

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Center for Islam in the Contemporary World
at Shenandoah University

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Leesburg, Virginia 20176

www.contemporaryislam.org

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Assalamu Alaykum!
Greetings of Peace.

When we entered 2020, little did we know the year would present unforeseen and unprecedented challenges. The institutions of higher education were tested more than most. Due to the nature of our activities, we are additionally burdened by not having in-person interactions. At Shenandoah University, we are blessed with visionary leadership. President Tracy Fitzsimmons was at the forefront among the educational institutions anticipating what the trends would be.

Following her lead, the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) at Shenandoah University took a proactive stance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, we initiated the first nation-wide survey on Muslim students in higher education. The survey highlighted the role of religion in coping with Covid-19. CICW started a book talk series online hosting several leading scholars, resulting in thousands of views on our YouTube channel.

The Center continued strong student support in 2020 by contributing to different scholarship programs. At Shenandoah University, we have partnered with the School of Education to provide ten scholarships for future school teachers, with half of those dedicated to minority students. A new initiative, in collaboration with Amana Mutual Fund, University Islamic Finance, Sterling Charitable and Islamic Scholarship Fund (ISF), provided Imam generational scholarships to the children of Imams and religious leaders, who are often underserved by their communities. On the twentieth anniversary of FAITH, a social work organization, we provided 20 scholarships to students in need.

One of the important characteristics of CICW is our deep connection with the Muslim community in the US and abroad. We see ourselves as a bridge between the academic world and the broader community, connecting academic knowledge with community development. To that end, we have developed a highly regarded teacher training program in prophetic pedagogy for Islamic school teachers. Likewise, we are collaborating with the International Interfaith Peace Corps to provide an Imam leadership training program.

With the Barzinji Project at Shenandoah University, we co-sponsored the Reflective Structured Dialogue workshop at the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Center also hosted public lectures, in-person before the pandemic, and online after the onset of Covid-19. The lecture topics included halal pharmaceuticals and faith-based wealth-building, among others.

Research is at the core of our academic activities. In 2020, we conducted several research projects: in-house, collaboratively, and by offering grants to researchers and institutions. We initiated two book projects on essential writings of two major contemporary Muslim scholars: Ismail al-Faruqi, Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman and others in English and Arabic languages. With the Institute for Islamic Tradition of the Bosniaks in Sarajevo, we are working on a book on the Bosnian Muslims' anti-fascist declarations during World War II. The Center has awarded 14 individual research grants in 2020 on a wide variety of topics, ranging from cultural productions of humor among Muslims to female scholarship and leadership in the Muslim community.

We anticipate a productive 2021, during which we hope to see many of our investments and efforts come to fruition. As always, we count on helpful and critical feedback on making CICW even better. We thank you for your enduring support.



With prayers for a safe and healthy post-Covid world,

Ermin Sinanović
Executive Director

CICW FINANCES FOR 2020

Revenues:
\$450,000
Expenses:
\$354,667

**Unaudited draft*



ABOUT CICW

The Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) was incorporated with the Commonwealth of Virginia in November of 2018. CICW is a non-profit, 501(c)(3), tax-exempt private operating foundation. In January of 2019, CICW signed an affiliation agreement with Shenandoah University, which outlined the relationship between the Center and the University. The University provides office space, access to library, and use of classrooms. The Center lends its expertise on contemporary Islam, organizes public lectures, facilitates curriculum development, and provides networking and outreach with global Muslim communities.

MISSION & VISION

At the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World, we:

- Engage in rigorous and innovative research, education, and outreach to advance a better understanding of Islam and Muslims in diverse, global, and contemporary contexts
- Facilitate collaborations between Shenandoah University and international universities
- Develop training programs for teachers and religious leaders in multi-faith contexts
- Host seminars and lectures on theological and cultural challenges facing Muslims today

CICW aspires to be known as a globally-recognized center for research and education leading to an enriched understanding of Islamic values and perspectives in a multi-faith world.

