# 1983

# IWDM Study Library

# Interview AMMCOP Houston TX

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

Announcer: Oh mankind, we created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other, not that ye may despise each other. Verily the most honored of you and the sight of G-d is he who is the most righteous of you and G-d has full knowledge and is well-acquainted with all things.

The American Muslim Mission in Focus. This program deals with the misunderstandings that exists in this country about the Muslim religion. We hope this program will bring about a better understanding of the religion of Al-Islam. We also hope this program will encourage all people to begin to know each other better so that we can work together to assure the survival of our country, now your host Imam Ibrahim Kamalud Din.

Ibrahim Kamalud Din: As salaam alaikum, may the peace of Almighty G-d be upon you, Dear beloved people I'm Imam Ibrahim Kamalud Din. I'd like to welcome you to another 30-minute session of American Muslim Mission in Focus and we want to thank you for tuning in on us today and we hope that you will stay with us for the next 30 minutes because we have some very interesting guests that we want you to meet.

The first guest is a very special guest, his name is Iman W. Deen Mohammed, and he is the resident a Imam of the Masjid Honorable Elijah Muhammad in Chicago Illinois. I believe that most of you are familiar with Imam Mohammed. He is a Muslim and he is a believer in the religion of Al-Islam and he teaches the Holy Quran and the life of Prophet Muhammad and you'll find that there are over one billion people on this earth who believe in this same religion of Al-Islam. So, I'd like to welcome you Brother Imam to our fair city of Houston and we'd like to thank you for taking time out from your very busy schedule to be with us here.

W. Deen Mohammed: Thank you for the opportunity.

Ibrahim: Yes sir. We also have another guest and his name is Yaqub Muhammad and he is the AMMCOP chairman of the Houston chapter and we want to thank him for taking time out from his busy schedule to be here with us and we want to welcome brother Yaqub.

Also that's what our subject is going to be about and I'm sure you've figured it out by this time, AMMCOP. AMMCOP is the abbreviation for a phrase, and that phrase is the American Muslim Mission Committee to purchase 100,000 commodities plus. We're going to get right into that so that you'll understand what this is all about.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed has revealed his program for economic development to people in the depressed areas of many cities across the United States, and believe me you dear beloved people that that program is being implemented constantly now across the country. It's benefiting many people who are hurt by this inflation and many other economical problems that we're having in our society.

This program is really for everyone and it is to benefit everyone, especially the very poor who are suffering from this economical crisis. I'd like to go to brother Imam Mohammed now and I want him to tell us what motivated him to get this economical program going called AMMCOP.

IWDM: Well, Imam Kamalud Din that's a question that I wish I could spend about an hour or two on to answer. First I would say what motivated me is the real situation that we find ourselves in, that is the majority of the African American people. Our situation is one of extraordinary dependency. We are people who don't have hardly any establishment at all, we hardly have any business establishment, no economic establishment. We depend on jobs to be available, most of us depend on jobs to be available, opportunities to work. If we don't have those opportunities, and sometimes we know the economy gets in trouble and those opportunities are not there, and we are the ones who first to be hurt and the ones who suffer the most because we haven't put ourselves in a better situation, we have been just too dependent.

The late leader Elijah Muhammad who gathered many African-American people under his leadership, he started a program to dignify the poor African-American people, poor blacks. He said, "You'd be surprised what you can do if you just pool your small resources and do things collectively." He didn't use a term collectively, that's the expression we use, but it meant the same thing. "Do things together." He said. He said, "You have to work together."

I think what inspired me more than anything else to initiate this effort, to re-initiate the effort, because after all we were trying to do something economically and I think we made some headway. Tons of fish was imported into the country from Peru and men of the community sold the fish and did earn a living from it, many of them earned the living from it.

Ibrahim: I was one of them.

IWDM: It wasn't successful for everybody but it was a very good program and it helped many men who otherwise would have been out of work right?

Ibrahim: True.

IWDM: Yes, and not only the fish program, there were other programs that the Hon. Elijah Muhammad himself, well, got the support for. Those programs were relieving some of the economic conditions of the African-American people who were Muslims under his leadership. I think the fact that we did meet with some real success, it was possible, so it's not like we're saying oh this is something we're going to try for the first time maybe it'll work. That's not the case, we were coming back into something that had been tried before and we had met with considerable success.

Looking at it again with fresh eyes, and fresh minds, and seeing the flaws in the in the operation before, I think now we can really be successful. Having a different attitude toward business, I think then our business efforts was part of the emotional movement to prove the white man wrong. But now that we don't have that kind of sensitivity, that kind of racial sensitivity, I think we will be more practical in what we do as business people now.

