# 2003

# IWDM Study Library

# Muslim Convention Public Address

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

We praise the Lord Creator of the heavens and the earth. We praise him. We worship Him only. We obey Him and we obey His Messenger, the last prophet, Muhammad, Salla Llaahu ‘alayhi was sallam. That is the traditional salute to him saying the prayers and the peace be upon him and what follows of that traditional of salute. Dear Muslims, dear believers, brothers and sisters, again peace be upon you, as salaamu alaykum.

Alhamdulilahi Rabbi-l ‘alaameen, the praise and the thanks is to G’d, the Lord keeper of all the worlds. Let me quickly try to take some tension out of the air. We who believe in this religion, we believe in G’d and we believe in Muhammad the prophet the model of the human being in his perfection as a servant of G’d. We believers, we know our life; we know our life; and we know what is not our life; we know our religion, and we know what is not our religion. We keep our life, and we keep our religion. Other things can come and go, but we keep our life that is our religion; we keep our religion. So I am getting ready to be more at work, to do more, to be more productive and to contribute to the good life of the believers that I have a common history with, and also to the good life of believers that I do not have that common history with. I do not know about you, but when I told the Imams of my resignation yesterday, a big burden went off my back.

Yes, so I hope that gave you a little relief. Praise be to Allah. How Muslims are to plan our life: We are to plan our life knowing firstly that Islam is our life, and without Islam we do not have any life. We are to contribute to the excellence of America because this is where we live, this is where we are going to stay, this is our country, and we have made great progress in this country after being put down lower than the animals of this land.

The vision of our founding fathers---some of them were influenced, after they read the Qur’aan--- they were influenced in a good way to become even better visionaries. After they read Qur’aan, after they got familiar with the Qur’aan and our prophet Muhammad, his history of how he accomplished so much in about 10 or 11 years, and how he worked for about 20 or 21 years and accomplished so much not only for Muslims but for the whole of mankind as G’d says “Wama arsalnaka illaa rahmatan lil ’Aalameen” That G’d says he was not sent to be any but a mercy to all the worlds. Then if we follow him, shouldn't we want to see mercy to everybody? Shouldn't we want to see everybody having the mercy of G’d? Yes we should.

So the vision of our founding fathers is not so far from us. One of the presidents of this United States, it is documented that he read the Qur’aan himself. He read the Qur’aan and he had the courage or the goodness to put it in writing that he read the Qur’aan. And I have met presidents in my time, very recently. I have met presidents in my time who have expressed deep respect and reverence for our holy book, the Qur’aan and for the tradition, the life of Muhammad the prophet. We do not live in a world of ignorant people. Our leaders are great people in this country. Our presidents and our leaders of our society are great people and they do respect great things. We do not always know that, but they do. I am a witness that they do respect great things and they respect Islam and they respect our holy book. They respect the last prophet Muhammad. Prayers and peace be upon him.

This country welcomes us to diversity. All the other groups that have come before us, they came here because they were welcomed. The idea of freedom for this society welcomes all people if they want to start their life over again. If they want a chance to live their life free of being prosecuted, then America says, "Here is the place for you". Now we know how history, we know how we ourselves were persecuted and we know religion has been persecuted too in America, religion has been persecuted, but that was not something that was called for by the founding fathers.

The founding fathers planned the future of this society so that it would become a welcome place for all people having good intentions and wanting to establish their life after being denied their freedom---that freedom in their own lands and in their own country. We have to ourselves then appreciate this diversity and be supporters of this diversity. In Islam G’d say to us, Laa ikraaha fee ad-deen", that is; "Let there be no forcing people in the religion." No compulsory, no forcing people in religion. Do not force people in religion. He says the way is clear, whoever wants the way, take it; whoever does not want the way, then let him be free to reject it. This is Islam, not imposing our way on other people. Then we shouldn't try to promote our interests and put down other people or try to have some plan to defeat their interest or to kill their life that they have chosen to have in this land of opportunity. We should respect all people who come here, who want to have their life.

