

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[43] *Ibid*.

[44] 64% of Muslims are immigrants (as of Dec 2001) <http://www.projectmaps.com/PMReport.html>

[45] Grant, Michael, Horizon, "World War II Japanese internment camps; civil rights; racial profiling."
<http://www.azpbs.org/horizon/transcripts/2002/january/jan21_2002.html>

[46] Ahmed, Kathy. Internal League document on the National Council of American Muslim Nonprofits. This fear of Muslims that non-Muslim Americans feel, partly originates from the fact that most of the 9/11 hijackers had lived in America for many years prior to the attacks. Indeed, blending into American society in order not to arouse suspicion was one of Osama bin Laden's directives to the hijackers.

responsibility for the September 11th attacks. After 9/11, the War on Terrorism became the Bush administration's top international relations priority and they have made it a policy to cut off the cash flow to al-Qaeda and other groups that they deem to be terrorist organizations. This particular grouping together of all organizations deemed to be 'terrorist' organizations has served two functions: the first is that it has allowed the Bush administration to claim action against "terrorists" which gives it a lot of political capitol with the public. This is accomplished by brushing all 'terrorist' organizations with the same linguistic paint. The second is that it has actually redefined 'terrorist' organizations to include organizations that the U.S. public has never been concerned with, such as internal domestic groups like Hamas. This becomes a problem for Muslim-run charities in America that fund international relief efforts.

 As discussed earlier, pre-9/11, Islamic charities were not necessarily at the forefront of the then-new president Bush's agenda. However, after 9/11, any money that went or had gone overseas was suddenly questionable and suspicious.[47] As Mohamed Nimer accounts in his essay on Muslim organizations in America pre and post 9/11, the largest Muslim charity in the U.S., the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development [HLF], was closed in addition to other prominent Muslim charities such as The Global Relief Foundation [GRF] and The Benevolence International Foundation [BIF].[48] The nature of these charities' closures occurred in an atmosphere of fear of Muslims.

The Islamic Schools League of America is not a charity that sends money overseas[49]; however, because of the *Islamic* character of the League, they are still subject to similar government and public scrutiny as Muslim charities. In addition to fear of closure, Muslim

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[47] Amri, Judi, Personal interview, 17 April, 2007.
[48] Nimer, Mohamed, "American Muslim Organizations", p.7. Of course, these three charities were not the only ones to be shut down.
[49] Keyworth says that the Treasury Department informed her that the U.S. government is more worried about money going out of the U.S. than money coming into the U.S.

organizations such as the League are also harmed by government suspicion because of the personnel crisis created by this atmosphere of fear and suspicion.[50] The Muslim population in America is small in comparison to the general population in America. Within such a small community, it is not difficult for one to become a 'big fish in a little pond'.[51] A personnel crisis was created due to 9/11 because suddenly not only were organizations under suspicion, but so were the individuals working for the organizations. Because the community is so small, oftentimes individuals are involved in more than one organization. If one organization is suspected of ties to terrorism, then all personnel affiliated with that organization are now effectively out of work and 'tainted'; no Muslim organization will want to work with them for fear of implicating themselves.[52] The U.S. government's suspicion of organizations and individuals has created a 'domino effect' among personnel.

Let us examine a hypothetical situation to illustrate this 'domino effect'. For instance, if a man worked for the Holy Land Foundation, he may have contacts that could get him *legitimate* overseas donors who want to contribute to a political action group in the U.S. Hypothetically, let us say that he is also a Board member on the American Muslim Council (a Muslim public affairs group). Thus he has made contacts for *legitimate* donors to contribute to the American Muslim Council through connections made from his work with the Holy Land Foundation. The problem arises when charities like the Holy Land Foundation are closed and its Board, staff and supporters fall under suspicion. Hypothetically then, this man would be investigated and his contacts, though legitimate, would most likely be deemed illegitimate. Also, his work with the American Muslim Council would effectively be over as the AMC would most likely want to distance itself from anyone under suspicion of ties to terrorism. However, the AMC, by virtue of

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[50] Keyworth, Karen, Personal interview, 11 April 2007.
[51] *Ibid*.
[52] *Ibid*.

