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# IWDM Study Library

# 2006 Muslim Convention Interview

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

00:22 Imam W. Deen Mohammed: Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim. With God's name, the merciful benefactor, the merciful redeemer, we salute the last prophet, Muhammad. Sallallahu alaihi wasallam, that is the prayers and the peace be upon him, and what follows of that salute to Muhammad, the Prophet, traditional salute given to him by well over one billion Muslims throughout the world. We are preparing for our Annual Muslim Convention that we have been identifying as 'Islamic Convention', but we have changed it this year to read 'Muslim Convention' because Islamic Convention points directly or puts religion in focus. And actually, our conventions that have been going on for a number of years now, are not to put the religion in focus as much as it is to put the members of our association in focus. And that was started back in the '60s, and even long before that by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, our late leader. We pray God forgive him his sins and grant him the Paradise. Since that time, we have been keeping the same spirit, that is the spirit of coming once a year together, to see one another, to be with one another, and most importantly, to hear what our leader has to say about the state of affairs for our association of our community.

02:13 IWDM: With that, I now go to the particulars for our convention. Our convention will be having workshops on CPC, ComTrust LLC, that is our collective purchasing effort to increase business for small people coming together with their small means but great means when it comes to character and virtues. We have great means, and in my opinion what makes business successful, and I believe this is generally accepted in the business world. What makes business successful is sticking to your principles, establishing yourself upon good character and a virtuous life.

03:15 IWDM: So this is what we expect from our business people who have come together. We are an association of business people independently doing business but collectively buying, making big volume purchases. And, we'll have workshops, we'll have a conference, we'll have also Graceline Fashions, also sponsored by the same business effort, Graceline Fashion Show headed by Binah Mohammed, and which will give an opportunity for designers in our community to put their designs on display and to have their designs modeled so that we see what we are producing in our community and support those who are excellent in their works.

04:06 IWDM: More than that... That's the business side. We have more of that, but I have to quickly now go to the spiritual side. For the spiritual side, there will be Jummah which will open our convention. Jummah will be on the Friday of the Labor Day weekend this year, Muslim Convention 2006. After Jummah, there will be a vendors' market, and it is exciting just to walk through the vendors' market and see all the fine products, ranging from garments, dress suits, leisure suits, women dress, some children's also, items in the market, cosmetics, oils, incense and jewelry, fascinating jewelry, some very very attractive jewelry that I find our vendors having in the market area, or marketplace for our annual convention.

05:18 IWDM: And Sunday, we'll have what will be the state on affairs, or state of our community address, of this association address by myself but we are expecting to have, if not on Sunday, on Cultural Night, which I believe will be Saturday evening and Saturday night, we are expecting to have a guest speaker and a keynote speaker. Our guest speaker will be the President of University in Indianapolis, African-American man, a catholic, a devout Catholic, but a very down-to-earth person, who has a lot of admiration for our history going back to the Nation of Islam, and especially for what we're doing now in the community.

06:11 IWDM: And we'll have a keynote speaker who's a lady reverend, and I hope that we'll have a lot of youngsters out to hear her. She can really move or motivate youngsters. And we expect to have her address us. I don't know if they will both be addressing us on Cultural Night, that may be the case, but one of them may be addressing us on Sunday when I make my major address of the year, public address, to especially on the state of our community, and also our address to the public, addressing the public life, and how we can become more productive citizens, and citizens enjoying our life more as God had designed this life to work for us.

07:04 IWDM: God designed our life to work for us and those who have done the most with the world are those who have been guided by scripture to know what God designed for us in this world to do with our life, and with our opportunities in the public. With that, I say we are happy to be preparing for our Muslim Annual Convention. And we are expecting many more than last year to be present for this year. And I thank those who have recognized my... That is those in our leadership throughout the country who recognized my 30 years of leadership and the growth that we have realized around the country, and some outside of the country like in Bermuda and a few other places, and are celebrating... And they are celebrating, and we are celebrating 30 years of my leadership. Thank you all. And again, peace. Assalamu alaikum.

08:13 Speaker 2: That was... Brother Imam, we wanna thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to come and be with us today, and talk to us in reference to the upcoming convention.

08:23 IWDM: My pleasure.

08:23 S2: We have a couple of questions that we would like to ask that's relevant to the upcoming convention. And also over the years... For example, last year, you had this theme for the convention was 'Human Nature, Earth's Most Valuable Resource.' And then, this year, we have 'Earning Freedom and Economic Empowerment, We are a Friendly Neighbor and Community.' How do these two subjects... Or how do see these two subjects come in together to benefit us as a whole?

09:06 IWDM: Yes. Well, last year, the subject was more on nature to bring our attention to the inherent human work that we have that most of us don't realize because of bad circumstance for our life, either bad home conditions or bad neighborhood conditions or bad world conditions. At the time when the world was very bad for us, we had a hard time surviving. But one of our guest speakers who'll be speaking at the convention this year said that when we were struggling, and all of us were hurting together, we were focused better. [laughter]

09:55 S2: Yes, sir.

