Living the Muslim-Enough Reality as a Muslim Woman Chaplain

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OVERVIEW

As a Muslim woman born and raised in Malaysia four decades ago, I came into a world that was about to move toward a global Islamization that would have a profound impact on my day-to-day faith practice. From the Saudi-backed and exported radical Islam that took off after the explosive rise of oil prices in the 1970s and 1980s, to the September 11th devastation that ignited the swift Western response of the global war on terror, to the rise and fall and recent return of the Taliban in the flux of the cosmic entanglement of American foreign policy—all have meaningfully influenced my Muslim identity.

On the communal level, I am deeply conscious of the preaching of the mosque I attend; the brand of Islamic education I entrust my children to; and the need for dexterous code-switching in the American public space. On the private level, especially as a chaplain, Islamism intimately runs up against my identity and pastoral formation. And the ultimate test of this identity collision transpires amidst the endorsement process required by the ACPE certified educator track.

The most difficult thing about being a Muslim woman chaplain was *believing* I could be one. Professionalizing the caregiving instinct that comes out of my vocational values or assumed gender role means not only that I am to learn the theological-scientific language of a Christian-rooted production but also that I am spotlighted to navigate (defend/propose/yield to) the Islamic context from which I come. So, when the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) could not endorse me as a Muslim chaplain,[1] on the one hand it was very tempting to relinquish the pursuit of chaplaincy: the leadership and its required education. On the other hand, I only had myself (my heart) to go by, which was saying that the pursuit of this goal was never for anything or anyone other than the Ultimate and that an endorsement rejection could not be a holdup.

This has been a perpetual experience of mine—trying on, acquiescing to, and then claiming my pastoral authority, from chaplain trainee to chaplain to my current status as a certified educator candidate. So, the question about margins is interesting because it is about whose margins I have been consigned to—and why.

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TERMINOLOGY: IMAM OR NOT IMAM, THAT IS THE QUESTION

I had two pastoral care visits in which I experienced the entanglement of the term "imam" in describing my role. The first was with the Jewish son of a recently deceased father who asked for a chaplain for companionship and connection. In between navigating his emotions regarding his sudden loss, the son was also curious about me, and he asked what my tradition was. When I said I was Muslim, he said, in jest, "Oh, you can't be an imam, can you?" I heard it with my ears, defaulting to wanting to be defensive, while recognizing the familiar stabbing pain in my heart that understood exactly what he meant. This was not a time for history lessons or personal disputation; I merely smiled and stayed present to his emotional ebb and flow.

The second instance was when I visited an Arabic-Muslim female patient with whom I had a long, intimate pastoral exchange. When her husband arrived to visit her, the patient was determined to explain who I was, and she resorted to using the word "imam," the term for clergy in the universal Islamic context.

In both instances, the person vibrationally recognized the work they saw unfolding before their eyes—a sacred work that held them close to the presence they recognized as the Holy. And in both instances I felt the familiar dread of shame, confusion, and denial. The shame originates from my own Islamic mystical ideal of self-annihilation[2] that purports that one's admission of oneself as the bearer of good tasks negates the service, rendering the work a prideful and self-important project.

But what do you do when the very role you hold has no easy religious or spiritual equivalent (title) in your tradition?

NAVIGATING OWNING MY CALL AND CLAIMING MY AUTHORITY AS A MUSLIM WOMAN CHAPLAIN

> What is call? "A God-shaped hole in the heart." "God's Glory sketched in the heart."
>
> —CPE students, fall 2023

Looking back on my life, I cannot say for sure which path directly impacted my journey to chaplaincy. Could it be arriving in the United States as a dewy-eyed undergraduate three weeks before September 11, 2001, a day that left the world reeling with shock, pain, and revenge? Could it be further back in my life as a teenager in a Malaysian Methodist high school where mornings began with chapel hymnals and a saree-wearing principal who iterated "Cleanliness is next to godliness" in morning assemblies? Or, could it be when I was at the Malaysian Islamic University and a class discussion turned my heart upside-down in existential wondering about what the point of everything was—and the only conclusion I came to that quieted my heart was my prayer to God to *help align my will to His will*.

