



Let there be among God's creation a group that seeks the truth and establish as justice thereby! (7:181)

## PEACE (SALAM) AND GREETINGS!

Welcome to the second issue of MyLLife Digest – a newsletter launched just a month ago. We are excited to come back to you with our second edition. In the next few editorials, I will explain various programs at MyLLife so that you become more familiar with our activities and possibly introduce MyLLife to some of your contacts whom we hope might want to know about MyLLife.

Our MyLLife Scholars Program is about 2 years in the running, and we are already inspiring 20 young students from various area universities to work in Public Policy related summer internships. The 2023 cohort of MyLLife Scholars come from various universities, such as New York University (NYC), Howard University (DC), Seton College (NJ), George Washington University (DC) and George Mason University (VA) and majority are studying Law, public Policy and Political Science in both graduate and undergraduate programs. We select our Scholars based on deep personal interest in building a just society, their unique backgrounds and personal experiences that shaped their aspirations to serve in Public Policy and good standing in their academic programs. Our program is geared towards students from immigrant, minority and disadvantaged groups since their voices are absent in Public Policy discussions.

Our program supports their summer internship with federal, state and local government as well as non profits. We offer scholarship ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,500 with an average scholarship of \$1,950 per student (2023 summer data). Our scholars have been placed in various organizations such as Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, Office of US Senator, Drug Enforcement Agency, Offices of Public Defenders in California, Virginia and Michigan and an European non-profit based in London, UK.

Here is link to their profiles in our website for [2023](#) and [2022](#) Cohorts. We hope you will take the time to get to know some of them and also act as our ambassadors to spread the word to potential 2024 candidates to apply. We also hope that you will share any thoughts on how we can expand and enrich this program. As always, you can sponsor such students in future by [donating to MyLLife!](#)

*Editorial by Rashed Hasan*

## MyLLife Scholar Reflection: Haley Brechwald

Haley, a member of our MyLLife Scholars 2023 Cohort, shared her Summer internship experience with us:



I am a rising 3L at George Mason University Law School. Prior to law school, I went to the University of Pittsburgh and studied Political Science and Legal Studies. I am from the northern Virginia area and plan to practice law in Virginia once I graduate. As a part of the MyLLife Scholars Program, I have been working at the Crime and Justice Institute. The Crime and Justice Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides technical assistance to stakeholders within the criminal justice system to identify problems and recommend policy solutions.

During this experience, I have completed report summaries on Diversion Programs, Justice Reinvestment Initiatives, Reentry Plans, and Community Assessments. I have conducted statutory research on jail trusts in Oklahoma, case law research on excessive bail and legislative research on bills introduced in the 2023 legislative session in Louisiana, and research on the procedures for competency restoration. I have conducted outreach to judges and District Attorneys in Oklahoma and Louisiana. Finally, I have reviewed data presentations and system assessment interviews from stakeholders to assist in identifying problem definitions and policy recommendations. This work has been extremely meaningful to me as I explore the gaps in the criminal justice system nationwide. As an aspiring Public Defender, the perspective and skills this experience has given me will help me assist indigent clients navigate the complex criminal justice system.

**Thank you, Haley, for sharing your experience!**

## Qur'an & Hadith Reflections

The COVID-19 pandemic has touched over seven hundred million people worldwide by now, and more than six million have died around the world. Various mutations of the virus will continue to pose threat to global health and prosperity. Another calamity that has long been in the making by the industrial world and large industries is the amount of CO2 that has been dumped into our atmosphere and global warming is finally here.



We have begun to see how our own neglect can damage our own future as it affects the health of the planet and its inhabitants, both plants and animals. A third calamity is the relentless and growing income inequality in our societies across the globe, where even in the USA, the richest country in the world, sixty percent of the households who are mostly blue collar workers have no savings to speak of and as much as twenty percent live in constant poverty. Around the globe religious persecution is on the rise, especially against Muslim minorities and other ethnic minorities along with the rise in widespread corruption in our political and economic systems. Last but not the least is the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) which will accelerate human learning but also will seriously impact how we live –for good or bad, depending on our own conscious choices, either driven by commercial greed and denial of God but by a sense of reverence to God and respect for the natural world and purpose-driven existence before we meet God.

