# 1984

# IWDM Study Library

# Chaplains Dialogue Houston TX

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

Voiceover: This program deals 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. Now, your host Imam Ibrahim Kamalud-Din.

Imam Ibrahim Kamalud-Din: As-Salaam-Alaikum. Dear beloved people may the peace and blessings of Almighty God be upon you. I'm Imam Ibrahim Kamalud-Din. I'd like to welcome you to another 30-minute session of the American Muslim Mission in focus. We want to thank you for tuning in on us. We hope that you will stay with us through the whole program because we have some very interesting and special guests we want you to meet. Our very special guest is Imam W. Deen Mohammed who is the resident 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 teaches the religion of Al-Islam. We are believers in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad which means the life works of Prophet Muhammad. You'll find that Prophet Muhammad was on the earth 1,400 years ago. He received the last divine revelation from Almighty God to all of mankind. He was a universal prophet. Also, it's a matter of fact that there are over one billion people on this earth that believe in this religion of Al Islam. I would like to thank you very much brother, Imam, for taking off from your very busy schedule to come and be with us again today.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: I appreciate the opportunity to be with you again.

Imam Ibrahim: Also, we have with us another special guest who is Chaplain Clyde Johnston. He is the director of Chaplains for the Texas Department of Corrections. I want to thank you very much, Chaplain Johnston, for taking time out from your very busy schedule to come and be with us today.

Chaplain Clyde Johnston: Thank you. Pleasure to be here.

Imam Ibrahim: It's an honor to have you with us. Now, we have some other guests, special guests, Imam Akbar Nora-Din Shabazz and Imam Eugene W. Farooq. They're also chaplains employed by the TDC. They represent the Muslim population, but their concern I believe, is for all of the men and women in the prison unit. So, we want to thank you very much for being here and taking time out from your busy schedule.

Together: Thank you Imam Kamalud.

Imam Ibrahim: Our time is very short, so I want to take advantage of this time that we have. My first question is to Imam W. Deen Mohammed. When you became the leader of the Muslim community you greatly increased the effort to reach more inmates in the prisons all over the country. I remember that there was a great effort made to teach and train, to better train perhaps hundreds and thousands of Muslim men and women to go into the prison and to take the teachings to the people that would increase their knowledge and enable them to better get control of their lives and have better understanding.

I would like to ask you at this time if you would tell us what was so important that caused you to put forth that effort?

IWDM: First, we were aware that men in prison didn't have the opportunity to be in direct contact with the movement that was called the Nation of Islam. They didn't attend temple meetings. Most of them had never even visited any temple. They had never come to the services in the free society. They learned what they learned about the Nation of Islam, the leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad called Black Muslims, from other inmates and sometimes from sources that left them with a lot of misconceptions.

We thought that we should increase our effort in the prisons because that's where the need was. We had need all over to correct the idea of the religion, but in the prisons, it was more critical, I thought.

Imam Ibrahim: It was. I remember. I was a part of that.

I would like to go to Chaplain Johnston at this time. I would like to open it up for you to any statement you want to make, any question you want to ask. Again, I want to let you know we're very honored to have you with us.

Chaplain Johnston: Thank you. I just want to say it's a pleasure to be on the rostrum with brother Mohammed. I have followed him during all the years that he has been the leader of the American Muslim Mission. We were reminiscing before we started taping here a while ago about the stormy days of this movement back in the prison before he came to his position of leadership. He's brought a great peace and quiet to the movement within the prison. I've experienced that. I remember in the very early days of the movement, I'm going back now to '68 long in there when the Muslim meetings in our prisons they were angry sessions, very angry.

I've seen that just come right on down until they have mellowed out. I have followed Brother Mohammed as he appears in place that’s within driving range of me. I have been to listen to him lecture and so forth because I wanted to know where the movement was because it affected the prison and anything that affects religion in the department affects me and so I would know firsthand. I appreciate his teachings and his leadership. You can tell by looking at him. He's a man of peace. I have experienced him as being that way. Our religion is different. We believe differently.

Somehow another, there is a peace in this man and there is a peace in the movement that enables both the religions, Christianity and the Muslim religion, to, I think, exists in a very peaceful way in our land. It is existing that way. There have been some radical movements in the Islamic religion, but there has not been those radical things within the American Muslim Mission. We have had no serious problems within the prison from the inmates that follow this religion.

