

From: Khadija Mustata

Daisy/Imam Feisal,

Thank you for the wonderful experience over the weekend. It was an opportunity that really allowed me to take a step back from the daily grind and was particularly nice to connect with such a diverse and intelligent group of people that I did not even know were out there...

Enjoy the holidays.
Khadija

From: Samina Ali

As-salam-alai-kum Daisy and Imam Feisal:

Thank you so much for taking the time and effort to bring together so many brilliant Muslim leaders at the amazing Garrison Institute. I cannot tell you how blessed I feel to have attended the conference, to have been included in such a dynamic way, and to have met you both.

You two are truly beacons of light and to be in your presence is inspiration itself; to pray with you leading us, Imam, sent shivers through my body and a quiet light that connected us all. Thank you on the behalf of all of us in my generation for being the true leaders.

Many many blessings and prayers to you both for continued good health, joy, and peace.

In gratitude,
Samina

From: Samina Ali

Dear All:

I cannot tell you how very honored I am to be included in this conference. I pray that I shall bring light.

My quote:

Long before 9.11 happened and Muslims were brought to the forefront of American eyes, I had been on a personal mission to bring knowledge about Islam to the Western eye, to battle against the stereotypes and injustices in media as best as I could. One avenue of expression God opened up to me is my novel, which chronicles a Muslim woman's journey to self-possession and liberation, which comes to her as a direct result of her gaining a better understanding of Islam. However, this battle to bring light into areas of darkness is not a battle one can wage by oneself. The MLT conference is deeply significant because it is bringing together American Muslims from all walks of life and providing a safe place for stimulating discussion and a sharing of valuable ideas. We need each other, our combined strengths and weaknesses, our combined efforts, our combined hopes and ideals and even our combined fears, each of us a cog in this wheel of light. I pray this conference shall be a place where we all unite to create alchemy.

--- Samina Ali

From: Samina Ali

As Salamu Alaykum Daisy:

I pray that you and Imam Feisal and your family are doing well...

The photos you sent are wonderful -- wow, what a fabulous cake! You are really quite an incredible visionary.

"What change did the MLT weekend inspire in your personal and/or professional life?"

I am not overstating when I saw that the MLT retreat felt like a culmination of years' worth of effort. I have been working in isolation for close to ten years in writing about Islam and Muslims, whether in essays that were published in college readers or anthologies or by writing the novel. My goal has always been to try to expose Islam to the Western eye, especially since there is so much stereotyping and acceptable demonization. I began this process long before 9.11. After that terrible event, Muslims suddenly came into the center of attention for the entire world. But there is still so much said and believed about Muslims and Islam that is untrue and misconstrued. In a recent national poll conducted by Cornell University, 44 percent of Americans queried favor curtailing some civil liberties for Muslim Americans -- that is nearly half the population! What is happening to the face of Islam, from both within and without? What can be done to bridge this ever-widening gap? Indeed, in that same study, 65 percent of those queried believe that Islam encourages violence more than any other religion; 40 percent said that Muslims need to register their whereabouts; 34 percent agreed that mosques should be monitored; and, finally, 80 percent believe Islamic countries are oppressive toward women. As a Muslim American woman, I am continuing my jihad to help build connections between the Muslim and American worlds. This conference and its attendees gave me the strength to know that there are many others like me and that each of us, when brought together, can create a blaze that will help purify relations between Muslims and non-Muslim and between Muslims and Muslims. That is my prayer, my intention, my hope, and the retreat emboldened me, strengthened me, widened my eyes. Imam Feisal and Daisy are the bookends that shall keep the rest of us standing straight.

Much love to you both, devotion & prayers

Samina

From: Shahnaz Habib

Wa Alaikum Assalam,

Thank you very much for this letter and the lovely photos that brought back so many good memories. In my personal and professional life, I meet so few Muslims and so your mail was good to read.

You asked about changes inspired by the MLT weekend. I want to tell you that the MLT weekend made me realize that I have a deep curiosity about religion, a curiosity that is academic as well as spiritual at the same time and I have decided to apply for a Ph.D in Comparative Religion. I also feel hopeful that I will be able to combine this education with my current training in media theory and production by becoming a writer and documentary maker specializing in covering religion. Since MLT, I have felt very excited that my role in life has somehow become clearer. Anyways...

Warm wishes to you, Imam Feisal and the rest of the ASMA team,

Shahnaz Habib

From: Ani

Dear Daisy,

I just want to write to thank you for organising such a marvelous event this pass weekend. I found the environment most invigorating and am really glad to have been a part of it...

Thank you for contributing so much to our Ummah.

My warmest Salam to you and to Imam Feisal.

Ani

From: Cyrus Copeland

Hi Daisy,

A quick thank you — and a big congratulations for pulling off such a wonderful event. As a writer, I'm constantly tempted to succumb to a loneliness that comes with the profession, a belief that we are all in our own pods churning out our own version of reality. But this past weekend was a reminder that the search for common ground is much more fruitful and fulfilling than those things which divide us. Never did I think I'd find so many like-minded people who shared my progressive views on Islam. Thank you! And continued good luck and fortune to you and your husband.

Kind Regards and Happy Thanksgiving!

Cyrus