

# ‘Coming to America: Washington Welcomes the World,’ a Thoughtful Discussions About How America Engages

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By Pete DeLaunay

**President Cathy** opened the meeting with **Arnie Ness** on the trumpet accompanied by **Ken Grant** on the piano for a rousing rendition of ‘Climb Every Mountain’, followed by a moving invocation by **Jane Tornatore**. Thanks to fellow Rotarian and meeting organizer, **David Woodward**, the day was filled with inspiration and insight with a two-part program. It began with impressions from four foreign students from Muslim countries, and concluded with inspiring remarks from Lt. Governor Cyrus Habib – himself the son of immigrant parents who found success and happiness in America.

The day’s program began with David Woodward introducing four Muslim students who each gave their impressions of America: Ms. Zaineb Al-Tamimi, a Fulbright scholar at the UW School of Public Health; Mr. Ali Al Ali, UW chemical engineering student; Ms. Syeda Iram Jafry, Seattle U MBA student; and Ms. Shahd Faleh, Finance & Information Systems student at Qatar University and working as an intern at the Boeing Company.



Ms. Al-Tamimi who concentrates on public health studies at the UW plans to use her education to help support under- served communities in her home country of Iraq. “As a Muslim woman I was surprised to see such diversity on the UW campus in the most beautiful way,” she said. “Although I have encountered some insults, I have overwhelmingly felt the generosity of the caring American people.”



Mr. Ali came to the U.S. nine years ago from Saudi Arabia and now studies chemical engineering at the UW. “To those who ask if I am a terrorist because I am Muslim, I say there are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world with none who follow the faith are terrorists,” he said. “You can’t stereotype a whole community because of these criminals. I encourage everyone to get information from multiple news sources, and to make up your own mind.”

Ms. Jafry came to the U.S. from Pakistan in 2015 to live with her brother here, and to study for her MBA at Seattle University. “At first I tried to ‘blend’ in so I didn’t stand out, but it has been an incredible experience,” she said. “I’ve learned that it is all right to have differences and to talk with others about them to understand and embrace those differences. Seattle is a wonderful city.”

Originally from Syria, Ms. Faleh came to the U.S. upon acceptance as a business student intern with The Boeing Company. “The impressions I got about the U.S. from TV at home were all wrong as this has become the experience of my life,” she said. “Americans here seem to teach their kids how people treat each other at an early age.”

President Cathy then introduced first term Lt. Governor, Cyrus Habib who lost his eye sight at age 8, yet went on to receive degrees from Columbia, Oxford and his law degree from Yale. His Iranian parents came to the U.S. where his father took an engineering position at The Boeing Company and his mother became a well-known attorney and Superior Court Judge. Lt. Governor Habib often quips that he’s lived from Braille to Yale, but dedicates his life to expanding opportunity to everyone; since from many parts of the world opportunity does not exist.

Following a description of his journey to become Lt. Governor and president of the Washington State Senate, he has dedicated his office to four key areas: trade, employment for veterans and those with disabilities, and to create a college-going culture.



“I emphasize the importance of people being ‘globally minded’ with respect for those from other countries and the rule of law,” he said. “To ensure low income students can take examination fees for an ‘International Baccalaureate Education’ we created an \$850,000 public/private partnership fund that has since helped 15,000 Washington students pay fees for these exams.” If the so-called Muslim travel ban were in place years ago, he wrote in a recent [Washington Post Op-Ed](#), his father and mother would not have been able to come to the U.S.



With some 40% of Washington’s economy related to trade, Lt. Governor Habib says ‘parochialism’ or anti trade policies are challenging here. At a recent keynote speech in Calgary he said “Washington State is open for (Canadian) business”.

“International engagement such as student global exchanges is important to our success,” he continued. “We need organizations such as Rotary to build goodwill, working across borders as traveling ambassadors for our country.” He concluded by inviting Rotarians to contact him about ways we can work together, and to consider him a resource. President Cathy announced that Lt. Governor Habib has agreed to join our Diplomacy Task force that has grown to include 45 Seattle #4

Rotarians, and is dedicated to developing how we engage with the world.

President Cathy closed the meeting by acknowledging Seattle #4 Rotarians who stocked 700 backpacks for students in Seattle, Syria and Senegal; thanking president-elect Mark Wright for taking her place as we saluted heroes from the Seattle Fire Department; and then gave a 'shout out' to VP Programs **Lisa Mayfield** who recently received a leadership award from the Aging Life Care Association.

