Zoroastrian Avesta Choir Participates in Annual Interfaith Concert

As in years past, the Zoroastrian Avesta Choir (an intergenerational group comprised of ZAMWI members) was proud to participate in the Annual Interfaith Concert at Washington Hebrew Congregation in Washington DC organized by the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington DC. Click here to view video compilation from concert. For more information: https://ifcmw.org/. Photo by Farzad Aidun.

An Evening with Bapsi Sidhwa and Teresa Russo

Two distinguished speakers, with a long list of credentials and recognition, hosted a fascinating evening for the Zoroastrian community in Houston. On Friday, October 27, a joint program featuring Bapsi Sidhwa, Houston’s internationally acclaimed author and playwright was organized by the ZAH (Zoroastrian Association of Houston) Library Committee. Ms. Russo had come down to Houston to share her work on compiling Bapsi Sidhwa’s letters and essays into a book she will publish.

Teresa Russo quoted from some of Bapsi’s writings, clearly impressed with the long reach of Bapsi’s contacts and interesting correspondence with people from all walks of life. Bapsi’s essays, on the other hand, revealed facets of Bapsi’s background, her upbringing, and her broad range of interests and accomplishments.

Bapsi Sidhwa, who did not need any introduction to her many admirers and followers in the community, recalled her childhood days, her struggles with health issues as a child, and how physical limitations inadvertently helped her to become a voracious reader, and ultimately a writer herself. She talked about events that got her started in her writing career, and remarked that a writer of fiction has to be an innate story-teller.

The audience enjoyed both speakers and showed their interest by asking many insightful questions. It was a fascinating evening, an unusual event made memorable by the expertise and sincerity of both the distinguished guests.
The 7th Parliament of the World’s Religions will take place in Toronto, November 1-7, 2018. The Parliament of the World’s Religions (PWR) was created to cultivate harmony among the world’s religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world.

Since the historic 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago, modern Parliaments have attracted participants from more than 200 diverse religious, indigenous, and secular beliefs and more than 80 nations to its international gatherings in Chicago (1993), Cape Town (1999), Barcelona (2004), Melbourne (2009), and Salt Lake City (2015). These Parliament events are the world’s oldest, largest, and most inclusive gatherings of the global interfaith movement.

Zoroastrians have been represented in all the Parliaments both in the opening and closing sessions, in panel discussions and individual presentations. Toronto is also the home of the largest concentration of Zarathushtis outside India.

FEZANA will be actively participating in this Parliament. For that purpose, an adhoc committee of the following individuals has been appointed to assimilate and coordinate work on all aspects of FEZANA presentations at the event: Ardeshir Irani, Dolly Dastoor, Aban Rustomji, Afreed Mistry, Armaity Anandasagar, Kersi Shroff, Rustom Bhopti, Zerbanoo Gifford, Arzan Sam Wadia (Consultant), Rohinton Rivetna (Consultant), Homi D. Gandhi (Ex-Officio).

The above committee will be co-chaired by Ardeshir Irani and Dolly Dastoor. Arzan Sam Wadia will act as Consultant for all Digital, Design and IT aspects. Rohinton Rivetna will guide us as Consultant on program presentations with his experience at several past Parliaments.

All interested attendees are welcomed and encouraged to register: https://parliamentofreligions.org/. FEZANA will submit a program proposal by March 1, 2018. Kindly send your proposal to the co-chairs, Ardeshir Irani (anirani2@yahoo.com) and Dolly Dastoor (dollydastoor@sympatico.ca) on or before December 31, 2017. Successful programs will be announced by May 1, 2018. Regular programs will be 45, 60, and 90 minutes in length.

Program types may include: Lecture or oral presentation, Academic paper, Seminar Panel discussion, Religious or spiritual observance, Workshop, Training session. Artistic performance Film. They should preferably focus on: the broad critical issues of justice, peace and sustainability; critical constituencies of Indigenous Peoples, The Next Generations, and Women and Girls; the signature document of the Parliament of the World’s Religions, Declaration Toward a Global Ethic.

In addition, each morning there will be an assembly of three hours during which time there will be no other session. The assemblies are on Indigenous people, Women, Climate, Justice /Global Ethics, Violence. Each day will also feature Major international speakers, each day will close with a plenary.
The parliament will also provide a hospitality room where we, as Zoroastrians can provide small Iranian and Parsi refreshments. There will be an open space for us to display books, artifacts, exchange information, etc.

This is our chance to showcase our community and religion in a very positive light. So, we encourage you to register, attend and make presentations to make the Zarathushti presence felt.

