

Wisdom of the Month

A Truly Muslim Ambassador by the Message He Portrays, And the Role Model He Displays

By Dr. Metwalli B. Amer

This is a real story of a Muslim police officer, Captain Jamiel Altaheri, with the New York Police Department. Michelle Miller reported the story of the Captain and his family on the CBS TV station in New York city recently. I wish to share his story in this November issue of the Crescent Newspaper. He will be the keynote speaker at SALAM Banquet on Saturday, November 12 at its Community Center. Here is the story as narrated by the CBS reporter:



Out of 36,000 NYPD officers, there are about 1,000 Muslim officers. Capt. Jamiel Altaheri is one of them.



"Honestly inside me, I was destroyed, that my daughter has to experience that," Sameha said.

"Were you ready to really explain to her these big issues?" The CBS reporter, Miller asked.

"You have to be ready because you hear it all the time. I hear it in the bus, I hear it in the train, I hear it in the park. I hear it every time I go out," Sameha said. "We need ... to have respect for each other, love each other, accept each other. We don't need walls. We need bridges between us."

They encouraged Nadine and all of their children to look past the negativity.

"I want her to be proud of her identity. Proud to be an American, proud to be a Muslim," Altaheri said. "I don't see myself as any different than an American-Jew, American-Catholic, a gay American. I'm just American. So, I never introduce myself as Muslim. I think when they find out, they say, 'Wow. You're a cool guy, you're Muslim?' I'm like, 'You, Muslims are cool, too.'"

NYPD's Capt. Jamiel Altaheri (right) and his wife, Sameha

"I wear this uniform with great honor. I know the responsibility I have. Not only to myself, but to the community that I serve," he added.



"In order for us to do our job good, we have to have a better relationship with the community we serve," Altaheri said.

Altaheri has been protecting and serving New York City for 12 years. But it's not on the streets where he faces his biggest challenge, reports CBS News correspondent Michelle Miller.

His 10-year-old all-American daughter, Nadine, recently needed her own protection from a bully.

Capt. Jamiel Altaheri's daughter, Nadine

"A boy in my class said that Muslims are terrorists and ISIS and they hurt people," Nadine recounted. She said she didn't know what ISIS was.

Altaheri is one of the highest-ranking Muslims on the NYPD. At home, he and his wife, Sameha, first-generation Yemeni immigrants, faced the hate head on.

That's why in his free time he travels around the country speaking at mosques, synagogues and churches. One visit came in the aftermath of the Orlando shooting.

"Terrorism has no place in Islam. Islam is soft. Islam is gentle. Islam is loving. Islam is peace," Altaheri told a crowd.

The Bronx borough president recently recognized him for his work in the community.

"He exemplifies everything good that it means to be a Muslim, everything good that it means to be an immigrant, and everything good that it means to be an American," Ruben Diaz Jr. said about Altaheri.

The captain says words do make a difference. Even in these troubled times, he remains optimistic.

"One day she'll say, 'Dad, what did you do about it?' At least I can respond back to her and say, 'Yes, daughter. I did something,'" Altaheri said. In the end, he said we all could.