



The Impact of Bias on Muslim Communities in New Jersey

Hosted by the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights (DCR)
September 20, 2023 @ 6:30PM – 8:00PM

Welcome & Opening Remarks

- Tee Leonardo-Santiago, Director of Outreach - New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

Panel Discussion

Keynote Speaker:

- Dr. M. Ali Chaudry, Co-Founder & President Islamic Society of Basking Ridge

Moderator:

- Patricia D. Williamson, Community Relations Specialist - New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

Panelists:

- Atiya Aftab, Attorney, Educator and Activist
- Imam Muhammad, Atlantic City
- Gezim Bajrami, Deputy Attorney General, NJ Division of Criminal Justice

Q&A

Closing Remarks

- Patricia D. Williamson, Community Relations Specialist - New Jersey Division on Civil Rights

Speakers & Biographies



Tisha (Tee) M. Leonardo-Santiago

Tisha (Tee) Leonardo-Santiago is the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights' first Latinx Director of Outreach. A second-generation Latinx Hudson County native and a first-generation college graduate earning their undergraduate and graduate degrees in Criminal Justice from New Jersey City University. In 2017, Tee joined DCR as a Bilingual Investigator in the Enforcement Unit, served as the bilingual subject matter expert for the New Jersey Bias Investigation Access System (NJBIAS) that launched in November 2020, and now serves as the Statewide NJBIAS Community Liaison. In March 2021, they were promoted to the newly created Community Relations Unit as the Bilingual Community Relations Specialist before becoming the unit Director.



Patricia D. Williamson

Patricia D. Williamson (she/her) is a Community Relations Specialist and Community Mediator in the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights' Community Relations/Crisis Response Unit. Patricia is the unit's lead on programming initiatives for race and religion. She is based in Trenton, and her primary counties are Somerset, Warren, Monmouth, Middlesex, Mercer, Burlington, and Hunterdon. Prior to this position, Patricia was the New Jersey Counts Project Director at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. Patricia led the Institute's work to ensure a complete and accurate count of New Jersey's urban communities in the 2020 Census. Patricia was part of the Census 2020 NJ Coalition, and convened a sub-coalition of African American

community-based organizations, non-profits, and institutions (such as clergy). Patricia worked for over 20 years as a systems engineer in the optical networking area of various telecommunications companies in New Jersey. She was also an adjunct professor at Bloomfield College.

Patricia has plenty of voluntary experience in civic engagement and social justice. Patricia is the immediate past Eastern Region Social Action Committee Coordinator of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. She led the advocacy arm of the regional Sorority chapters between Maine and DC, the US Virgin Islands, Germany, the Arabian Gulf, and southern and western Africa.

Patricia resides in central New Jersey. She earned a BA in Mathematics from Hampton University, an MS in Computer Science from Howard University, and an MA in Education and Human Development in the Educational Technology Leadership Program at The George Washington University.



Dr. M. Ali Chaudry

Dr. Chaudry grew up in Pakistan, graduated from the London School of Economics with honors in Economics and Econometrics and received a Ph.D. in economics from Tufts University. He worked for AT&T for thirty years in various departments including Chief Economist, strategic planning and finance where he served as division CFO for the PR Division. After retiring from AT&T in 1998, he lectured in business at Seton Hall and at Rutgers from 2004 to 2014. Since 2007, he has taught a ten week long non-credit course on Islam and Muslims. He co-authored a book on Islam and Muslims (2010) with Dr. Robert Crane. He teaches economics at Raritan Valley Community College. He serves on the Advisory Board of the Center for Religion, Culture and Conflict at Drew University. Dr. Chaudry served on the Bernards Township BOE (1990-1995) and on the

Bernards Township Committee (2002-2007) and as Mayor in Bernards Township in 2004, becoming the first Pakistani born Muslim to become Mayor in America.

He is a co-founder of the Islamic Society of Central Jersey, Jam-e-Masjid Islamic Center Boonton. He is also co-founder and President of the Islamic Society of Basking Ridge (ISBR), and is co-founder of the NJ Interfaith Coalition. He serves on the NJ Attorney General's Muslim Outreach Committee and as a member of the Interfaith Advisory Council of the NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. He is President of the Branchburg Rotary Foundation. Dr. Chaudry is a frequent speaker at interfaith events and initiated the Pledge to Stand Up for the Other, calling on everyone to challenge bigotry in any form.



Gezim Bajrami

Gezim Bajrami, a first generation American and Houston, Texas native, graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas with a Bachelor of Arts in government in 2009. From there, he went on to attend Seton Hall Law School, in Newark, New Jersey, earning his Juris Doctorate in 2013.

He served as an intern to the New York City Council and the Honorable Michael L. Ravin, J.S.C. (Essex County), and is now a Deputy Attorney General (“DAG”) in the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General.