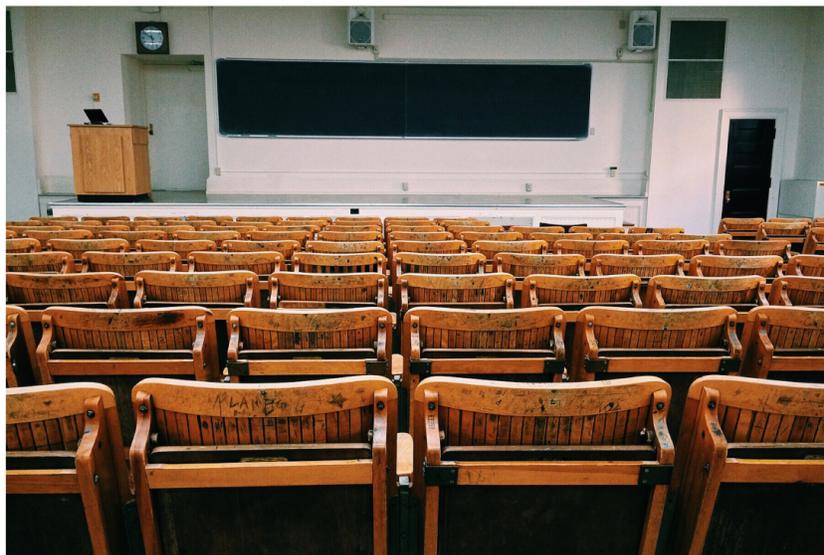
RESEARCH AT CICW

Research forms the core of CICW. It informs many areas of our activities including teaching and education, outreach, and publications. We host seminars and workshops, offer post-doctoral fellowships, and research grants.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, CICW conducted the first nation-wide survey of Muslim students in higher education to understand the impact of the pandemic on their lives. It was completed by 498 students from 32 U.S. states. The results revealed a high level of anxiety among students due to uncertainties surrounding the virus, especially among the graduating students. Students revealed an overall increase in religious practices and a reliance on religious and spiritual resources to cope with the stresses of the pandemic. The full study can be found at: [Covid-19 Survey](#).

Muslims Students and COVID-19: Understanding the Needs of Muslim Students within Higher Education

AMIR DURIC
ERMIN SINANOVIC
MIRJAKHON TURDIEV



IN COLLABORATION WITH



Muslim Student Life
Syracuse University



Anxiety levels increased by

60.41%



16% Students have health insurance through their institution of higher education

7% Students have no health insurance through their institution of higher education

47% Feel their ability negatively affected in applying for jobs and internships



68% Worried about the impact of COVID-19 on academic goals





RESEARCH GRANTS

Our research grant program continues to support diverse researchers in a variety of disciplines. In 2020, CICW awarded 14 research grants to both faculty and Ph.D. students. This year's grants were awarded under our "Islam on the Edges" and "Faith-Based Pedagogy" research programs.

Grants were awarded to a multitude of varying projects. The research projects included Muslim women religious scholars in the U.S., religious beliefs among Somali Bantu, Biblical turn in the study of the Qur'an, Islamic law in Nigeria, Muslim Prayer in American public life, Muslim women in Russia, cultural productions of humor among U.S. Muslims, along with many others.

Detailed information on the recipients and their research grants can be found: <https://www.contemporaryislam.org/2020-grant-recipients.html>

Congratulations to the 2020 Recipients of the Imam Generational Scholarship



Abdullah Aljabban
Psychology
Undergraduate



Anas Qatanani
MD
Graduate



Hafsah Kamal
Computer Science
Undergraduate



Lauren Schreiber
Islamic Chaplaincy
Graduate



Mamduda Zaman
Secondary Teaching of English
Graduate



Mariam Ewais
Biological Sciences
Undergraduate



Shaistah Din
Health, Society, and Policy
Undergraduate



Sara Abdelrahman
Nursing
Undergraduate



Mohamad Altabaa
Biochemistry
Undergraduate



Sumaya Uthmaan
Biochemistry
Undergraduate

Funded By



Advised By



For more information visit: myuif.com/imam-generational-scholarship/

SCHOLARSHIPS

The Center continued strong student support in 2020 by contributing to different scholarship programs. At Shenandoah University, we have partnered with the School of Education to provide ten Leadership Scholarships for future school teachers, with half of those dedicated to minority students.

The Leadership Scholarship will be awarded to a student admitted to any SU Bachelor of Education program in the School of Education. It will be dispersed as follows: \$2,000 in year one and \$1,000 in years two through four.

On the twentieth anniversary of FAITH, a social work organization, we provided 20 scholarships to students in need.

