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# IWDM Study Library

# Interview - Establish Muslim Community Houston TX

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

Imam Ibrahim Kamalud-Din: Thank you, dear beloved people, for joining us on the American Muslim Mission in Focus. This is a program that is designed to bring you valuable information that will improve the life of you and your family.

We have a special guest with us today and I'm sure most of you are familiar with our guest. He is the resident Imam of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad Masjid in Chicago, Illinois. His name is Imam W. Deen Muhammad. He is a Muslim world leader and he is the leader of the American Muslim mission, the largest Muslim community in the Western Hemisphere.

The American Muslim mission was formally known as the Nation of Islam under the leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad who was his father. The teachings of the Nation of Islam was not in accord with the Holy Quran as we have come to understand since Imam W. Deen Muhammad has taken over the leadership of the community. Our object today is to try and make you understand or help you to understand that we are on the true path of Al-Islam and we want you to understand what the true teachings are, it'll make better relationship between all of the people in our communities. Imam Muhammad, I would like to welcome you to our program.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Thank you Imam Kamalud-Din, happy to be here.

Imam Ibrahim: Thank you. Now, I would like to talk about community building, establishing communities and I know that we are in the process of establishing a Muslim community. Now, the first thing I'd like to know is what is the value of establishing a Muslim community and what principle would we establish such a community on?

Imam W. Deen: Yes, the value is in the great opportunity for living a Muslim life. When you're living alone, it's very difficult to live your religion with great ease. It's a strain when you're living alone. Our religion is not a religion for an individualist, it's religion for person who identify in community and really, the expression [Arabic] means Islamic community and G-d says in the Quran that you are the best community raised up for the good of all people, you see.

Community is emphasized in our religion that Muslims should live his life in community. There is no way to live the Islamic life except in a community. Now, we come to our mosque, our Masjid for worship, for prayers. We come there and we are given the opportunity to sometime dine together. We have pioneers in the community in Chicago and in many places here in Houston, they used to do it, perhaps they're still doing it, who prepare meals and so we eat together and we worship, we have worship together, we eat dinner together but that's not enough.

If you live together in a community, then you share the burden of community life with each other and that's important for Muslims. The value is to have better opportunity to live your religion as it should be lived, community life. The principle is Lā ilāha illā-llāh, worship but one G-d. There is but one G-d, Muḥammadun Rasūl Allāh and Muhammad is His Messenger, that's the principle.

As we know that that principle is tied to the other essential structures, our pillars of the faith- of other religion pardon me, that make it possible for us to live it in a community life. There is but one G-d, Muhammad is the Messenger of G-d, peace be upon the Prophet. He was teaching his followers and he said Buniyal Islam Ala Khamsin, the religion of Al Islam is built upon five essentials. He said they are to believe in but one G-d and to profess one G-d and Muhammad is His Messenger and to pray, make Salat.

For us praying is not just doing this or this, but prayer is reciting the Word of G-d and submitting the whole life to the Word of G-d in the steps we call Rak'ah and doing it five times a day. Here, we have an obligation to profess the oneness of G-d and to acknowledge Muhammad as the messenger and the last messenger of G-d.

With it, a discipline called prayer, Salat, that require that we bring our spirit and our morality and our physical body and everything into daily discipline that's five times a day and Muslims practice it all together, so here, we feel-- you perhaps have wanted to lose weight, right?

Imam Ibrahim: Right [laughs].

Imam W. Deen: You want a partner to go with you, right?

Imam Ibrahim: That's right.

Imam W. Deen: It's hard to lose it by yourself.

Imam Ibrahim: That's right. [laughs]

Imam W. Deen: When you know that Muslims are doing the same thing you're doing, whether they're next door or he's in another country, we know that Muslims are doing the same thing, so we're not doing this alone. We do the five daily prayers. We are doing those prayers with millions and millions, hundreds of millions of Muslims on this planet but it's better when you can-- although we got that benefit, it's much better when you know that the people in your neighborhood are doing it, the brother next door as you call the prayer. That's what we want, we don't have it.

We want a situation where we can hear the call to prayer and we don't have to go and catch a bus and go a long ways. We walk right out our doors, me and my neighbor, he's a Muslim too and we with a lot of families, we walk right on our door and go to the place located conveniently in our neighborhood and go there and worship, and return to our homes.

If the Muslim live in close proximity, then their religion can be lived in its fullest sense but when we scattered about, I have to go for miles to meet another Muslim to do prayers together in congregation, then that's difficult. He said also charity is one of these five essentials, to give in charity.

When Muslim live in a community with each other in the same neighborhood, then we can know each other's needs quicker and better, you see. When we're living so far upon, one may be suffering, we don't know about it. Many people as G-d says in his holy book and give also to those who don't ask the because of their dignity. You see, so there are many poor people who won't ask for help. There is shame, shame prevents them from begging or asking for help, but if you live in close proximity, you know the state of your brother [crosstalk]-

Imam Ibrahim: That's right. You could see it.

Imam W. Deen: It's so much better and then he said the fasting. Well, fasting and going to break fast together, you know we do that and how we enjoy it. How much better it would be if we're right in the same neighborhood fasting and seeing each other, As-Salāmu ʿAlaykum, brother, and greeting each other daily and the smell in the cooking pot and sharing in it, living next door. It's just much better to live in a community.

Now, The Muslims shouldn't put so much emphasis on his community life that he forgets that really the earth is G-d's mosque.

Imam Ibrahim: That's right. [laughs] That was my next question.

Imam W. Deen: And pilgrimage also, pilgrimage, we leave together and go make pilgrimage to the holy house in Mecca in Saudi Arabia-

Imam Ibrahim: It is beautiful.

Imam W. Deen: - together, but even that would be enjoyed more I believe by us, if we were going as a community that lived close to each other.

Imam Ibrahim: True. Because I know there was one year that so many of us in our community made it together although we didn't live necessarily so close to each other, but when we went together, it was much enjoyable, you had somebody that we feel we know and it's just better.

Imam W. Deen: It is. Community life is the life of man.

Imam Ibrahim: Our time is very short and we get to talking, it goes that fast.

Imam W. Deen: It goes as fast, I know.

Imam Ibrahim: There's something I want to ask you about before we get too far. The land that we bought in Sedalia, I know that at one time you had mentioned that we were going to thinking of it as a site to establish a Muslim community. Are we still thinking of doing that? Are we still going to use that land?

Imam W. Deen: Yes, we are. In fact, we are looking more to Sedalia now because we have the land, it's 40 acres, about 40-plus acres and that we were hoping first to establish a national boarding school there. The original plan was for a national college training for the teachers of our schools, Clara Muhammad schools. We still hope for that but that was a bit more difficult to realize.

We think that we can easier right now be more practical for us to establish a national high school boarding high school and that will give the parents an opportunity to send their teenagers, youngsters to that area where they'll have better environment protected from a lot of the problems of the big city like Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, these big cities to get their high school education. We'll also accommodate the program for teacher training that will eventually we hope evolve into a college.

We are looking to that land and we have applicants who would like to live there. In fact, we already have approved a few people, they have moved there. We hope there will be a little community. We don't want homes living too close together. You want to keep the character of the land around about us. I think we could have a small model, not a big one but a small model of Islamic community life right there.

Imam Ibrahim:: That will create a desire, more of a desire in the rest of us to want to become a part of such a thing.

Imam W. Deen: Yes.

Imam Ibrahim: Now, what about the land we have in Georgia, the land that we call Elijahville?

Imam W. Deen: That's much more land.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes, I know that's--

Imam W. Deen: That's much more land.

Imam Ibrahim:: It's about 4600 acres.

Imam W. Deen: Yes, it is, about 4600 acres. Yes, there's much more land.

Imam Ibrahim:: That's enough to put a whole city there.

Imam W. Deen: And a beautiful land as well.

Imam Ibrahim:: Very beautiful.

Imam W. Deen: The difficulty is with the courts. Members of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's family claim many assets, they claim many properties. We have been fighting it in court and the court has not given a decision yet that will permit us to utilize the Georgia farm, Terrell County farm which is the Muslim farm in Georgia. Because of that tied up in court.

Imam Ibrahim:: What reason do they give for feeling that they should do this?

Imam W. Deen: The members of the family when they face financial difficulty, no money coming in because after all, the Hon. Elijah Mohammad, he gave assistance to many of his relatives.

Imam Ibrahim:: I know. I'm aware of that.

Imam W. Deen: But he required of them that they were productive in his organization too. He didn't give assistance for nothing. They had to support and many of them were actually working in some capacity. Now, when the change came and we couldn't afford the load we had, the policy changed, business policy changed and also the policy regarding the collection of contributions or the getting contributions, - changed. That was not a program to promote that anymore. We ended the program promoting of having a competition where members are given more this member is giving more and you compete with that member in giving to the community.

Imam Ibrahim:: That created a problem.

Imam W. Deen: And a regular preaching of give, give, give, that stopped so now the money is not coming in, but you still have the load that you had before. The people now, they're not getting that money so they are desperate. Many are desperate, I can understand their desperation, I can understand that situation.

Imam Ibrahim:: But also sounds like a test.

Imam W. Deen: I have sympathy for them but they have to find a way to manage without putting their weight on the back of another person who has the same situation or maybe worse situation, you see. The change in the policies brought about this situation where family members have to face financial difficulties. Some of them were not affected, like Herbert Mohammad was established. He wasn't affected but the great majority of them were affected. Because of that, they have lay claims to many properties that were generally understood to be properties of the community, you know?

Imam Ibrahim: Yes, I know.

Imam W. Deen: Yes. The courts, I don't think that they're interested too much in seeing one side or the other getting the properties. The courts if they can they will just prolong it and prolong it as long as there's a reason to. It seemed that they just prolong it and prolong it so the money is eaten up in lawyer fees, in court fees et cetera, et cetera.

I have learned a lot about these probate cases as we have been at. In most of the probate cases, the people put themselves in danger by not protecting themselves with the law. If you write a will, a will should be written and the will should be protected and preserved. It save you from the procedure, probate court procedure you see.

Since the Hon. Elijah Mohammad, if he wrote a will, it was not where it could be found and presented to the courts that leaves everybody in this particular situation. The Hon. Elijah Muhammad I believe, he felt that he had established what properties belong to him and his relatives and what properties were community properties. That language don't stand up in the court, that's the problem.

Imam Ibrahim:: But there were so many things that took place over those period of years, because see I was- I've been in the community about 25 years, so the money that was asked for and was send in, the mail money and it was for a specific purpose. It was made known that it was for community development, for everybody.

Imam W. Deen: Yes, to build a nation.

Imam Ibrahim:: That was understood. I don't see why in court they should have any problem making a decision when those things are obvious.

Imam W. Deen: Like I said, if the legal language is not there, then you can't argue the court except on legal grounds and use legal language. You know how many avenues or how many routes you can take with legal language.

Imam Ibrahim:: True. That's very true. I've heard a saying, it says that in this world a thing can be legally right but morally wrong, and morally right but legally wrong and I can see how that works.

Imam W. Deen: That's just prolonging procedure in court, that's tying up properties that can't be utilized and is denying both sides the use of those properties. That's immoral, that's all wrong but legally speaking-

Imam Ibrahim: They can do it.

Imam W. Deen: - it's right.

Imam Ibrahim:: Yes. I would like to ask you a concern and getting back to the establishing of the community. Now, what is our relationship with people in other communities? We set up a community then there's going to be people perhaps even close to us.

Imam W. Deen: Certainly, Prophet Mohammad, peace and blessings be upon him, he established a community, an independent community in Medina. The prophet demonstrated to us how an independent Muslim society functions and operates. It gives the right of religious freedom to its subjects and in exchange for his subjects support for the government as protector of the interest of its citizen and securer of the peace, its citizens then give it tax, pay taxes. They have to share in the tax burden of that particular nation and that particular government then also has to protect the rights of those citizens.

For a Muslim society, it include protecting their religious rights. It is documented that the rights of the Jews and the Christians to worship as they had been worshiping. This was expressly put in the document that they could continue to worship as they have been worshiping without any fear of threat from the Muslim community. The freedom of religion was documented for them.

Now, if a Muslim is living as a community in a majority non-Muslim society where the government is majority non-Muslim, therefore the rule or the law of the land is not Islamic, then if your government accord rights to the citizens, you expect the same rights. We expect in a civilized nation, we'll be given the freedom to practice our religion and to live our religion as it is dictated by G-d in the holy book. In exchange, should we pay taxes? In an exchange, shouldn't we support the welfare and the national welfare?

Imam Ibrahim: Yes.

Imam W. Deen: Right. Yes, and that means living at peace with your neighbors, whether they're Muslims or non-Muslims. We apply, if we just apply the same principles that was established under the leadership of our prophet, peace be upon him, in our given situations, the Muslims should be able to co-exist and live and prosper in any society that is civilized.

Imam Ibrahim: I can see how what you say is good for everybody. Everybody should have this kind of understand. It will make a more peaceful society as a whole.

Imam W. Deen: We're not that far apart, right?

Imam Ibrahim:: That's true. Yes.

Imam W. Deen: Right. Does this Muslim believe in democratic institutions? Muslim believes in doing good by his fellow man?

Imam Ibrahim: That's right

Imam W. Deen: All people. Actually, we're not that far apart. That's why I believe that this land we call America is really a land that's going to bring the best out of all the great religious people. It's going to bring the best out of us. It's an opportunity for us to struggle together and learn to live with each other, and cooperate with each other for the good of the whole society.

Imam Ibrahim: It's like a proving ground.

Imam W. Deen: It's the proving ground, bringing the best out of all of us.

Imam Ibrahim: That's right. Yes. Now, our time is getting a little short and this is a question that I really want to get in. What are some of the programs that have been established under your leadership in our community?

Imam W. Deen: Well, I don't see a program but some of the more cherished successes is number one, the establishment of the practice of the religion. In the old days, there was a confusion as to how this religion is to be practiced.

Imam Ibrahim: True

Imam W. Deen: There was a belief in Islam, a belief in Allah. All of that was confused because of the distance between us and the practice of the faith.

Imam Ibrahim: I see. That's right.

Imam W. Deen: When you practice the faith correctly, then even your concepts come more clear. I think the best that we have achieved is the practice of the religion as its practiced by one billion Muslim-

Imam Ibrahim: One billion. [laughs]

Imam W. Deen: - over the planet. Next to that, I would say our emphasis on education, our emphasis on personal and community responsibility, and that includes sharing the burden of American society. That we shouldn't accept that we exempt ourselves from a share in the burden of American society, so whatever vices that threaten America, whatever racial ignorance’s are threaten America, whatever foreign enemies threatens America, if we citizen of this country, we can find a way as Muslims to share the burden.

We have properties we have brought, but I think those principles are more important than the land. We have land. We've purchased some land. We have a new library donated to us by the Saudi Arabian government, new library there in Chicago, American Muslim Mission Library, will are operating a high school in there now.

We have a small high school, about 50-some students there, is going very well. In fact, we have a teacher there now who has doctoral degree in the sciences of chemistry and physics. Really, we have a very excellent opportunity there. In Chicago, the cost of the facilities there in Chicago, which most of them are paid for as you know by poor members of the community. The library is only one that I could think of that was donated to us. All the others paid for by our poor members.

Imam Ibrahim: That's why I said there should be no doubt in the court that this property is community property.

Imam W. Deen: There shouldn't be any doubt. If G-d bless us, what we want to do is convert many of these assets that were purchased under the old leadership and purchased in different economic times and situation, we're going to sell them. We hope to get the good dollar for that, market dollar. Then use that money to reinvest in small towns like Sedalia, North Carolina.

Imam Ibrahim: That's beautiful.

Imam W. Deen: Perhaps in the different regions, South, East, West, Midwest and invest where we can get a greater rate of return for our investment with less burden. Get more profit with less burden. We can't do it now in these big cities that have so many problems.

Imam Ibrahim: I got one last question. We only got about a couple of minutes. The thing that you've said so far I can almost see the answer to this next question but you already said. There's a severe problem of crime in the society and I wanted to ask you this. How can this be avoided in the Muslim community? I know it'd be pretty hard to answer that quickly.

Imam W. Deen: We will try. We have to find a way to become better informed as to what is our responsibility as Muslims. There's specific responsibilities given to the man, the husband, the father, the mother, and the children. All of us under a responsibility. The more we learn our family obligations, family role obligations, the less crime we'll have in the Muslim family. If you take the crime out of the family, you can take it out of neighborhoods.

Imam Ibrahim: That's right. That's the tip. We often said that the family is the foundation of any society.

Imam W. Deen: It is, yes.

Imam Ibrahim: If the family is healthy, the whole nation [crosstalk]

Imam W. Deen: The whole nation will be healthy.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes, that's right [chuckles].

Imam W. Deen: That's right.

Imam Ibrahim: Well, brother Imam, I sure want to thank you-

Imam W. Deen: It's been a pleasure again.

Imam Ibrahim: - for being on the program.

Imam W. Deen: It's been a pleasure again and I think you have a wonderful program.

Imam Ibrahim: This information is going to be very valuable. I've gotten a lot of compliments from people about you in our shows. I thank you very much for that.

Imam W. Deen: I hope we'll come back again soon.

Imam Ibrahim: Yes, sir. Dear beloved people, as usual, our time has run out. We want to thank you very much for being with us and as you know, we go to the last minute so we have to go right out. Thank you very much. We'll see you next time. As-Salāmu ʿAlaykum. May the peace of Almighty G-d be upon you.

[music]

Speaker 1: The American Muslim Mission in Focus. 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.

[00:26:27] [END OF AUDIO]