But there's another reality Imam Kamalud-Din, I'm sure you aware, all of us are aware of, but sometimes we have to refresh our minds, and that reality is this, slavery. Our history begins in this country in slavery. We came here, we were brought here to be slave laborers for the south and what happened? Behind that came the movement up north with freedom, right?

Ibrahim: Yes.

IWDM: And when we came up north, we were still in that situation. As one brother of AMMCOP said, one of the AMMCOP representatives said at a meeting we had real recently, he said, "Well, when we were free we didn't have any economic base, we didn't have any economic base, we had no business, we have no economic base." He said, "So really we were free 'but we weren't economically free."

That's something that hasn't come yet, economic dignity, economic freedom hasn't come yet. If you would ask a Christian who was in Congress, African-American, or Christian preaching Christianity in his neighborhood, or Christian in any field or any profession, if you'd ask him say, look what is the main motive in your life? What drives you more than more than anything else. If he would be truthful he will tell you desire for economic dignity.

Ibrahim: That's right.

IWDM: Right?

Ibrahim: Yes.

IWDM: Yes, and that's because of the past situation. Slavery was a total situation of total dependency upon slave master. Now if you have people in that condition in that situation for generations the habit builds in right?

Ibrahim: Yes.

IWDM: The habit of depending on somebody else. Well, a slave, does he worry about how he going to get his clothes?

Ibrahim: No.

IWDM: No. Does he worry about shelter?

Ibrahim: No.

IWDM: The master provides shelter, the master provide clothes, the master provide food. Does he worry about how his family going to live tomorrow?

Ibrahim: No

IWDM: No, the master plan for his family.

Ibrahim: That's right.

IWDM: See this kind of thing has been some kind of way filtered deep down into the psychological makeup of the African-American people. A majority of us realize this, if not consciously, you realize it as a spirit. In our spirit we were rebelling against that. How can I establish myself? The AMMCOP program is mainly designed to satisfy African-American people who find themselves in that situation.

They're not professional people, they're not able to get a big dollar for their skills, they don't have skills, you see? They're just common people, but they have will power, they have determination, they have desire to pull themselves out of that situation. We can't change the whole ghetto, we can't change everybody, some people don't want anything.

Ibrahim: That's true.

IWDM: They may say well yeah, I would like to have it too, but they don't have any initiative. It doesn't mean that much to them. But we have many African-American people that are poor and in that situation and it means everything to them to get out of that situation. These are the people that we have working with us to improve the dignity of the African-American people. The common poor man and I believe that that's what motivated me more than anything else, knowing that we have been just overly dependent upon outside circumstances and we haven't responded to the human need to do something yourself.

Ibrahim: Brother Imam that's beautiful, believe me that's clear. There was something you said about the slavery idea being embedded deep inside of us. I just want to say that I didn't realize how true that was until you came into the leadership in our community. I begin to hear you explain it like you did then, and various times, and then all of a sudden one day that I could just burst through the realization and it scared the hell out of me at first.

It took me a little time to recuperate you know? Well, I'm doing fine and many others are doing fine. I'd like to go to brother Yaqub. Brother Yaqub I know you have some questions there that you wanted to get into, and some statements, so feel free to go right ahead.

Yaqub Muhammad: One of the question I would like to ask is concerning the present reality of AMMCOP. We've started working here locally, and mostly the people I'd like to say first of all that the people in our chapter, the local chapter, they sent you the greeting of peace.

IWDM: Send the greetings of peace to them.

Yaqub: Yes sir, and they are very, very enthusiastic about working in this program. You just ask them whatever it is that need to be done, and they move on it, take care of it. This is one of the most dynamic program that ever come before our people

IWDM: You're right.

Yaqub: I would like to ask you, what do you think presently the actual reality of AMMCOP is in regard to maybe the employment? I've heard you say sometimes concerning the employment, how we fail to employ our needs, and how we fail to just take care of our basic need for food, and clothing, and shelter, where we could use the money that we spend, just our spending money to give some kind of collective program. I think I've heard you discuss that once or twice.

IWDM: If I may. Let me I don't want to appear to be too philosophical of the program.

Yaqub: Yes sir.

IWDM: The church itself once was a strong influence in our life and all Christians don't ignore the need to be involved materially. I mean, as a community, we have some churches that buy farmland, and they plant crops, and they work together. They bring those produce in, and they open up their own stores, and they do good business. They do good business as community. The Seven Day Adventists and their is many others are doing this and we started in the same way.

The problem for most of the African-American people is this, that we don't have a vision of life, a concept of life, that contains our life. Life is like water, it's fluid. It's like water, or like air, and if you don't have something to put it in it just goes everywhere. I think that's what happens to our life because we don't have a concept of life or vision of life for ourselves. When we become Muslims we do get a new concept, a new vision of life ourselves. Christianity for most African-American people have not provided that context it has given them a spirit but it hasn't given them a vision of how their life is to be lived in terms of what a community needs.