We are late comers, so we should study the history of this diversity, the history of the people that came here to have their life free, so that they will not have to be afraid of rulers, of tyrants who would take their freedom from them. If we are going to enjoy Muslim, if we are going to enjoy the same freedom here, then the first thing we should do is have at least our Imams, our teachers, our leaders, knowing the history of this diversity so that we will appreciate it and support others and having the same freedom that we want for ourselves.

I repeat, our religion Islam is our life. While planning our life, we are to keep our plan in line with the Qur’aan and with the tradition or the life of our prophet Muhammad, Salla Llaahu ‘alayhi was sallam prayers and peace be upon him. In order to be successful as a Muslim society or a Muslim community, planning our life here in America, we must know the Qur’aan better. We must know the life of Muhammad better because we will be forming something unIslamic if we do not form it in accordance with the teachings of the Qur’aan and the life of our prophet Muhammad Salla Llaahu ‘aalayhi was sallam We are in Chicago. I know a lot of you have heard things about Old Chicago like you heard things about the Old West. You are in one of the best cities we have in the United States. In fact I think it is the greatest.

There might have some small towns with about 70 people in it maybe 700 that is better as an environment but you are still going to have to leave their small town and go to a bigger town so come to Chicago anytime you like. You've got an invitation from Imam Warith ud Deen Mohammed.

We must understand also that our life is to be established in community and it is to be established as community life. An individual’s life depends upon community life. I remember studying the writings on how people---human beings that is---individuals must have the freedom and opportunity to interact with other human beings, grow up in a human environment in order to become human. Isn't that something? If you do not have that then if you are left without a human environment in the wilderness, they documented this, they found a boy, they called “the boy” the boy was like an animal.

When they found the boy, the boy was like an animal thinking himself one of the animals, because that boy did not have the opportunity to live and interact with other human beings. Allah did not create us to be alone. Allah created us to be in community life. And if you want to progress economically, business-wise, or financially you need each other, you need each other, you need community. G’d gave us the concept that will satisfy all of our needs as individuals on this planet. That concept is community life. G’d say of us, "You are the best community or best the community evolved for the good of all people, “Kuntum khayra ummatin ukhrijat li**l**nnaasi” the best of communities evolved for the good of all people.

We must also understand that our community, because we are a minority in America we are not the whole society we are a small part of this society. Our community exists in the environment of the bigger community that surrounds all of us or engulfs all of us, that is the community of the American people, mostly Christians. Others are increasing in numbers here that belong to other religions or other spiritual persuasions, but the majority is Christians. We are most likely going to have Christians as our neighbors.

I have a Christian---I do not know if he approves me giving his name---he is Mr. Thomas, he has two names from the Bible. He is Mr. Isaiah Thomas. I have lived as his neighbor now for several years and I trust him with my life just like I trust my life with the best of you. He is a good church going Christian. We are to recognize our neighbors and follow Muhammad's advice to us, be aware of our neighbor and be always ready to assist your neighbor when your neighbor is in need. This is the teachings of prophet, by me living that--

Thank you. By me living that with my Christian neighbors I have the best Christian neighbors. They only want to know if you are good and if you mean them well; if you are going to be good by them, if you care about them. If you let them know that then you'll see love come out of them that you do not see come out of a lot of Muslims. Now I am a good doctor. I can heal some of you Muslims if you let me.

And we are also in the global community. We are part of the whole community of mankind, the international community of people. We are in that context too. We must also be aware of that and draw from our religious teachings, draw from the Qur’aan, and draw from the life and teachings of Muhammad the prophet, so that we'll be successful in embracing mankind, citizens of the United State of America, near and far, and winning the friendships of the good healthy-minded people so that we will have more freedom in this land to prosper.

Freedom is offered to everybody that comes here, and you are free, but you have to plan your freedom. If you do not plan your freedom, freedom will destroy you. As so many out there in the streets that are destroyed by the freedom as they perceive freedom, that freedom that they perceive is destroying them. We do not want freedom to destroy us; we want freedom to give us more opportunity to live our life of health and productivity.