Supposedly grateful to Chaplain Shabazz over here, and then to Chaplain Farooq who has just come to us more recently for the help that they are both given me and keeping religion on and even keel because it could become a very disruptive thing in the prison because there are pressures from the outside, some prejudices that if I couldn't work as effectively with them as I do, there could perhaps be some problem because of misunderstanding, that sort of thing. I want to publicly thank them for the help that they give me.

Imam Ibrahim: I want to thank you for those statements. Brother Imam, would you like to give a reply or make a statement?

IWDM: I'm very much aware of those days, the earlier days of ours, when some of our members, well, they disobeyed really the spiritual teachings around Elijah Muhammad.

Imam Ibrahim: That's true.

IWDM: He was more interested in getting Black people to accept responsibility for their own lives and to live with themselves and try to work their life out as a people and have better families and better morals and better discipline in their lives. He was more interested in that than he was in creating-- In fact, I don't think he was interested in creating any hostilities or real violence between no violence at all between the races. He would tell his people not to carry weapons and that they were not to act violently against the White man. In fact, he taught them to respect the White man.

He said, "Many of your work for White man." He say, "Give them an honest day's work."

Imam Ibrahim: I remember that. Also, I would like to now go to our two other guests. If they have any questions or any statements they'd like to make.

Eugene W. Farooq: First of all, I'd like to give the greetings on behalf of the Muslim brothers within the TDC to brother Imam Mohammed, As-Salaam Alaikum.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Wa Alaikum as-salam.

Eugene W. Farooq: This is our-

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Greetings to them.

Eugene W. Farooq: Yes, sir. It's indeed a great pleasure to be here, brought this today with you. I had several questions that I wanted to address. One of them was the majority of the individuals who are coming to the prison and convert to the religion of Al Islam. Once released from prison are very productive individuals in the society. Now, what I would like to ask you is what do you see as being the basic reason for this?

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Well, something to believe in. I believe most of the men, the people, who give themselves to destructive life after all criminal life is just another form of destruction. I think most of them they have been disappointed, but maybe the home environment contributed to it. Who knows what contributed to it, but they've been disappointed in life. When they find something else that they can believe in, sometimes that new faith gives them a new lease on life and I think that's what happened.

Chaplain Johnston: I'd like to jump in and endorse that. I find that the Muslim faith is giving new life, new in save to a lot of the men who pick it up in the prison. It's a new hope. In the early days in the prison, wardens were skeptical of Muslims, other officials were a little bit threatened and worried about the Muslims, but they have disciplined themselves. They have proved themselves. I ventured to say that the majority of the wardens of our prison, I cannot speak for them all, but I believe that most of them would say that the Muslim people are trying very hard to try to discipline their lives, to make their lives better so that they can be more productive, more creative people upon their release.

There's some peer pressure within your communities, within our prisons where they-- If a fellow starts going wrong his brothers, I'll use the term brothers out of my own faith, his peers, will speak to him and try to discipline him, to keep him in the straight and narrow because this is new life for them. This is new hope for them. It's something that-- I wish somehow in my own faith, there could be something new that would come that would give new life, new hope to my own group.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Chaplain Johnston, I think a lot of that comes from their life in crime really. Everything is not bad in the criminal society. One thing they have that is good, they will stick up for each other.

[laughter]

When they become Muslim, they still have that spirit to help each other out.

Chaplain Johnston: I see many of the others who are in religious groups and I'm speaking principally of the Christian faith now, somehow another there's not the “spree decor” to use a French terminology here, there's not the enthusiasm and the zeal to try to better oneself in the Christian faith as I find it in your own group. I'm very disappointed in my own group for that. Of course, as we study movements, we find that all movements go through various phases.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: That's true.

Chaplain Johnston: In your own group, you have just to look forward to somewhere down the line. It may be-

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: It has happened already in many Muslim countries.

Chaplain Johnston: Yes, that's what I'm saying. Just because I'm saying that our own Christian religion has become a little bit more passé or decadent and so forth, it will also happen to yours too.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Real soon. It's a cycle.

Chaplain Johnston: It's a cycle.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Yes.

Chaplain Johnston: It goes through phases, but you're right now at a very creative, productive phase. That's very heartening and very good for us and for your people that are involved in.

