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# IWDM Study Library

# Southern University New Orleans, Louisiana

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

[applause]

Speaker: Praise be to G-d that is [foreign language]. We acknowledge the one G-d, creator of the heavens and the earth, Lord, sustainer of the universe. We acknowledge also that Muhammad, to whom the Quran was revealed about 1400 few years ago in the peninsula now called Arabia, is the last prophet and the messenger and servant and messenger of that G-d the only G-d, the G-d for all of us.

I would like to first express our appreciation for our office for this invitation. We appreciate the invitation, and I think this the third time that I've had the honor of addressing you on this campus of Southern University at New Orleans and I hope that this won't be the last. I must have been doing something right before, I hope I do something right this time again.

I wanted to speak on Islam in America, and I hope that it would be within the theme that you have; Islam global culture, receiving or understanding Islam as a global culture; the global culture of Islam.

I'm sure that all of you who understand Islam have some knowledge of Islam. You know that there is a difference between Islam as religion and Islam as culture. I would like to begin with the image of Islam in the world' our past, present and we hope future. Islam began in Arabia with the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, prayers and peace be on him. Islam, within really about 11 years or so, became the new leader for the world of that time. I say within 11 years or so because the first 10 years or more, Islam was just quietly being revealed to the Prophet and the Prophet was quietly introducing it to his companions and to those who would listen.

It was only after the Prophet began to institute the religion openly in Medina with an opportunity he was given there in Medina, the nearby city to his birthplace city Mecca. It was only then that Islam began to be known publicly and within, as I said, a relatively very short period of time about 11 years Islam was the leader of that time. The Prophet was inviting the great nations to Islam, their leaders to accept Islam, and Islam was beginning to open the way for a revival of this of the sciences, revival of education and a revival of the sciences.

Because of that movement we may say are that great mission of our Prophet, the West was excited and ignited by that light, that knowledge that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, in the Quran. They later, themselves, began to do independent research to study the lost knowledge, to reinterpret, to take a fresh look at their own religion, their scriptures. We know of Martin Luther who brought about a great revolution in Christianity and with that revolution, we have the Renaissance that changed the West, freed the subjects of dictators that were then ruling over them, freed their minds, their intellect for independent research.

Today, we take pride in being citizens of America, of a democracy, and enjoying human equality. All of this couldn't have happened, in my opinion, without the Quran being revealed to Muhammad of Arabia, prayers and peace be on him, and bringing about a situation in the world for the leaders and nations of that time to have new curiosities and go back and study their own knowledge, their own religion, to see if they could find the way that they had lost.

They had lost the way. We have to admit that Christianity had lost the way and civilization had lost the way. It was Islam that first came and showed the way. This is what history tells us and this is what should be admitted. However, in time, we know the West benefited greatly especially Spain. For 600, 500, some say 600, 700 years, Spain was under influence of Islam and Spain was a model for the West, especially for Jews. They often mentioned the Jews would even now mentioned Spain, how Spain the rule, the Muslim rule in Spain gave them an opportunity to progress intellectually without feeling any fear from the Islamic government that they would be persecuted or denied their freedom.

This was a good time for Christians, a good time for Jews, a good time for the West. We have to say it was a good and a bad time for Muslims because we know that moral deterioration set in. A lot of the rulers of that Islamic, that great span 500 years or more, were victims of corruption. Though they kept to human idea of what society government and society should be, they did not stay strong in their religion. We had good and bad leaders in that period of time. I believe that accounts for the fall of that, or the demise of that great Spain we call Muslim Spain.

Its influence, still can be seen today in the cultural life of Spain and we have to recall it as a great time for peace between Muslims, Jews, Christians and others. I was really touched by the story of Muslim Spain, the author of the publication that I read said that it was reported when the Muslim government was overthrown and the Muslim rulers were pulling out of Spain, non-Muslim citizens of Spain could be seen crying, shedding tears. They were weeping because the Muslim government had been removed.

We know that behind that time or with that time, came the period of confrontation for Islam and Christianity. The image of Islam suffered under the crusades, and I would add that the image of Christianity too suffered under the crusades. Because the crusades, the war between quote cross and crescent does not give us the picture of Islam and it does not give us a picture of Christianity. It give us a picture of people fighting each other in the name of religion, but really motivated by worldly conquest, seeking dominance.

In our Holy Book, G-d tells us that He will not give dominance. Always there will be some particular nation or some particular people or some particular select group of people at the top ruling, dominating, but we shouldn't seek that and G-d says He will not give that to any who seek it. If you seek that, He will deny you that. Colonialism came more recently in our history and the history of the world, and colonialism also changed the image of Islam. We as African-Americans or blacks, we know of our-- I hope we do, we know of our history in America, we know that we lost our image and many of us now have given up wanting to regain that image.