From 2013 through 2016, DAG Bajrami oversaw investigations and civil administrative prosecutions related to licensed medical professionals with a focus on eradicating the indiscriminate prescribing of controlled dangerous substances. Since October 2016, DAG Bajrami has been assigned to the Office of the Attorney General’s Division of Criminal Justice, where he leads confidential investigations, conducts settlement negotiations, and represents the State of New Jersey in the prosecution of felony-level crimes throughout the State of New Jersey.



Atiya Aftab

Atiya Aftab, Esq. currently maintains her own practice providing representation to non-profit corporations. Atiya has been an Adjunct Professor at Rutgers University, Department of Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies Program teaching “Islamic Law and Jurisprudence” for over 10 years. She is also the Chair of the Center for Islamic Life at Rutgers University, convener of the first full-time dedicated Muslim Chaplaincy at a public university in the nation. She is a member emerita of the Rutgers University Board of Directors.

Atiya is the co-founder and chair emerita of the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom, an international women’s interfaith organization. She has been a member of the Islamic Society of Central Jersey’s Board for 20 years and

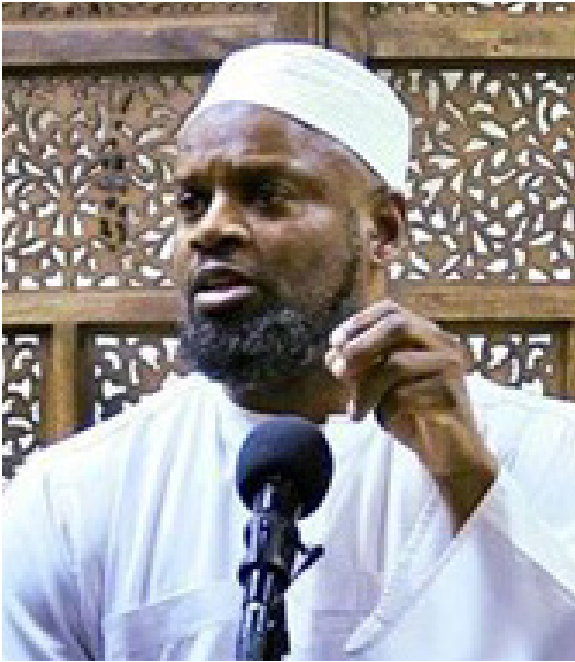
was the first woman chair of the board. She co-founded the New Jersey Muslim Lawyer’s Association and has been its Vice-President and Treasurer. Atiya is a Fellow with the Arianne de Rothschild Fellowship and completed a certificate program with KARAMAH, Muslim women’s human rights organization.

Atiya was a member of Attorney General Peter Harvey’s Arab and Muslim Advisory Committee (Chair, Education and Training for Law Enforcement Subcommittee) and was a member of the New Jersey Supreme Court Committee on Minority Concerns for 10 years. She was also chair of the South Brunswick Women’s Commission and was responsible for organizing its yearly leadership conference for 10 years.

Atiya received her Bachelor of Arts Degree, Phi Beta Kappa, in 1988, majoring in Political Science (Pi Sigma Alpha) from Rutgers College. She went on to Rutgers Law School in Newark and graduated with her Juris Doctorate Degree in 1991. After law school, she held an Appellate Division Clerkship with the Hon. James H. Coleman, Jr., then Presiding Judge Appellate Division and now retired Associate Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court. Atiya then joined Robinson, St. John & Wayne as an associate. She went on to represent the Department of Banking and Insurance as a Deputy Attorney General.

Atiya has spoken at numerous forums on topics related to Islam including academic institutions, conferences, police training centers, places of worship, universities, hospital, community forums conventions and newsprint, social media and television and radio addresses.

Atiya has received several awards including the prestigious Pacem in Terris Award by the Diocese of Davenport and the 2013 Professional Lawyer of the Year Award by the NJ Commission on Professionalism in the Law.



Imam Muhammad

Imam Amin Muhammad is a native of Atlantic City, NJ, who has studied with traditional Shuyukh from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Lebanon. Among the Shuyukh whom he has benefitted greatly from are Shaykh Walid Ar Rifa'i, Shaykh Jamal Zahabi, Shaykh Samir An Nass, Shaykh Salahud Din Al Idlibiyy, Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, Shaykh Abdullah bin Ali Basfar and others. He has studied many of the Islamic sciences such as 'Aqidah, Fiqh, Tafsir, Sirah, Hadith, and Hadith methodology. Presently, Imam Amin teaches Hadith, Fiqh and delivers Jumu'ah Khutbah at Masjid Muhammad in Atlantic City, NJ. He also teaches and lectures at various mosques in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. He has been an advisor and teacher at M.E.C.C.A. in New York, a

teacher at Al-Maqasid in Pennsylvania as well as other institutions across the country.