Or, could it be all the above *plus* my own lived experience with a mother who taught me everything crucial to know about God? As I grew, my mother's spiritual teaching increasingly tightened its grip as her orbit moved ever closer psychically around me and God. As she claimed prophetic insights and maneuvered our lives based on such truth, a lunar eclipse would best depict the God-Mom relationship I was in. She was the earth that parked herself between the sun and me, the moon, obscuring the sun's ever-generous light. I willed myself to be in the shadow of her large words, personality, and realities. I could hardly breathe, but to defy my mother was to incur wrath onto my heart that I could not bear. I recognize now that my mother and I were emotionally fused in a way that gave a gloss of relational closeness. But she had all the power and I kept flaming it, keeping in my heart the prophetic words: "Heaven lies beneath the feet of your mother."[3]

As Kathrin Asper writes, "Expressed in mythological terms . . . [it was like my mother was] looking for paradise [here on earth]." My mother's parenting and spiritual teaching was always aimed toward something meaningful and big promises of "what's to come." There was always a "grandiosity and a striving for idealization" that I am drawn to and perhaps seek for myself. And as her orbiting closed in, her "ego not only [became increasingly] rigid but also brittle and prone to fragmentation."[4] My parental programming kept me compliant to my mother's increasing paranoia (a concept I only learned about later). I followed orders to cut off relationships while preserving the one relationship I considered most important— my mother.

Was my journey to chaplaincy foreseeable because I know what it feels like to not have a Self, to have one's life ripped from underneath one by grief, immense trauma, compounded hardships, and many more unimaginable sufferings that humans are promised?[5]

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I found CPE, and it also found me, in the form of a program requirement for a seminary graduate certificate program for Imam and Muslim Community Leadership.[6] Even as I was grateful for the financial scholarship the program provided, the certificate title indicated that I could only fit the latter half of the certificate designation because *imams must be men*.[7] And although everything felt right about CPE, introducing myself as a chaplain was jarring, not only because I had no idea what it meant but also because I had absolutely no context for the title and role of chaplains.

But move I did because moving was all I could do while shedding my old skin and growing a new one.[8] To use the trauma theology of *sa'i* that derives from the Arabic verb *sa'a*, meaning "to walk, to strive or to pursue," s*a'i* refers to the ritual that commemorates the actions of Hajar, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim, in searching for water for her son Isma'il. Hajar walked back and forth seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa, and honoring her act is one of the integral Islamic pilgrimage rites of Hajj and Umrah in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The "hills" I walked among were a life plan
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community for older adults, a low-income housing community with a significant number of Afghan special immigrant visa holders, and a Level 1 trauma hospital, always with seminary as my water sanctuary. I am referring here to the same *sa'i* ritual commemorating Hajar and Isma'il, whose desert tribulation concluded with water springing out of the ground underneath Ismail's feet, the ZamZam Well located within Masjid al-Haram, the Islamic holy site of Ka'aba, or the House of God in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Seminary has been my water sanctuary due to the community of learning, interfaith dialogue, and nurturing, just as ZamZam Well has been a place of refuge for pilgrims. I live in one of the counties with the largest, most diverse Muslim populace within the "DMV" area of Northern Virginia, and I thought that until I was accepted within the Muslim community as a "Muslim" chaplain, it was not a crown nor a title I could truly wear.

Even as I was skilling up in my spiritual caregiving, the doors to religious institutions were not cracking open.[9] But perhaps my own ideal version of religious institutions as unmovable entities that open and close their doors as they please is a myth[10] because, in reality, I was building relationships with known religious authorities in the area. During my time at the hospital, I consulted with imams for patients and families, I liaised with local mosque authorities for funeral and other religious services, I solicited a local *khatib* (a person who delivers sermons) to provide Friday sermons during the month of Ramadan in the midst of pandemic that were broadcasted at the hospital. While I may have benefited from the ripple effect of these relationships with colleagues,[11] the purpose of these relationships was always to benefit community members and faith practitioners who needed care and loving guidance in their time of need.

Stepping up to the plate as a religious authority, as a chaplain, looked mightily different than the leadership easily identifiable at mosques or Islamic schools, and I also feared that I might be a fool who only looked wise in her own eyes. This tension is very debilitating, and no amount of action-reflection-healing works until I myself, warts and all, simply have to bear the burden, like Hajar, who said: "O Ibrahim, will you go and leave us in this valley in which there are no people and nothing?" She said that to him several times, and he did not answer her. Then she said to him: "Is it Allah Who has commanded you to do this?" He said: "Yes." She said: "Then He will not forsake us."[12] In bearing the burdens of this chaplaincy work that is not easy to translate in an Islamic context, my own self affirmation, self-consolation, self-profession, confession, and declaration is that God is the most crucial and self-protecting measure to live by, and I only enter and continue with this spiritual caregiving work under the purview of God alone.

