

LAS VEGAS

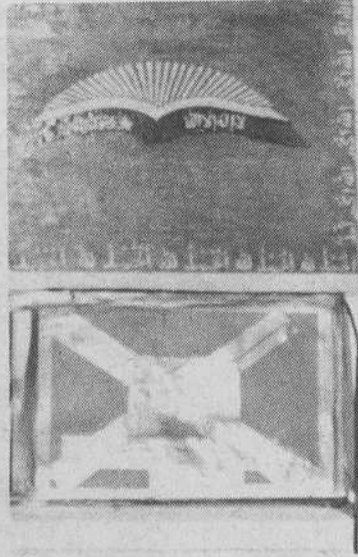
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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Resident Imam Haji Fultan Luqman Abdus-Salaam stands in front of a painting while explaining the different aspects of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Muslim holy month offers reflection, recommitment

By Sonya Douglass
Sentinel-Voice

While many families search for creative ways to enjoy their Christmas leftovers, Muslim families nationwide are celebrating their faith without food or drink. In fact, they aren't eating or drinking anything between sunrise and sunset.

They are celebrating Ramadan — the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.

"Ramadan is a time for Muslims to reconnect and reorientate ourselves to Allah," said Resident Imam Haji Fultan Luqman Abdus-Salaam.

The prayer leader of Masjid As-Sabur — Place of Prostration and The Patience — Abdus-Salaam said Muslims use Ramadan to fast, to reflect, to recommit themselves to moral living, to focus of their faith and to pray.

Ramadan began on Tuesday, falling a day behind New Year's Eve. But unlike New Year's or the Christmas and Hannukah holidays which begin the same time each year, the start of Ramadan is determined by astronomical calculations.

"We must sight the moon in our local

area to start the fast," Abdus-Salaam said.

Fasting is an important part of the month-long celebration of faith.

"It is a standard practice, one of five actions followed by Muslims," Abdus-Salaam said. "Anyone can fast during the month of Ramadan, but it is required by Muslims. It is not fasting to lose weight, but to return to the connection, the worship, the faith of Allah."

In addition to fasting, Muslims must also refrain from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual intercourse during the daylight hours and make a special effort to avoid deplorable behavior: telling lies, slander, greed and so on.

Prayer is also important. Abdus-salaam said that 1/30th of Muslim scripture, the Holy Quran, is read each day, which the allows reader to reconnect to the moral tenets of the religion. He said prayer allows for insight and opens Muslims up for blessings.

For more information on Ramadan, you can contact Imam Abdus-salaam or Imam Jihad YaSin at 647-2500.

City of Las Vegas to receive \$6.1 million in federal funding

Money to support affordable housing, economic development, homeless and non-profit social services

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The City of Las Vegas will receive \$6,105,994 in FY 1998-99 through four different U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant programs, a 3 percent increase from the previous fiscal year, city officials announced Tuesday.

The monies, to be administered through the City's Neighborhood Services Department, will help create new programs and augment existing ones that help construct public facilities, increase home ownership and housing rehabilitation and spark economic development in several low-income neighborhoods.

In addition, the programs of many of Las Vegas' non-profit social services agencies are funded in part with monies from these grants.

"We are pleased that HUD has again recognized the need in Las Vegas and our track record for creating successful programs that create visible change," said Sharon Segerblom, director of the City's Neighborhood Services Department.

The grant awards were made from the following federal programs: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), \$3,976,000; Housing Assistance for Persons

