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# IWDM Study Library

# Panel Discussion Masjid Al Islam Houston TX

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

Imam Talib: We didn't have a lot of people here. We didn't have really a lot of time to prepare for the Imam coming. At the same time, as many of you know of, we've been making announcements for the last two or three weeks asking people to come out. We've got leaflets. We've made radio appearances. We have ads in the papers.

There's been enough time for many of us to work to try to make a better showing or a bigger crowd. But my question, I'll throw the question back.

What is it about us that when it comes to doing the physical labor, which is definitely harder, and in many cases, as the spiritual conversation? Why is it that many of us feel like we can't do that? This is all I can say, because there are just a few of us like it is and usually not going to take a lot as we know around the country. But there are just a few of us. When we hear about something going on, we right away come in and volunteer.

There are some of us, for whatever reason we have, we don't want to be involved in the promotion of something here. We’re happy that Allah has blessed us to have those of you who are here now. As you know, our schedule was for the Imam to come in, to attend Jumua at the Islamic Society of Greater Houston. Then from there, come here to the open forum.

With the weather changing like it did in Dallas, Arkansas and other places, it threw his flight off by about an hour or so. Rather than go from the airport through the east side of Dumont, which we would not have made in time, we came here instead. I was saying that if we were able to go through the eastside, then there would be more people here now, knowing that the event is in town. I think that would be one of the answers that we could give.

Bro Gomah: Just to follow on what Brother Imam Talib mentioned, yes, there was an effort for the short period of time, about three to four weeks. We were working well to get out information. But there was enough publicity. But the change in the schedule immediately got the difficulty. We prayed to Allah. In shaAllah, we’d better.

IWDM: I have a real interest in the same benefits coming to us. Not for my sake. You run a business. I understand. I accept you not questioning anything. I accept and I am very pleased with what you've done. You run a business in a business way. If you want to be successful in your business, you don't want to be ignoring something that could be bringing profits into your business. That's the way Muslims should feel about the Da’wah. The support for this religion. We don't want to ignore something that could bring profit to us.

If I'm popular and my popularity will bring more people to us, we should use it. We shouldn't ignore that resource. We should use that resource so that we all benefit from that. If Muhammad Ali was here, he'd be much more popular than all of us. He could even draw many more people. The Muslims all around the country, they use Muhammad Ali, as his name just to draw people, because he's so popular.

To me, we're really ignoring, overlooking our resources. I agree. More should be done .I think with the right effort, you could have ten thousand times the result that you have for this occasion here. With the right effort. It’s not in my spirit to criticize. Since he's opened it up , it is a small group here. It's not like telling the world about it. I do think that we really overlook our own resources. We don't get the benefits from our own resources.

I don't have to appear. Many places, they invited me, I tell them use my name quietly. I'm telling you that, I say, "I know I won't be able to make it, but you can use my name." By chance, something should happen, maybe I will make it, so it's okay to use my name.

My name draws the people that like me. If not the people that like me, it makes a bigger meeting. So use me up.

Audience 1: As Salaamu Alaikum welcome

IWDM: Thank you.

IWDM: Yes. If you would look at the speeches that I have made over the years, you'll see that I have mentioned all those places you've talked about. I do that very importantly. In fact, we'd be ignorant not to be aware of our Islamic past and to bring that to the attention of our African-American people.

IWDM: I feel much more at ease with Minister Farrakhan. People are telling me that we know it's a fact that he's saying this, and he's saying that. It's a fact, too, that he makes the declaration of faith before about at least a thousand Muslims, Imams and scholars. We met in private with him and he didn't back off of that. I felt that he was sincere when he said that he believed in the prophet that we believed in the Prophet Muhammed who received the Quran. Sala lahu Alaihi wa salam (prayers and peace be upon him).

I felt that he was sincere to him saying that. I knew him. I've known him since he was a very young man. I was a young man myself when we met. I know him. I've been in contact with him as a friend. Not just as a Muslim, but as a friend. I used to visit his home. He'd visit my home. We know each other. You've been around a person enough you know when they're lying. You know when they're putting on.

