# 1983

# IWDM Study Library

# Interview: Panel of Women Community Houston TX

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

Voice over: That you may know each other, not that you may despise each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of G-d is he who is the most righteous of you and G-d has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things.

The American Muslim Mission in focus. 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 ensure the survival of our country. Now your host Imam Ibrahim Kamaludeen.

Imam Ibrahim Kamaludeen: As Salaam Alaikum, may the Lord bless you. [inaudible 00:00:57] and blessings of all mighty G-d be upon you. I am Imam Ibrahim Kamaludeen. I will be, for the next 30 minutes your host on American Muslim Mission in focus. This is a program which is designed to bring pertinent information to the society that will enable us to correct our lives and establish good self-government in our lives. Most people think of government as being cities, state or national, but most of us are not concerned about the government within our own individual life.

I would like to welcome you to the American Muslim Mission in Focus. We have a very special treat for you today, and what I mean by a special treat, I mean we have a special guest. A man who is well known in America and around the world. His name is Imam Warith Deen Mohammed. He's a leader of the American Muslim Mission which is the largest Muslim community in the Western Hemisphere. We also have two other guests. They are Imam Abdul Saboor Hasan who is the Resident Imam of the Houston Masjid of Al-Islam and Sister Rasheeda Shabazz who is a member of the Houston Masjid of Al-Islam.

Brother Imam, I would like to welcome you to our city of Houston.

IWDM: Thank you.

Ibrahim: We feel very honored and pleased that you accepted our invitation to come here. We feel that this interview will give you an opportunity to share with everyone, your views and answers which are solutions to many, many of the problems that we're suffering today in our society. We know that you are very busy traveling all over the country fulfilling all of the invitations that you receive from the colleges, universities and high schools and churches, leadership conferences and other organizations. We want to thank you again for coming here.

IWDM: Thank you, Imam, Kamaludeen.

Ibrahim: I would like to begin our session here with a question that I know is very important to everyone. It's concerning education, the importance of education. We know that in the American Muslim Mission, ever since you assumed the leadership of our community, which was in 1975, that that is the first thing that you established in our community as first priority, was education. what I would like for you to explain to us is why you established education as the first priority? What is so important about education? We all know that education is important, but I believe that many of us don't really know what the reason is for the importance of education.

IWDM: It's understood that the answer to the question is best understood when we understand the makeup of the membership of our community, from the very inception of the movement back in the 30s when it began as the Nation of Islam and later became what is now the American Muslim Mission. Its appeal was to the poor, the culturally deprived people of the big cities, Detroit, Chicago. The membership has remained very much the same in terms of what class of what is the background of the members.

As you know, the organization began with the establishment of a private school. It was called, at that time, University of Islam, and actually, it was just an effort to give better education to youngsters and also to adults. There was adult and youngster's program. What we have done, is continued that effort of trying to improve the knowledge of education, general education of our membership. We feel that that's the answer to that, the world is becoming more crowded, life is becoming more difficult for individuals to live. The cost and the crowding of life, the complex world we are living in is becoming more and more complex as we live.

Technology and all these great demands of life. If we don't keep promoting education, improve the education improvement and the education of our community, we're going to find ourselves further and further behind the world.

Ibrahim: That's right.

IWDM: It should be a priority, in our religion, education is a priority.

Ibrahim: Yes sir, I think we have a very good understanding now of the importance of education. I'd also like to go to our other guests. I'm sure they have some questions to ask you, we want to take advantage of your visit here. I'd like to begin with Sister Rasheeda Shabazz.

Sister Rasheeda Shabazz: Okay. Brother Imam, before I came into the community, I had certain ideas about Muslim women. I know that a lot of other people still have these ideas, would you address some of the misconceptions like our freedom and the way we dress?

IWDM: Yes, again, I feel that we have a very good situation because of our unique ideas about the woman in Al-Islam, that we inherited from the old organization. In the old organization, the women were not denied leadership. In fact, women were the leaders of their own society. The society of the women came under a woman leader, and the society of men came under a man leader. Raymond Sharief was the man leader for the whole nation.