We thank G’d Alhamdulilahi Rabbi-l ‘aalameen. Again we must also be appreciative of people who open their doors to us. We know times have changed, so it is no big thing that we are having this meeting here, our annual public address here at the UIC pavilion. It is not a big thing. But in a way it is a big thing too. When you look at the fear that is in the air because of the things that are going on in this world, and how Muslims are characterized by some of the things that Muslims are doing.

You must also agree with me then that it is a big thing that we are having this meeting in this pavilion. Now, we Muslims are to see that our community life is not without good leaders. People complain, "Oh this place is bad." Or, "This masjid is not like it should be." "This Imam he should do this." Complain to everybody but the right person. Complain to him.

Hold your leaders responsible. This is Islam. Allah has taught us with the Qur’aan and Muhammad that when Judgment Day comes, every people will be gathered together with their Imams, with their leaders. You are going to be gathered before the judgment and your leader is going to be with you, so that they will be a witness against you or for you and you will be a witness against them or for them.

The prophet says, prayer and peace be upon him, he said, "Religion is sincerity." And they asked him to further explain and he said, "The sincerity of a leader taught his following and sincerity of a following towards the leader." To be sincere with your leaders you have to be truthful with them. You have to not talk behind their back what you cannot say to them before their faces.

For them to be sincere by you and with you, they have to not put their government jobs before your interests.

You are free as Muslims and you are free as Americans to choose the life you want. You need to choose leaders who love believers and whose life that they are living and whose behavior that we are looking at tell us that they love believers.

You need to choose leaders, Imams, who love obedience to G’d, and who love respect for G’d, and love respect for the G’d-given dignity or "honor" quotes, the G’d-given honor that every human person should be respected for having, whether that human person respects that honor that G’d has given them or not. We should not be the one to disrespect the honor that G’d have created for them. We should call them back to the honor if they are ignorant of it. Call them back to the honor that G’d created them for but do not let us disrespect that honor. Respect everybody, and that is not the first time you heard that, my father taught you to do that. Education; Muslims must understand that education enables man to make progress in big, big measures. Without it, you make progress in little small measures.

Look at the societies before modern history. Look at the societies that did not have education, that were not devoted to science or not devoted to industry, not devoted to knowledge, look at them in history and you will see how small their contribution is to mankind. Then look at those who had the appreciation for science, appreciation for industry, appreciation for education, and look at the big world that they have created for mankind.

So you must support education. You must have a respect for education and you must support it even if you are poor. Support it with your mouth, with your lips; give support with your mouth, with your lips for education even if you are poor and ignorant. Isn't that how our parents from slavery and our parents from the south, when the North was open to them and they had to leave the south to make progress, isn't that what they told their children? Then they pressed upon their children, "Now you might do very well up north, but get an education. You owe it to me son, and you owe it to your grandfather, who is gone, or you owe it to your grandmother who is dead in her grave, you are free and we were not; get yourself a good education."

With that encouragement, the early history of our people after freedom from physical bondage from slavery on a plantation, is a history of the rise of intellect, the rise of brilliant men and brilliant women, who were our leaders and who made great progress for us in that time immediately after slavery up until the civil rights movement---up until the civil rights movement. Then the movement changed from one of an academic movement---an academic supported movement---it changed from that to a political movement, a movement for civil rights. We have to keep history in our view. You know the teachers under the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, they used to say, "History is best to reward all research."

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad's ministers and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad were speaking mostly to a congregation---nationally and locally---a congregation that was almost 100% illiterate. Yes we were not intellectuals. We were trying to learn how to read. We had programs for adults and children under the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's leadership, to teach adults and children how to read. In fact, you couldn't even become a member, until you wrote correctly a letter requesting to be a member. Is that not so? Yes, that was to emphasize and make you know that it is very important that you become literate. That man wanted us to succeed.

I am speaking of the teacher my father, the one that he called G’d in the person, in the flesh. That man wanted us to succeed. He did not want us to fail. He knew that to succeed you must appreciate knowledge; you must want to become literate. So let's not forget that and let us go back to putting an importance on things like it is supposed to be put on things and put an importance on things that are more important than others. Put more importance on those things and less importance on those things that are lesser in importance.

So your leaders must be encouraged to support private schools. The more we live on this planet and these times, things have changed. Trends are different. The more we support private schools, the more we prepare our community, not just ourselves and our children, the more we prepare our community to prosper in the future. More and more we are going to see government burden financially to finance our public schools. And we are going to see society growing in numbers and growing in problems just like it is now. It is not going to change. It is going to continue to grow in numbers and grow in problems.

The problems of living in these big cities are going to get greater and greater; it is going to take more and more tax money, government funding, to keep civilization, to keep some signs or some sanctuary of civilization. So we have to be able to look into the future; our leaders, you are reading, you are literate, look into the future, see what the future has in store for us and you will see that if you want to be successful, you have to put more importance on education. You are now being challenged by newcomers, who come here and they score higher on the test than average Americans score, so that American public of yesterday is challenged by newcomers today, to even appreciate knowledge more and devote yourself more to academic achievement.

If you do not, you are going to find yourself way behind them, and maybe that is G’d's plan, I do not know but I know I am not going to believe it until I can't do anything about it. I am going to try to do something about it. And the way we do something about it is prepare for it, now.

Support our private schools. We need private schools. These public schools cannot teach us Islamic life. Even if they hire a Christian or a Jew, or even a Muslim, to work in a public school and teach us Muslim life, Islamic life, you will be better off having your own Muslim school doing it because that situation will not give you what your own situation will give you.

I was told by an F.B.I. who was questioning me during the troubled times for the Nation of Islam, and I had been excommunicated, I had been put out---he was questioning me and he is asking me questions about my father. He took over the conversation, and started telling me things about my father. But I knew they were better information gathers than I am, he did not shock me at all. So he said, "Your father did not just give money to Muslims, your father gave money to needy Christians also." I hesitated, I thought a little bit, and a couple of scenes came back to my mind, and I saw my father in the dining room at the table, and I recall him saying that he had sent some money to some Christians, who needed some help.

So I told, I said, "Yes, I am aware of that" after I hesitated for a couple of minutes. I said, "Yes, sir. I am aware of that." Maybe it was just 15 seconds. It seemed like it was a long time that I hesitated, probably 15 seconds. So I hesitated and I told him I said, "Yes, I am aware of that. Yes." When we plan our life and especially our schools, we should plan these schools so that we help Muslim children, not only attending our Muslim schools but Muslim children who are in public schools. We should have a program also for Muslim children who are in public schools, so that we assist them with their courses, with their subjects, that they are having difficulty with. We need to give them tutorial help, to help them make better grades in the public schools. We can do that. That will not cost us a whole lot. So while we are not able to provide enough quality schools to take care of all of the children of our parents, let us assist those parents with their children that are attending public school by offering a program for them too where they can get Islamic education on the weekend; where they can get assistance, tutorial help during the week and on the weekend.

Community life is the full life, complete life. Community life is the full life. It is the complete life. Community life is where you can have full expression for your life---your whole life. Where you express your spiritual life---and that is number one. You go and join your brothers and sisters on Friday, the Jum’ah prayer. And you go and join them at any time that you can that is possible for you. You join them in the five daily prayers as a group and you pray with your brothers and sisters.

This is the spiritual life. You work to improve your financial situation so that you can help that spiritual life. Do you not know if spiritual life did not need help G’d wouldn't have put it in our body. G’d put it in our flesh and blood body. My spiritual life can't communicate to you except through this instrument, my flesh body---it needs it. Take away this flesh body I can't reach you with any communication. Some people believe they can but that is spooky.

So value this physical body. Know that the physical body that you live in is a sign, from G’d to you, that as you need a house for your own soul. Your community life needs physical structures for you to express your life and express your life upon the environment. Yes, you need stores. You need businesses for business life. You need cultural centers for cultural expression, for weddings, for child celebration, for new birth celebration etc, for plays that will instruct the people to have the good life.

You need this. No wonder they call us spooks; we do not have a body out here in the world.

