ZAYTUNA COLLEGE

NEWSLETTER

summer
2018
I had the great honor of joining the Rev. Al Sharpton in the nationally televised memorial service for the young African American Muslim Stephon Clark, who was tragically killed by the police in Sacramento, California, and to lead his Janaza prayer. Finally, Shaykh Hamza Yusuf has represented Zaytuna at diverse forums, colloquia, and seminars—such as the Ethics and Religious Committee, the World Economic Forum, Liberal Education Among Abrahamic Religions, and the Alliance for Virtue under the auspices of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies.

Zaytuna College: Going Places

Imam Zaid Shakir
Board Member

Among the evidence indicating that Zaytuna is your Muslim college is the fact that the impact of Zaytuna’s faculty, students, and staff is not confined to the walls of this historic institution. Increasingly, we have been able to reach you directly through a wide variety of events and programs. For example, just three weeks ago, the president of the College, Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, gave the keynote address at the first annual Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA) Halal Festival. I also addressed the assembly.

Student Life Director Imam Dawood Yasin led a group of students on a service trip to Princeville, North Carolina, the first town in the United States to be incorporated by African Americans. They were there to assist residents in reconstruction efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew. Their efforts augmented and enhanced the work that Islamic Relief has been doing in the area. Other programs and events involving our faculty and staff include the Zaytuna in Your Community (ZIYC) initiative, under the direction of Seema Duhan. ZIYC continues to expand our reach. Over the course of the past two months alone, the provost of the College, Dr. Hatem Bazian, has done programs in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Chino Valley, California, while Dr. Abdullah Ali has been to Folsom and Santa Barbara, California, as well as Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. Dr. Ali Ataie has been to Modesto, California. Shaykh Faraz Khan has presented in Phoenix, Arizona, and Canton, Michigan. Imam Dawood Yasin has visited Salt Lake City, Utah, and Mahdy Amine has been to Modesto, California, as well as Miami, Florida.

In addition to these events, which involved the direct participation of our faculty and staff, we have been able to connect with large numbers of you via our live-stream programs. During the past month, we have been able to host and live-stream lectures by Dr. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, the renowned political philosopher Sir Roger Scruton, and our very own Dr. Ali Ataie. The former two lectures were enriched by lively discussions between our guests and our president, Shaykh Hamza Yusuf.

These are just a few examples of the kind of reach your support helps to facilitate. God willing, with your ongoing support, we will continue to go places, and Zaytuna will continue to provide education, insight, and direction for an audience far beyond the walls of our Berkeley home.
FROM BOYS and GIRLS to
MEN and WOMEN

DR. RANIA AWAAD
Faculty

One of the most enjoyable experiences for me, as a faculty member at Zaytuna College, is being blessed with the opportunity to witness the maturation of our students. Imagine seeing a recent high school graduate, unsure and a little confused, blossom into a focused and confident young man or woman. Imagine seeing someone who can barely read the Arabic script transform into an aspiring scholar capable of reading serious religious and literary texts in classical Arabic. Imagine someone who knows nothing of the legal rulings of the religion gaining a firm grasp of the rulings associated with the obligatory acts of worship, as well as an understanding of the most critical areas of interpersonal relations. Imagine a young woman with a dream of becoming a doctor scoring in the 97th percentile on the MCATs during her junior year at Zaytuna. These are the types of amazing transformations your support helps to foster.

Together, we can continue to build an institution that will be a source of pride, not just for ourselves and our current generation, but for generations to come. Having received my training and now teaching at Stanford University School of Medicine, I know what a world-class institution looks like. With your continued support, I am confident we can develop Zaytuna into such an institution. By the grace of God, I believe we have already started on that road.
A ZAYTUNA STUDENT’S REFLECTION ON GRADUATING

SCOTT DOOLIN
Alumnus, Class of 2018

My time at Zaytuna College has been without any doubt amongst the greatest blessings I have received. It is with great sadness, as well as with great appreciation, that I prepare to graduate. While I intend to stay within this community and continue my studies here, this time serves as a benchmark by which I can measure the extent to which Zaytuna has, by the grace of God, affected my life. And I can say with all sincerity that this effect has been immense. My education at Zaytuna has begun to ground me both intellectually and spiritually, and more than almost anything else, has made me who I am right now. I still have much work ahead of me, but I can say with confidence that I have been granted a stable base that will continue to prop me up and direct me safely along the way. For this I am deeply thankful.

Much of my sadness stems from the fact that my relationship with the individuals I have come to know so well, my cohort, will soon shift. I have been blessed to watch this group of students cultivate and grow over the past few years—the countless hours, days, and weeks we have spent together leave for each one of them a special place in my heart. These students are unique, thoughtful, and engaged in questions that, if allowed to come to fruition, possess true civilizational potential. Our extended, four-year conversation with the great scholars of both the Islamic and the Western traditions has become intimately bound and tremendously enhanced by our extended, four-year conversation amongst ourselves, guided of course by the light of our teachers and the love and trust of our community.

