

# 'Jews for Allah' attempts to gain Islam converts

By Rachel Zoll  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DANBURY, Conn. — Most days, laid-off telecommunications worker Mohamed Ghounem minds the world from behind a laptop propped on his living room coffee table. He's working to get the Quran translated into Hebrew. His Web site, created to woo Jewish souls to Islam, has gotten national attention.

But battling for converts can be dangerous work. The glasses the 32-year-old Muslim is wearing have no lenses: "It's a disguise," he said. "I've received death threats."

Ghounem, of Danbury, is the founder of Jews for Allah, a Web site — jewsforallah.com — that "invites" Jews to Islam.

"Basically, I'm a pioneer," said Ghounem, educated at Western Connecticut State University and Al Azhar University in Egypt. "One of my main goals is to inspire Muslims to invite Jews, to dialogue with them and to teach them about Islam."

"I'm not harassing anyone to convert. It's their free choice," he said.

"If someone moves off my site, I'm not going to chase

them around the Internet," he later added.

Ghounem recently spoke to a reporter from the living room of his apartment as his 2-year-old daughter played on the floor. His honorable discharge certificate from the U.S. Army was propped up on the coffee table. A gold-leaf placard, the "Ninety-Nine Names of God," hung on the wall.

By Ghounem's thinking, the similarities of Judaism and Islam — similar dietary laws, the same Sabbath, the same belief in circumcision, and shared prophets — offer an entree for Jews into Islam. He is searching for a Jewish convert to be president of his organization as a means of legitimizing it. He said two converts have turned him down.

Though presidential candidates may be scarce, converts are many, Ghounem said. Just how many, he couldn't accurately say. "It's in the hundreds. I don't know. There are some — they're in the closet."

Ghounem's Web site solicits donations under the heading "Multi-National Muslim Committee." He said the Web site has attracted few donations to a Newtown

post office box, especially over the last few months. "I'm asking for money from two peoples who aren't comfortable with each other," he said.

Some people aren't comfortable with Ghounem's mission.

Rabbi Tovia Singer, of the international missionary organization Outreach Judaism, called the Web site dangerous, anti-Semitic and "pregnant with hate."

Ghounem said his goal is to convert the nation of Israel and Jews everywhere to Islam. The Web site states that the organization is "countering the schemes of deceptive Zionists and Judaic groups that target the Unity among Muslim families in the Islamic World."

Given tensions between Islamic people and the rest of the world, Ghounem's efforts seemed ill-timed, said Emad Ismail, an imam of the Islamic Society of Western Connecticut. Besides, he said, Islam teaches harmony with people of other faiths, all of whom were created by God.

"You cannot be in peace with God without being in peace with his creation," Ismail said.

The roots of Jews For Allah are in Ghounem's own conversion of sorts. His parents were "good Muslims," but he wasn't observant as a youngster. He said television and pop music were more important to him than Islam.

After a period of seeking that stretched through his

20s, Ghounem said one of his professors at WCSU spurred him toward Islam.

"I was very naive about my roots," he said. "What helped me was an African-American professor, (who) said that to move forward, you have to know your background."

## Greater Mt. Moriah Primitive Baptist Church's

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The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Black Political Caucus is seeking volunteers for its Election Day activities on November 4, 2003 from 6:30am until 7:30pm. Various assignments available. Contact Mark @ 704-556-7543 for further information.

# Ray Charles to goes back to gospel roots with DVD offering

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Grammy-winning entertainer Ray Charles has gone back to his gospel music roots.

"It was very nostalgic, bringing me back to my childhood at church on Sundays," Charles said this week ahead of the release of a 90-minute concert DVD "Ray Charles Celebrates A Gospel Christmas."

In 1953, Charles recorded his first big hit "I Got A Woman," a blend of gospel and blues, but he never thought about being a serious

gospel singer.

"My mother said you can't serve two masters, and I sing rhythm and blues," he said.

The 13-time Grammy Award winner recorded the gospel DVD during a concert last November in Green Bay, Wisconsin. He was joined on stage by 70 singers from the Newark, New Jersey, Voices of Jubilation Choir.

It was the first time Charles, 73, has performed traditional gospel music in public since he was a boy singing in church in rural Georgia and Florida.

The DVD selections include "The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting On An Open Fire)," "Little Drummer Boy," "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," "Silent Night," "The First Noel" and "Rudolph The Red Nose Reindeer."

A portion of the proceeds from DVD sales will go to the nonprofit Save Africa's Children.

On The Net:  
Save Africa's Children  
<http://www.saveafricaschildren.org>

# Walls Memorial 56th anniversary

Continued from page 8B

Church will host Walt "Baby" Love Crusade at 9:45 a.

November 21-22

Bread of Life Christian Ministry at 931 Wilann Drive will host its Prayer, Praise

and Prayer Explosion Women's Conference. For more information call 704-531-2246.

Peace Moravian Church will host its Christmas Bazaar. For more information call 704-759-9939.

November 22

The ninth annual Christmas in Paw Creek Arts and Crafts Fair will be held at Paw Creek Presbyterian Church at 8 am at 7400 Mount Holly Road.

## Obituaries

### Alexander Funeral Home

**Kenneth Gardner Jr.** died October 13 at Carolinas Medical Center. Visitation and funeral were held October 18 at Zecheriah Alexander Sr. Memorial Chapel. Burial at West Creek Cemetery, Mount Holly, N.C.

### A.L. Jinwright Funeral Service

**Master Xavier Lamont Jones**, 14 months, of 3553 Griffin Street, died October 4. Graveside service was held October 13 at Oaklawn Cemetery.

**Michelle Lee Watts**, 42, of 130 Stephens Lane, died October 6. Funeral was held October 13 at Jesus Only Apolistic Healing Temple, Pensacola, Fla.

**Mae Marshall Springs**, 68, of 2804 McCombs Street, died October 14. Funeral was held October 18 at Greater Galilee Baptist Church.

### Grier Funeral Service

**Olivia Burns** of 2727 Shamrock Drive, died October 2 at Brian Center Nursing Home. Funeral was held October 10 at A.S. Grier Memorial Chapel. Burial at Beatties Ford Memorial Garden.

**Elverie Wilson** of 1431 Taffani Lane died October 2 at her residence. Funeral was held October 5 at China Grove AME Zion Church. Burial at China Grove Memorial Garden.

**Robert Harris** of 1408 Whisnant Street, died September 29. Funeral was held at Plaza United Methodist Church. Burial at Gethsemane Memorial Garden.

**Alexander Johnson** of 4200 Hovis Road #46 died October 6 at his residence. Funeral was held October 11 at A.S. Grier Memorial Chapel. Burial at Gethsemane Memorial Garden.

**James Brown** of 2660 Rachel Street died October 8 at Carolinas Medical Center. Funeral was held October 12 at Greenville Memorial AME Zion Church. Burial at Gethsemane Memorial Garden.

**Anna Jeretha Wall** of 2714 Dogwood Avenue died October 10 at Presbyterian Hospital. Funeral was held October 19 at House of Prayer #2, Statesville Avenue. Burial at Mallard Creek House of Prayer.



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[www.SouthernChristmasShow.com](http://www.SouthernChristmasShow.com)

The Charlotte Observer