You know when they're faking it. I believe that he wasn't faking it. I believe he was sincere. But I believe that pressure that he hasn't been able to deal with; pressures from the earliest days of our work are still on him. Those pressures are still on him. He's doing a better job of surviving with those pressures now than he did before. Those pressures are still on him. If he believes that it justifies him saying one thing to people that follow the old ways, the way of Honorable Elijah Mohammed and saying another thing to a different audience. He doesn't preach the same thing even to a non-Muslim audience that he preach to his private audience in his local places. He speaks differently to the public than he speaks to the people who follow the teachings of Honorable Elijah Mohammed.

I think that he losing that over the years, he's been losing that following. The more he loses following, then the less that following he'll be able to influence how he will behave. Inshallah, we prays that he will lose all those that influences him in the wrong way. I hope what I said is clear. That we should regard him in a positive way, not in a negative way and treat his people in the same way. And Inshallah, there will be good Muslims as we all of us are trying to do that.

Audience 3: What is your feeling about the situation of African-American Family?

IWDM: Yes, the African-American family at large.

Audience 3: Yes.

IWDM: Okay. What is my feeling about that? Yes, that it is a major concern for African-American people. The greatest concern that I feel that we have as African-American people, as black people in this country is the state of the family. The solution is in our religion Al-Islam. That's where the solution is. If we can't go directly to our people with the message of Islam concerning the family, at least we can bring them the principles and value.

Some of us want to have a 100% of nothing. Some of us say bring in the Quran and the Hadith, and the Turkish flag or the Pakistani flag, then start. I say leave all that behind and start where you can if you have to. Why can't we bring them the good teachings and the good principles and the good values that come straight from Quran and straight from our Prophet's life. At another occasion, introduce ourselves and do Da’wah in the name of the religion.

I feel it's an obligation on Muslims, not just something that I think we can do. I believe it's an obligation on Muslims to share what you have with other people that you know will be of benefit to them and that they need badly. Shared it with them without trying to proselytize or convert them to your religion. We should have people who will bringing good social messaging, good social reform messages, good moral reform messages to the people who are suffering in our race. And not necessarily presenting ourselves as one who's Imam or Muslim teacher or in the Da’wah.

Don't we have Islamic people giving educational lectures all over the United States? They're not saying, "My name is Imam John This is Da’wah, saying Bismillah and saying Tashahud," they are not coming that way. We have to do the same thing. The more we do that, the more successful we'll be. Please believe me, study the Quran more and study the life of the Prophet more, and you'll see that I don't believe anybody- now this is my belief, I don't believe anybody can come with the message, whether we come in the name of the Quran, in the name of the prophet or not.

I don't believe anybody can come with a more impressive message for bettering people's lives, no matter what their condition of life is than the Muslims. If he is properly aware and properly informed. That's my belief.

Audience 4: Concerns about the situation with Arabs, America and the problem in the Middle East.

IWDM: Anybody wants-- you want to say something?

IWDM: Your concern, the concern that our brother express here, I think is shared by most Muslims. Most of us feel that America favors Israel. America favors Israel. The record supports that. That America favors Israel. That way of dealing with the problem of Middle East hasn’t changed yet. The latest opportunities that the President Bush has had to deal in an even-handed way with the Israel and Arab hasn’t shown any improvements, it's still the same thing.

So we know that. We know that the United States favors Israel. The government, the president favors Israel over the Arabs. But when we look at the history of that situation that is the role of the United States in the Middle East. We see improvement. America is not quite as uneven-handed as it was some years ago, so we see improvement. I think when we look at these problems, we have to look at these problems in their entirety and not just in the today, and not just in one isolated pocket of it, but look at the situation in its entirety.

You know politics in this country. You think America is evenhanded with its treatment towards black and white. Although we've made a lot of progress, haven’t we? But it's not even-handed in its treatment of blacks and whites. I just read a headline on a paper. It said that the war against drugs is really a war against the black who were in drugs. But they made it into a war against the black people and the drugs, and not just the war against drugs. Whether that's true or not, I didn't search the article I don't know. But that was the headline I saw, a caption on the front page of a paper saying that the blacks were really focused in this war against drugs. They focused the blacks, us, in the war against drugs. Should we give up now?

Should we give up hopes for progress in the United States just because we achieved this uneven handed treatment of us? No, we look at the whole history of the relationship with the white people of America. We see improvement. We are much better off in terms of getting better treatment today from whites that we were 30 years ago, or even 20 years ago. That's the way our Muslim brothers, Arabs, and immigrant Muslims, all of us should look at it. We shouldn’t look at to say because they're doing that today, certainly they’re doing that today.