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its board member's affiliation with the Holy Land Foundation, is itself under suspicion as are the rest of *its* board members, staff, and network of support. A 'domino effect' is thus created by the web of suspicion. It is in part because of this personnel crisis that non–charity Muslim organizations like the Islamic Schools League of America are so heavily impacted by government and public scrutiny of American Muslim organizations.

The closure of some charities angered many in the American Muslim community and the U.S. government took steps to "deflect charges of anti-Muslim bias."[53] The Islamic Schools League of America was part of an effort that grew out of meetings between Islamic charitable organizations and the U.S. Department of Treasury (hereafter referred to as the 'Treasury'). The Islamic organizations requested a 'white list', a list of organizations that people could donate to without being accused of funding terrorism. The government refused and continues to refuse to do so.[54] The accusation of contributing funding to a terrorist organization carries severe consequences and in the largely immigrant Muslim community many people were effectively impelled to not donate anymore to Muslim organizations. In a rationale for working with the Treasury, Keyworth wrote, "501c3 Muslim organizations are unable to take in and/or disburse funds (domestic or overseas) without exposing either donors or themselves to undue scrutiny from the government."[55] The League helped organize a Taskforce for an organization called the National Council on American Muslim Nonprofits, the NCAMN. According to the rationale, Keyworth said,

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[53] Nimer, Mohamed, "American Muslim Organizations", p.8.
[54] Keyworth, Karen, Personal Interview, 11 April, 2007.
[55] Keyworth, Karen, Islamic Schools League of America. Rationale for Treasury Work. Internal Document. Falls Church, VA: Islamic Schools League of America, 28 July 2004.

"We [the League] spoke with Mr. Chip Poncy, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Assistant Secretary (in the Executive Office for Terrorist Financing & Financial Crimes, US Department of the Treasury). He made two major points:

1. The Dept of the Treasury, for a variety of reasons, would like to help Muslim organizations find a way to operate that would allow them to function – to carry out their missions – without undue hardship.

2. The Dept of the Treasury would like to build confidence between both the Muslim organizations and the Treasury."[56]

Unfortunately, the NCAMN never developed and dissolved due to the changing political milieu.[57] The inability of Muslim organizations and charities to have a 'seal of approval' from the U.S. government remains a major problem for these organizations and ability to receive funding.

9/11 and the media

The League has never been accusatorily named in a media news article or on a television story about terrorist financing or links to terrorism; however, because the League is a service organization for Islamic schools in America they get grouped together by association with the schools. Islamic schools in America have been called "training grounds of hate" that for the government to not take action and close is an act of "sedition."[58] Writers from the Washington Post did an article on 'Muslim schools in America' not even six months after 9/11. Keyworth says that the article is "rife with factual errors."[59] The reason for the media's focus on Islamic schools is the American search for the reason(s) 'why' of 9/11. If hatred is learned, the media

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[56] *Ibid*.
[57] Keyworth, Karen, Personal Interview, 26 April, 2007.
[58] Thomas, Cal, "Where are the Sleeper Cells?", 7 March, 2002.
<www.townhall.com/columnists/CalThomas/2002> accessed 15 April, 2007.
[59] Keyworth, Karen, "Trial by Fire: Islamic Schools After 9/11" in *Horizons Magazine*

needed to investigate how and where that learning could have originated. Islamic schools stateside were an easy target. One of the issues that the media focused on in their investigations was school curricula.[60] The Washington Post said that at the Islamic Saudi Academy in Northern Virginia,

> "Eleventh-graders…file into their Islamic studies class, where the textbooks tell them the Day of Judgment can't come until Jesus Christ returns to Earth, breaks the cross and converts everyone to Islam, and until Muslims start attacking Jews."[61]

Fear of anti-American and anti-Semitic teachings in the curricula is not one that is new nor is it original on the part of the American media. Keyworth explains in her article on Islamic schools after 9/11 that a few struggling Islamic schools in America were grateful for free textbooks given by overseas donors, but that doesn't mean that objectionable passages were necessarily taught.[62] In addition, Keyworth says that these textbooks from foreign donations are rarely used because most Islamic schools in the States are not K-12 and thus the Islamic schools have to prepare the children to go to public high schools.[63] In order to do this, most Islamic schools simply use the public school curricula and then add Arabic and Islamic studies classes.[64] Using the local public school curricula is also oftentimes a necessity because of budget restraints.[65] However, culling objectionable texts from Islamic schools is a necessity that, in the aftermath of 9/11, is all the more crucial and possible. Keyworth writes that, "The tragic events of 9-11 have turned up the heat on the issue of curriculum, and Islamic schools in America, can, and will, meet the