While that might be consolation for my spiritual development, what happens when the powers that be gatekeep the profession through the required endorsement process?

WHOSE MARGIN AND WHY?: THE NOT-MUSLIM-ENOUGH REALITY

> If you put shame in a petri dish, it needs three things to grow: secrecy, silence, and judgment.
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> —Brené Brown[13]

The endorsement letter ISNA sent me uses the sandwich method of placing the negative in between two positives. It began:

> In terms of your strength, you bring a depth of empathy to the patients and staff in the hospital where you work and a heightened awareness of the underserved within the institution. You engage and connect with them completely without judgment and present yourself as a mirror for their emotional pain.

And then it went for the jugular:

> Although you speak English well, you are slightly challenged in terms of colloquialism—which is culturally nuanced therefore presenting you with a critical cultural competency challenge. *Religiously, you lack basic Islamic knowledge.* Your Islamic knowledge is less incidental and more sporadic and does not meet the requisite standards for a Muslim chaplain.

It went on to spell out where I lack knowledge, privileging knowledge of jurisprudence and the like, proposing to rectify the matter as follows:

> You can be considered for endorsement in 24–36 months if you fulfill and demonstrate the conditions below:
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> 1. Basic understanding of Islam and basic knowledge of Fiqh [jurisprudence]
> 2. Formal classes in the Islamic sciences to gain basic working knowledge of [creeds, jurisprudence, prophetic biography], Qur'an Memorization, & Hadith studies [studies of the statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad]. We recommend [two institutions].
> 3. Mentorship with an experienced Healthcare Muslim Chaplain

When I received the letter, I was about to meet with the interview panel for the role I needed the endorsement for: certified educator student/candidate. Since I was following in the footsteps of only a handful Muslim spiritual caregivers who are ACPE certified educators, I thought the endorsing institution would recognize the implications of such a trajectory. I felt a gamut of emotions when received the letter, including gratitude that the endorsement denial was not impeding a real economic need for income, as it would, say, if I had been a single mother with dependents.

If Islamophobia is systemic prejudice against Islam or Muslims, what should one call subtle and overt microaggressions by the same faith practitioners against their own kind? As the saying goes, "All skinfolk ain't kinfolk."[14] It is as if I was expecting the rejection because that would fit the Islamic experiences I rub up against, yet I was still holding on to the yearning and hope to be seen as a Muslim leader in my own right.

IS RAGE AN OPTION?

> To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a state of rage almost, almost all of the time.
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> —James Baldwin, 1961, on being Black in America[15]

What should I say to an institution that declares I am lacking in religious knowledge, when it is religiosity that takes me to each room to visit patients and families; it is faith in our shared humanity that humbles me to honor staff for their continuous hard work; and it is the prophetic memory that reminds me of what is ultimately the point, which is to be good to one another and to want for another what we want for ourselves. How do I speak to such religiosity that is not packaged neatly in high theology or jurisprudence knowledge? To be a Muslim woman in relation to the institutional faith community is to be confused, angry, and deeply hurt 85 percent of the time, especially when pressured to "Islamically perform." I have lived much of my life apologizing too much or not apologizing enough for never seeming to play the Muslim part well.

The truth of the matter is that, until I express my rage out of my real rejection and colossal shame, I cannot begin to access the emotions underneath the rage, which are immense sadness and fear. My endorsement rejection taught me

- to feel shame about my story,
- to hide my story,
- to pretend I am okay, and
- that it is not religious to be vulnerable.

I want to see the story of Hajar and the *sa'i* ritual as a foretelling of the perpetual-and-real time existence of margins and those who live in the margins. If *tawaf* is ideal worship in God-remembrance in circling around the House of God built by the hands of father-and-son,[16] *sa'i* is the human condition of pain and suffering and the relentless submission by whatever means in meeting that ideal. The searing desert sand underneath Hajar's feet as she ran back and forth among the hills, seeking water for herself so both she and her baby might live, was my own "awful rowing"[17] toward God. But row I must, because if God is not the point, what is?

