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**MEMO:**

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**Omar Alfi's Speech -**

Assalaamu alaikum, my name is Omar Alfi. I am from Glendale California and I go to Polytechnic School. I have come here today to celebrate Eid el Fitr which is our holiday at the end of Ramadan. Ramadan is the holiest month in a Muslim's year. It is so holy because it is the month that the Quran was revealed to Prophet Mohammed. In Ramadan we fast from sunrise to sunset. Fasting means we are not allowed to eat or drink, as well as showing self-control by resisting the temptation to eat and drink. Another reason that we fast is to purify our soul. We purify our soul because while fasting we are also not allowed to gossip, steal, cheat, or lie. In Ramadan we try to read the Quran daily and try especially hard to obey God. I like to think of Ramadan the way someone described it to me a few years ago. Just like professional athletes go to training camp to train so that they can be in good shape and perform their best during the whole year, Muslims have Ramadan to train their body and soul to be in good shape and perform their best the whole year. I feel that Ramadan is a very spiritual time for me. I enjoy the fasting because I view it as a challenge that I put to myself everyday. It feels so good when I fast the whole day and I have the feeling of succeeding and fulfilling my goal. And my reward is to break my fast and have dinner with my family. In Ramadan we try to do extra things such as pray extra prayers at night called Taraweeh. Most people like to try and finish the Quran during Ramadan. One of the things that a lot of people like to do during Ramadan is to go and break their fasts at family and friends houses. I feel honored to be here in the White House and I thank you for giving me this opportunity of letting me share my feelings on Ramadan. Assalaamu alaikum.

**Lena Alfi's Speech -**

Assalamu Alaikum! My name is Lena Alfi. I am from Glendale, California. I am 10 years old and I go to Westridge School for Girls. Today Muslims around the world are celebrating our holiday called Eid-el-Fitr. We celebrate this holiday for the success of fasting the Holy month of Ramadan. In Ramadan we fast from dawn to sunset. We fast from food, water, lying, gossiping and losing your temper. There are several reasons why we fast but I will only talk about two now. First of all it is to control your anger and temper. Fasting teaches you to be patient and understand that God knows what a person is doing that might make you lose control. Second of all it teaches us to feel how the poor feel. It is supposed to remind you to give donations and charity to the poor. There are two other girls in my class who are Muslim and every year we talk about Ramadan and Eid. When you are sick, travelling or pregnant you are not supposed to fast. Every night in Ramadan there is a special prayer at the Mosque called Taraweeh. You don't have to go to Taraweeh but God will be pleased if you do. If my parents say that they will be proud of me and give me twenty dollars if I fast the whole month. I am not going to fast for the money, I am going to fast because I want to please God. If I am ever tempted by a cupcake or cookie I think of God, or the poor who are tempted by this every day of their lives. Also, if I am cranky or grumpy because I am hungry I remember how patient the poor are because they might feel this for 3 or 4 days in a row while I am grumpy after 3 or 4 hours. I hope this speech gave you a little bit of an idea of what fasting is to me.

Maurer -

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Secondary  
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(2)

## What Ramadan Means to Me

By Maha Ezzeddine

The abandoned soccer field is silent and empty except for a small crowd of children scrutinizing the horizon. A few eager men and women stand a small distance away clutching binoculars in their gloved hands. A joyful shout arises suddenly from the shivering crowd of children. "I found it! I found it!" exclaims an excited child and a finger points to the sky. Immediately, almost everyone else sees it. Like the glistening of a pearl from a crack in an oyster shell, a thin sliver of moonlight adorns the sky. Squeals of delight escape the children and the men shake hands joyfully. A soft chant comes from the lips of a young boy. "Welcome, welcome, O Ramadan!"

The shimmering "hilal" is the telltale sign of the coming holy month. It is something I look forward to eagerly throughout the year, which in comparison to Ramadan, is like a barren desert. For Ramadan is the month in which I am closest to my religion, when I can best experience its joys and rewards. In no other month do I feel so surrounded by Islam and its followers. In no other month does Islamic pride raise its banners so high.

To me, Ramadan is much more than fasting. It is a period of Islamic rejuvenation, in which I set my goals, and then try to go beyond them. It is one of the few times of the year when I am aware of the millions of Muslims besides me, doing what I do, feeling what I feel. Ramadan is a time in which apologies are made, grudges forgotten, new friends embraced, and old friends renewed. Sometime during the course of Ramadan comes that moment when I realize that no place is dearer to me than my Masjid. During this month, I often reach an ultimate peak, when I feel that my heart has never been closer to Allah (swt).

Perhaps the most profound difference Ramadan has from the rest of the year, is that instead of attempting to improvise our Islam to fit into America and our lives, we shape America and our lives to fit into Islam. We try to catch most of the five daily prayers at the Masjid, regardless of our work hours, school schedule, or time. Many are driven by an urge to pray the Tarawih prayers at the Masjid, and are willing to skip valuable homework time and sleep hours to attend them. The constant twinge of hunger reminds us of our duty, and it is not difficult to cut out the distractions of Shaytan. The television often sits in a dusty corner as the

family in another room reads Quran. In the same way that we used to fit prayers in between the hustle of our everyday life, during Ramadan, we fit our life in between our prayers.