We are not satisfied with their behavior. We're not satisfied with our behavior either. We need a lot of improvement too on our side. I think if we concentrate on both side, getting them to behave better we getting ourselves to behave better then we'll make more progress. But I still agree because I have the same concern that the brother has, and that is that if we agreed, whatever we're doing, we should be doing it with our eyes open. We should know what we're dealing with.

I know the political people don't have to be American, they will always be together. If you don't protect your own interests, nobody else will. Muslims are not to trust their interests to non Muslims. This is Al-Islam.

Bro Gomah: I just wanted to follow up here. It's very important that our brother mentioned about his concern. Actually, it is as Allah described in the Holy Quran. The division amongst Muslim countries is some kind of a curse upon the Muslims. That’s why Allah say “some of the punishments We make you divided”. So division is a punishment of Allah. Because the closeness is only by Allah by the will of Allah.

Whatever you spend in the heaven and earth, what you do in the heaven and earth to show what’s in your heart you will never be able to do. But who Allah will be able to do it. Yes, my brother, it is very concerning, actually here and this is you are in the lucky age that Muslims- all over of the world are concerned about one another. That is what Allah has advised like us this. You are the best of mankind, enjoy what is good, and forbid what is wrong.

You have a message; you have certain things you have to live with the excellent moral of every aspect of life that Allah has created you to be witness of all of mankind.

Imam Kamaluddin: I just wanted to add witness to what has been said. I wanted to use the history of the life of Prophet Muhammed peace be upon him. When he started out, he started out revelations of Allah, and he began to live it, practice it, and preach it. After just 23 years, look what he brought about in Arabia. We still serve the same G-d, that same power is there that what was done then, that can be done now. This is what we should do, contemplate on building our religion, work together in unity, and we can overcome anything. Allah will be with us and all the forces in creation.

Question from a Sister

IWDM: The Muslims in our Masajid many of them have what they call- what do they call them now- not a committee. But it's an organized group of sisters that work to acquaint- single sisters with single brothers match maker. A group to help make possible a good match. I don't know how well that's working. I haven't been in touch with them in some year. So I don't know how well it's working.

But if I understand the religion correctly, we are to look for mates that are similar. The most important similarity is first believer. We are to also look for mates from our own society, our own locale. We’re not to go outside of a locality looking for a mate, before we look first in our own immediate locality. I'm speaking from the teachings of Islam, if not from the Quran, then from the life of the Prophet. I discourage sisters marry outside of the community, non believers.

I discourage them marrying outside of the African-American people outside of their races. I discourage that. It's allowed but it should be discouraged. We should be encouraging to marry believing Muslims to have believing Muslims as a mate. They should have also people that they are have some knowledge of. You should look for people you have some knowledge of. In this country, they frown on cousins marrying. I think we are missing something. We should start looking at cousins.

You got a nice cousin marry your cousin. No matter what we believe over here, it doesn't stop us from falling in love with a cousin. I’m sure some brother have had some feelings for a cousin. It's natural, it's just natural. Islam allows us to marry a cousin. Marry a cousin, marry closest, marry the closest people to you. Don't marry your brother, that's wrong.

But marry a cousin. We marry a cousin. We can marry a cousin. We can marry a cousin. No marrying nieces, no marrying aunts. But marry cousins. First look to those that you know you have more knowledge of. They are close to you, you have more knowledge of them, you have more experience with them, look to them first, and pray to G-d that you get a believer. The prophet of G-d says that in one of his sayings that if a believer mate comes to you and offer themselves to you, and you turn them down, the next offer you get is going to be worst.

Question: I think G-d has created some sort of diversity in the American public at large, who are Muslims, what is Islam, what their beliefs are. How can we capitalize in the US, by Da’wah purposes as an individual grouping, as a group how to take the advantage of it? I would like from the panel to give some ideas.

