

How it All Began
The Making of MPAC-WNY
Brief Historic Perspectives by Khalid J. Qazi

MPAC-WNY was established in Buffalo, NY, in May 2004. The following is a summary of the decision process and the inauguration of the organization in Western New York. Before that, the New York State Chapter of the American Muslim Council (AMC-NY) was headquartered in Buffalo.

Here, we have reproduced original minutes, proceedings, and media reports from my archives for your information and reading pleasure. The seeds for the formation of MPAC-WNY were planted during the annual meeting of the AMC-NY in October 2003 followed by an appeal to the Muslim Community of our region. We start the historical perspectives with that appeal.

A Letter to the Community

March 14, 2004

An Appeal
"Charting Future Course Together"

As we discussed at length and as decided by you at our annual meeting on October 19, 2003, the AMC-WNY Board pursued the option of exploring the potential for AMC-WNY to merge with one of the three national organizations; namely the American Muslim Alliance (AMA), Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) or the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC).

A 4-member task force of AMC-WNY Board, comprised of Amanda Ahmed (Coordinator), Joseph Abdallah, Bayram Arman, and Zaid Islam evaluated these three organizations and physically visited California for this purpose. A research-oriented process and a sophisticated point score system were used for the assessment of these organizations.

At our Board meeting earlier this month, the task force unanimously made its recommendation to the Board to merge with MPAC. The final decision, however, lies in your hand.

The Board is planning to present the recommendation to the community on

Sunday, March 21, 2004, at 10 AM at the Yemenite Benevolent Association Hall at 109 Ridge Road in Lackawanna, NY. The entire Muslim Community in Western New York is invited to attend this important meeting so that we can move forward together with this critical decision. Since the decision will impact the entire community, the AMC-WNY Board strongly feels that the entire community should deliberate on this issue and make comments and opinions known at the public forum on March 21st. Your presence at this important meeting, therefore, is crucial and highly recommended.

All the members of the task force will be available to answer your question(s) and explain the reason(s) for their recommendation. You can bring a perspective that, Insha-Allah, will add to the discussion and lead to a sound decision for our community. This is a special plea for you and your spouse to attend this crucial meeting. We will have a light breakfast at the meeting for you.

After you make the decision for the future of your organization on March 21 we will, Insha-Allah, embark on a marketing plan that will preserve (in fact, enhance) the good will we have been able to create in the community. This campaign will start with our Annual Banquet set for May 22, 2004.

Please mark your calendar now so that you are able to join this premier Muslim event of Western New York.

Looking forward to your participation at the March 21st meeting. Meanwhile should you have any comment or question, please do not hesitate to call me any time at (716) 683-1840. Shukran



Khalid J. Qazi
President, AMC-WNY
NY State Coordinator

AMERICAN MUSLIM COUNCIL -- NEW YORK STATE CHAPTER

PRESS RELEASE

March 18, 2004

AMC-WNY: Charting the Future Course
What: Special Membership Meeting

When: Sunday, March 21, 2004
Time: 10:00 AM (Starting with breakfast)
Where: Yemenite Hall, 109 Ridge Road, Lackawanna, NY

Reason: To decide and finalize the future course of AMC-WNY. The findings and recommendations of a 4-member Task Force established for this purpose will be presented along with the recommendations of the Executive Board to the general membership for their consideration. Members of the task force will elaborate on their review process and will be present to answer questions from the audience. The decision will change the future course of the organization.

For further information, contact:

Amanda Ahmed
(716) 308-2162

Khalid J. Qazi
(716) 683-1840

AMERICAN MUSLIM COUNCIL-WESTERN NEW YORK CHAPTER

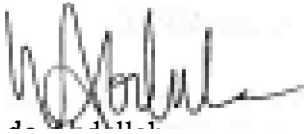
TITLE: *A Special General Body Meeting & Special Community Forum
"Chartering the Future Course Together"*
PLACE: Yemenite Benevolent Association Hall, 109 Ridge Road, Lackawanna, NY
DATE: March 21, 2004
TIME: 10:00 AM

AGENDA:

1. Introduction by Dr. Khalid J. Qazi, President of AMC-WNY
 - Review of current status of AMC National and AMC-WNY Chapter
 - Discussion of decisions made at the last general body meeting regarding the future of AMC-WNY
 - Introduction of four-member Task Force: Joseph Abdallah, VP AMC-WNY, Amanda Ahmed, VP AMC-WNY, Bayram Arman, Treasurer, AMC-WNY, and Zaid Islam, Member at Large, AMC-WNY
 - Introduction of Amanda Ahmed as Task Force Coordinator

2. Presentation of Task Force operations and findings by Amanda Ahmed

- Presentation of evaluation criteria and performance rates (scoring and point system) used by Task Force members
 - Presentation of Task Force final report to the general body
 - Question/Answer time with Task Force members
3. General body to vote on recommendations proposed by the Task Force
 4. Future course of action, by Dr. Khalid J. Qazi



Wedade Abdallah
Secretary
AMC-WNY

**Minutes of the AMC-WNY Special General Meeting
March 21, 2004
109 Ridge Road, Lackawanna, NY**

The meeting started at 10:30 AM following a breakfast at 10 AM. The attendance sheet of the participants is part of these minutes. Copy of agenda and the report of the Task Force were distributed to all the community members and media in attendance to report on the future of AMC-WNY.

The President, Khalid J. Qazi, conducted the meeting. The meeting started with the recitation of The Holy Quran. The President then explained the following to the General Body:

First, he explained the reasons for the special meeting and briefly reviewed the decision of the membership at the annual meeting on 10-19-2003. He mentioned that the process for re-affiliation started last year when AMC and AMA (American Muslim Alliance) decided to merge and did not consult with AMC-WNY or any other chapter. National AMC became dysfunctional as the founding member of AMC was arrested for allegedly acting o/b/o a foreign government without registration. AMA Board at that point withdrew their merger request with AMC. This led to huge problems for AMC and left

AMC-WNY in a lurch. At our annual meeting, the membership asked the AMC-WNY Board to explore the option of joining one of three alternate national organizations (AMA, CAIR, or MPAC).

He explained that the AMC-WNY Board appointed a Task Force (TF) to explore the option. The TF presented its recommendation to affiliate with MPAC which was unanimously adopted by the Board at our Board meeting last month. The General Body must now decide regarding this recommendation. Throughout this process, the General Body was kept abreast of developments and progress leading up to today's event through regular newsletters. He also mentioned that some other AMC chapters met in Chicago to decide on the revival of AMC but AMC-WNY chose not to participate.

Therefore, we are now attempting to align with an organization committed to the same kind of mission and work as we are. Dr. Qazi then introduced the Task Force members: Amanda Ahmed (Coordinator), Joseph Abdallah, Bayram Arman, and Zaid Islam.



Task Force Members Joseph Abdallah



Bayram Arman



Amanda Ahmed (Coordinator)



Zaid B. Islam

Amanda Ahmed, as the coordinator, presented a formal report of the TF, a copy of which was provided to all the participants at the General Body (the report is part of these minutes). She explained the grading system used by the TF and reviewed the three organizations investigated by the Task Force i.e. AMA, CAIR, and MPAC.

After reviewing the grades received by AMA, CAIR and MPAC, Amanda Ahmed then explained why the TF had unanimously recommended for AMC-WNY to affiliate with MPAC. The other members of the TF also made comments as needed at various stages of the discussion. There was active participation of the members who asked several questions about the research and evaluation presented by the TF.

General Body raised questions about where funding and dues will be sent in the event of change. Dr. Qazi explained that we would ask MPAC to grandfather our current members so that they do not have to pay dues again. He also highlighted that all our funds were raised locally.

At this time Syed S. Jaffri made a motion to leave AMC and join MPAC as recommended by the TF and the Board; Fayyaz Hussain seconded the motion. The General Body then inquired about what would happen if we passed this motion. Dr. Qazi explains that it will formally and legally sever our relationship with AMC and negotiations with MPAC will begin on the new affiliation process.

The motion was carried with 32 votes for the motion, 0 against while 5 abstained.