It is useful to be reminded of God's promise in the Qur'an: "If the people in their towns had believed and acted responsibly, God would certainly have opened the blessings of the heavens and the earth for them. But they denied and neglected, so we took accounts of what they have earned (by their conducts)" (7:96). Then there is also the warning of our current conditions as stated in the Qur'an – "Corruption has spread across land and sea, because of what humankind has done with its own hands and God will make them suffer the consequences of what they have done – perhaps they will amend their ways!" (30:41)



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## CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON FUNERALS

By: Selena Gallagher

I grew up in Malaysia and married an American and have not thought of death and burials till my in-laws passed away. They were Catholics and the burial was traditional American, as were their graves. Recently, I was at the funereal of a friend who had died and as a Muslim, was buried the traditional way after the ritual washing and blessings, in a simple cemetery. On the opposite spectrum, I had a colleague from Africa who told me about her uncle passing and how her family was organizing a large funeral for him nine months after his death as the family was scattered all over the world. I did not see nor participate in the funeral, but the event was a multi-day event that was both sad and a celebration of life at the same time. The idea of a body waiting months before a funeral was difficult for me to processes as Muslims make every effort to bury the dead within 24 hours.

Funerals, like marriages, are a time to pull the family together. Interestingly, even with funerals, people see it as an opportunity to make or strengthen connections. It may be because people appreciate the finite time they have with others. Whatever it is, inevitably families that are spread out physically or by strained familial ties come together at funerals.

Putting the dead to rest is a very personal task to Muslims. Most times, the sons of the deceased will be asked to help in laying the body into position of facing Mecca inside the grave. Typically, the sons do not have experience with this, but other members of the Muslim community help with instructions that are sometimes funny and sometimes poignant. Although it is a sad time, the confusion and cacophony of suggestions helps with the sadness. Even though the cemetery staff can do everything, it is considered a privilege for the sons or close male relatives to do the last thing they can for their parent.

I grew up in Malaysia and am struck at the differences between cemeteries where I grew up and those in the United States. In the U.S., Muslims can choose to be buried in a Muslim cemetery or the Muslim corner of regular cemeteries. Cemeteries are normally situated on soft rolling hills or on flat cleared areas with each plot having a headstone, or flat marker, although there are fancier plots. Many cemeteries in the U.S. prefer flat to the ground headstones and few flowers, bushes, or trees as it is easy to mow the grass to keep the cemetery neat. In my home country, Muslim cemeteries are lovely, shaded gardens. Each burial plot has a head stone, cylindrical to show the deceased was a male or flat for females, and a foot stone. The fancier plots have raised ledgers where flowering and fragrant bushes sprout. Shade trees are planted to “provide shade for the deceased.” This all makes walking through a Muslim cemetery in Malaysia a cool respite from the heat of the tropics. I also grew up with prohibitions of crossing over a person’s body, so a lawnmower crisscrossing burial plots fills me with horror at the transgression towards the deceased!

As I contemplate my demise, I have many thoughts on how to be buried. Since my soul will hopefully be in Jannah, I believe the best way to leave this earth is to fertilize the soil. Since all bodies will decompose eventually, I have wondered if anyone would be horrified that I am contemplating being buried with mushrooms to speed up the breakdown process.

*(all opinions expressed by guest contributors are theirs and not necessarily reflective of views of MyLLife)*

## MyLLife Volunteer Profile: Selena Gallagher

My name is Selena Mokhtar Gallagher and I have been a proud volunteer with MyLLife.org for several years. I am passionate about exploring how the Quran and Islam can help us navigate our changing world. How can we stay faithful to the divine messages while adapting to the challenges of climate change, environmental pollution, scientific breakthroughs, and more? As a former Federal Government employee who is about to retire, I am eager to devote more time and energy to MyLLife and invite everyone to join me in rediscovering Islam and its teachings for a sustainable and ethical future.



## Monthly Recap & Upcoming Events



MyLLife Inc hosts virtual Weekly Qur’an readings every Saturday from 9-10 pm EST. One session per month will be a 90-minute special topic session. All are welcome!

Event Link: [Journey into the Qur’an: Weekly Zoom Series](#)

## Meet the Editors



**Rashed Hasan**  
Founder, Board Member



**Selena Gallagher**  
Volunteer



**Mana Soroush**  
Social Media Coordinator

**Our vision:** Build a faith-based community to shape and practice our faith, be each other’s keeper, and serve the larger community through service and civic engagement.

**Our mission:** Build infrastructure, capacity, content, community engagement models, and institutions to realize our individual and collective vision.

**Outcome we seek:** Help each other reach the highest human potential through faith and good work.

Keep in touch!



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