"LET'S MEET IN THE PARK UNDERNEATH THE TREES"[18]: WELCOME TO THE MARGINS

> Catherine: It doesn't matter why he did it or how.
> Aunt Elizabeth: Of course it does. *That is where the human being lives, in the how and why, not the should.* If you cannot metabolize your pure ideas of love and philosophy with *blood and sinew and f**d-up humans who do their best and fail but try to love and serve you . . .* [emphasis added].

> Catherine: Everything in me wants to f**king kill him.
> Aunt Elizabeth: Not everything. Or you wouldn't have to hit yourself in the face.
> —*The Great*, Season 2, Episode 10

The endorsing institution, ISNA, missed the opportunity to model and trailblaze the way to include the hungry and the tired within its domain. My endorsement experience taught me that, in certain religious quarters, being religious can only be defined starkly, not in the fullness of life evident in how I have shown up by being and staying Muslim despite the cards I have been dealt.

I cannot be marginalized if I refuse to accept the patriarchal voice of Islam as *the only* legitimate Islamic voice. I refuse to abide by the game of labels and binaries and have begun to see the ISNA letter as a badge of honor that I am indeed where I am supposed to be, laboring toward what I was meant to practice. The patriarchal voice *is* valid and has always historically existed, but the tradition is expansive and inclusive of a myriad of (Islamic) faith expressions. I contend that we Muslims all want the same thing at the heart of the faith: to witness and be witnessed, to know and be known by the One and Only.

I aim to lift up the "living Muslim documents"[19] within the ACPE: Muslim CPE students, Muslim certified educator candidates, and Muslim certified educators. We are a reality. Our stories are diverse, but our tentativeness is universal.[20] Even in the margins, I seek spaces where I can inch or run toward the center with confidence and hope. The ACPE has been that space for me, and I implore certified educators with Muslim students to recognize the hardship and struggle in the stories these students may tell, the realities and myths they may swirl in, as they find their way through their calling. Encouraging aspiring Muslim chaplains to hold their own in their authority is a benefit to them and to us—their authority formation may remind us why we do this work in the first place.

Until ISNA accepts chaplaincy *not* in an Imam-context but in a specialized *Elder*[21] context that has something to teach and can expand one's religious and spiritual maturity, they will repeat this misalignment of values. Meanwhile, the growing number of Muslim chaplains in need of endorsement will remain at risk of facing rejection rather than being taken seriously for their own religious authority.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? EVERYTHING

> He taught Adam the name of all things.
> —Quran (chapter 2, The Cow: 31)

There *is* another name for a woman in religious authority—chaplain, chaplain educator. Its religiosity is located in the work it entails—connection, hope, devotion—that

originates from and leads to the life source that springs out from each of us. I am Muslim because of the deep longing within that sings praises at every turn in the awe and wonder of being alive—because I have lived through the trauma of being partially or not alive. And to have the chance to live again, fully, completely, with increasing access to my range of emotions, *is* wholly and religiously spiritual.

I am my mother's daughter; she teaches me even today the importance of healing in right relationships. Being in the midst of a community that takes such care in training educators has been an eye-opening, enriching experience that I feel blessed to be a part of. I am learning to show up in my skin, my body, my spirit through this educator process so that I may be the educator I aim to be for aspiring students to come. That objective is so palpable. And I am grateful for the alternative organization, Muslims for Progressive Values, that opened the way for my current opportunity.[22]

As a woman of faith wearing the religious authority hat, the religious obstacle I have come across is that there is the Islam (practiced and imparted) as an ideal and the Islam (practiced and imparted) with the imagery of an umbrella that covers and protects any and all who need respite from the searing sun or torrential rain. The former keeps the tradition alive and well, ensuring its long-lasting beauty and serenity; the latter comforts and holds the promise that the ideal is achievable for all. The two are not in contention; each is constantly supporting the other. And when the former is being sisterly in guiding and advising, the latter asks to slow the quick judgment and unashamedly appeals for the protection of the umbrella.

In the story of Hajar, I wonder if we hear the voice of Sarah and feel her presence, not merely as the historical recounting of one who experienced envy and was protective of her household and lineage but also as one who equally exercised her agency of love, justice, and concern for her sister-wife companion, Hajar, and Hajar's son, Isma'il. Can we see these mothers of two prophets model holy surrendering and flourishing, despite their dissonance?