A fellow student recently shared with me this thought: four years at Zaytuna College reflect the journey of life itself. We (even those of us in our mid-twenties) enter as intellectual and spiritual children, we experience great difficulty as we struggle to live up to the rigor and quality of work that is expected of us, and we come to discover aspects of ourselves that we never knew existed or were even possible. As I look toward the end of this time, I recognize quite clearly that graduation does in its way resemble death. Like death, for many of us, the future is unsure. We know we will have to continue to confront our limitations and ourselves, though now without the comfort and support we were granted as undergraduates. Also like death, I find myself looking back and counting all that I have missed, wishing I had tried harder to memorize this text, studied a little harder for that class, taken better notes for all of these books. Thankfully this is not, as far as I can see, the end, and the opportunity to improve on and continue to enhance what I have gained gives me much excitement. I believe I share sentiments with many of my classmates in saying that now is the time for the real work to begin. Everything I produce in the future, God willing, will be tainted by the hues Zaytuna has impressed upon my heart. I pray that as I move forward, I am able to represent Zaytuna College in a manner as dignified and as full of light as I have found it to be. This incredible experience and incomparable educational opportunity would not have been possible without your generous support. I will be forever indebted to each and every donor who has given so much to help make Zaytuna College, as well as my opportunity to benefit from it, a reality. I thank you from the very bottom of my heart. 
The combination of reason and revelation is the most important principle established by early and later Muslim scholars for the sake of ascertaining the truth of the legal and metaphysical issues that constitute the foundation of both our cultural heritage and our civilization. The scholars exerted every effort to establish the intellectual foundation for the proper understanding of the rational and transmitted sciences, categorizing them and basing them on sound foundational principles. This was done in ways suitable for best understanding what Muslims consider scriptural injunctives.

On the basis of the tremendous effort undertaken by the scholars, we divide the sciences into two categories that reflect the aforementioned considerations. The first involves the instrumental sciences. These are those sciences that are not the ultimate objective of our study; in other words, they are not an end in and of themselves. They are neither studied nor obtained for their own sake. Rather, they are instruments or means that allow us to obtain, know, and teach other religious sciences. Among these instrumental sciences are morphology, grammar, logic, knowledge relating to the etiquette of research and dialectics, semiotics, and rhetoric.

The second category is the high sciences, which are studied for their own sake as ends and not as means facilitating the study of other types of knowledge. These sciences include Qur’anic exegesis, prophetic tradition (Hadith), jurisprudence and its foundational principles, theology, and others. The intellectual edifice of Islamic civilization was built upon these two branches of knowledge, and the Zaytuna master’s program seeks to contribute to their reintroduction into our curricula, schools, and societies. Hopefully, our efforts will foster the revitalization of a viable, widespread Muslim intellectual tradition. Your continued and much appreciated support is crucial to our success in this regard. May God bless you.
As spring semester comes to an end, and students work on wrapping up their assignments in preparation for summer break, Zaytuna College staff continue their efforts behind the scenes. From my own experience, I know the everyday struggles that are prevalent in any work environment make it easy for many of us at Zaytuna to lose sight of the value of our work, but our hearts and minds are connected on a deeper level, and the meaning of our work reaches far beyond the temporal obstacles we encounter on a day-to-day basis. As we endeavor to make history and lay the foundations of a distinguished academic institution, we also endeavor to realize our own unique potential and refine our minds and souls through this transformative experience that is disguised as a job. As human beings, we often take the present moment for granted, only to nostalgically reminisce in the future, but it is crucial for us to harness a greater perspective and understand that there is always purpose in our circumstance. I believe that there is a reason that our amazing staff are part of the college’s legacy, and that even our ostensibly insignificant tasks bring meaning, whether we fully realize it yet or not.

Because Zaytuna is a fledgling institution, the lines between administrative departments can sometimes become blurred, with our multi-talented employees working together on projects that have a positive impact on our college and our community. Although most Zaytuna employees work behind the scenes, the operation of the college can be largely attributed to their efforts. Everything from student life and academics to community events and our marketing presence boils down to the tireless efforts of our staff. It is a blessing to work with these individuals every day and support one another in our efforts to make Zaytuna an institution of excellence.

The work we do does not just affect the college and our community, it also affects our own lives as individuals. The environment serves as a spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally fulfilling space that lends itself to individual development and growth. While students receive a formal education in a classroom setting, staff are also on an educational journey simply by spending their days within the walls of Zaytuna and growing along with the college. We always rise to the occasion when faced with difficult tasks, knowing that our efforts have meaning and contribute to the betterment of the College. For many of us, Zaytuna is much more than a place of employment, and we believe that we strive for a bigger cause than ourselves.

At Zaytuna, we commonly refer to our institution as the first Muslim liberal arts college in the country, but we tend to overlook this point as we are immersed in our daily tasks. The reality is that our college truly is a historical institution, and as the first of its kind, will be recognized in the future as such, God willing. The work of our staff and faculty today, along with the generous contributions of our donors and community, will shape the trajectory of Zaytuna College, if not the entire academic landscape of the country, tomorrow. While these may be high aspirations, they motivate us to reach higher and to seek a goal we know is universally beneficial. Zaytuna College will outlive all of us, God willing, and we cannot forget that we are laying the groundwork for generations to come. The fruits of our labor have already begun to blossom, and in time, will be in full bloom. We thank all of you, our donors, for helping to provide us this opportunity to serve.
GIVING OPTIONS

1. MAIL
Fill out the pledge card and mail it back with our enclosed, prepaid return envelope. Your gift will help build a future generation of professional, intellectual, and spiritual leaders.

2. ONLINE
Visit Zaytuna.edu/give and make your contribution through our easy-to-use online portal. With your support, you are demonstrating that Zaytuna College belongs here in America.

3. TEXT
Use your phone to send a text to 41444, and in the body of the text, simply type “Zaytuna” and the dollar amount. Your generosity helps us have a public impact today.