Imam Ibrahim: Listening to you two talk, I was thinking that there's one thing that should be realized is that Al Islam is not a religion for just one set of people, it's a religion for all of mankind. It's a universal religion. Everyone, every human being can benefit from it. I think that-

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: That's very important especially for the inmates, the men in prison and those in the streets who I think kind of identify with those people who've given up on life. Who don't have any hope. That's very important, what you're saying because many of them think that the religion Islam is some kind of a cult. Even a criminal cult. Some of them thought it was a criminal cult.

Imam Ibrahim: I noticed that some of those ideas are still being projected to the people as though to keep some animosity between people. I think this communication; this is one of the reasons why I'm very happy and pleased that we were able to meet together here like this because this will make people realize that all it takes is communication.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: I believe so.

Imam Ibrahim: I was telling someone, and I think I heard you say this, that this problem that's going on in the world between people, like Jews, Christians, and Muslims or whatever. I heard you say once that if all of these people would really live up to their religions, you wouldn't have this problem.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: That's true.

Imam Ibrahim: Because all the religions are basically good.

Imam W. Deen: All the religions are pure. The religious you mentioned are pure. In their essence they're pure.

Imam Ibrahim: Right. I think it's just proper communication.

Chaplain Johnston: Unfortunately, religion becomes political in count. It comes something around which we organize to accomplish deviant things. It's a focus around which we are able to gather together and so forth. That's very bad. Very sad.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: It is.

Chaplain Johnston: Of course, I believe my religion, the Christian, faith is the greatest religion in the world. But I believe in the freedom of religion as a Baptist. The leaders of this country were Baptists and they were very staunch believers in the freedom of religion. I believe that every person has a right to believe what they want to believe. I'm just as concerned that you have a right to believe what you believe as I have a right to believe what I believe.

I do not sit in judgment on you as I hope you do not sit in judgment on me or my people. It is beautiful and wonderful for us to be able to work together in harmony. I believe that it is right and proper that we respect one another. In fact, if we do not respect one another, there's no hope for us. I respect you as you practice the lofty teachings of your faith and as your people are made better and as society is made better by your faith. I rejoice in that the same as I rejoice in people being made better by what I believe.

Imam Ibrahim: Chaplain Johnston, I just hope that more people will just-- This will motivate more people to start thinking this way and just looking into things.

Chaplain Johnston: Of course, in Christianity, we're taught that if we judged we will be judged. I don't want to say bad things about you because that puts me in a bad light. I don't even feel bad things about you. Don't misunderstand, but even if I did, I wouldn't verbalize them because that makes me judging you and then that-- If I put you down, I put myself down. That's what I'm trying to say. I'm not going to be guilty of that.

Imam Ibrahim: You know the reason for that is because we're all one human family.

Chaplain Johnston: Right. Absolutely right.

Imam Ibrahim: Brother Imam, he was speaking of something there a minute ago about freedom to practice your religion of which you believe. I heard you mention once that that is also a part of our religion.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: It is. Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, when he established the first Muslim society, government, community in Medina in the Middle East, he gave a mandate that the Jews would be free to practice their religion and to observe their religion as they had been observing it. That the Muslims had a duty and obligation, being the host society there, they had an obligation to protect the rights of Jews and Christians or other people who observe or adhere to legitimate religion.

Now, we know some people like we have in this institution, they don't have legitimate religion. Their religion is criminal. He didn't allow that. He did recognize the right of Christianity and Judaism and other religions too to exist and then have a free life just as Muslims had under the Muslim state.

Imam Ibrahim: I can see that-- Go right ahead.

Chaplain Johnston: There's another thought that comes to my mind that's in keeping with what we're talking about. There was a very learned Jewish man who made this statement regarding the Christian movement when he was very young. The Jewish people were trying to stamp it out and this very brilliant man by the name of Camero said that if this is of G-d, we cannot hold it back. If it is not of G-d, it will die out on his own. As I look at your group, I say, if you are truly

of Allah or G-d, we'll not be able to hold you back. I'm not trying to hold you back. You cannot be held back in any way. If it is not it will die on its own.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: It will. It's true.

Chaplain Johnston: Go the way of the world.

Imam Ibrahim: I see we were getting so wrapped up in this. You all have any more questions that you'd like to-

Imam Akbar Shabaz: Yes I have one.

Imam Ibrahim: Go right ahead.

Imam Akbar: I also would like to bring greetings from my brothers in Texas congregation to Imam. As salaam alaikum.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Wa Alaikum As-Salaam. Greet them for us.