Our religion has, and I think it's because of that that we find Muslims now so enthusiastic in their support for the AMMCOP program. Our religion says, the Quran says, our holy book says, "Seek with the means G-d has given you, the hereafter, but don't forget your share in this world". A Muslim man if he understands his holy book, he can't neglect his responsibility to contribute to a stabilized community. The only way you're going to contribute to a stabilized community you have to be doing something constructive, you can't be idle, you have to have work.

Business is a good way, business is what produce work, and without business you don't have any work unless you're working for government. We know that if more of us are depending on government jobs then worse race relations gonna get in this country. Because the other citizens of this country they don't like to see all the blacks on the government payroll and I don't blame them I don't like it either.

The only way out then is for us to do something constructive together since we are not rich we can't go with the rich people, we have to stay with each other. I think what we're doing now that's, presently, is really seeking outlets. First of all seeking sources, factories, producers, and manufacturers who can supply us with our needs. When we purchase we purchase wisely and we have a good relationship with the supplier. I think that's what AMMCOP is all about right now and that's what they're doing right now. Soon, the cost of contributions, and the cost of the fund raising program of AMMCOP itself.

Their fashion shows have been coming off now almost every other week or so, and they've been very successful. The national Chairman, Samuel Bilal, he said, and he really said it, I like that spirit. I thought he was talking a little bit too big okay? He said, "Pretty soon we'll be competing with Paris." He said, " We are designing these clothes." The last program I saw I think you will. I think in time the AMMCOP designers will be competing with the Paris designers.

Ibrahim: I agree

IWDM: I'm telling you, I am amazed to see what they have been able to do. I said, "Well now, we don't want to design just those evening clothes." I said, "What about the work clothes?" And I noticed that the next show they had work clothes. Nice overalls had been designed by them, coveralls for the men, and this is what we want, and I think that's what AMMCOP is. Pretty soon we're going to realize the success of the program.

Ibrahim: I noticed when I saw that, displaying the work clothes and the tools, that was a great dignity and everybody applauded, I felt good about it you know?

IWDM: That's a message, we need that message.

Ibrahim: I'm beginning to think that would be the thing really to motivate.

IWDM: You don't dress pretty until you get dirty. You have to do some work, then you can get pretty.

Ibrahim: That's true. Also, at this time I would like to mention our community-- Well, it's not so much community newspaper, it's the World newspaper. The AM Journal, The American Muslim Journal and at this time they should be seeing it on the screen. That's a paper that really will enlighten people on exactly what we're doing and it'll keep them in touch with the progress we make as we progress you know? Also many of you--

IWDM: Excuse me, but it's the best way to keep in touch with what's happening in your community nowadays, Muslims, I feel like I've missed something if I don't read every issue of that paper, because it tells me what's happening in my community.

Ibrahim: Right. That's right. Also, I would like for them to call 437-7087 if they want further information on how they can get this newspaper, and also how they can get your new book that we talked about earlier, Religion on The Line. That's a very enlightening book and especially the part where you were on this radio program with the other religious leaders and you all were discussing the different--

IWDM: Yes, that was an experience for me that I'll never forget. I came on a program, I was invited by a Jewish host, a young woman, who was a of woman liberation, she belonged to women liberation, a society. There I set with Jewish Rabbi and with a Protestant Minister, I mean, these people are known in their community. Just not ordinary people, and with Catholic Priest, and we began to discuss humanly the problems that all of us are facing, and the need for all of us to contribute some good so that the society at least benefits from something that all of us can do, you see?

After a while I didn't see any Protestant, I didn't see Jew, I didn't see any Catholic, I just saw people, human people together with a belief in something bigger than themselves trying to tackle problems that all of us have to do something about sooner or later.

Ibrahim: That's right, Brother Imam, that same thing happened on one of our programs where we had a Chaplain Johnston of TDC as a guest, that same thing took place as we talked you know? We just became one nerve--

IWDM: He's a special man.

Ibrahim: Yes, yes he was.

IWDM: He's a special man, he's a great human being.

Ibrahim: I would like to ask the people to call that number 437-7087 if they want to get further information on how they can get this newspaper.

Now, my next question is this, this is a statement that you made in one of your talks concerning AMMCOP. To me this was very, very significant, it says, one of the purposes of AMMCOP is to destroy waste, waste of time, money, and life. You know, most people don't think of waste of time. They might think of waste of food, or waste of life, and I noticed that that is one thing that is really needed in our society, it's for people to learn the reality--

IWDM: There's an old Arab proverb that a lot of us think is a Christian saying and some Muslims think is a Muslim saying, but it was before even the Prophet Muhammad you know? Before even Jesus, it's an old ancient Arab proverb says, Idleness is the devil's workshop.