The story of Hajar and Isma'il, Sarah and Ishak need not be a story of divergence but one of equal hope for the other's realities. I have grown from this mis-endorsement, as I have also taken ISNA's recommendation earnestly. Because I do believe our hearts seek to travel the same path—toward the wellspring waters, for the hope of closeness to The Bestower (of the wellspring).

NOTES

[1] I use "could not" rather than "would not" here in relation to ISNA not endorsing me. I believe that it is more of a case of misaligned values or interpretation of Islamic leadership representation than an outright dismissal of my personhood. There is also the issue of who makes up ISNA's endorsing committee; if the individuals have met the basic requirement of U.S. professional chaplaincy: a qualifying undergraduate degree; 72 hours of qualifying

graduate education; and four units/1600 clinical hours of clinical pastoral education (CPE). ISNA is one of the two Islamic endorsing bodies recognized by the Department of Defense at this time as it was "grandfathered in" as a religious organization allowed to endorse religious ministry professionals as chaplains for departments of the military (personal correspondence with the executive director of the Armed Forces Chaplains Board, Col. Dale Marlowe, June 2023). Perhaps I should highlight here that being grandfathered in as an official endorser for the Department of Defense is an honor and a responsibility that demands the judicious use of authority.

[2] Self-annihilation is a Quranic concept based on the following verses: *"All things in creation suffer annihilation [fana] and there remains the face of the Lord in its majesty and bounty"* (chapter 55, The Beneficent: 26-27). Islamic mysticism uses the Arabic word *fana*, meaning "passing away, ceasing to exist, or to annihilate," as the nullification of the ego-consciousness toward the experience of union with God as the ultimate goal of life on earth. This is starkly divergent from the Western philosophy of self-actualization in Maslow's hierarchy of needs that refers to realizing one's potential as achieving the highest level of psychological development.

[3] This is an authentic saying of the Prophet Muhammad. It is narrated that "a companion came to the Prophet and said: "O Messenger of Allah! I want to go out and fight (in Jihad) and I have come to ask for your advice." The Prophet said: "Do you have a mother?" Companion said: "Yes." The Prophet said: "Then stay with her, for Paradise is beneath her feet" (Sunan an-Nasa'i, *The Book of Jihad*, hadith 3104).

[4] Kathrin Asper, *The Abandoned Child Within: On Losing and Regaining Self-Worth*, trans. by Sharon E. Rooks (New York: Fromm International, 1993), 62–63, 65. Kathrin Asper is a Jungian analyst who lectures at the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich, Switzerland.

[5] In the Quran, God says: *"For indeed, We alone created humans from a drop of mixed fluids, in order to test them, so We made them hear and see"* (chapter 76, The Man: 2); or, *"We will certainly test you with a touch of fear and famine and loss of property, life and crops. Give good news to those who patiently endure—who say, when struck by a disaster, 'Surely to Allah we belong and to Him we will all return'"* (chapter 2, The Cow: 155).

[6] Now a defunct program, it was offered at the former Hartford Seminary as a joint scholarship graduate certificate with the International Institute of Islamic Thought, Northern Virginia as continuing education for local imams and Muslim community leaders "that extends further than imam-hood" (this phrase is how I describe my understanding of the program's name and intention, based on personal correspondence with the former program director, Timur Yuskaev, in January 2018). However, I never personally resolved what "Muslim community leadership" meant. I did not want to lift up what seemed like an arbitrary conferment of the scholarship award.

[7] This feels tongue in cheek yet holds true historically within the Islamic tradition. Mattson writes, "The term 'imam' literally means 'leader' in the Arabic language . . . to signify a person who is a leader in some religious field or practice . . . [but] also applies to the person who performs the function of leading a congregational prayer." Ingrid Mattson, "Can a Woman be an Imam? Debating Form and Function in Muslim Women's Leadership" (*On Being*, March 6, 2008). Clarke and Mattson highlight the reality of "woman imams" or "ordained female ritual experts," known as *anu ahong* in China, who guided "women's mosques" that first developed in

the late eighteenth century. Lynda Clarke, "Women in Islam," in *Women and Religious Traditions*, edited by Leona M. Anderson and Pamela Dickey Young (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Ingrid Mattson, "Can a Woman Be an Imam?" Still, women's mosques and the women imam phenomenon in China is a cultural development of a minority populace's needs that does not address women's religious authority in mixed-gender public spaces in North America. At the end of the day, the traditional Islamic values that I subscribe to position men as prayer leaders. This is why it is implicitly understood that "imams" (as congregational prayer leaders) must be men.