We know also that we lost the history of our people in Africa, but we are not aware that Islam too lost its image. Islam has been persecuted in the world just as black people were once persecuted in the world. Just as Islam was misrepresented and something had to happen in some way in the world to bring about the correct image or picture of Islam, the African-American people, our image, how we perceive ourselves, how the world perceive us, how the world sees us, was something that we could not live with. And it was only because someone took both these burdens upon themselves and tried to, in his own way, bring about freedom for the image of Islam, freedom for the truth of Islam and freedom for the real life of black people, only because this person took up those two burdensome responsibilities is that Islam began to be propagated in America.

There was no effort to propagate Islam in America before the Nation of Islam was conceived, called the Lost Found Nation of Islam. There was no effort to propagate Islam in America before Fard, a man called W.D. Fard and W Fard Muhammud. This man that's called Fard spelled in the encyclopedia F-A-R-D, but pronounced F-A-R-A-D, he came into the ghetto of Detroit where African-Americans in the early '30s were the worst off.

He came to the worst part of the of the city for blacks, and he began to invite them to Islam and also invite them to a knowledge of self. He believed that they were lost and he called them the Lost Found Nation of Islam. Here is a man conceiving a Nation of Islam. There were already existing an International Nation of Islam, but that International Nation of Islam had suffered crusades, had suffered colonial domination, had suffered the loss or at least the misrepresentation of its identity in the world or its image was lost.

Fard was introducing now his new conceived nation, and he called it the Lost Found Nation of Islam, as a kind of sacrificial model; a model that he was giving as a sacrifice. When I say as a sacrifice, it was not true Islam so he made a model to sacrifice with the intention that true Islam will one day come with the intention that the persons that he was using in this sacrifice would get his hints, would find his hints, would find the hints in his teachings, the hints in his work and those hints would guide them to freedom, to freedom.

Now, at this point, I would like to say that Fard was not the only one guilty of that, I have read many Bibles, if we could call them all Bibles, since my curiosity began and that was a long time ago. Back in the late '50s in the early '60s, that's when my curiosity started. Since then, I read many Bibles. I was surprised to find in the gospel, the Christian Bible in the gospel, Jesus doing something that seems mighty strange to get site to come into the eyes. The Bible says that he mixed saliva with dirt, and he put the dirt and saliva mix, a mud kind of thing, on the eyes of the person that had lost the sight. That brought back the sight.

Well, I also remember reading in Old Testament, that after Abraham had dug wells so that people could have the clean fresh healthy water from the depths of the earth, it says that Jacob put dirt in the well. Well, it seems that Fard was not the only one that did things like that. Fard, knowing that African-American people, blacks in America, in the '30s were lost, they were lost from themselves, they did not know themselves, they had to discover themselves again. He knew that the self that they had was not their own self, was not their own self.

He says that in his lesson, he says, "And who is your own self?" He answers the question, he gives it a kind of catechism. He answered it himself, he said, "Your own self is a righteous Muslim." That was the answer he gave for black people. Now, wasn't that strange that while other were trying to get back to Africa and find the original self of black people of the lost blacks in America in Africa, Fard, this kind of mystic, he said, "Your own self, your original self, is a righteous Muslim."

When I have come to understand Islam, the language of Islam in the Quran, I have to agree with him. The own self of everybody, the true self, the original self of every human being is a righteous Muslim, is the Muslim. Our Prophet said that everyone, every child born, is born a Muslim and it is the circumstances that the child is put in that make him otherwise. This is what our Prophet taught us, prayers and the peace beyond him.

Fard was not saying anything strange to Islam, but the way he was presenting everything was very strange to Islam. I'm not trying to clear this particular teacher who came to black down-and-out blacks African-Americans in the early '30s, because he can't be cleared, he did wrong to introduce Islam in a package that is not Islam is wrong, that is wrong. He did do wrong to make claims, outrageous claims, to say that he was the son of man and that no help came to blacks until the coming of the son of man in the person of WF Muhummad or WD Fard.

This is wrong because help did come to us before Fard came. Help came to us in Frederick Douglass, help came to us in Booker T Washington, help came to us in WEB Du Bois, help came to us in Sojourner Truth, help came to us in [inaudible 00:32:39] and many many many others. Help did come to us, and Fard himself borrowed from some of those that had brought help to us.

He borrowed from Booker T Washington. Booker T Washington had a school, and part of his school curriculum was to teach drill, military drill to the students. He believed that that would help African-Americans come back into a sense of discipline, appreciation for discipline in life. Fard borrowed from him and introduced military drill into the classes of the Fruit of Islam.