Akbar Nora Shabazz: Yes I will. It's been a growing concern not only in Texas but throughout the country of female officer searching Muslim male inmates. Can you give us some kind of direction on that?

Imam W. Deen: Yes, that problem has reached to me now for the last two years. They have been telling me that is a problem for some inmates and I know I will feel embarrassed myself being searched by a female but that's when you are in prison you lose your rights and you have to accept that when you are in prison you don't have the rights of free people-

Imam Akbar: Yes that's right.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: I Think some of the things that we can't change in prison I think maybe it's good for us that we can't get everything we want in prison because the life shouldn't be a reward, it should be punishment.

Imam Akbar: That's right.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: It's too bad that some innocent have to suffer too.

Imam Akbar: That also would apply to wearing beards that's also a big concern throughout the country on wearing beard. In most prisons, that's a rule for security reasons but we have a lot of brothers who are attacking the institution about that.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: My advice is that if you have explained that it is your religious belief that you should wear a beard and we know that Prophet Muhammed wore beard and his followers do wear beards but there are some men who can’t wear beard and I didn't hear Prophet Muhammed say they are not Muslims because they can't grow beards. I think what they should do is I understand that in that situation all they can do is appeal to the administration, the warden. Ask the warden to allow them to wear and if they can't get results, then they have to accept those circumstances.

Imam Akbar: Thanks, brother Imam.

Chaplain Johnston: Now I was telling you earlier as the Director of Chaplains, I had followed you around to hear what you were saying so I kind of keep up with the movement. I would pose this question to you, where is the movement, the American Muslim Mission at the present time and what are the trends, where are you going and especially where prisoners are involved?

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Where prisoners are involved, we are really now trusting that men will be in the position of Imams within the prisons who are not themselves convicts, they are free men like these Chaplains we have here, and that they will have the inmates concerns at heart and also the communities concerned at heart, and that we will trust them. We don't want to have an administration in the masjid, in the church, for us it's mosque. That administration is responsible for what is happening in the prison. We would rather have men who are accepted by the institution, who are educated and can perform that service for us and for the institution.

Chaplain Johnston: Now I would like to change the question a little bit, where is the American Muslim Mission going, what are the trends and the movements outside the prison. I mean, where are you going?

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: I don't think it has changed, not since I have become a voice in the community. It hasn't changed. Our direction is to be a model Muslim community. For us, a model Muslim community is a tolerant rational community that want to co-exist with all decent people and especially with Christians because they are the majority in this country.

Imam Ibrahim: That's an excellent answer, thank you very much.

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Thank you bro Imam

Imam Ibrahim: We are getting close to the end of our time, so maybe we have time for one more question?

Imam Farooq: Yes brother Imam. I have a question and that's concerning individuals who come to the prison. They come here and they aren't Muslim. Once they get in prison they hear the teachings about Islam, they accept the religion. Some, often times, they are in for committing all types of crimes. We have some that are in for murder and they have their death penalty that they are waiting on but they accept the religion Al Islam. What is the position that is taken in the religion concerning execution?

Imam W. Deen Mohammed: First let me say this, Muslims feel that no human being has the right to power or the right to take life, but the Muslim society we are duty-bound to respect the law of G-d and we execute laws that G-d has established and there is capital punishment in the Muslim society, but it's not us we don't have the power it's not our law just the law of G-d that if you kill you have to answer for that. If you commit capital crime of felonies you have to answer for those crimes.

What I would say to men like that is that they should find peace and find solace in their religion if they have really been converted to that religion and if their prison officers, administration or they are Imam who service that prison if you feel that this man has really had a great turn in his life, a great change in his life and you feel that he should be given another chance, I think he can make an appeal on the basis of his change in his life because of his religion. If he is rejected, then he should go to death as a Muslim.

Imam Ibrahim: Okay, I would like to thank you all very much again for being on the program and you really made it very interesting. I've learned a lot.

Dear beloved people, I would like to get you to buy one of the books by Imam Warith Deen Mohammed. It's a book called Religion on the Line. I believe you will be seeing it about this time. The subjects in there I think will enlighten you very much. I know it will enlighten me and we would like for you to call 4377087 and we'll give you further information on how you can obtain one of these books.

I'd like to thank you again for staying with us and we'll be bringing more information to you on our next programs. I'd like to leave you with A Salam Alaikum. May the peace and blessing of Almighty G-d be upon you. Thank you very much.

[Music]

Voiceover: 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. 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.