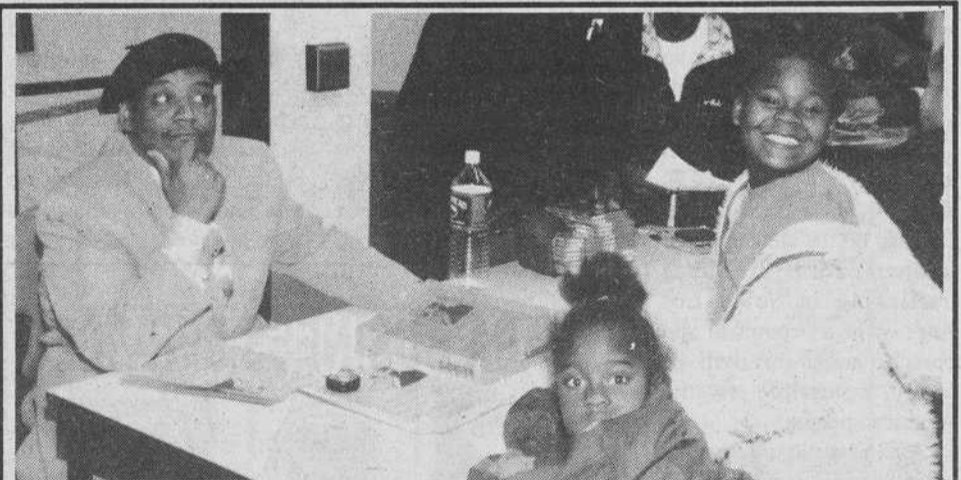
with AIDS (HOPWA), \$598,000; Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG); \$152,000; and the Home Investment Partnership Act (HOME), \$1,379,994.

Also the local consortium Continuum of Care grant program, which received a Blue Ribbon Award from HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo during his October Las Vegas visit, will receive about \$1.7 million for homeless services. The Salvation Army, which was awarded \$1.4 million, will construct and operate a Safe Haven shelter for seriously mentally ill homeless people.

There are no facilities where the homeless mentally ill can now stay for structured rehabilitation or treatment programs.

The Women's Development Center, 953 E. Sahara Ave., was awarded about \$240,000 as renewal funding to continue their existing transitional housing program for homeless and low-income families.

For more information about any of the federal grants, programs which they support or the Continuum of Care consortium, contact Alonza Robertson at 229-2300 or Terri Stanfill, manager of the Neighborhood Development Division at 229-2120.



Rhapsody 'n Rap

Fred "Rerun" Barry watches two girls ham it up for the camera, Dec. 19th at the West Las Vegas Library Theater. Barry was part of Covenant Celebrities Productions' Rhapsody 'n Rap stay in school concert. The free event featured many stars like singer Smokey Robinson.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Isadore Washington

Study shows Chicago's poor victims of business loan bias

By Dalia Dangerfield
Special to Sentinel-Voice

A history of inefficiently distributing loans to low-income neighborhoods among some banks in Chicago may have gotten worse, according to a recent study.

Small business loans were eight times harder to come by in poor communities throughout Chicago in 1996, than in other areas, according to a report released by the Chicago Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, or ACORN.

"Low income neighborhoods aren't getting their share of small business loans," said Ed Wang, the group's lead organizer.

The report said one out of every eight loans in Chicago is directed towards businesses in

upper income communities. And for every dollar that is given to business owners in low-income areas, \$11.64 is given to those in high-income communities.

"We have a group of lenders that are completely ignoring the needs of people in low-income neighborhoods," Wang said. "Anybody can take a walk around Englewood and see what's happening in the community."

Boarded up storefronts and vacant lots frequently line the streets of Chicago's low-income communities. Residents often walk or drive miles, bypassing nearby buildings, in order to find a store to buy their weekly groceries.

According to the study, potential entrepreneurs in such areas, who seek to revitalize the neighborhoods have the odds

stacked against them. Small business loans are hard to get for people who want to rebuild in low-income areas.

"They're not receiving the money they need to attract jobs and small businesses," Wang said. "That's why a lot of those communities continue to be left out economically." He also said that banks continuously ignore the industries in rundown areas.

A couple of months ago, the organization issued another study showing that potential home-buyers in low-income neighborhoods haven't received their fair share of home loans in past years.

In order to rectify the problem, the study suggested that small business loan requirements be improved.

"You can't use the same type of standards that you would use in a high-income community," Wang said.

The standards made for low-income communities should help the bank aggressively market its products in poor areas, he said.

The latest study refuted an earlier report by the Federal Financial Institution Examination Council released in September, which focused on lending in low-income areas, and found that there wasn't a big discrepancy between the nation's poorer and more affluent areas.

According to the ACORN study, that data underrepresented the plight that residents and entrepreneurs in poor communities face with the banking industries.

Dalia Dangerfield writes for the Chicago Defender.