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[60] Strauss, Valerie, and Emily Wax, "Muslim Schools in America: Where Two Worlds Collide", in *The Washington Post*, 25 February, 2002, <www.teachkidspeace.org> accessed 15 April, 2007.
[61] *Ibid.*
[62] Keyworth, Karen, "Trial by Fire: Islamic Schools After 9/11" in *Horizons Magazine*
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] *Ibid.*
[65] *Ibid.*

challenge and be better for it."[66] The issue is to find a balance for how much pressure to put on Islamic schools and how much interference is too much.

The media's glaring spotlight on Islamic schools is an issue for all Muslims; Keyworth says, "Unfortunately, because the media prefers innuendo to the truth, we are all tainted by this situation."[67] The issue is not just about Islamic schools though; American Muslims feel that the media's attitude towards Muslims is biased. According to a Zogby poll of American Muslims taken during the months immediately following 9/11, "Most American Muslims (68%) do not feel the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the media is fair. Three in four (77%) do not consider the treatment of Muslims and Islam in Hollywood fair."[68] With such bias in the media, both perceived and real, it is fair to conclude that the League, while not a target of the U.S. government, nonetheless feels the scrutiny of the American public/media like any other Muslim organization.

Impacts of Secularism on League funding

The scrutiny of Islamic organizations is not only reserved for the U.S. government and the media. Non-Muslim institutions and organizations are also skeptical of religious Muslims. This skepticism poses a problem for the Islamic Schools League of America because it affects their ability to receive grants and funds that other, non-Muslim, religious nonprofits are able to obtain.[69] The League works closely with Islamic schools to encourage civics education. To further promote this, the League created the Civics Education Project, the goal of which is to

"Encourage Muslims in the United States to become more fully engaged in

American civic life and facilitate the dissemination of accurate information about

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[66] *Ibid.*
[67] *Ibid.*
[68] Zogby International , Project MAPS (Muslims in the American Public Square), "American Muslim Poll" Nov/Dec 2001, <http://www.projectmaps.com/PMReport.htm> accessed 18 April, 2007.
[69] Keyworth, Karen, Personal interview, 11 April, 2007.

Muslims/Islam to encourage acceptance of Muslims by the American public…The Civics Project will create a variety of educational materials for K-12 full time Islamic schools, weekend Islamic schools (similar to "Sunday" schools), Muslim youth groups, K-12 public schools, and interfaith groups. The materials aimed at Muslims will focus on presenting and bolstering the underpinnings of civic responsibility as taught in Islam.[70]

The League set out to realize this goal, so in 2003 the League applied for grants from the Carnegie Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Surdna Foundation to fund their Civics Project. Board members of the League worked for many months on their proposal, and they were lucky to have a professional grant writer as a board member at that time. However, their grant proposals to Carnegie, Ford, and Surdna were turned down, and, per standard operating procedures, they were not informed *why* their proposals were rejected. To my mind this is extremely troubling because then an organization can only ever speculate and wonder why they were rejected. Maybe it was as simple as, 'the writing wasn't good enough or professional enough', or maybe it was, 'we don't think your organization relates enough to the work we want to fund.' Perhaps, though, it is something more fundamental and Carnegie, Ford, nor Surdna disagreed with the League's involvement in Islamic schools because these foundations, like many other grant–funding institutions in America post-9/11, are only interested in funding projects that promote secular Islam.

The Islamic Schools League of America does not promote 'secular Islam'. The League's vision illustrates their dedication to the promotion of Islamic values in education.

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[70] Islamic Schools League of America, Carnegie Letter of Inquiry – Final Version. Internal Document regarding Civics Project.