As the different sisters, I believe the last sister, I'm not sure, I've heard names. She was a leader, we had several. I can't recall her name who was the last leader for the women. Anyway, what this did for me was, it made me sensitive to the need for women to be recognized for what they have to contribute. I studied the Quran and I studied the life of Prophet Muhammad and the early leaders under Prophet Muhammad. The Kalifs of the religion, during the early days of the history of Al Islam, which started back, better than 1,400 years ago now.

I found that there was a movement to bring justice to women by Prophet Muhammad and his early successors. I think that that movement, in time, got misplaced, overlooked. As a consequence of that, we haven't seen enough progress to justify Muslim's claim, civilization to excellence. As a civilized community, we haven't seen enough progress in most of the Muslim world for women. Equal education was established for women during the days of the Prophet, peace be on him.

[inaudible 00:08:55] big business just like a man [inaudible 00:08:58] established. They established business into the political [inaudible 00:09:05] lifetime.The prophet of [inaudible 00:09:12]. It was written that throughout the religion men, spiritual men because man is spiritual and perhaps [inaudible 00:09:24] more inclined towards mysticism than women, I think. [inaudible 00:09:29] women and the palm readers [inaudible 00:09:33]. Really I think that men are more inclined to mysticism than women and I [inaudible 00:09:38] is that we have to understand [inaudible 00:09:43] facts, that is, that G-d created us as a nation.

It says, one leader [inaudible 00:09:50] one nation, and that[inaudible 00:09:53] for both of us have the potential[inaudible 00:09:57] possibility [inaudible 00:10:26]

(Unclear section)

Ibrahim: Because that will [inaudible 00:14:38] that people have especially women. Thank you very much, I would like to ask you one more question before I go to Imam [unintelligible 00:14:49] and I think maybe [inaudible 00:14:54] we want to bring up [inaudible 00:15:02] this I think everybody is aware, crime is running [inaudible 00:15:15] and some of the most [unintelligible 00:15:18] abuses [unintelligible 00:15:23] all types of incurable diseases. Have in our society many people and women who have waited from what degrees [unintelligible 00:15:38] but they don’t seem to have that in our society. Plunge in deeper into moral decadence, we know that there's something else that's needed, there's something else that's missing. What do you see as the reason for this problem and what do you see as the solution?

IWDM: First, I don’t claim to have all the answers. I think the growth of the world is making life more complicated for us, population what we call population growth, population explosion is making life more complicated for all of us. It is a pity that we don't hold on to the best that history has taught us, the best that history have given us. The best that history has given us is an appreciation for G-d, the concept of G-d and a appreciation for moral excellence, for virtuous life. What you're talking about disturbed me a lot in my younger years of my ministry that is about eight years old now and in my younger years of the ministry, these conditions bothered me a lot.

Now I have come to accept them as just seasonal conditions and I think that trends that we're seeing now in the religious society is indicating that society is aware that this has gone too far and we're going to see more positive leadership on the part of religious established religion. I think it's going downhill now it's not climbing, I don't think so. Although here in Houston, you might be experiencing maybe the peak of crime, criminal crime problem, problem of crime and immorality in the life of the people here. You might be experiencing the peak of it but for the whole country, I think it's on the decline.

Ibrahim: All right, I appreciate that very much because we're on the job here in Houston, like you're going all over the country and we're sharing with the people the knowledge that we have on the holy Quran and what the practices of our religion and I find that it's benefiting many people like it benefits us.

IWDM: Yes it does.

Ibrahim: I'd like to go to Imam Hassan who is the resident Imam of the Houston Masjid of Al Islam and I'm sure that you've got many questions that you would like to address to our leader Imam Warith Deen Mohammed.

