**Talking Points on “Why you are fasting with DC Muslims”**

*Learn one or more of the talking points below so you can respond to questions on why you are fasting.*

I am fasting to help make others aware that:

* Anti-Muslim discrimination should not be tolerated in DC or anywhere else.
* Not all Muslims are Arab and not all Arabs are Muslim. There is much diversity in the Muslim community. Arab is an ethnic group. Islam is a religion.
* In the United States, 10 percent of physicians are Muslim Americans, which reflects the Islamic obligation of duty towards humanity.
* The best way to learn about the experience of Muslim Americans is to speak with Muslims directly.
* Being Muslim is seen as an all-inclusive way of life rather than a strict exclusive religious code because of its focus on balancing personal and public life.
* Islam’s dietary restrictions include abstaining from pork and alcohol. During Ramadan, however, Muslims abstain from all food and drink from sunrise to sunset.
* Islam encourages Muslims, both men and women, to dress modestly. Muslim men and women come from diverse backgrounds, which explains the variation in their dress codes across cultures.
* Women and men are equal in Islam. It is true that inequalities exist in many Muslim societies but it is also true that gender inequalities exist in many non-Muslim societies as well. Gender inequalities emanate from cultural practices, not from Islam.
* Muslims are not “new” to the United States. Millions of Muslims live in the United States and have been a part of the cultural landscape in America for the past four hundred or more years.
* The vast majority of Muslims do not speak Arabic as their native language.
* Anyone from any race could be Muslim; in other words, “Muslim” does not refer to a particular race.
* Islam is the fastest growing religions in the world.
* The majority of the world’s Muslim population is not in the Middle East or Africa. Indonesia has the largest number of Muslims —over a 100 million—followed by Pakistan, [India](http://facts.randomhistory.com/2009/07/21_india.html), and Bangladesh.
* Muslims are very family-oriented and this also translates into a community-oriented way of life.
* Islam does not permit Muslims to treat people as sub-human. Islam teaches to treat all with respect.

**BONUS**

* During Ramadan, Muslims are experiencing [both a personal spiritual and physical challenge](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/9-things-you-probably-didnt-know-about-ramadan_us_574352b7e4b045cc9a71a924?k5dtk9eim4bj7cik9) — one that isn’t made any easier by the unhelpful suggestions or comments from often well-meaning people such as “Sorry to hear you’re fasting” or “wish you could go to lunch with me!” Try to be mindful.