For further questions, suggestions and to get contact:
Ardeshir Irani & Dolly Dastoor, (Trustee &Vice-Chair 7th PWR 2018)  
Co-Chairs, 7th PWR Ad-hoc Committee

Welcome to the New ZAMWI Board

FEZANA congratulates the new representatives on the ZAMWI (Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Washington DC, Inc) Board, and looks forward to working with them in the future.
Anne Khademian (President)  
Jamshid Parsinezhad (Vice President)  
Behnaz Mistry (Treasurer)  
Jamshid Dehghanian (Joint Treasurer)  
Mehnaz Marolia (Secretary)  
Pegah Emami (Joint Secretary)  
Mehrdad Izadyar (Trustee at Large)

FEZANA Nominates New Rep for GWG  
Demographics Monitoring and Resettlement

In response to a request made to all regional representatives at the last Global Working Group (GWG) meeting in Hong Kong, FEZANA is very proud to nominate Meher Panthaky of Toronto, Canada, as the FEZANA Representative for Demographics Monitoring and Resettlement of Zarathushtis in North America.

PROFILE OF MEHER PANTHAKY

I was born in Mumbai India, studied law, married to Ervad. Jal Panthaky and came to Montreal Canada in 1967, moved to Toronto in 1983. I have 4 children and four grandchildren.

Ever since arriving to Canada I was involved in the community events, I am also one of the founding director of OZCF and has served on and off on the board several times.

I have worked on the fund-raising/entertainment committees both for ZSO and OZCF, has successfully produced several Parsi Gujarati plays and raise funds not only for the Zoroastrian community but also for Gujarati and Jain communities.

I am passionate in helping new immigrants and from last several years I provide voluntary services in helping, guiding and assisting new arrivals in Toronto to find jobs, affordable residence, involve them in the community events and making them welcome and comfortable. I also help not just Zoroastrians but members of any community in searching for employment. I was also involved in fundraising for the Dekpor School Development Organization in Africa and very passionate about helping Apne Aap Women's Collective- an organization in Mumbai India who helps to rescue girl child of the ladies working in Red Light District and give them a new life and identity. I thrive on busy lifestyle and enjoy the company of my family and friends and helping people.
Interfaith Committee Proposal for Coordinated Community Service

Zoroastrians have a long tradition of community service, charity and ecology or caring for the environment. Our forefathers were famously charitable -- they built schools, hospitals, orphanages, public institutions and dharamsalas, not only for other needy Zoroastrians, but also for members of other communities.

Our prophet Zarathushtra was the world’s first ecologist and our religion actively preaches to preserve the purity of the elements -- earth, air, fire and water. In fact we have festivals that celebrate the elements eg. Ava Parab celebrates water, Adar Parab celebrates fire. The ideals of charity & ecology are as important or even more important in today’s world than they were a hundred or even two hundred years ago. Look at the new FEZANA logo -- it symbolizes caring for the environment!!

As Zarathushtis we need to step up to the plate to do our fair share to make this world a better place. And what better place to start than right in our own communities where we live and work.

We know that most of us do a lot of community service regularly, but wouldn’t it be truly awesome if Zarathushtis across North America and even possibly from around the world came together on the same day in acts of service?

Therefore, we are proposing that FEZANA recognize 2 days in the year when the whole Zarathushti diaspora can come together in service of mankind & the environment.

The first is the “Season of Sharing.” We would pick a date between September 21st (International Day Of Prayer & Peace) and October 2nd (International Day Of Non Violence). This coincides with Mehregan the festival of harvest and thanksgiving. Meher Yazad symbolizes Love and Commitment. As part of our celebration of Mehregan, we can organize an activity that involves charity and community service. It can be a food drive (most communities have food drives leading up to Thanksgiving), a fundraiser walk or run, an event at a local food pantry packing food for the needy, working at a soup kitchen, or helping out at a retirement community to name a few.

The second is the “Season of Caring.” It can coincide with Earth Day on April 22. We can also symbolically link it to Rooz E Derehktkari, the ancient Iranian day of caring for trees which happens in spring. The activities can include any project aimed at improving the environment like planting trees, cleaning up a park or nature area or getting involved in a conservation project.

By connecting the Season of Sharing with Mehregan, and the Season of Caring with Rooz E Derehktkari we can teach our younger generation how our ancestors also had the same lofty ideals that we espouse today. These activities can be organized by the students of local Zarathushti religion classes in each region. It can be organized to involve the local Zoroastrian community or it can be done as an Interfaith event which would be a great opportunity to educate people of different religious backgrounds about our faith and its principles.

There are many small groups of FEZANA or even individual families or individuals who are not close to any significant Zoroastrian communities. We encourage them to participate as individuals in this effort -- Every single Zarathushiti is empowered to serve. And what better way to live up to our motto “Hamazor Hama Asho Bad” meaning “May we all be united in strength and righteousness.

