

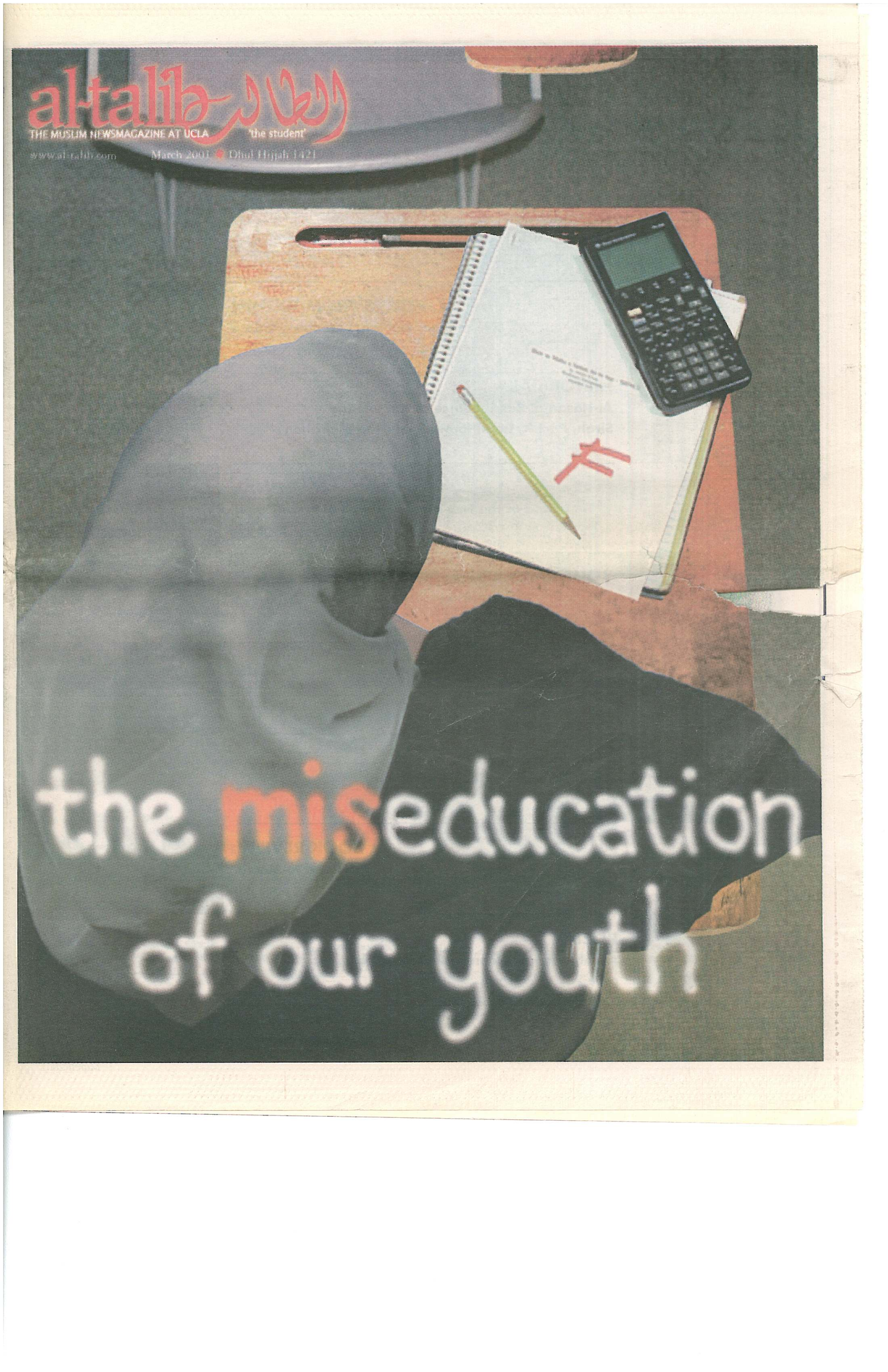
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al-talib

THE MUSLIM NEWSMAGAZINE AT UCLA

'the student'

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the **mis**education
of our youth

Modern Education

questioning our school system



Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon his noble soul) said that children are born upon a *fitrah*, a natural state inclined towards Allah Most High, that is molded and altered as they mature into adults. Today's public education system is not one which nurtures that *fitrah*, but rather, it deconstructs and completely transfigures it until little of our children's divine light remains.

In fact, public "education" is not education at all, but a form of regulated indoctrination. The bell rings, students flock to class. The bell rings again, students rush out for lunch. This, educators will tell you, is preparation for the "real world," the world of labor and the job market. School is not a place to think creatively about the world, to challenge the presentation of war and history as written by imperialist powers, or to initiate a change in communal opinions about Mexico, Afghanistan, Palestine, or any other part of the world. It is not wisdom, enlightenment, or development of the soul that is taught in these institutions, but the fastest way to become popular. Young people are taught to market themselves, reinforcing America's consumer-producer society (otherwise known as "truth, justice and the American way"). The only motivation to learn now is to sell your knowledge later.