For the child who comes home with a construction paper lantern dangling from his wrist, and for the grandmother who takes her special Quran off the shelf, Ramadan is a "spring cleaning" of character. In Sunday schools, children are taught to control their anger and to give and to be grateful to Allah. Ramadan is the time when many Sisters, young and old, decide to adopt the hijab as their timeless companion. We discard all bad language from our tongues and try to replace it with a constant flow of Dhikr. We recognize our mistakes during Ramadan, and work to correct them. He with the parsimonious greed becomes he of the generous giving, and she with the uncontrollable temper becomes she of the patient understanding. Most importantly, Ramadan is the month in which we beg Allah (swt) for his forgiveness with all our being. For me, Ramadan is a total revising of resolutions and intentions, which I can only hope that Allah (swt) will purify.

A constant awareness of the Most Merciful envelopes all that we do and all that we say. The desire to learn and teach reaches its peak at this month, and the lectures and halaqas are countless. During this month, many hearts experience their first timid touch at concentration in prayer, only to find that all their awareness and consciousness is devoted to Allah (swt). For many, the overwhelming love and fear of Allah (swt) becomes too much, and their first tears are shed on a Masjid floor.

Living in America only makes Ramadan more cherished. I spend Iftar with the members of the local Masjid; they become my family. It is with confidence that we refrain from snacking on chips with our non Muslim comrades, for we know that we are the pioneers and that our example will set the standard. In no other country does meeting another fasting Muslim in front of an aromatic McDonald's offer so much reassurance. Perhaps being a minority causes us to grasp the month of Ramadan with such enthusiasm as can be experienced in no other country.

But dearest to me, O Ramadan, are your starlit nights in which we all venture out to our Masjid to worship Allah (swt). The doors of the houses of Allah are open at all times to us, and the recitation of a believer constantly dwells between their walls. In no other country can such eager crowds be found in the Masjids. Muslims across the United States pray in the basements of houses, in old schools, in community centers, and even in greenhouses; places all bestowed with the honor of being a Masjid. In no

other country can we attend four rak'ahs led by a Jordanian Imam, then drive down the highway to complete the other four behind a Pakistani. Late at night, we may decide to go to our local Masjid, where an Egyptian Imam leads the prayer in rotation with a Sudanese. How thankful we are that we can attend our places of worship so freely in America, without the fear of being arrested, shot, or harassed; thankful that we can spend our Ramadan in the one country in which religious freedom is so manifest. The dark skinned prays with his shoulder and feet touching those of the light skinned and the old believer gently lines a learning youth by his side. Nowhere can such varied forms of unity, such acceptance of differences be found during Ramadan. Few other places have so many people of so many origins humble themselves with their tears and prayer. This is all a part of our month. The harmony and open mindedness of Ramadan assures the heart of every Muslim that his religion is from Allah (swt) and that this month is a great blessing.

Some may think that Ramadan is not clearly defined. We do not have any tangible symbol of its presence; no adorned trees, no special costumes, no standard carols, and no flickering candles in our windows. To outsiders, Ramadan is a month of starvation and obsolete dullness. However, as the observant eye would soon realize, the meaning of Ramadan is so profound that it is difficult to comprehend with one custom or one symbol. Ramadan is the celebration of Islam through serving Allah, in which we find our joy and comfort. It is the happiness prevailing at our hearty Iftars, it is the voice of an Imam resounding throughout all of our humble but grand Masjids, it is the firm handshake after a long, satisfying prayer, it is the tears of a repenting believer's dua'a, it is the relieved smile of a child completing his first fast, and it is the satisfied "alhamdulillah" released from the lips of a Muslim as his Quran has been read from cover to cover. Ramadan, especially in this country, can be compared to the anticipated moments as Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him) began the first call to prayer from atop the roof of the Ka'bah, shattering the heavy, desert silence with a resonant cry of, "Allahu Akbar!"

**Zainah Alfi's Speech -**

Asalam Alaikum! My name is Zainah Alfi. I am eleven years old and live in Los Angeles, California. I'm here to tell you a little about Ramadan, the Muslim fasting month, and some experiences and will power of a professional Muslim NBA player. His name is Hakeem Olajuan and he plays of the Houston Rockets. He is pretty well known. Some things he has done in Ramadan is fast in his games and when he is travelling has the permission to break his fast, but he says that that rule was meant for people back then when you traveled on camels and when it took months to travel. My goal is to fast all day every day this month. I did this last year and I have again this year. There were days when I was hungry and upset, but challenged myself to keep going. I wasn't just about to give up my goal. Ramadan is a Muslim fasting month that comes once a year according to the Lunar Calendar. It is a month of fasting from food, drink, gossip, lying, cheating, etc. I like to think of Ramadan as an athletic training camp for the reason it is like training camp to purify your soul for the year. In Ramadan you should try to read the Holy Book Koran, think of God and try to pray the extra prayers at night called Taraweeh. Thank you for listening and have a nice Eid.