For more information, please contact Maneck Bhujwala (mbhujwala@socal.rr.com) or Ardeshir Irani (anirani2@yahoo.com)
The annual 2017 Unity Walk was held on Sunday 10 September 2017 on Embassy Row Washington D.C.

The theme of the walk this year was "Know Your Neighbor," reflecting words from the scriptures of various faith traditions who participated. Secular Humanists, agnostics, and atheists were all welcome. Spirituality abounds in every human being!

The Interfaith event attracted close to one thousand participants from civil society and was widely covered, locally and internationally in Television and Radio broadcasts.

The opening prayer for the Unity Walk at the Washington Hebrew Congregation, this year was shared by newly ordained Mobedyar Hormuzd Katki, Ph. D., standing in the center, dressed in white, seen with some of the Zoroastrian participants, young and old.

Included in the photo are President Mojgan Irandokht Aryaban; Vice President, Manijeh Aidun of Sazman-e-Zanaan (women’s organization of ZAMWI), and the Co-Directors of the Religious Education Avesta Class for children, Mina Aidun and Rubina Patel. Rabbi Gerry Serotta, Executive Director of the Interfaith Conference, (www.ifcmw.org) is on the right, bottom row. Photo Credit: Farzad Aidun

Apple bagging service project for the 2017 Unity Walk on 10 September 2017. The finished bags of apples were provided to food pantries for the homeless in Washington DC.

[LEFT] Urvaksh Patel, with children of the Avesta Class, at the Catholic Annunciation Church on Massachusetts Ave NW (aka Embassy Row) in Washington DC. The farm produce was gleaned and provided by the Society of St. Andrew.

To find out more about the Society of Andrew and its hunger relief programs, visit: http://endhunger.org/
Looking for Emerging Leaders to Feature in Upcoming FEZANA Journal Issue

Zarathushtis in North America are doing very well, with many Young Adults on the threshold of Leadership positions. The FEZANA Journal would like to feature these Emerging Leaders in its Spring 2018 issue. I have been requested to guest edit this issue and accepted the challenge. We plan on featuring two levels of leadership (a) those under 35 yrs and (b) those between 35 – 45 yrs. If you would like to be considered for inclusion please contact Edul Daver, eduldaver@gmail.com; 908-397-4443. Also, if you know of someone that should be considered please forward their name and e-mail address.

We plan on profiling perhaps 15 movers and shakers who will no doubt make our community proud in the not too distant future.

Your help to make this issue a success is much appreciated.

Thanks,
Edul Daver
eduldaver@gmail.com

Coming Soon… Fall 2017 Issue of FEZANA Journal: Science and Spirituality

Nature raged over our continent this year. Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, specially Houston with all its destructive force. Then came Hurricane Irma, caused havoc in Florida, followed by forest fires in British Columbia and California. These were all humbling experiences. We have first person accounts from Zarathushtis who went through that trauma, and shared how the community came together. It brought out the best in us, our humanity and spirituality unfolded itself in helping our neighbor.

Our Fall issue is written by scientific experts in their own fields who all practiced spirituality as interpreted through the Gathas, assembled by our guest editor Dr Ervad Jehan Bagli, a renown scientist and practicing scholarly priest. Dr Jamshed Goshtasbi and his daughter explained the meaning of service in the Gathas and how that transcends spirituality. Dr Soroosh Sorooshian and his son Dr Armin Sorooshian explain how the Gathas help them understand the laws of nature, Shirin Cama urges her fellow physicians to incorporate spirituality in diagnosis and treatment. Dr Bagli himself espouses the value of spirituality in the healing process, Dr Lovji Cama talks of Spirituality Zoroastrianism and science and other authors share thought-provoking and engaging insights as well.

Subscribe now to receive your issue, at https://fezana.org/publication/fj

2018 FEZANA AGM DATES and PROGRAM BROAD OVERVIEW

For participants to book their flights etc, please find below a very broad conceptual program of the 2018 FEZANA AGM:

Host: California Zoroastrian Center

Thursday April 26, 2018
9:00AM – 1:00PM
Pre AGM Session Hosted by North American Mobeds Council

2:00-5:00PM
Panel Discussion and Brainstorming for FEZANA’s participation at Global Interfaith Events in 2018

Friday April 27, 2018
8:30 AM: FEZANA AGM Begins

Saturday April 28, 2018
8:30 AM; FEZANA AGM Continues

Sunday April 29, 2018
8:30 AM: FEZANA AGM continues and shall end at noon.

1:00 PM: Post-AGM Sessions TBD

More details to come (including accommodation etc) as they become available.

Contact vp@fezana.org for questions.
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