

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor,
Assalamu Alaikum

I have been reading and following your magazine articles since I started receiving them. You have a variety of topics in your magazine and a broad group of readers. Within my 5 year stay in the USA, I have been very privileged to pray and visit most of the masjids in the Bay Area and also to listen to the "Bayans" (talks) from a variety of speakers and imams.

One thing that has remained consistent over all these years is listening to our brothers and imams in "Bayan" referencing the ways of the disbelievers as "THE AMERICAN WAY". Even though I am not an American by birth, I find this phrase insulting. Being an American is not a different religion nor should we treat this like one.

When we talk about Muslims owning liquor shops and other haram places, we don't refer to them as "THE PAKISTANI WAY", even though there are Muslim brothers from Pakistan in this business. Or when we talk about adultery and shirk, we don't refer to them as the "ARAB WAY". My point is that these should not be referenced and targeted to any one specific country. Instead words like "Non-Believers" or "Disbelievers" can be used. This way, reference is made across the board and not to one specific group of people

We in Fairfield (and in other places) have been very fortunate to have a mixed culture of people (including Americans) use our Masjid and take part in our programs. We should be very careful that we do not alienate any one group of people.

I hope that this message is read and at least understood by all brothers giving "Bayan" in any masjid in the USA.

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TRIP TO PERU



Alhamdulillah, five brothers from San Francisco left to visit the Muslim community in Lima, Peru for the purpose of spreading Islam. We had no idea if there were any masjids or even if we would encounter any Muslims at all. We were a bit apprehensive but put our trust in Allah that everything would go well. One of the brothers amongst us was fluent in Spanish and was used as a mouth-piece in translating and talking to the local people.

We arrived in Lima, Peru around 6:30pm and immediately offered our Asr prayers. We then looked for a Muslim-sounding name in the local phone book at the airport. To our surprise the person who answered the phone was the person in charge of the mosque in Lima, Peru. His name was Saeed and insisted on picking us at the airport. We told him that we would take a taxi. We were so happy and relieved to find out that there was a masjid. The masjid, which was a huge house with twelve rooms, was donated by an Arab brother. We arrived at the masjid and were greeted by Saeed, a Palestinian who had been living in Peru for the last 45 years and Juan, the masjid caretaker. They had prepared tea and fruits for us.

Peru is a gigantic country of well over 24 million people. In the capital city of Lima, there are approximately 400 Muslims. Most of the Muslims in Peru are originally a mix of Palestinians and Syrians who left their homelands searching for a better economic life for their families. Evidently, they found what they were searching for because the majority of the Muslim brothers in Peru are industrious and financially well-off. However, due to the lack of practicing their religion, these brothers have secularly been away from Islam and their children are either non-Muslim or Muslims by name only. Overall, the people are very nice, good hearted and hospitable but they have fundamentally segregated themselves from Islam. Unfortunately, many Muslims have even adopted the local traditions and religion.



Mosque of Lima, Peru

One of the first Muslims we visited in Peru was brother Issa, the President of the masjid. He was sick when we visited him so we offered him some Zamzam water. He immediately felt better. We were invited to many Muslim houses and received such nice hospitality. Some Muslim brothers came from remote areas and as far away as a 2-hour flight from Tacna (located near Chile) to see us. More than 20 Pakistani brothers there are involved in the car business and their wives, masha-Allah, are very conservative and observe the Hijab.

At Jumha prayers, the talks are usually bilingual in both Arabic and Spanish. It was directly after Jumha salat that 3 brothers in Lima had embraced Islam, Alhamdulillah. Many of the Muslim brothers in Peru related their stories to us on how they outlived the many difficulties in their life and on how Allah protected and directed them to Islam. Many of these brothers had wholeheartedly made their intentions for continuing the effort of spreading Islam. The qualities of good Muslims so undeniably shine.

We had a visit from one man named Khalid who came and told us his early life story. He also had several questions to ask us. He seemed to be an Arab but had an unfortunate incident of being separated from his family.



Mosque Bab ul Islam, Tacna, Peru

It was amazing how Allah (swt) protected him. After a few meetings with us learning about Islam, he decided that he wanted to become Muslim.

Another Peruvian brother stated that the country of Peru is emerging from Dunya (worldly pleasures) and thus fertile for Islam. In addition, there were a few Peruvian ladies who embraced Islam and said that they liked what Islam offers women in today's modern life.

On the other hand, the Muslims who migrated to Peru for the sake of worldly pleasures are now so engrossed in seeking fortunes to such an extent that there is no difference between the Muslims and non-Muslims. Unfortunately, many of our brothers in Peru who were originally of Palestinian and Syrian descent have blended in well enough in the pursuit of fortune to the point that they have lost their Islamic identity. They no longer are practicing Muslims and as a result, their children are now being raised as non-Muslims. This is a very big lesson for all of us. Allah has said in the Quran:

"And those who strive in Our (cause), -We will certainly guide them to Our paths, for verily Allah is with those who do right."

(Quran 29:69)

On our final day in Peru, the local brothers cooked an outdoor lunch for us. Many of the non-Muslim neighbors who had seen our gathering decided to stop by and join us. Alhamdulillah, all went well and enjoyable. We really had a very rewarding experience in Peru. The Muslim brothers were sad to see us leave. Our final day was made even more special when before leaving, four Peruvian men who had joined our lunch decided to become Muslims. Alhamdulillah.



Mosque Bab ul Islam, Tacna, Peru