Dr. Syed Jaffri then made a second motion to ask the current AMC-WNY Board to continue; the motion was seconded by Umair Ahmed

Fayyaz Hussain moved to amend the motion to make it an interim board only up to December 2004. Ahmed Jamil seconded this amendment. After a brief discussion, the amendment was voted upon. It received 7 in favor and 20 against. The amendment was defeated.

Subsequently, Joseph Abdallah made an amendment to amend the original motion so that the current board would follow through until the merger is complete but none seconded the motion so he withdrew the amendment.

Margaret Gillette made an amendment to the motion that the current AMC-WNY Board serve the full term they have been elected for (Oct 2003-2005). This was seconded by

Syedda Siddiqui, Syed Jaffri and Umair Ahmed accepted the friendly amendment. After discussion 23 members voted for the motion, 1 against and with one abstention.

Subsequently, the members discussed the official date for the new affiliation and the process for transition. It was agreed that the official launch date of the chapter would be best left for May 22, 2004, at the annual banquet. The President will negotiate these issues with MPAC's transition team. The meeting ended with Dua at 12 noon

Respectfully submitted:



de Abdallah

Wedade Abdallah
Secretary (AMC-WNY Executive Board)

**MPAC-WNY Formation Announced
in Buffalo News 22 March 2004**

RELIGION

Muslim group switches affiliation

By JAY TOKASZ
News Staff Reporter

Six years ago, a small group of Muslim leaders launched an organization that soon became the voice of many Muslims in Western New York.

For Muslims, the organization known as the American Muslim Council, Western New York chapter, meant a sustained effort to develop cohesion and strength in numbers in their community.

For non-Muslims, the group was usually the first point of contact for a

Muslim perspective on issues such as the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the Lackawanna Six arrests.

Now, the area's largest organization of Muslims is undergoing the most significant transformation in its brief history.

Members of the group Sunday formally agreed to cut ties with one national Islamic group and affiliate with another.

The move will result in a name change for the local group, and members hope it will lead to a stronger voice for Muslims on both a local and national scale. They also hope the affiliation

will help enhance their organizational skills and lead to greater credibility in the community at large.

The local group has been in organizational limbo since the dissolution of the national American Muslim Council, which merged in July 2003 with another national group known as the American Muslim Alliance.

The events nationally upset many local chapters, and a task force since October has been studying whether Muslims here should affiliate with another national group or stay independent.

The task force recommended joining forces with the Muslim Public Af-

fairs Council, which currently has 12 chapters, mostly in the Midwest and on the West Coast.

The national group dubs itself "The Progressive Voice for American Muslims" and is an active Washington, D.C., lobby group.

At a special meeting in the Yemenite Hall on Ridge Road in Lackawanna, about 40 members of the local organization approved the recommendation. The new affiliation likely will be finalized over the next few months.

The current board of directors of

See Muslims Page B8

Muslims: No foreign funds allowed

Continued from Page B1

the local group want to be able to unveil all of the changes in May at the group's annual banquet, which typically draws hundreds of area Muslims.

"We will attempt to move in a quick fashion," said Dr. Khalid J. Qazi, president of the group.

The task force studied possible affiliations with two other national groups, the American Muslim Alliance and the Council

on American-Islamic Relations, before determining that the Public Affairs Council provided the best fit.

Task force members met in January with Public Affairs Council leaders in Los Angeles and came away impressed by the national group's professionalism, the diversity of its leadership, its financial stability and its commitment to openness and accountability.

Local Muslim leaders also

stressed affiliating with a national group that accepted gifts only from donors in the United States, to avoid any appearance of foreign influence.

The national group has a policy prohibiting the acceptance of foreign funds.

