

Islamic Speakers Bureau of Atlanta

ISB Director Featured in Kuwaiti Newspaper Al-Anba

Original Article

<http://www.alanba.com.kw/AbsoluteNMNEW/templates/local2010.aspx?articleid=177858&zoneid=14>

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The Executive Director of the Islamic Speakers Bureau in Atlanta: I am proud of the achievements of Kuwaiti women.

Khalifa: Our role is to present Islam and bridge the gap between the Islamic world and the West.

The key role of the Islamic Speakers Bureau is to establish dialogue, build understanding, and overcome stereotyping.

Arab women do not lack capabilities. They must work harder to overcome the "mental block" that they are incapable of change.

My message to Kuwaiti women : you are on the right track, pursue self-empowerment to fulfill your ambitions.

There are 6-8 million Muslims very well integrated into American society. They assume efficient and influential roles.

She's an Arab Muslim American. At an early age, she moved with her parents from Egypt to the US. Soumaya Khalifa pursued her education in Texas and Georgia. Upon fulfilling her academic goals, Khalifa felt she had much more to offer. She founded the Islamic Speakers Bureau and became a role model for Arab women. At the request of educational institutions and government entities, the Islamic Speakers Bureau gives on-site presentations on Islam. Besides her role in the Bureau, Khalifa has a keen interest in women's rights. She accepted the invitation of the American Embassy in Kuwait to participate in various activities celebrating International Women's Day. Khalifa expressed her happiness and pride in the achievements of Kuwaiti women who assume government, academic, and judicial positions. She added that Kuwaiti women are well versed and highly educated. Yet, they have a long way to go to reach more ambitious goals.

Khalifa added that Arab women do not lack anything. There are, however, cultural and social factors that form a "mental block" that they must overcome to unleash their full potentials. Furthermore, she talked about the effective contributions of the American Muslim community in various fields such as education, the judiciary, medicine, and engineering. Yet, Khalifa noted that the biggest challenge Muslims face is the responsibility to build a positive image and to correct misunderstanding in the minds of some Americans. The Islamic Speakers Bureau opens bridges of understanding and dialogue while highlighting the true values of Islam. Khalifa added that in order for this dialogue to be effective,

participants must have the incentive and the interest to pursue it. She added that this dialogue is a significant factor for enhancing appreciation and respect between Muslims and Christians.

What is the reason for your visit to Kuwait?

I was invited by the American Embassy in Kuwait to participate in the festivities and activities celebrating International Women's Day. It gave me the chance to exchange ideas with various organizations on Islamic topics in general and American Muslims in particular. I have also explored women's' experiences in fulfilling their ambitions and dreams all over the world. I will also have the opportunity to meet with Kuwaiti businesswomen and representatives of various Kuwaiti women's cultural and social organizations.

How do you assess the woman's role in Kuwaiti society?

I applaud Kuwaiti woman's role in politics, she succeeded to be a minister and a member of the Kuwaiti parliament. Her high education and qualifications enabled her to assume important positions as university professor, lawyer, and physician. I believe that women all over the world have worked hard and have achieved a lot. They still have a lot to offer.

Why do Arab women have more opportunities in the West than in their homelands?

Out of personal experience, even though Arab Muslim women are a minority in the US, I succeeded because I made the initiative and found a role for myself. Anyone who is interested to know about Islam and the Arab world seeks our help at the Islamic Speakers Bureau in Atlanta. I don't think it's a matter of opportunity only. You must seize the appropriate time, place, and have the interest and willingness to persevere in an environment that is receptive to the positive role of woman.

What does Arab woman need for self-fulfillment?

Arab woman does not lack anything. There are, however, some cultural and social factors hindering her from moving forward. She has the strength, capabilities and qualifications. She only needs to work harder to fulfill her ambitions at all levels. There is a mental block or a belief permeating in the Arab world that woman is incapable of self-fulfillment. For example, we have witnessed the debate about giving Kuwaiti woman her political rights. Her dream has been fulfilled due to her qualifications and ability to induce change.