"The Islamic Schools' League of America envisions and works towards the day when Islamic schools will be the preferred centers for learning and leadership that nurture and encourage America's youth to develop their innate creativity and inquisitive nature in the pursuance of academic excellence while anchoring their hearts and souls in a moral framework of a God-centered life."[71]

A 'God-centered life' is the antithesis of secularism. Arguably, Islam, by definition, cannot be secular because Islam is 'a way of life', a religion that is not practiced 'once a week' but everyday.[72] Islam permeates all aspects of the religious Muslim's life; there are dictates on everything from how to ready oneself for prayer to how to invest one's wealth.[73] Secularism on the other hand, is "a system of political or social philosophy that rejects all forms of religious faith and worship."[74] Rejecting faith is the last thing that Muslims with a 'God-centered life' want to do. In addition, the League "envisions and works towards the day when Islamic schools will be the preferred centers for learning"; Secularism espouses "the view that religious considerations should be excluded from civil affairs or public education."[75] This view is clearly incompatible with the League's vision and mission. The League, and indeed, religious Muslims, does not espouse the ideals of secularism. As such, they will not receive funding from organizations that seek to promote secular or 'moderate' Islam.[76]

In order to demonstrate that foundations seek to fund 'secular or moderate Islam' (i.e. projects and organizations that promote secular or moderate Islam), I have looked at papers put forth from two grant–funding institutions, the Carnegie Foundation and the Rand Corporation.

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[71] Islamic Schools League of America, Vision statement, <www.4islamicschoolsorg.> accessed 19 April, 2007.
[72] Keyworth, Karen, Personal interview, 11 April, 2007.
[73] <www.islamonline.net> accessed 21 April, 2007.
[74] "Secularism", <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/secularism> accessed 21 April, 2007.
[75] *Ibid*.
[76] Rabasa, Angel, and Cheryl Benard, Lowell H. Schwartz, Peter Sickle, *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*, (Arlington: RAND Corporation, 2007), p.3. <www.rand.org> accessed 18 April, 2007.

The mission of the Carnegie Corporation of New York is to "promote 'the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding'" through awarding grants that fund such work.[77] Vartan Gregorian is the president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which, as previously discussed, turned down a grant proposal from the League to work on a civics promotion project. Gregorian's 'Report of the President', entitled, "Islam, A Mosaic, Not a Monolith", appeared in the Carnegie Corporation of New York's Annual Report 2001. It is a lengthy overview of the history of the spread of Islam and how that history has shaped the Muslim world today. Gregorian's essay is a 'fair and balanced' account of that history and an explanation as to why it is critical for non-Muslims and especially non-Muslim Americans to understand Islam. He writes that,

> "It has become essential for us to understand Islam as a religion, its unity,
>
> diversity and culture – and to appreciate the legacy of Islamic civilizations, their
>
> role in the development of modern civilizations, the roles of Muslim nations and
>
> the challenges they face, and their future place and role in the world."[78]

The President's Report is a notable challenge to move beyond a xenophobic, intolerant view of Islam/Muslims that is unfortunately so prevalent among Americans today. Gregorian highlights the policy implications of the 'mosaic' nature of Islam, including the Sunni – Shi'a conflict. Throughout the report there is an underlying theme of the paper that 'secular is better', that somehow these conflicts in the Muslim world could be assuaged if the people were less religious and more secular. Gregorian states that, "We cannot and should not underestimate the power of

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[77] "Our Mission" Carnegie Corporation of New York, <www.carnegie.org> accessed 26 April, 2007.

[78] Gregorian, Vartan, "Islam, A Mosaic, Not a Monlith", *The Report of the President*, in *The Carnegie Corporation of New York's Annual Report 2001*, p.8., accessed 11 April, 2007.

secular states, institutions, and cultures."[79]   This demonstrates the bias towards secular institutions and organizations that promote secularism.

> "Clearly, then, the delicate relationship between mosque and state as well as the principles of Islamic and secular law will be paramount in all Muslim discussions about democracy. Related to that is another democratic necessity: an informed electorate…If they cannot or will not provide an adequate secular school system, will they relegate education, by default or decree, to the clerical establishment and its schools, the madrasa, with their peculiar and parochial curricula?"[80]

This demonstrates that Gregorian, like many others, does not see that secularism is *not* the same as separation of religion and state; there can be separation between religion and state without secularism.   Furthermore, this piece illustrates the negative attitudes about religious schools, calling their curricula 'peculiar'.   To my mind this demonstrates that perhaps foundations like Carnegie, Ford, and Surdna are not hostile to Islamic education in America, per se, but are hostile to Islamic education overseas.   However, the two are often conflated and, as evidenced in the *Washington Post* report, many in the public do not see a difference between Islamic schools ("the *madrasa*") overseas and Islamic schools in the United States.