09:56 IWDM: So the attention was given to the good nature that is in all of us, that God put into us, for us to rely on when pressure comes, when bad times come, rely on that bad nature to carry us through. So that attention was on that, and how we allow everybody to benefit from that but ourselves. Everybody's making billions on our good nature except ourselves.

10:26 S2: Yes, sir.

10:27 IWDM: They're either getting the benefit from the good side by appealing to the good side or they're getting benefit by appealing to our weaknesses, and corrupting us, so we buy things that we shouldn't buy, and give our life and our monies to things that we shouldn't give our life and our monies to.

10:46 S2: That's right.

10:47 IWDM: So they put us into hell if we don't employ our own resources. So that's what was all about that last year. And this year, we are looking more at the community rather than the nation. We're gonna be focusing community life, and how God has also made inherent in us community life. Every individual is born with urges and hunger for community life, with the urges to prepare himself for community life, and with the hunger inside for community life. Man's life is never complete, and that includes women, man's life is never complete until he finds his life established in community.

11:31 IWDM: So this is also inherent. It's as inherent as the soul with its righteousness, and as a soul with its curiosities to develop the intelligence for us. It is as inherent as that, the community. That's why God says, "You are the best community evolved... Of the best communities evolved for the good of all people." He's telling us that we are inherently people born to come into community life. God had put that seed in us, so that we come into community life. So it'll be focusing community life and how we are to prepare ourself for the full community life. So that we have people representing us well in religion, also in spiritual life, in business, in politics, in government, et cetera.

12:24 S2: Yes, sir.

12:28 Speaker 3: And Imam Mohammed, in keeping with that spirit of the question that was asked, the question would be here is that each convention, even though you have different subjects, do you have any particular focus that you're headed toward as you give the various subjects? Where would be your... Where you're headed toward?

13:00 IWDM: Yes, yes. Destiny for the human soul cannot be realized except with other people, even eating a meal at home with your family; the Prophet encouraged us to not to eat alone, but to seek to eat in the company of others or have company when we eat. He said the blessing is on the numbers, the blessing is on the numbers. If one eats, that is a small portion. If two eats, it gets bigger. If 10 eat, that's even more. If 20 eat together, that's even more. 30 eat together, that's even much more.

13:41 IWDM: And that's why we feel so good when we eat with a crowd, especially a crowd that's compatible with our own good nature and aspirations. When we eat with people like that, we still feel good. We feel much better than we do when we're eating at home with, by ourselves or with a couple of people, a couple of persons from the family. When the group comes together and we're all, "Oh, look how the spirits... They're so alive," and how good we feel.

14:07 IWDM: So in the long run, what we are hoping for in the distance is to see year-by-year, we don't want any year to be less impressive than the year before. We want every year to be more impressive. That's what our goal, that's our effort, that's how we were training for. And the long distance aim that we have is to see this community life blossom more and more, come up, structured well, more and more; having more and more of what we call for in our life as a community. And that means, most importantly, clean and decent places that we can respect, that... And others will respect, if they come from any religion. Places of worship, masajid we say or mosques, places of worship.

15:06 IWDM: But in the same, I would say, importance, the same importance, when we measure importance, in the same measure of importance, we have education. There's no education separate from religion in Islam. There's no way to separate education and Islam. And it was that way for Christians, and for many, it's still that way for them. It was that way for Christians in the early history of this country. Our government was not funding schools. Schools were funded by churches, by religious communities. So there's no way to separate our interest in education for our adults, but also, for our children who inherit us. No way for us to separate it, so down the road, we hope to have quality schools, fine schools, schools that light us up when we see them, and know that our children are attending those schools.

16:06 IWDM: And we hope to have, also, neighborhoods where Islam will be present there, not just Muslims without Islam, but Islam will be present there in the Muslims. They will have Muslims conducting businesses, following the moral principles and guidelines of our religion, not having something that our religion objects or having people who are letting down our standards, but people upholding our standards in business. We hope to have thriving business community. We hope to have the adhan heard in that neighborhood. And I have heard from our townspeople, our government people, in these towns where we are, I've heard that they would not only welcome our places of worship but they would welcome the call to prayer, our adhan to be heard on the neighborhood, just as they welcome church bells to ring. And that's what we hope to see one day.

17:17 IWDM: But we also would like to see us having everything within our own responsibility that we can possibly have. I will never be completely pleased myself, with the neighborhood that can't take care of itself financially. Neighborhoods should be supported by business people, and business people should make the neighborhoods strong, financially; should make the neighborhoods strong financially. And we should be able to go to, within reasonable distance in our own neighborhood, to buy what is convenient for us to have. The convenience store should be the whole neighborhood so we can go and buy whatever, eggs, flour, food items, a garment, if we need something to wear for Sunday, we shouldn't have to go way across town; we go right to our store in our neighborhood. We should have everything that we need. Even real estate, if we wanna talk to a real estate agent about property or selling or buying property, we have our own real... Everything.

18:23 IWDM: I'll be only satisfied when we have a neighborhood that's efficient in every respect: Business people are strong, and they belong to that neighborhood, where the neighborhood provides the tax base for the whole area. That our neighborhood, the tax base is provided by our own area, that the city is not looking at us and saying and weeping, saying, "I wish those people hadn't moved in here." [chuckle] But they'll be, instead, telling their friends and everybody, "We are proud of these people, they have a strong community, and a strong and safe neighborhood." That's what we aim down the road, that's what we want. And we have to make improvement on the development of that every year. We have to see us reaching, and getting closer and closer to that every year.

19:14 S2: I see. Sounds like work to me.

19:19 IWDM: Yes, yes.

19:20 S2: We have our works cut out for...

19:21 IWDM: Yeah, and that kinda work sounds like happiness to me.

19:23 S2: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

19:27 IWDM: A real man's sad because he ain't got no work.

19:29 S2: He got no work to do. [laughter] Brother Imam, getting back, staying on, should I say, the theme for this year's convention, 'Earning Freedom and Economic Empowerment,' and bringing to mind our youth, we are, at this moment, I think we are about 30 years into your leadership. And some of us who was back during the time of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, we had about 30 to 40 years of his leadership. And what do you think is the reason why it has taken us so long, economically, to develop? And what effects is this having on our youth today?

20:17 IWDM: Yeah, the first part of the question.

20:20 S2: Yes, sir.

20:22 IWDM: What has caused us to not achieve sustained growth for our economic effort, interest, the reason for that is mainly two. There're other reasons too, but mainly two, two is enough as an answer.

20:39 S2: Yes sir.

20:41 IWDM: Firstly, under Honorable Elijah Muhammad, we were a protest movement, just like our Civil Rights Movement, we're a protest movement. We were a protest movement. We were protesting bad treatment and limits placed on our life by the government itself. The government permitted it. The government was permitting that. So when our idea started in America, in the early '30s, mid, through the '30s, and the '40s, and the '50s, to the '60s, all those years, there were two laws and two Americas, as our civil rights brothers say. Two laws, one for white folks and one for us; and two Americas, one open and one closed. The one closed, closed to us. Yes, so that was the reality.

21:41 IWDM: So that's one of the reasons. When you look, when you see that the Nation of Islam was protesting that and the Nation of Islam was condemning the whole society, the whole white society of America as a race of devils, blaming them for all these evils. Now, we know many of them were innocent, but when you're hurting like that, you don't say that, "There's three or four people around here that's not hurting me. It's just, there's 100,000 that's beating on me, you know?" You don't say that. You say, "These people are beating on us, these people are hurting us." So that was the truth, that was the reality. That's one reason.

22:26 IWDM: Now, when we accumulated the money, and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad passed away, the government people, they watched Honorable Elijah Muhammad come from nothing to where he came. From almost nothing in the '30s to where he was in the '60s, they watched that. And in the '70s, he passed in '75. So they watched that, and they knew that this man is a wise leader, and he is safe, he is a safe leader. "We can trust him that he's not gonna start any senseless violence, or have his people corrupting our society." So they didn't fear anything, any harm coming from Honorable Elijah Muhammad, but now, he's gonna pass. The next leader may not be the man that Elijah Muhammad is. He may not be as wise and as safe with those explosives they are working with.

23:24 IWDM: So they feared that the next man came up would not be able to handle the explosives and the language of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam, like he handled them. So they planned to deprive the next leader of financial strength, because that's what makes you more powerful, is money. So they wanted to deprive him of financials. What did they do to Nation of Islam, to us? They did the same thing to us that they did to Garvey and all the rest. When those leaders got to old age and are about to pass, or when they pass, then the government comes in with charges of taxes unpaid and whatever. Coming with all those charges to take all the money away, so we won't be strong financially, if you get their own leader, you won't be strong financially to support yourself.

24:20 IWDM: So that's one of the reasons. The other reason for it is that we depend on leaders too much. We see our whole life in a leader and for some reason, our leaders have been all messianic leaders. A messianic leader is a leader that you believe God gave you, and he has a mission to complete something for you that God assigned, God gave him that assignment, and so when he is gone, the spirit is knocked out of most of the followers, they have no spirit to go forward when he's gone. To have sustained economic growth, you have to see the job as being more important than your persons, even though that person be the leader. And that's what I have done over 30 years, I've built up that kind of reality in the minds of the people, especially in the minds of our leaders, and I expect our growth to continue whether I am here or not, we will have sustained growth.

25:31 S2: Yes, sir. So what effect do you think that have had over the years on our youth?

25:41 IWDM: Yes, that was the other part of the question, pardon me, yes. On our youth. Well, it has... Its impact in the life of our adults is much stronger or much more evident than it is in our youth. I think youth, they're young, so youth either go away from you and find something to do or they get a spirit to pull you out of your misery and out of your sleep, wake you up out of your sleep and we can see our youth doing that. We have youngsters, males and females all around the country who are very enthusiastic and optimistic and they're leaders all to themselves, within their own associations, they're real leaders. So I don't think we have to worry too much about our youth being hurt by these setbacks. It's usually the adult people, the ones who have families, children and they have not seen this fulfilled for their children. So it's those that are set back, they're set back, they're the ones who are mostly set back. Our young...