I can go on to show you even that he borrowed the idea of calling us to a nation because it was Marcus Garvey who had, prior to Fard, it was Marcus Garvey, an African-American victim of America's enslavement of our people et cetera, he called us to a nation, an idea of nation to accept and embrace an idea of nation, and to identify with Africa and to see ourselves as a nation; a nation of millions of people existing in Africa and in the West; in America, in the Caribbean, everywhere. He called us to that idea before Fard did, but Fard put together a real special kind of package, he gave divine sanction to everything he was saying.

Nobody before him did this, nobody gave divine sanction to everything he was saying. Fard gave divine sanction to everything he was saying, he said that G-d was bringing all of this about, and that G-d had decided that all this should happen, and that he himself was the manifestation of G-d, and that he came to select one of the down trodden, or one of the lost sheep and raise him up to lead the rest of the sheep. He chose Elijah Muhammad, who was formally named Elijah Poole, born in Sandersville Georgia, my father, he selected him to be his mouthpiece.

My father used to tell us a lot about how he was selected and he said, "Samson, used the jawbone of a donkey in his war against the Philistine." He was seeing himself as a donkey in Fard picking him up and using. He actually said, "I had no knowledge, I was ignorant. I only had three years elementary school education from Georgia. I didn't know what the world was, I didn't know anything about Islam until Fard taught me."

He acknowledged that he was a kind of a donkey that Fard and found and used him to fight the great battle, to make the great battle with western power, with white power, with the white supremacy because at that time there was still white supremacy. I'm trying to carry a lot of things together, that is Islam and compare or show a kind of a parallel for the faith of Islam in the world and the faith of African Americans in the world, and to show how a peculiar method was used to attract us to ourselves, to our real self, and also attract us to true Islam.

I think when Fard said, "Your own self is a righteous Muslim," he was saying by way of quietness. That was a quiet way of saying, he could have come out openly and taught it, but he didn't come out open to teach it, he said it very quietly. Who is your own self in this kind of Muslim catechism that he gave-- Fard's catechism that he gave? He answers, he says, "Your own self is a righteous Muslim."

He said that we had lost ourselves, meaning that the self that was in us was not our self. And others had said that too, that slavery and integration into the white men-- I'm not talking about the integration popular that was brought on by the civil rights movement, I'm talking about that process of integration that was going on before the civil rights movement, where blacks thought if they were to be educated they were to imitate whites, educated whites, if they were to speak correctly, they had to speak just like educated whites, if they were to have the right expressions when they talk, they had to imitate the expressions of the educated whites et cetera. That's what I'm talking about, that integration.

That period of integration was to many of us, like Booker T. Washington and others, a false representation of ourselves. We were not ourselves, we were imitating those who had enslaved us and those who had given us a measure of freedom, but not true freedom at that time. Fard questioned that self in us, that identity in us, and advised us to become independent-minded. The proof that he wanted us to be independent-minded, and I will go so far as to say, he wanted us to one day become independent of his teachings, independent of his influence.

If he didn't want that, he wouldn't have enticed us in a very kind of seductive way to be attracted to the Quran, but at the same time hold us back from going to the Quran. That's like a woman doing a strip tease in a burlesque. She's making you want it but saying, "No, don't touch me, stay back." I'm not saying that he was that vulgar, but he did do a striptease. He did a striptease with himself and he did a striptease with Islam. He was enticing us and making it look very seductive, taking it out of his beautiful dignified form and making it very seductive, and saying, "Come to it, but don't get the Quran, don't get the Quran, stay back it's not time."

The Hon. Elijah Muhammad told us, there will come a time when we will know the Quran. He said but first, some of us had to learn the Arabic because he said the truth of the Quran was not in the English translation but was in the Arabic. He encouraged to his young members of the Nation of Islam Lost Found Nation of Islam to study Arabic. He himself secured professors, one of them who-- in fact the one who did the most good for us because his ability in English was very good too, was Dr. Jamil Diab. He was from Quds, Jerusalem, and he had lived a good time in America so he was well acquainted with life of the American people and also with our plight, our circumstances in America.

He became our teacher, he didn't try to change the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's message, he didn't attack it, he just stayed clear of it and he did his job of teaching. His job was to teach us Arabic and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad learned that he was also good in general science and he was good in math, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad had him teaching us several course, he handled several courses for us, especially for the older children at the junior high school boys and girls.