Bro Gomah: Before we go to this question here, just for our sisters that are here, because she was asking why you don't have a[ non-Muslim. It is a response psychological- we respect they're here. When a sister of Islam has identified all of previous messages and the prophet with no distinction, we love them all. We know they are all receiving from both- from Allah's revelation, so they are known to us. But on the other hand, the unbeliever, or the Christian or Jews, they don't believe in Muhammed. Jews don't believe in Christ. So he cannot maintain the freedom of the religion of the Jewish woman, and that Christian woman. The same thing that Christian man cannot maintain the religion of the Muslim woman. That is why Allah has said this is the laws of the revelation, and this is commanded by Allah by the way.

The reason is philosophically that Muslim identify it or he sympathized, he cannot force the wife, the Christian wife to be in his religion because there is no compulsion in religion, what is right is known and what is wrong is known. There is no compulsion anymore. But on the other hand, the Christian can pull the woman to follow his religion, which there will be no freedom at this aspect.

Question repeated: I think G-d has created some sort of diversity in the American public at large, who are Muslims, what is Islam, what their beliefs are. How can we capitalize in the US, by Da’wah purposes as an individual grouping, as a group how to take the advantage of it? I would like from the panel to give some ideas.

Bro Gomah: Yes, of course we can have some advantage at lease we will have some listening ear, I don't know if it was done in the past. But the most important is what we are. We have to work in ourselves as it is dealt in a way as he would want it. It is did not identify the teachings or words or things like that. It was an action people whatever they had a word they know when they La Ilaha illa Allah, Muhammedar Rasol Allah.

Immediately they respond to anything they will listen and obey. It is not even the question or anything. This is actually the Da’wah, Guidance only comes from Allah. It's the guidance that only comes from Allah. But our duty is to take this opportunity that project ourselves in a way it should be. Through Muslims should implement and establish Islam in your own life.

Speaker 1: One of the approaches that I always take, I realize I understand that I am a Muslim. I don't have any problem with that. Nobody has to remind me of that. But many times I will approach, as we say, non Muslims in a manner of Da’wah. Not so much to introduce them Al-Islam as Muslims or non-Muslim. But to point out because we've been blessed by Allah to have a better insight to human beings what makes them tick.

I think if we can share that with people that are interested in Al-Islam, but because they're interested in Al-Islam now, it's time for us to let them know about Muslims. Not only let them know about Muslims, but also try to give them some insight into the dignity and the workings of the human beings.

For me, I think that's really what Da’wah is all about. We say that it's Al-Islam, and we are hoping to maybe convert, or cut down hostility towards Muslims. But I feel that if we take the approach of having some kind of concern for people who are in trouble in this society and share with them the knowledge of Allah that blessed us with, that made us better people, not just necessarily better Muslims. But made us better people. I think we take that approach, then Allah will bless us with the success that we are after. A larger Muslim community, friends, and success.

IWMD: Recently, they had a telephone conference and the purpose of that telephone conference was to bring Muslims scholars, noted persons, scholars and noted persons together to address the concern that’s occurring in the Gulf. I was unfortunate I wasn’t able to participate in the conference, although I was told about the conference call. But I was fortunate to hear the tape of that conference.

The telephone conference is to be followed up by a meeting, I believe the 16th of this month. The 15th pardon me of January around the same time with the deadline. 15th of January is supposed to be an actual meeting. Most of what was said by the different speakers was very beautiful, obvious, and the American concern of American Muslims was separated from the war concern.

It was proposed that we capitalize as American citizens, or who are hoping to be citizens if you're not a citizen of this country. That we capitalize on the crisis in the gulf. Use this as an opportunity for Da’wah, for political advancement, and in every other way. I support that. I believe we should. It just makes good sense. I mentioned that in business that you don't want to overlook your profit making resource.

This is a profit making resource. It says that make every knock a boost. That's one of the expression they have in America. Make every knock a boost. You turn a negative into a positive. Try to make a negative a positive. Deal with it, but try also and make as much possible the negative into the positive. I think as a Muslim we have to do, we have to use our good sense and make that crisis also pay Muslim, and not pay the enemies of Muslim. They're making capital. So we should make capital.

I support our brother's concern 100%, and I think we need an organization for that, we need some organizers. A few people get together who share the same concern and have the ability to start something. We can start something in our local places and unite with all the rest of the Muslims to make this propaganda by capitalizing on the Gulf crisis. If the Gulf crisis is imaging the Muslim in wrong way that gives us an opportunity to make more effort to image the Muslim in the right way. As he said, the American people ear is open.