While mentioning culture, I want to mention to you something that really made me feel sad. That was I thought when I went to speak at the Apollo Theater in Harlem New York that I was still speaking----I would be speaking pardon me----in a facility that was owned by Percy Sutton’s family, his business partners and his family. Percy Sutton is an African-American of prominence a great political figure after Adam Clayton power and a well-respected person and he is still deserving of that respect. But somehow the management of that theater did not go well for him and they lost the Apollo Theater. Then they told me that we are renting it from a Jew. Now that is not to say that that is bad. Maybe it is better that we were renting it from a Jew. Sometimes it is better that a Jew is doing business with you. I've had some good Jews to open up opportunities for me. Yes I have. When I did not have a job, I had a Jew to befriend me. This whole idea that all Jews are like those that used to be in Jew town, cheating us and robbing us, telling you, "How you like that suit?" I remember this. He said, "Look in the mirror, look in the mirror." He got a hand full of the suit holding it like this so it looks real neat and tight in the front. But you do not know that, oh, you just feel it, "Oh yes." You get home man, you want to go back there and kill that Jew. We have a lot of bad experiences with Jews. But that was a certain group of Jews who were home in hell. They were the poor Jews of Jew town. A marketplace called Jew town. But you could get some good hot dogs there. Yes, I am telling you. There are some good hot dogs---Chicago stock kosher hot dogs. Man they were all right. My son says, “Daddy do not say hot dog." He says, "I do not like that expression." I said, "What should I say son?" He said, “Say franks." (Laughter)

We are hearing a lot of talk about the one world order. Now we know people look at the one world order differently. I guess the President and our state department when they think about the one world order, I am sure they're thinking about how the business life of the planet earth is becoming one system now, just one life system. No more like it used to be.

Each country having it is separate economy and working separately. Not interacting really knowing it is dependent on the other economies. But now that is gone, that time is gone. We do have one world economic order. I am sure that we would like to improve the political order. We would like to see the political units, that is the nations, the separate nations of our planet coming together to co-operate with each other for the good life of peace and a good life of all of us of all nations.

But I do not know if that is what they have in mind for the political order. I do not know. But I do believe it is that. I know one thing, I served as a member of a special committee serving the President, during the time of the Democrats in the White House, President Clinton and I was working directly with the State Department at that time. I was given that opportunity by the going out Secretary of State. He saw that I was in before the next Secretary of State came in. But our work did not really start until the next secretary had been established in that position.

I do have experience that tells me that the United States government under the President of the United States is very much interested in seeing peace and justice for all people; for all nations in the world. Now that is interfered with by private interests; private interests make it very difficult for any government to achieve all it wants. Again we must understand our responsibility to not only contribute to our own government, or to our own community government, and do not think you do not have a government.

A Muslim community must have it is own government. Its government is seen in its organization and in its leaders. That is your government. Your government, the religious government is seen in its organization and in its leaders. If the organization is good and the leaders are good, you have good government. Our government lives under the protection, or have the protection if we live and respect for others. Our religious government has the protection of the government of the United States. We should be obligating ourselves as much as other Americans obligate themselves to contribute to this government to make it better. If we are not pleased with it, let us be as other free Americans who are self asserted, aggressive, and who appreciate their freedom, and know that they have the right to influence the shape and the future or the course of their government. Let us be as energetic, as enthusiastic, and as responsible as they are. Let us join them in working to make our government better. Have our government better for all of us.

I was reading in the Qur’aan. I am a student of the Bible too---a very good student of the Bible. Some of you preachers be surprised what I could share with you if you meet me in private. G’d has blessed me with understanding of the scripture and I thank G’d for it, and I would like to share with good people what G’d has blessed me with.

Yes, I read in the Bible about Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) and I read in the Qur’aan about Jesus Christ, and I read how his disciples said Jesus was calling for assistance for people to help him. His disciples replied to him “We are your helpers to G’d. We are your helpers to G’d. We are your helpers under G’d. We are your helpers for G’d. We are your helpers to bring G’d's calls to G’d to bring it where he wants it to go; to take it where he wants it to go.” Now I firmly believe that African-American people have a history that justified G’d's intervention. I believe African-American people have a history that justified G’d selecting the best of us, to lead us into a model life, that there will be a model life to help strengthen the faith and trust that is in people to make this world a better world and a better life for all. You are chosen, thank you. Peace be unto you, as salaamu alaykum.