As a result of that, I, along with a number of other students, began to read, study, read and understand some Arabic. We began to study verses of Quran and we were given portions of Quran as part of the Arabic class by Jamil Diab. When we began to read the Quran in Arabic, my father, the then leader of the Nation of Islam who has passed away and we pray G-d to forgive him his sins and grant him paradise because he was innocent, he did not know what he was doing, he was only following his teacher, he wanted us to learn the Arabic and he began to be curious after we began to show that we had some knowledge of Arabic.

One day he asked myself and my brother, Akbar, who is very good in Arabic, in fact, now he teaches in upper state New York, Binghamton University up there. Professors of Arabic have told me that his Arabic is just like theirs, you can't tell the difference between his Arabic and their Arabic and they're native born Arabs. My brother's name is Akbar. Akbar and I, we looked at my father when he asked us, he said, "Are you reading the Quran some in Arabic, the Arabic, can you understand some of it?"

We said, "Yes daddy, we can understand some if it." He said, "Well, what is it? What does it say?" I told him, Akbar looked like he was wondering what to say, and I told him because I had a strong religious curiosity, Akbar had a strong academic motivation, that's not to criticize Akbar now. I told my father, I said, "Daddy, I see it's the same." [laughs] He was disappointed, he thought that the Arabic would bring a knowledge that would give support to what he was teaching, but it was the same and Arabic was even pure and clearer as a judgment against what he was teaching that was on Islamic.

He had introduced his children to a language that was going to bring them to the Quran and take them away from Fard. I believe that Fard intended that, he intended that one day we become independent-minded, independent thinkers and begin to suspect even what he taught us, and reject everything that does not stand up in the light of Quran. Thank G-d that happened. My father says when Fard was conceiving his idea for bringing a change of freedom to us, say he was gambling, he threw the lottery, he said, "Oops, I missed that time."

[laughs] Well he might have missed that time, but thanks to Allah, when we got the Quran there was no miss after that. Now I would like to say a word to the members of the, I would say, Nation of Islam that was taken off the shelf. When I came into the leadership, I shelved it, I put it on the shelf, I put it away. Farrakhan came, Minister Farrakhan came and he took it back off, he took it off the shelf. He thought he was knocking the dust off of it, but he took it more through more dust. It got more dusty. He now leads the Nation of Islam.

We have hopes that he's going to continue to influence his following to study Arabic, and to study Quran, and to study the life of Muslims, the International Muslim Nation or Ummah, and to one day hope to be at one with the International Ummah. I hope that that will happen, I do see signs that Minister Farrakhan is allowing that to happen. Sometimes I see him even encouraging that. As long as I can see that, then there's hope that the same road that we traveled from that saliva and dirt on our eye to the Quran, will be the road that they will travel. And one day they will have Quran, they will rejoice over the Quran more than they rejoice over anything else.

This is what I believe is going to happen. In fact, it's happening slowly. We appreciate, - I'm digressing a bit, but I appreciate also-- we appreciate Minister Farrakhan disassociating himself from the statement, from the ugly slanderous statement against religious people and against the Pope and against the-- we are not to-- G-d says to us in Quran, "Don't even revile or slander or talk ugly of the god of other people, even though their god may not be the right G-d." Because we invite them to have the same behaviors toward us if we do that.

You see. So in this case, it is not of people that worship idols, Christians worship G-d, we don't agree with everything they say and do, we don't agree with that concept or that perception completely and we don't agree with everything the Jews believe in. We don't agree with that perception completely, but we respect the essence and the good intent and all the religious people. We do know that one G-d revealed all Scriptures. Farrakhan, he won more respect for me to himself and support for us having patience and waiting for him to bring his people into the full light of Islam.

When he came out and disassociated himself from the statement made by his assistant, Dr. Khalid, I hear that he didn't only disassociate himself from the statement but he also disciplined Dr. Khalid. And this is very good, this is encouraging. Getting back now to the history of Islam in America, what I've said to you, you'll perhaps say, "You haven't told us about the history of Islam in America. You've told us about how your situation, as people who wanted Islam, was made so complicated by Fard and that the Quran was the open door and the light to guide you to real Islam. You haven't told us about Islam in America."

I have because as I said before Fard, there was no preaching of Islam in America. The Ahmadis, they did a little preaching but never were they visible like the Nation of Islam or the Lost Found Nation of Islam under Fard. Moorish science temple attempted too, like Fard, to introduce something to attract us to Islam, but what they introduced to us was not Islam and they did not have the visibility, never had it, that the followers of the Hon. Elijah Muhammad gained.