Audience Question: What would the panel recommend to us? Here as Muslims to take full advantage of our numbers?

Speaker 1: One thing I would recommend is that those of us who recognize what Allah has blessed us with and whatever field we maybe in. That we take on that role of leadership that is to sometime maybe be the first one to take the first step to go to a place and to an organization, or to a friend or whatever it maybe, or school, or another organization. Or to another Masajid or another center, and talk to them in that area that this particular person is living in. In short, I always think that those of us who- we have to really examine ourselves, and while we are trying not to boast still be honest and recognize that I am good in this. I'm good in that. If you look in either one of these places, that's what I'm good at is needed. If it's needed there, then I should take that first step, and not necessarily wait until or use the term or reasoning “nobody asked me”.

But nobody mentioned anything to me about this particular person or organization being in trouble. It seems it came to me without anybody saying anything so I could make that move. That's one of the things that I feel that we recognize that we have certain qualifications and that we will go on ahead and give them free of charge. When I say free of charge, I mean without anything up our sleeves.

Bro Gomah: That’s a good question. May Allah bless you. Sure, we're going to talk about that actually, about our ups and downs, but on negative points, a lot more, this is all actually practical experience. But yes, it can be done because it is very important that’s why Allah repeatedly says your Ummah (community) is one Ummah (community). Because our resources are limited.

You can do things much better effectively and efficiently because you are within the limited resource. If you are to add maximum utilization of that resources which are there. Yet, there is a role which we have to do is increase communication. Increase communication, share with some programs and build up the trust.

Because it is not easy to come to trust. It is going on the way, but it has to- but with more aggressive steps Inshallah. We have the seeds. The seeds are there, but we pray to Allah that we shall not be ruined.

Audience Question: Husband and wife concerns.

IWDM: I'm not from the area here but that is a concern, and I think that you should try to get the Muslim of the community here to be informed of the details of her case, so that we can see getting her some help. But sister don’t wait until it get that far. If you had come to the community and asked them earlier, much earlier before they go to the court maybe it will save problems or trouble.

Bro Gomah: Okay, sister. You see that's all that we can do- because it is given the court and it is the court that have something here, but like that Brother Imam had said, we should know that the own- what the grounds on the story, the event. In any way, divorce Islam is different than divorce in a Christian society. Divorce in Islam normally it had to come after a third step. Reconciliation, ignoring in the house, and some kind of punishment. Then the divorce is the last.

After assigning even an agent for the wife and an agent for the husband, they have to come to one another. There are classifications, one after another. It should be mentioned before. If he is non-Muslim, I think it's a bad situation, and try to seek some help as much as you can. But we need to know more about what we can about the story.

Moderator: I would like to thank everyone for their participation, and we are going to wrap up the program for the day. Before we conclude, we would like to do is have the panel for some final comments and then after that we will close the program. Thank you.

Speaker 1: My comment is that I would like to thank everybody. Those of you who did come out and hope that we will continue with this spirit. As you know when the Imam comes to the town, there is a certain excitement. A certain spirit that is generated, and always the Muslims in that city hope that the spirit and that excitement will continue after the Imam leaves.

This is one of the things that I am hoping that the excitement that we have right now after Sunday, we will still be running hard and we know that this will cure a lot of the problems that we have. If we keep moving with the excitement and with the aggressiveness that we see on occasions like this, then it will eliminate a lot of problems. Problems close to us and problems far away from us.

Bro Gomah Omar: This occasion is very important. Thanks to have came Brother Imam feel great encouragement to make as much more benefit over some of the experience that we have and those experience in this area, as we did, Inshallah.

However, I would like just to remind you here that the things, which we have heard. In order for unity to be maintained either among ourselves, or among our brothers. Remember Allah, and the best of Hadith which is that says for us.

I accept Allah as my lord, I accept Islam as my religion and I accept Muhammed as the last prophet.

IWDM: I would like to really address two concerns that we have all been discussing. One is the problem of capitalizing or fully using our resources, and the other is the Gulf crisis. I will begin with the problem of not fully capitalizing or using our resources. To give an example of what can be done, there was a brother from the immigrant Muslims, who I consider now, I hate to use those term immigrant, because some of them are naturalized citizens and some of them are more involved with making contributions to the betterment of society than those who we don’t call immigrants. For want of a better term, I have to just use that term to identify him. He's in California, his name is Hatu. You know Imam Hatu, that brother Hatu in California. When I first met him, they were inviting me to share on the program for the purpose of bringing more Muslims together, immigrant Muslims and African-Americans Muslims together.

