

Thank CBMC  
Bissmillah.....AA,Shalom, Peaceupon.....

It is great to have all the well wishers who have made it here at the ISB, to celebrate our Independence day. I would like to recognize some of these special friends, who have taken a valuable time out to be with us. We have.....  
Congressman John Sarbanes, Councilman.....  
have had a pre commitment to four other events taking place today.

ISB is one of the largest American Muslim Community Center in the Baltimore/DC area serving all including fellow Americans who are non Muslims. One of its missions is to educate fellow citizens to achieve peace and harmony amongst all.

Remember this day in 1776, independence was declared. Independence from whom? and from what? Of course it was from a Super power Great Briton, and for liberty from its heavy handedness in depriving it to its colonial citizens.

Adlai Stevenson has appropriately said” America is much more than a Geographical fact. It is a political and a moral fact. It is the first community in which men set out in principle to institutionalize Freedom, Responsible Government and Human equality”. Of course there are challenges to achieve the Human equality. A short lesson in history, from the perspective of American Muslims, is appropriate today to show how these citizens have had a stake in our America, since way before July 1776.

- 1178 A Chinese record known as Sung Document mentions the voyage of Muslim Sailors to a land known as Mu-Lan-Pi, interpreted as America.
- 1310 Abu Bakr, a Muslim king of the Malian Empire, spearheads a series of sea voyages to the New World.
- 1312 African Muslims from Mali and West Africa, arrive in the Gulf of Mexico and explore the interior using the Mississippi River as their access.
- 1527 Istafan (Estevanico), an Arab from Azamor, Morrocco, was a guide for the Spanish, lands in Florida with the ill fated expedition of Panfilo de Narvaez. He ultimately settles in 1539 in what we call today, Arizona.
- 1530's 10 million African slaves were uprooted from West Africa. 30% were Muslims who became the back bone of American economy.
- 1732 Ayub Sulaiman ibn Diallo , a Muslim slave in Maryland, is set free by James Oglethorpe, founder of Georgia.
- 1765 Thomas Jefferson obtains a copy of the Quran while studying law.
- 1776 John Adams publishes “Thoughts on Government” in which he praises Prophet Muhammad, as a “sober inquirer after truth”.

There is a lot more about Muslims in America since 1776. Anyone is welcomed to visit Wikipedia, the encyclopedia, to learn more. The only tragedy has been that the Brits alongwith many Protestants spread fear about Muslims and the Ottoman Empire from the very birth of our nation. It was only in 1952 that our government recognized Islam as a legitimate religion, because many Muslims serving in the Army, ( some had served in the civil war too), wanted the right to be identified as Muslims. Today we, as American Muslims, have the challenge to define ourselves, as to who we are, and not let others mis-represent us.

It is our duty to remind everyone that America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, the courage to declare "...that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty & the pursuit of Happiness....".

Our dear brothers and sisters Thank God The Almighty and go forth in this land of the free. William Faulkner said' " We must be free, not because we claim freedom, but because we practice it. It is Liberty and Justice for All.  
Freedom is a chance to be better.

God bless you all and may God bless America.

Muhammad Jameel  
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