Imam Hassan: Yes I certainly have a lot of questions that I would like to ask I know that we don’t have that much time to just go off into a lot of questions. One question that I would like to just address to him is about getting back to education. That of what kind of education can the world as a whole expect to get for its children apart from religion?

IWDM: When you say the world, no education. The only thing that will educate the world is true religion because everybody doesn't have an interest in computers, everybody never, you're not going to get all the people to have an interest, an academic interest. Some people are going to go in their separate ways and it's not going to be towards the colleges or towards the institutions of higher learning. They're going to be going in their separate ways. If you expect to educate the world, you have to appeal to the best side of their nature and to do that, you have to appeal to their need for faith and that brings us back to G-d and religion.

Really, G-d and religion is the answer, G-d and correct religion is the answer for raising the level of knowledge of the masses as far as the kind of, I would say scientific kinds of concepts. You can improve those scientific concept but it doesn’t mean that life, the human life is going to be lifted, I believe we have a higher awareness. Perhaps society have never had a higher awareness of the scientific nature of scientific workings or order then the masters have -- that we have right now. I'm talking about the masses now but look at the conduct of the masses in terms of what he was talking about, respecting the government, the need for government in the self, a government of the self. You can hardly get your children's attention, they're so taken by things that are happening on their level. On all level, you can hardly get their attention to see that they have prepared for a higher level, for adulthood, and married life etcetera. It's hard to get them to understand that the lights have to be paid for, that the electricity bill is coming. It's hard to get them understand those things although they are made more aware of the, perhaps of the nature of electricity and etcetera. Then the masses have been in the history of humanity. What I'm saying is that G-d hadn't left us alone on our own, G-d didn't leave us on our own. We need G-d and unless we come to faith, we'll never improve the condition of the world, we can prove the condition of our separate worlds.

But the big world of the masses will be neglected unless we bring them back to a healthy idea of what moral life is and what responsibility, yes and life tells me that I can't manage for myself. I have my limitations. Me, this person here W. D. Mohammed, I have my limitations and I know I'm getting all kind of trouble if I don't have an authority over my life. So this is what we have to do, we have to tell the people that.

Ibrahim: Well brother Imam that statement that you made about G-d is still watching over us.

IWDM: Yes.

Ibrahim: I know that that's a great message for everybody especially for people who are in trouble.

IWDM: And he's never going to leave us.

Ibrahim: That's right. [chuckles]

IWDM: We leave him but he's not going to leave us. [laughs]

Ibrahim: That's right. I'd like to go to sister Rasheeda again.

Rasheeda: I was thinking while you were talking about how people get away from having G-d in their life and they want to force things to happen the way they want them to happen and if they would just let G-d back in or just relax and let it take over.

IWDM: Yes.

Rasheeda: But they want to force things the way they want.

IWDM: Yes and I said these conditions are seasonal. I know when I was a youngster, we weren't as near as argumentative and the defient as youngsters are now and well I'm not saying that our youngsters are lost, I think older people are more lost. I think people my age are more lost than the youngsters [laughs] but as a father, and I know my wife, I know the problem she has to deal with daily and really it hurts to the heart, it hurts me in my heart to see that kind of burden on my wife and there's nothing we can do about it hardly.

You can hardly do anything about it it's because it's the permissiveness of society and the insistence I think on so a lot of people in media although the media has its excellence too. I think there's a lot of negligence on the part of media also and they have contributed a lot to this defiance in the children. Defying established authority, defying the parent, defying any attempt to correct their behavior. It's just a spirit of defiance in the society nowadays and it's affecting the children I think more than it's affected us.

People of my age, although I wonder what made a 67-year-old man go in a tavern three blocks from our gift shop in Chicago and stick up the place and the police came, he shot the police, they killed him. Police didn't die luckily the officer didn't die, he was shot but he didn't die. That's a man, 67 years old they say he had a life of crime. At 67 he still hasn't changed he's still thinking, go ahead an take people's money. We need more responsible people and than we are [inaudible 00:24:36] but there's a lot of things that don't support that the president is doing. I do appreciate the new, moral, a sensitivity that has come with them with president Reagan.

Ibrahim: You know that I was thinking that when your speaking of morals that always seems to come up and I understand that often I've heard you say that if you don't have a good strong moral base then you can't have healthy human growth and development. I figured some kind of way that must be the key to our problems, the crime and what you just got through mentioning.

IWDM: Sir, when we lose our moral discretion there's no more feeling, no more sensitivity for what is morally right. Then, in the religious language, we're dead.

Ibrahim: Yes, yes so now I see what they mean by being resurrected from the dead.

IWDM: Yes and dead bodies they deteriorate fast don't they.

Ibrahim: That's right. [laughs] and also, I noticed that there seems to be a degeneration of the respect for motherhood, for women in general and I noticed on television and different magazines and posters, everywhere you look they show the woman and well practically naked in some cases naked. I noticed it was a great disrespect for the women and it makes them objects, more or less.

IWDM: Yes. A lot of harm has done right by disrespecting [inaudible 00:26:22] to a woman that's mother, to me that's mother. I see a woman as mother. Mother has been more important in my life, it's been more than by my life to [inaudible 00:26:35]

Speaker 1: Right.

Imam: And any time they [inaudible 00:26:41] women [inaudible 00:26:42] so deeply commodity [inaudible 00:26:47] to sell this. It has to have an effect on the youngster [inaudible 00:26:53] it has to have an effect.

Ibrahim: You know, also I would like to [inaudible 00:26:58] short time but one [inaudible 00:27:02] an opportunity to do ask another question. [inaudible 00:27:07]

Hassan: [inaudible 00:27:09] being a director of education, that's what I be saying about education. I know you are [inaudible 00:27:18] and the question I ask you were, why is it so necessary for [inaudible 00:27:24] about educating our own [inaudible 00:27:30]

(unclear section)

IWDM: They said [inaudible 00:27:33] not to present but it's more important [inaudible 00:27:42] for the president [inaudible 00:27:43] when we [inaudible 00:27:44]

… this is the story of the man who passed an olive tree. He passed the olive tree, not to eat from that tree himself because the tree matures at such time in the long year. It takes long years to mature but he doesn't expect to eat from it. The average man had passed olive trees, he's planting the tree for the next generation to eat.

And He says "We eat from what they planted and we plant so they will eat". That's the idea, we come in this world and what we are able to survive because someone had provided an apartment or a house, means of living for us. We should feel an obligation, there's an obligation on us. To live the same way we didn't come into life and found nothing. We came in life, we found something. Now, what should you do be trying to do? You should be trying to leave life, leaving something. You should be preparing to leave life and leave something behind.

So that the future focus is more important for us than the present. In our religion, it says, and those who look to the hereafter. right? Not to this present but those who look to the hereafter. So the future life for us is more important than the present to all our work, what we do as workers, it should be in the spirit of old time people, the old folks, the old-timers. They were working hard so why are you working so hard man? So well, I want to leave something for my children. right?

Yes, that should be our spirit. You don't want to leave that. If we leave that, then we lose hope for the future. Our people become so weak, non-productive, so weak, unfit for the employment, the labor market, unfit for the skilled mark, unfit for everything. If you don't care about anything, about preparing for the future, then you're not fit for the labor market. You're not fit for the skilled market, you're not fit to anything.

Ibrahim: I hate very much to stop you but we're at the end of the program. [laughs]

IWDM: Well, that's it. I'm sorry I took so much time.

Ibrahim: I want to thank you so much for being with us, you know, and I'd also would like to say to you, beloved viewers, that we appreciate you tuning in on us today, and most of all we appreciate you're sticking with us until the end of the program, and we're going to be bringing more programs to you with more information that we hope will help you to solve your problems. We want to thank you again and I'll close as I opened, as-salaam-alaikum, which means, may the peace and blessings of Almighty G-d Be upon you.

Voice over: 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.