Ibrahim: Yes, I've heard that many times and I found that to be true from experience in my earlier days.

IWDM: Certainly it is.

Ibrahim: I can see where that 'd be very beneficial. Now I'd like to go back to you brother Yaqub, if there's any statements you'd like to make any further questions you'd like to ask Imam Muhammad.

Yaqub: Thank you. Currently the creative artistic clothing shows are traveling around the country, just recently you appeared here in Houston, and San Diego, and also in Washington DC. Could you maybe elaborate a little bit on the purpose of the shows? I know earlier you mentioned the fact about--

IWDM: Yes, the show has multiple purpose. To acquaint people with AMMCOP is the main purpose. To acquaint people who need that program like we do, we are poor people and a lot of us unemployed, and some of us are on welfare, welfare dollars, welfare whatever it is, it's not dollars is it? I don't think its dollars. Whatever comes from welfare, it's not enough, you can't feel dignified on welfare. Unemployment is terrible, you can't live like that, not if you care something about yourself. AMMCOP's main purpose is to bring this program to people and acquaint them with it who are in our same situation, so they have an opportunity to make a choice, would you like to be a part of this program or not.

There's another purpose, and the other purpose is to raise funds so that AMMCOP won't be a burden on a community or on any individual. That it'll have something to operate with so those chapters will be able to operate, because through those chapters, we're going to be able to get the cooperation that we need to make that annual purchase of 100,000 commodities, and that's no small thing.

Ibrahim: That's right it's a big thing.

Yaqub: Thank you very much I'll turn you back to the host.

Ibrahim: Okay now brother Imam, I know you're going to save this Elijahville for the next one, for the next program, but what I wanted to ask you was concerning the buy, the big buy, that's what, you know, the collective buying, the big buy. Will that be just buying merchandise in America? Or will we go outside of America also to do business?

IWDM: We are a new African-American community. We are different people, and I sometime feel embarrassed to speak so patriotic as an American citizen because people don't expect that from you. I found blacks to be shocked when they hear me speak patriotic, and patriotically, and also whites. They say, "He's strange."

Ibrahim: That's true, they do.

IWDM: But I know where my strengths lie, my strengths lie in building a home for myself where I'm going to live. I'm going to live here, I'm not going anywhere else.

I have no plans to go anywhere else, to go out of this country. Really, we look for American suppliers first and we believe in this support American industry, we believe in that, support American people, we believe in that. We look for American suppliers first, but we have an interest in the third world. Many people of the third world, we identify with them, and they need help and our country is trying to help them, have been helping. Our country is one of the biggest donors in the world, you know that.

We share that interest too, but we think right now we need to help the American economy. We're only going to go outside when I think it is not only in our best interest to go outside, but it's also doing a human service to go outside.

Ibrahim: I see, that makes a whole lot of sense. You know I was thinking about what you said about they look at you and think you're strange. I don't think they think the idea is strange but I think--

IWDM: Every time a black man says he loves everybody, they think he's crazy.

Ibrahim: Yes, I guess I could kind of see that a little bit.

IWDM: I'm not romantic with everybody, I respect what G-d wants, and I respect human being, I respect that the essence in every person, that is equal no matter how we degrade ourselves, we have an equal essence in that vessel.

Ibrahim: That's true, that's true. Thank you, that's very beautiful. I would like to also mention again about your book. I just got to keep mentioning that because I want people to read that book, and it's called Religion on the Line. I don't know if you'll be able to see that this moment but it's a very enlightening book. I would like for you to call 437-7087 if you want further information on how to get one, and also the paper AM Journal, it's a worldwide paper. It has world news in it and it'll keep you informed on what's going on in your immediate communities as well as other communities.

We'd like to thank you for sticking with us on the program and brother Imam, I would like to thank you again because you came a long way to be with us and we thank you very much.

IWDM: Believe me, I appreciate this opportunity. It helps all of us when we come together and as you say, discuss these things.

Ibrahim: Yes sir, thank you, and also brother Yaqub, we'd like to thank you for being on our program, and for the information and the interesting questions that you brought to us to give us more enlightenment on AMMCOP.

Yaqub: Thank you very much it's been an enlightening also to have our leader and teacher Imam Warith Deen Mohammed making some comments on the questions that we've asked him.

Ibrahim: Thank you and dear beloved people, we want to thank you again for sticking with us on the program, and we hope that you received enlightenment from it like we did and I'd like to greet you with As salamu alaikum as I began, may the peace of Almighty G-d be upon you and we'll see you in our next program.

[Music]

Announcer: The American Muslim Mission and focused. This program has dealt with the misunderstandings that exist in this country about the Muslim religion. We hope this program will bring about a better understanding of the religion of Al-Islam. We also hope this program will encourage all people to begin to know each other better so that we can work together to assure the survival of our country.

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