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April 5, 2011
Volume 170 | Issue 11

technewsit.com

TechNews

Student newspaper of Illinois Institute of Technology since 1928

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Islam and social justice

Discover Islam Week 2011: Discover, Experience, Learn

By **Tanim Taher**
TECHNEWS WRITER



Each of us lives in a society where we work, interact and live together. There is a certain set of rules and paradigms that make this society function but which, on the other hand, bind us together in harmony. We may come from very diverse backgrounds, we may have very different kinds of jobs and aspirations, but our society is well able to accommodate all such differences, and indeed, benefit from them, due to the prevalence of several cornerstone societal values. Respect and dignity for others and the idea of freedom are obvious social fundamentals that immediately come to mind. However, there is another very important social value that encompasses these and ensures that the rights of others - groups or individuals, are protected and not violated; and this is the idea of social justice. Social justice is that glue that

binds people in a society together in harmony - it is what ensures that people are able to lead an honorable, safe, dignified life.

The Muslim Students' Association at Illinois Institute of Technology (MSA@IIT) is organizing a series of lectures from April 4 - April 8 to shed some light on the very important idea of social justice. The goal is to show that the great religions of the world, including Islam, firmly support issues related to Social Justice, and also to give examples of how religiously inspired struggles for justice and equality transformed history and civilization for the better. Below is the list of talks that are being organized by MSA@IIT.

Yesterday, April 4, from 12:50 p.m. - 1:40 p.m. at Herman Hall Ballroom, there was an interfaith panel of students who read passages related to social justice from scriptures of different religions - Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. The idea was to show that although we come from different religious backgrounds, our religions are all related and united in one very important area among others - that is human rights, human dignity, and social justice. Today, on April 5, at the same time (12:50 p.m. - 1:40 p.m.) in the MTCC Ballroom, Professor at the Humanities Department at IIT, Catherine Bronson, will deliver a lecture entitled "Science, Civilization and Islam." A society based on the strong foundations of equality and social justice can achieve great milestones and transform human history. Professor Bronson will discuss how the Muslim Civilization between 600-1600 AD that was based on these very same principles transformed the realms of science and culture, and allowed for the flourishing of a very open, welcoming, diverse and just society where people from different races and religions could work together freely.

Then on Wednesday, April 6, we give you the opportunity to learn about the man who inspired and continues to inspire struggles for

DISCOVER ISLAM WEEK APRIL 4TH-8TH 2011 SCHEDULE			
APRIL 4TH MONDAY	APRIL 5TH TUESDAY	APRIL 6TH WEDNESDAY	APRIL 7TH THURSDAY
SOCIAL JUSTICE IN RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURES	SCIENCE, CIVILIZATION & ISLAM	MOHAMMAD AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	ISLAM 101
HERMAN HALL BALLROOM 12:50-1:40P.M	MTCC BALLROOM 12:50-1:40P.M	MTCC AUDITORIUM 12:50-1:40P.M	MTCC AUDITORIUM 12:50-1:40P.M
Various religious groups get together to promote diversity through commonality	Catherine Bronson Adjunct Faculty at IIT and Phd candidate at University of Chicago	Tahera Ahmed Northwestern University's first Muslim Chaplain	MSA OPEN HOUSE FARR HALL, 3RD FLOOR 1:00-2:00 P.M
FREE LUNCH EVERYDAY			
email: msa@iit.edu		web: msa.iit.edu	

justice and equality around the world. This man is Prophet Mohammad, the prophet of Islam - who by the grace of God transformed the most backward, oppressive and socially unfair city in just 22 years into a sophisticated, cultured and an uplifting society where justice and equality reigned everywhere. Prophet Mohammad is an inspiration to a billion plus Muslims, and his struggles for justice and equality resonate strongly even today - including some of the recent events in North Africa and Middle East. The title of the lecture is "Mohammad and Social Justice", and it will be given by Tahera Ahmed, who is a chaplain from Northwestern University. The lecture time is again 12:50 - 1:40 p.m. at the MTCC Auditorium.

If you like the first three lectures, and want to learn more about the faith that heavily emphasizes concepts of social justice, then you will also like the "Islam 101" lecture on Thursday, April 7, 12:40 p.m. - 1:50 p.m. in the

MTCC Auditorium. Islam encourages social justice right from the beginning, starting from home by taking care of your parents, and extends to even to those who are not related, such as neighbors, orphans and the needy. Islamic social justice is about a struggle against inequality. This lecture will touch some bases on core Islamic beliefs, and it will be delivered by Abdur Rahman Khan who is the Imam of the largest mosque in the Chicagoland area. The final event for the week is on Friday, April 8, and it is called "Mosque Open House." If you are interested to see how Muslims pray and what a mosque looks like, then you are invited to join us for the Friday prayer at the IIT mosque on third floor of Farr Hall, from 1:00 p.m. - 1:40 p.m.

There is free food at all these lectures and events listed above! We hope you will find the lectures interesting, relevant to today's time, and illuminating. So please come and tell your friends about it as well.

I PRO 335 : Lego Art

By **Tanya Prabhakar**
TECHNEWS WRITER



Lee, the leader of I PRO 335
(Photo courtesy Tanya Prabhakar)

I PRO 361 Lego Art is aimed at creating an after-school Lego Art program for socio-economically segregated youth students. This week I interviewed Lee Fink, the team leader of I PRO 361.

Where did you get the idea for I PRO 361?

The idea of "LEGO Art" originated from my own personal interest in the arts and expressing creativity. For the past few years I had always been hearing about the government budget cuts within arts programs. I wanted to start something that gave opportunities to young students who may not have had the chance to be creative. After some research into different arts programs, I decided to simplify the I PRO into something exciting. I eventually ran into many sites that were about modern-day LEGO artists and sculptures. As a child, I knew how easy it was to use the modulated LEGO bricks and the endless variety the bricks produced. Thus, the initial idea of "LEGO Art" was created.

What is the mission of your I PRO?

This program was initiated to address the decrease of government funding in youth art programs within Chicago. The I PRO seeks to

create an environment of creativity and positive experiences through the use of LEGO bricks.

What are the short-term and long-term goals of the group?

Our short term goals for I PRO 361 is to launch a pilot program of LEGO Art, find potential sponsors for LEGO Art and develop methods to give recognition to these youth students. Looking further down the road, the long term goals are to actually implement an after school program based off the pilot program. Additionally, the I PRO seeks to gain grants and sustainable partners for the future semesters.

What has the team accomplished so far?

I'm very happy with the team I have had the chance to work with this semester as we have progressed at a very steady and rapid pace. The most notable accomplishment thus far is the start of the pilot program of LEGO Art. Our I PRO has teamed up with the Boys and Girls Club here in Chicago to put together a two week long LEGO Art program (March 28 - April 8). Our educational development sub-team created a curriculum for each day of the program with help from IIT's Math and Sci-

ence Education Department. Additionally, our I PRO has developed many methods of recognition for these young artists from simple award prototypes, to a final exhibition of their work, and even an online virtual gallery. Our funding and sustainability sub-group have already gathered many grants and potential sponsors for LEGO Art and are awaiting the take-off of our pilot program.

What are you most looking forward to in the project?

I think I speak for the whole I PRO 361 team when I say that we are most excited about the pilot program which begins on March 28. The team has spent a lot of time defining what LEGO Art is and what the program should look like. The pilot program will be the realization of our vision. LEGO Art started up as a small simple idea to me and grew into something much larger. The success of our I PRO is due to the hard work put in by our team and I invite any IIT student that wants to share our passion to look into I PRO 361 for future semesters.