The Imam's Generational Scholarship is a new initiative in collaboration with Amana Mutual Fund, University Islamic Finance, Sterling Charitable and Islamic Scholarship Fund (ISF). This program granted scholarships to the children of Imams and religious leaders who are often underserved by their communities. This project offers a minimum of ten "Imam Generational Scholarships," \$5,000 each per year.



BOOK PROJECTS

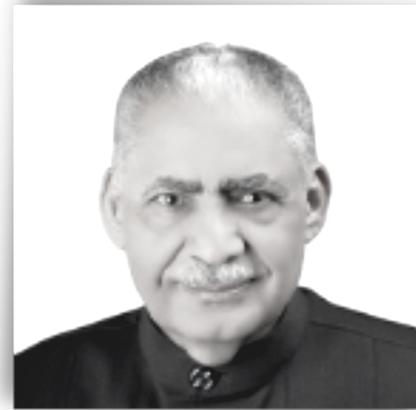
CICW committed resources to two books on major contemporary Muslim thinkers: Ismail al-Faruqi, Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman and others in English and Arabic languages. These two books are expected to be published in early 2021.

The Muslim Resolutions: Bosniak Response to World War Two Atrocities is a research book project in partnership with the Institute for Islamic Tradition of the Bosniaks in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The book will highlight the Muslim resolutions from the beginning of World War II. At this time, leading Muslim elites in Bosnia raised their voices against the Nazi occupation and the mistreatment of various ethnic groups. The anticipated release of this book is mid-2021.

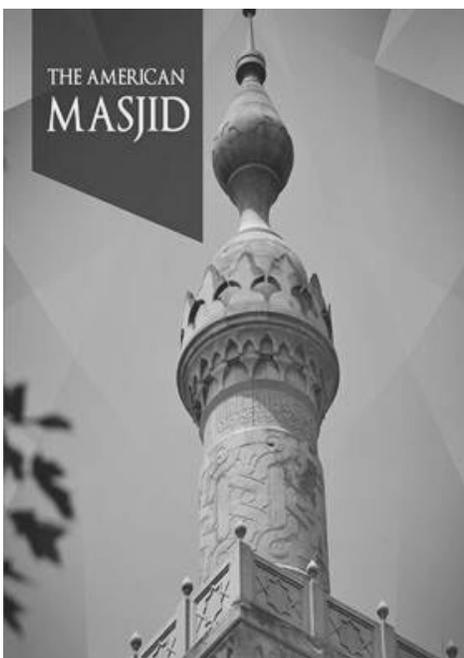
Further researching prophetic pedagogy, CICW has collaborated with the University of Islamic Sciences Malaysia (USIM).



Dr. Ismail al Faruqi

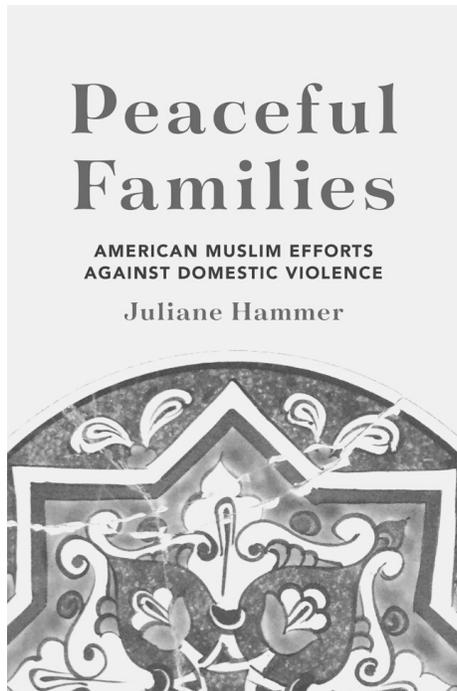


Dr. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman



"AMERICAN MASJID" BOOK

The Center supported the publication of "American Masjid", a book by Riad Ali. The book is a panoramic view of the mosques in America, with beautiful photography and accompanying explanations. CICW distributed the book to one hundred mosques across the US and fifty university libraries.



BOOK TALK SERIES

With the onset of the COVID pandemic, CICW launched an online book series. The Center hosted eight book talks by a diverse group of academics and community leaders. The topics included modern Muslim theology, gendered morality, Islam in Asia, and peaceful families, among others. These talks were viewed close to 4,000 times on CICW's dedicated YouTube channel!

Access the book talk series at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7fb64YTkfFCHTj9FLtcTFQ>

LECTURES

On February 20, 2020, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohamad Haniki Nik Mohamed of the International Islamic University Malaysia delivered a lecture titled "Pharmaceutical Care for Muslim Patients," at the Bernard J. Dunn School of Pharmacy, Shenandoah University. Dr. Mohamed's lecture was attended by 40 students and faculty alongside 20 others who joined virtually from the Fairfax Campus of Shenandoah University.

Dr. Yaqub Mirza, a CICW Trustee, delivered multiple lectures on Islamic faith-based wealth-building to audiences in Malaysia, Pakistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the United States.



IMAM TRAINING PROGRAM

DECEMBER 2020

Interfaith and Civic Engagement for American Imams: Professional Development Workshop

The International Interfaith Peace Corps (IIPC), and the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) at Shenandoah University, organized a two-day workshop to formally introduce the “Leadership Capacity Development Learning Exchange” series. This launched a discussion on the interfaith and civic engagement framework proposed by Imam Mohamed Magid and Dr. Imrana Umar. Over the course of the two-day pilot program, 15 imams were trained. Participants engaged in collectively defining and establishing a final framework to serve as a guide for Inter-Multifaith Engagement, Civic Engagement, and Social Activism in America. Fifteen religious leaders from different backgrounds representing various organizations from across the United States were in attendance for the two-day program.



BARZINJI PROJECT

CICW contributed to the Reflective Structured Dialogue workshop at the University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina from February 24-25, 2020. In attendance were faculty and students from the University of Sarajevo, Shenandoah University, and the International Islamic University Malaysia. The Barzinji Project at Shenandoah University in collaborative partnership with CICW organized this workshop.





PROPHETIC PEDAGOGY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

The Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) partnered with the Council of Islamic Schools in North America (CISNA) to offer the Prophetic Pedagogy Professional Development Workshop series. The workshop series was completely virtual! In attendance were educators from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Syria, Kosovo, Malaysia, India, and Australia. The series integrates the impressive teaching style of Prophet Muhammad, as found in the Quran and Sunnah, with contemporary research on teaching and learning in Islamic schools.

Educators had the unique opportunity to learn, plan, engage, and collaborate with peers from around the world. Prophetic pedagogies offered in this series included questioning in the Qur'an and Sunnah, the power of Halaqas, storytelling as a teaching tool, apprenticeship, repetition as renewal, Imam Ghazali's guidance for teachers, among others.

We hope the series will transform teaching and learning practices of Islamic School educators by way of applying the Prophet Muhammad's approach to instruction, addressing the current social and emotional needs of Muslim students, and best practices to influence curriculum according to an Islamic paradigm.

M. YAQUB MIRZA, PH.D., PRESIDENT & TRUSTEE

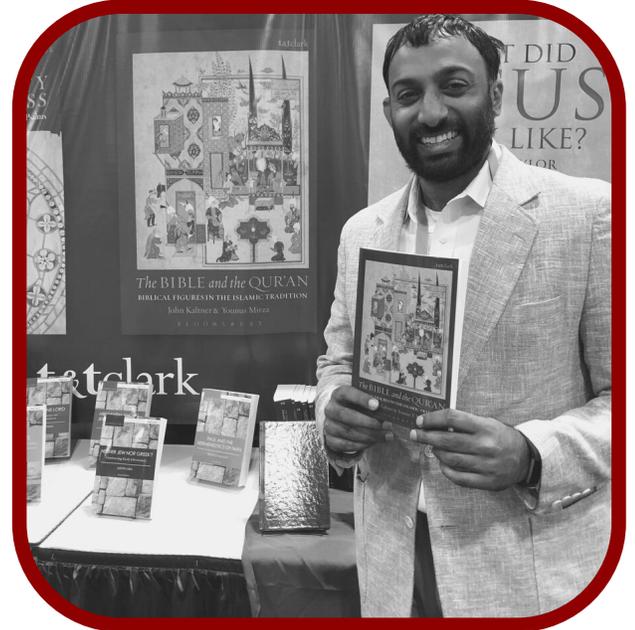
Dr. Yaqub Mirza delivered multiple lectures on Islamic faith-based wealth-building to audiences in Malaysia, Pakistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the United States. Dr. Mirza spoke at Shenandoah University's School of Education and Leadership 2020 Graduation. Last December he addressed the North American Imam Federation (NAIF) at their annual meeting, *Navigating through COVID-19 & Beyond as Imams*, on the topic "Economic Crises and Solution".