In my opinion, when you want to study and find out how Islam became known in America and how Islam has become now a religion practiced by many Americans, you have to study the Nation of Islam or the Lost Found Nation of Islam conceived by W Fard Muhammad, WD Fard he went by different names, and established by Elijah Muhammad, that worldly naive man from Georgia, a black from Georgia, who only had three years elementary education. He established the houses of worship, called temples in those days, and also-- by the way, before we passed, he took the name mosque off of the house of worship. The name mosque was put on the houses of worship in the middle '50s, perhaps as even as early as '53 or '54 I think upon the suggestion of that professor I mentioned to you earlier, Professor Jamil Diab.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, in the last years of his life, he began to call them temples again and that was the name he left, not the mosque, temples, because he knew that we had not come from the temple of Fard to the mosque of Islam. That's why he did it, to tell us in his death that we had not come from the temple of Fard to the mosque of Islam yet, but that had to come.

The temple, the mosque of Islam, today would not be had it not been for this mystifying man, whom perhaps was mystic, a religious mystic, doing what he did to advance the human life from human misery and degradation of the blacks, and to advance Islam from an incorrect image in the world to a true image in America. Now for a little figures, some facts on Islam or the attempt by Fard to introduce Islam and to save blacks.

When he concluded his works in late 1933 or early '34, he published that they had attracted 25,000 blacks to their membership. I know a lot us think he only had a small following, that's not true, he had a big following back then. 25,000 was attracted to the membership of the Lost Found Nation of Islam under the teachings of Fard. He had already set up the two units for the men and women; one called the Fruit of Islam giving cultural training to the men and disciplining the men, the other unit for the women was called MGT.

By the way, he also got this from America; from us. The blacks, we had the Long Star, that was the women, wasn't it? Organization I think. The Eastern Star, pardon me, and the Eastern Star was the women unit and then there was the other counterpart was the male, for the males. He separated his organization too and gave classes and club-like situation for the men and for the women called the men FOI and the women MGT, and GCC, Muslim Girls Training and General Civilization Class.

Now, I'm going to do something to make a friendly gesture that might be misinterpreted to the brothers of the Fruit of Islam that are following Farrakhan and a few others not as popular as he. It's time for you to look at where we are today. I never did like-- I'm sharing this with you brothers of the fruit, I never did like having our women called girls. The white man used to call our women girls and used to call us boys. I said, "Where's the women class? If this is nothing but the girls' class, where's the women class? If we are marrying grown-up women who are only girls, that make us boys." So, I didn't like that.

Now, to make, as they say, a long story short. In my opinion, Fard's thinking was this, "Blacks can never come away from the white influence, white world's influence, until something be done to shatter and destroy their thinking that they have presently." So he devised something that he knew if blacks bought it, it would completely shatter the thinking that they had bought from the white world or that they had accepted from the white world.

Now the next thing for Fard was this, to do it in such a way that it sensitized them to think Universal. Now he perhaps was the most narrowest person, narrowest author, in terms of introducing universal truth that I have ever come upon, but he was also a big exaggerator, he exaggerated and made claims for his narrow view that his narrow view was really universal.

He said, "This is the universal truth." So that made me, - and you always speak of yourself better than you can speak of somebody else, but don't think I'm saying me alone, I'm just one of many that was influenced this way and began to move in this direction, in the same direction or moved in the direction that I moved in. That made me then want to be universal in my mind and in my thinking. I want my perception to be universal. I think that was part of the strategy, part of the scheme, to make us come out of something very narrow.

You know the use of extremes; if you want a person to really want freedom, confine them. The more you confine them, the more they don't want to feel freedom. If you confine them in a prison like they have now, like these inmates enjoy now, they may not want too much freedom

[laughter]

If you confine them in a prison like they used to have long long long generations ago, the behavior when they come out they don't want freedom. I mean, human freedom. I think Fard, he had something very narrow and limiting, very constricting and constraining, but it was to give us an urge for something big for relief, you see?

And he claimed for his own narrow view, a universal view. So that makes us the student now, they think they are universal. We used to say, "What school did you go to? I'm in the fifth-grade elementary school. So what school do you go to?" I said, man, I go to the University of Islam, that's what our elementary school was called; The University of Islam. The leaders of the black revolution-- or evolution, and for our minds for our intellect, they also called their institutions, colleges, and universities before they even had qualified college and university professor that they had then.

Again I think Fard might have took a hint, he said, "Well, if they did it, I can do it and I can do it better." And he did do it better. He did his thing better. We began to think universal, and I began to see that the real Islam is the religion that introduces this adherence to the universe. G-d says of the paradise that we're going to inherit or gain upon our goodness, we will be rewarded because of our goodness. He says of that paradise to cultivate He said that it's expanse is as the expanse of the skies and the earth.

[00:58:32] [END OF AUDIO]