To further highlight the negative opinions that Muslims in America face, I would like to consider a report entitled, "American Public Opinion about Muslims in the U.S. and Abroad".[81] The report begins by prefacing that although "Public opinion surveys conducted in the aftermath of September 11" and "subsequent polling" indicates that "most Americans have not judged Muslims and Islam on the basis of the actions of a few extremists", "mainstream American

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[79] *Ibid*, p.50.

[80] *Ibid*, p.33.

[81] Keeter, Scott, and Andrew Kohut, "American Public Opinion about Muslims in the U.S. and Abroad", *Muslims in the United States: Identity, Influence, Innovation*, Ed. by Philippa Strum, (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005), pp.5-17.

culture has not yet fully accepted Muslims and considerable suspicion remains. There is a

willingness to see Muslims profiled for security checks, as well as other signs of wariness about

Islam and Muslims."[82]   The report included one polling category that is of significance to the

League and its work.   The figure below shows how people's education levels and religious

beliefs impact their opinions about Islam and Muslim – Americans.   As the table illustrates,

Figure 7. Education and Religious Tradition Related to Views of Islam and Muslim Americans

	------ Opinion of ------			
	Muslim- Americans		Islam	
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable
College grad				
July 2005	66%	14%	55%	30%
March 2002	64%	16%	52%	31%
Some college				
July 2005	63%	17%	47%	32%
March 2002	61%	20%	41%	33%
H.S. or less				
July 2005	44%	34%	30%	42%
March 2002	48%	26%	29%	34%
White Evangelical				
July 2005	53%	26%	31%	46%
March 2002	51%	30%	29%	45%
White Mainline				
July 2005	53%	23%	42%	36%
March 2002	52%	17%	40%	28%
White Catholic				
July 2005	61%	17%	48%	31%
March 2002	63%	18%	37%	33%
Black Protestant				
July 2005	67%	28%	50%	33%
March 2002	59%	21%	n/a	n/a
Secular				
July 2005	49%	22%	42%	31%
March 2002	44%	25%	44%	34%

Source: Pew Research Center polls

The more education one has, the more favorable their opinion of Islam and Muslim-Americans.

In terms of religious affiliation, White Evangelicals had less favorable opinions about Muslim-

Americans and Islam than those of other religious affiliations polled.   For an example on how

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[82] *Ibid*, pp.51-52.

Christian religious attitudes can negatively impact Islamic schools, please see the attached addendum. The addendum is a letter that the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS) sent to the Dar-Ul-Arqam Islamic school after the school sought membership with TAPPS. The principal of this school forwarded the letter to the League.

Conclusion

The Islamic Schools League of America faces critical funding issues as their organization expands and they increase their services to Islamic schools. They are afraid to receive overseas funding for fear of being accused of supporting terrorism; Muslims in America are reluctant to support the League because of their own fears and attitudes about Islamic education. Non-Muslim organizations do not want to aid the League because of their own fears and prejudices. There seems to be nowhere for the League to turn. To my mind, the League's budget crises are too large to not take drastic measures. For example, their budget for 2006 was only about $45,000. This is not enough to cover the value of their sole salaried employee, let alone the projects that the League takes on. In addition, for the League to accomplish its increasing work load they need to hire more salaried employees who can devote more energy and resources to the League than they are currently able because the League Board members all have other, full-time jobs. Karen Keyworth feels that the time has come to abandon concerns and reservations about receiving funding from overseas. She says that their work with the Treasury Department on the National Council of American Muslim Nonprofits has shown her that the government is not concerned about money from overseas coming into the United States but rather money from the United States going overseas.[83] To my mind, Keyworth's suggestion of establishing a *waqf*, or an Islamic trust, with money from Saudi donations is the best plan for the League's future. As demonstrated by the fallout of the NCAMN, attempting to establish connections with the

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[83] Keyworth, Karen, Personal Interview, 20 April, 2007.

government is a dead-end road. Receiving more funding from American Muslims and non-Muslim organizations will take time as attitudes and perceptions grow and change. For these reasons, the League should work with those who do want to fund them. Keyworth says she is personally aware of many individuals overseas who are willing and able to donate to organizations like the League.[84]

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[84] *Ibid*.