"This is something we took very seriously. We talked about it over and over, at every meeting," said Joseph Abdallah, vice president of the local group.

e-mail: jtokasz@buffnews.com

SIGNED STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD DECLARING AFFILIATION WITH MPAC

**MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL
OF
WESTRN NEW YORK**
6343 Transit Road, Depew, NY 14043. Phone (716) 683-1840 Fax (716) 683-1843

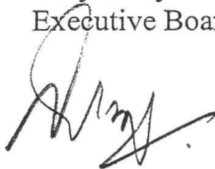
To Whom It May Concern:

As decided by the Executive Board and the membership effective May 22, 2004, the Western New York Chapter of the American Muslim Council (AMC-WNY) will affiliate with *The Muslim Public affairs Council and will be known as Muslim Public Affairs Council of Western New York (MPAC-WNY).*

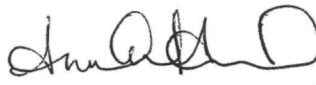
We would appreciate if you would update your records to reflect this change. Our address will continue to be 6343 Transit Road, Depew, NY 14043; our phone no. (716) 683-1840 and fax no. (716) 683-1843.

Thank for your time and consideration.

Very Truly Yours
Executive Board MPAC-WNY



Khalid J. Qazi
President



Amanda Ahmed
1st Vice-President



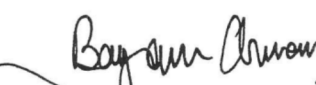
Joseph Abdallah
2nd Vice-President



Zaid Islam
3rd Vice-President



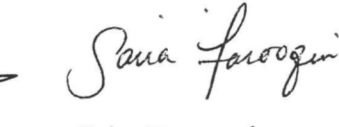
Wedade Abdallah
Secretary




Bayram Arman
Treasurer



Sadeq Ahmed
Member



Saira Farooqui
Member



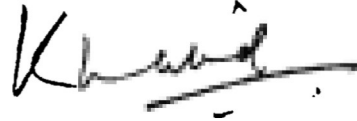
Nadeem Haq
Member



Naseem Malik
Member

AMERICAN MUSLIM COUNCIL
WESTERN NEW YORK CHAPTER

To: Members of AMC-WNY and Western New York Muslim Community
From: Khalid J. Qazi, President, AMC-WNY
Date: March 26, 2004



March 21, 2004 was a special day for the Muslims of Western New York. We charted a new course and a new direction for our community. On this historic day you decided to establish a formal affiliation with the Muslim Public Affairs Council, affectionately known as MPAC, and sever our ties with the American Muslim Council. To recap the events that led to this affiliation, let me take you back to last year. On July 17, 2003 American Muslim Council (AMC) announced its merger with the American Muslim Alliance (AMA) to form one national organization. This decision had been taken without the counsel or the knowledge of its chapters including AMC-WNY. Several conversations with the national leadership led us to believe that the organization was facing several problems and that AMA had withdrawn from the merger soon after the announcement. AMC at the national level had become dysfunctional and did not even attempt to follow its mission and objectives. In months following, it became clear that AMC had lost its standing and was becoming a liability for us. At the annual meeting of AMC-WNY on October 19, 2003, you charged the Executive Board of AMC-WNY with the task of evaluating and recommending merger with one of the three national organizations, namely American Muslim Alliance (AMA), Council on American-Islamic Affairs (CAIR) or Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC).

The Board of AMC-WNY established a Task Force (TF) of four Board members to evaluate and recommend a course of action to the Board. The members of this TF are: Amanda Ahmed (Coordinator), Joseph Abdallah, Bayram Arman and Zaid Islam. The TF researched the three organizations and contacted each one of them. Unfortunately, the TF had unsatisfactory response on several occasions from CAIR. Attempts by the TF and the President of AMC-WNY to establish a credible method that would satisfy our evaluation process did not materialize and, hence, that option was not pursued by the TF.

Contacts with AMA and MPAC led to a visit by the TF to California to meet the two respective Boards and visited the headquarters of both the organizations. The TF undertook the three day visit in January 2004 and presented its recommendation to the AMC-WNY Board in our monthly meeting of February 2004. The TF made its recommendation on the basis of evaluating the organizations in nine different categories.

Each category was scored and graded as NA (not applicable), U (unsatisfactory), P (pass), P+ (pass plus) and HP (high pass). Should you desire to review the complete evaluation instrument, please do not hesitate to contact the coordinator of the TF, Amanda Ahmed (phone: 716-836-5288).

The TF unanimously recommended that we affiliate with MPAC. This was based on the very high grade received by MPAC from all the members of the TF. The AMCWNY Board unanimously accepted this recommendation and presented the same before you on March 21 for your consideration.