Free your mind by asking questions, yes – but don't ask the wrong kind. Neither teachers nor students can grapple with anything outside of the Western paradigm. No one questions that democracy, freedom, and the American way are the epitome of justice and human rights. No one is concerned that the contradictions of America's slave-holding,

land-owning, racist and sexist founders are the source of the document every race and creed in America is supposed to hold dear. An amendment here and there should be sufficient to appease everyone, right?

In an attempt to spread democracy and a non-judgmental system, however, there is ultimately no moral guidance offered for the sensitivities of a developing adolescent. Instead, schools are producing a frightening rage within our youth, testified to by the fact that juveniles are the fastest growing segment of the prison population. In schools where the mention of God or religion is forbidden, our children's natural inclination towards the Divine is deactivated from an early age. This inward suffering goes unnoticed by parents, for unlike burns and bruises, broken spirits are not so easily recognized.

Muslim children are just as susceptible to this rape as children from non-Muslim families are. They pass through junior high and high school not knowing a single honorable characteristic about their history. They will be sure to teach you about the schisms and the power struggles, but will you ever learn about the 800 years of Muslim rule in Spain? About the peaceful spread of Islam in Indonesia, brought about by traders and merchants? About the poetry of those who simply and absolutely loved God?

Whereas the vast majority of early Islam's scholarship were from the working class or freed slaves, education today is a privilege reserved for the affluent. The less well-to-do are in a dilemma about how to achieve that affluence, considering they cannot get worthwhile jobs without an impressive (and costly) history of higher learning on their resumes.

They struggle with the education system's great paradox: you must be rich to get a decent education, but you must be educated in order to get rich.

Unlike the modern school system, the goal of Islamic education was traditionally to create spiritually wholesome and intellectually sound human beings, capable of distinguishing what is ethically and morally true from what is not. The greatest Islamic scholars were also scholars of math, science, history, astronomy, and philosophy. They were statesmen, warriors, poets, mathematicians, doctors, astronomers, and physicists. These scholars were diverse in their knowledge and specialized in a number of fields, but did not separate belief in God and Ultimate Truth from pursuit of worldly interests; for as the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught, the transient world is only a passageway to the ever-lasting one.

So what are our options? It's too easy to label the whole system a conspiracy and sit on our hands. There are members of our community who are sacrificing time and effort to remedy the problem. Although they are not perfect, Islamic schools and home schooling are two promising alternatives. For our children's sake, there must be a move towards education as it was conducted during Islam's golden era, when knowledge signified not the simple memorization of facts, but the transmission of wisdom from teacher to student. In the end, we all recognize that knowledge is power, but we must ask ourselves, what kind of knowledge are we seeking? •

Jazakum Allahu khayran.

– The *Al-Talib* Staff

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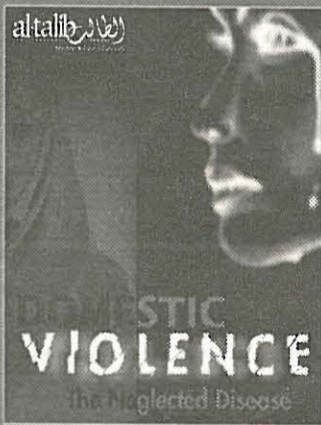
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Editor's Note: In *Al-Talib's* July 2000 issue on Domestic Violence, we provided phone numbers of Muslim organizations that offer help to battered women. Updated contact information for these organizations, some of whose numbers have changed, is included below. We hope that this will be of some use to Muslim women who are subjected to psychological and physical abuse across the nation, and we pray that Allah Most High facilitates a way out. Help is available. Please take advantage of these facilities. •

al-talib Update

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(National Islamic Society of Women of America)
310-782-1483 (shelter)
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P.O. Box 1403
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access code: 00
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http://www.muslimsonline.com/mwhn

Al-Talib is devoted to expressing the views, concerns and ideas of the American Muslim. It seeks to promote and achieve community empowerment and the worldwide success of Muslims by instilling the Ummah with the spirit of Jihad, the love of the Qur'an and the example of Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. It also serves to correct the mainstream media's misinformation about Islam and Muslims, and seeks to provide non-Muslims with accurate information about Islam. Furthermore, *Al-Talib* is committed to remaining an independent forum for a diverse spectrum of views and concerns.

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This magazine contains the name of Allah Most High. Please treat it with respect. Jazakum Allahu khayran.