

## National Shura and In-Service for Chaplains, Imams, and Other Service Providers to the Muslim Community

Shareda Hosein  
Brite Seminary

On Saturday, March 23, 2019, the 9th Annual Shura and In-Service for Chaplains, Imams, and Other Service Providers to the Muslim Community was held at Yale Divinity School in New Haven, CT. About 170 people attended. While chaplains, imams, community leaders, and advocates are the staple, this year the event also attracted a number of academics.

As in the previous years, the conference was organized by the Association of Muslim Chaplains (AMC) and the Islamic Seminary Foundation (ISF) DBA the Islamic Seminary of America (TISA) in cooperation with the Muslim Endorsement Council of Connecticut (MECC).

The goals of Shura 1440 were to convene the annual AMC meeting as well as the annual meeting and training for endorsees of MECC; provide practical, interactive in-service training for these three categories of people; to obtain feedback from interested stakeholders regarding curriculum development for these groups' effective education and training; and to provide informational updates on MECC and ISF developments.

This year's theme, "Protecting the Heart: Islam and Cross-Cultural Competency," featured authors, academics, advocates, supporters, chaplains, and imams, all of whom spoke on the importance of recognizing and taking responsibility for our own unconscious prejudices that, when taken as a whole, is a disease that fragments society. Islam sets a precedent for recognizing and abolishing such attitudes in ourselves and in society, while cross-cultural competency teaches us how to interact effectively with the other.

The day started with an opening du'a from CAIR national co-chair attorney Roula Allouch and a Qur'an recitation by Chaplain Mustafa Boz, followed by welcome remarks from the host organizations representatives – AMC president Imam Dr. Salahuddin Muhammad, Chaplain Sharif Rosen, MECC board member and co-treasurer Imam Kashif Abdul-Karim, and TISA president Dr. Ihsan Bagby. Rev. Dr. Ronald C. Oliver, president of the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), and Chaplain Jawad Bayat, representing the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), also made remarks.

An exciting new element was added – an interactive plenary session at the beginning of the day that focused on “Muslim American Intergroup and Intragroup Prejudice in the African American, Arab, and South Asian Communities.” Panel presenters included Dr. Ihsan Bagby, Attorney Roula Allouch, and Dr. Zahid Bukhari. Dr. James Jones moderated. Participants were then divided into small facilitated groups in order to expand on the issues surrounding intergroup and intragroup prejudice. Findings were collected and will be sent to conference participants.

This was followed by two parallel sessions: Dr. Khadijah Matin’s “Cultural Competency: “We’re Only Midway in the Journey” and Chaplain Abdul-Rasheed Muhammed, Chaplain Mustafa Boz, and Imam Kashif Abdul-Karim’s “Endorsement of Muslim Chaplains in American Institutions” – with four tracks: “Meet the Authors”: Dr. Celene Ibrahim (One Nation, Indivisible), Dr. Saher Selod (Forever Suspect), and Dr. Reza Mansoor (Stigmatized); Imam Bilal Prather’s “Culturally Sensitive Models for Addiction Rehab and Prison Reentry”; Chaplain Nisa Muhammad and Chaplain Leenah Safi’s “Student Cross-Cultural Issues in Higher Education”; and Professor Lance Laird, Chaplain Samsiah Abdul Majid, and Chaplain Shareda Hosein’s.

The closing plenary session, Dr Rania Awaad, MD’s “Cross-Cultural Competency: The Way Forward,” expounded on the damaging effects of misdiagnosing clients when we bring our inherent biases into the therapy room. Many of these biases permeate our thought processes so deeply that we may be completely unaware of them. Dr. Awaad recommended taking the “Implicit Association test” offered on the Harvard University website, which reveals these unconscious biases. She further emphasized the importance of joining Islamic knowledge with therapeutic techniques when working with Muslim clients. Dr. Awaad is one of the editors of *Islamophobia and Psychiatry*, which addresses three related but distinct areas of interest: Islamophobia as a destructive force, Islam as a religion threatened by stigma and misinformation, and the novel intersection of these forces with the field of psychiatry.

AMC, ISF, and MECC thank everyone who participated in this year’s conference to make it a success.