I am delighted to report to you that the general membership and the community debated this issue in a thorough and professional manner with attention to the detail. The members adopted a resolution severing our ties with AMC and approving our affiliation with MPAC. I am grateful to all the community members who attended the meeting and engaged in a serious discussion. We owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the TF who did an excellent job in making their recommendation after a thorough evaluation and research. I am personally grateful to them for a job very well done.

Our next step will be to work with MPAC to establish a seamless transition into the new organization. We are planning to formally launch this affiliation and unveil the logo of MPAC at our 5th annual banquet set for May 22nd. The Executive Director of MPAC, Salam Al-Marayati, has agreed to be our key note speaker at the banquet. MPAC Board is as excited as we are in forging a new direction for the Muslims of Western New York. Lot of details need to be worked out between now and the banquet. We will be looking forward to your active participation and cooperation in this process.

Congratulations to you on this historic decision. I know we will move forwards in a more productive fashion for the benefit of the entire community. Looking forward to greet you at our banquet. Meanwhile should you have any comment or question, please do not hesitate to call me at (716) 683-1840 at your convenience.

With warm personal regards and best wishes. Wasalam

Buffalo News Article on MPAC-WNY: Sunday, May 23, 2004

Muslim group gets new name and direction

BY JAY REY NEWS STAFF REPORTER

The area's largest of Muslims celebrated Saturday, with a change in name and a more progressive direction.

The Muslim Public Affairs Council, formerly known as the American Muslim Council, Western New York chapter — officially embarked on a new path Saturday during the organization's fifth annual banquet, after recently switching affiliations.

Salam Al-Marayati, director and co-founder of the national organization, was the keynote speaker during the banquet in the Adam's Mark Hotel, where he welcomed the new Western New York chapter.

"We're part of America and we should show what we're about and what we have to offer as Americans," Al-Marayati said during an interview prior to the start of Saturday's program.

Part of the problem, he said, is that Muslims in the United States tend to be excluded from the political and decision-making process — obstacles the organization is working hard to overcome.

Al-Marayati, however, praised the local group — which has been at the forefront on issues such as the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and the Lackawanna Six arrests — for their efforts and involvement, calling Western New York's Islamic community one of the most successful in the nation.

"It's now synchronizing our efforts so it has more impact," Al-Marayati said. The local group had been in organizational limbo since the dissolution of the national American Muslim Council, which merged in July 2003 with another national group known as the American Muslim Alliance.

In March, the local members agreed to join with the Muslim Public Affairs Council which has 12 chapters, is an active Washington, D.C., lobby group and dubs itself "The Progressive Voice for Muslims."

Dr. Khalid J. Qazi, president of the local group, has stressed the importance of educating the larger Western New York Community about Islam while educating local Muslims about the importance of becoming more visible in government and political issues.

"It is a new beginning for us. . . . I truly am excited," he said, "because we now have leadership in the organization that will take us to the next level."

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**Inaugural Banquet & Unveiling MPAC Logo
May 22, 2004
Adam's Mark Hotel, Buffalo, New York**

Following is the President's Message in the Program Copy of the Inaugural Banquet:

Asalam-Alaikum (Peace be with you)

It is, indeed, a great honor and pleasure for me to welcome you to our fifth Banquet. This annual function has become the premier event hosted by the Muslims of Western New York.

Tonight, we are especially excited to embark on a historic journey as we affiliate with a truly vibrant and progressive Muslim Organization to become "The Muslim Public Affairs Council of Western New York". Henceforth, we shall be known as MPAC-WNY. Our membership took this decision on March 21, 2004

We will formally unveil the official logo tonight. As we embark on this progressive course, we will continue with building bridges of cooperation and understanding with all sections of our community.



Unveiling the MPAC LOGO at the Inaugural Banquet (May 22, 2004)

Special thanks to our supporters and sponsors. Without their commitment and contributions, we could not and cannot sustain our outreach programs.

And a special word for our members - our most valued asset. We continue to look to you for advice and guidance as we chart the new course.

God Bless You

Khalid J. Qazi