[8] I have various images for the CPE action-reflection-(new) action model of learning. "Shedding one's old skin and growing a new one" is one of the images that fits the sort of transformative learning I see CPE-immersive training to be.

[9] In my experience, when mosques advertise for a chaplain position, they require Islamic sciences proficiency beyond the standard chaplaincy requirements (CPE, master's degree in divinity or theology). Perhaps what constitutes "Islamic sciences" is the challenge. Creed, jurisprudence, prophetic biography, Qur'anic memorization, and the reports and actions of Prophet Muhammad are understood to be Islamic sciences. I wonder whether Islamic sciences could also extend to include family systems, empathic listening, trauma-informed spiritual care, or even validation (theory) and dementia. Or, could these sciences be considered religious in their own right and merit their own standing?

[10] This is taken from Edward P. Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019). Wimberly writes about submyths, or "lesser stories" that "emerge from our experiences as human beings . . . [and] sometimes are so powerful that they block the influence of the ongoing call" (p. 7). The myths of rejection, powerlessness, and being a loner that I tell myself surround (Islamic) religious institutions absolutely tie into the myth of perfection, of my working hard to perform, to "fit in religiously."

[11] I do not know how true the feeling of mutuality was for the Islamic authorities I liaised with, but I certainly had to come to terms with it myself, on my own, to be effective in my chaplaincy work for patients, community members, and families.

[12] Narrated by Ibn 'Abbas, in Sahih al-Bukhari, 3364, Sunnah.com, https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3364.

[13] Brené Brown, *Listening to Shame*, TED talk [YouTube], 190:06, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psN1DORYYV0. The quotation can be heard at minute 19:06 in the video.

[14] This is a variation of a quote attributed to Zora Neale Hurston.

[15] James Baldwin, *The Negro in American Culture* [YouTube], 1961, thepostarchive, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNpitdJSXWY.

[16] Derived from the Arabic word *Tauf*, which means "to go round and round," *Tawaf* is a ritual of encircling the Ka'aba or House of God seven times in a counterclockwise direction and is a fundamental part of both the major pilgrimage (Hajj) and the minor pilgrimage (Umrah). Islamic tradition identifies the Ka'aba as being built by the father and son Prophet Ibrahim and Isma'il, as in the Quran: *"And (remember) when Ibrahim raised the foundation of the House with Isma'il, (both praying): 'Our Lord! Accept (this) from us. You are indeed the All-Hearing, All-Knowing'"* (chapter 2, The Cow: 127).

[17] This is the title of poet Anne Sexton's (1928–1974) eighth collection of poetry that centers on the theme of dying, which she wrote after meeting with a Roman Catholic priest who told her "God is in your typewriter." This gave Sexton the desire and the willpower to continue living and writing, up until she ended her life by carbon monoxide poisoning.

[18] This is my own phrase recalling Rumi's invitation: "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing, / There is a field. I'll meet you there./ When the soul lies down in that grass, / The world is too full to talk about. / Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*, / Doesn't make any sense." *The Essential Rumi*, trans. Coleman Barks and John Moyne (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995).

[19] This phrase recalls Anton Boisen's coined term "the living human document" that is the basis of CPE's intensive study of the human experience.

[20] See *Mantle of Mercy: Islamic Chaplaincy in North America*, edited by Muhammad A. Ali, Omer Bajwa, Sondos Kholaki, and Jaye Starr (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2022). The thirty essays in this collection describe the experiences of Muslim chaplains in various settings, their faith callings, and their tender religious and spiritual approaches to caregiving from an Islamic consciousness.

[21] I am trying out what kind of leadership chaplain-educator can take on, and Elders as "knowledge holders and custodians of Indigenous community's knowledges…who are responsible for transmitting that knowledge to future generations," taken from George J. Sefa Dei, Wambui Karanja and Grace Erger, *Elders' Cultural Knowledges and the Question of Black African Indigeneity in Education* (Switzerland: Springer, 2022), fits at this time, God Willing.

[22] Muslims for Progressive Values was founded almost two decades ago to address situations like the one this article lifts up. Muslims for Progressive Values seeks to be an endorser recognized by the Department of Defense to provide a healthy, wide-ranging avenue for Muslim chaplains seeking endorsement.