ERMIN SINANOVIĆ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ermin Sinanović authored several blog posts, including for the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs at Georgetown University, Al Jazeera English, Muslim Matters, and Al Jazeera Balkans. The topics included genocide denial, the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the Montenegro elections, and elections in America. He was interviewed for *Status Hour*, where he spoke on CICW's research program, Islam on the Edges, and for Turkish Anadolu Agency, where he spoke on the Srebrenica genocide. Sinanović presented a paper at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) Annual Conference on *Islam in Indonesia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*.

YOUNUS MIRZA, PH.D.

Dr. Younus Mirza continued directing the Barzinji Project for International Collaboration at Shenandoah University, where he also taught courses on various aspects of Islam. He wrote several blog posts for Islamic Law Blog, the Maydan, and taught an interfaith course for the Interfaith Youth Core. Dr. Mirza presented academic papers at the annual conference of the American Academy of Religion (AAR).



EXECUTIVE BOARD PROJECTS

REHENUMA ASMI, PH.D. AMAARAH DECUIR, ED.D.

The Education Committee of CICW headed by Drs. Rehenuma Asmi and Amaarah DeCuir, produced a professional development program for Muslim school educators titled *Prophetic Pedagogy*. This 10-part series examined teaching practices of Prophet Muhammad and envisioned the contemporary applications to 21st century Muslim schools. Drawing from the Quran, Sunnah, and the writings of Muslim scholars we made meaningful connections to modern research on teaching, learning, and child development. The professional development strategies reflected the needs and priorities of Muslim students in Western societies and addressed the instructional guidance needed for educators in Muslim schools. The Prophetic Pedagogy concept was founded and co-facilitated by Sheikh Abdalla Idris Ali and conducted in collaboration with the Council of Islamic Schools in North America (CISNA).

The Education Committee of CICW continues to collaborate with a multi-faith scholarly research team to conceptualize a faith-honoring pedagogy that makes students' faith commitments visible in their classroom experiences. This research team is led by Dr. Jill Lindsey, Associate Provost at Shenandoah University, and also includes Dr. Erica Brown, Associate Professor at The George Washington University, and Dr. Doug Stump, Assistant Professor at St. Bonaventure University. The team prepared a manuscript for publication that defines faith-honoring pedagogies as a set of teaching and learning practices that honor the diversity of students' faith-based worldviews and lived experiences. Their work seeks to disrupt the typical classroom settings that make students' faith commitments invisible, and offers strategies for teachers to uphold faith-honoring practices in pluralistic settings. The research team is funded through a grant from CICW.



2020 IN NUMBERS



17

Number of research grants awarded



>\$50K

CICW gave more than 50 thousand dollars in research grants

\$70K IN SCHOLARSHIPS

We awarded 70 thousand dollars in scholarships to students in need, children of Imams and religious leaders, and to Shenandoah University's School of Education

>400 STUDENTS SURVEYED



First nation-wide survey of Muslim students during COVID-19

>100 TEACHERS TRAINED



Our unique Prophetic Pedagogy workshops trained more than one hundred teachers in Islamic schools

>15 IMAMS TRAINED



Established a framework to serve as a guide for Inter-Multifaith Engagement, Civic Engagement, and Social Activism



8

Authors interviewed in our Book Talk Series



~4000 VIEWS



AND THERE'S MORE TO COME!!!



CICW'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES & EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The board of trustees is responsible for governing and overseeing the Center's strategic direction, as well as oversight of its financial resources. Trustees raise and contribute funds to the Center.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Chairman
Member of Parliament, Port Dickson, Malaysia
President, People's Justice Party, Malaysia

M. Yaqub Mirza, Ph.D., President
CEO, Sterling Management Group, Inc.
Trustee & Chairman, Amana Mutual Funds Trust

Firas Barzinji, Esq., Secretary
General Counsel, Sterling Management Group, Inc.

Ayman AbuSulayman, Treasurer
Sterling Management Group, Inc.

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Rehenuma Asmi, Ph.D.

Amaarah DeCuir, Ed.D.

Younus Mirza, Ph.D.