So if you have Muslims working in unity, working together, it was part of the West Coast program for that purpose to bring all Muslims to work together. My name brought a lot of people together from our side; it brought a lot of people there from our side. This brother, this brother had real ability and this brother was a very good speaker, Brother Hatu.

Pretty soon he became popular, now he's popular; they don't even invite me out there now. He's so popular he attracts all of us, he's popular, he attracts everybody. So that's what will happen anywhere if we just use what we got. Don't worry about a follow-up, you got to make yourself popular.

Then you'll have that follow-up. We got to have popular people. Don't be afraid to have popular people. We want popular people. We need popular people. Let's make our local Imam more popular. All right. Inshallah. So much that's the only-- one other thing, you know the biggest problem that we have and that people have all over the world, I believe when they're trying to do a job. You see, if we're working together for the religion that's a job, isn't it?

Commitment and attachment, commitment and attachment. We forget what we should be committed to and what we should be attached to. If we are working as Muslims, we're committed to Allah, to the religion, to Allah and His messenger, right? We're committed to that, not to each other. We're committed to each other because of that. We’re only committed to each other because of that. To who should we be attached to first? Attached to religion, the cause of the religion. You're attached to the cause of the religion first. Now if I have an attachment to you that I'm working with, my coworker over the Imam, that falls under that.

We don't let our performance on the job be hurt because we don't like a certain person, the personality of a person, the person you're working with. I may hate him; I may hate him as a person. That's not going to affect my performance on that job. No, the job is too important. The job is bigger than all of us. That's the way you should see it, that's the way you look at it, and we'll be successful. We're committed to the cause of the religion, we attached to the cause of the religion. We can tolerate each other until we can do better.

Now for the Gulf crisis. The crisis in the Gulf, I want to say the best thing that came out of that telephone conversation, and I'm talking for us in America, is that we should make an effort, all over the United States to identify with peace. Peace against war, and one of the participants in the conference, he said something that we have to accept and that is, that if Muslims start a movement for peace in the Middle East against war, we must add the terms to quantify that, of just peace. Peace and of just peace and we should see our effort as part of the effort of all Americans who are against war.

And I'm sure those Americans who are for war, all of them are not pacifists, a lot of them will accept war if it's justified. So we should join those people who are against war and that means that we come out of their umbrella. No, we have our own effort and our own leadership, but identify our efforts with the peace, with the people, which is for all American people. That's my opinion that was the best thing that came out of the conference call. That's all.

I listened to the Imam while we were in during the break, I listened to him and I told him something. What I said to him, he want me to tell you what I told him. I told him that we need to do more of this. This, come together for the good of the whole Muslim community, that's beautiful. Come together and address the most pressing concerns of the Muslim. We need to do this more and I think if we did it like on a seasonal basis four times a year, seasons.

That Muslims can come together and address the heavy concerns of Muslims all over, address the concerns of Muslims all over Houston also the concerns of Muslims throughout the entire world and I think we would have more people come together. Lots of people have heard about the pressures on the world community, the pressure on their separate communities.

If we come and address these major pressures that's on us, our faith will get more Muslims to come alive and be present when we ask them to come to work.

Imam Kamaluddin: Also I wanted to speak to what one of the brothers said earlier about people, why we don't-- let everybody know. And I wanted to tell you that and Imam Mohammed spoke about taking advantage of our resources, and I would accept him as one of our great resources. So since he's here for that purpose of Da’wah, community, he's going to speak Sunday, so we still have time to reach a lot of people. So if each one of us takes that responsibility and call our relatives and our friends and people we know and invite them out, Allah will bless us.

Because in the Quran it says, "Man can only attain what he strives for." maybe we haven't been striving enough, and I'm not excluding myself now, I mean, all of us. We got to strive harder and strive more. So I think if we all set that in our minds when we leave here and start calling people we know. I believe we still can increase the numbers of people to turn out to this occasion. Thank you.

Moderator: