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# SELF SUFFICIENT ECONOMIC SYSTEM

### By Imam W. Deen Mohammed

Imam Muhammad Takbir.

Audience members: Allahu Akbar.

Imam Muhammad: Allahu Akbar. Alhamdulillahi. Assalamu alaikum.

Audience members: Wa-Alaikum-Salaam.

Imam Muhammad: Peace be unto you. Alhamdulillahi rabbil alamin. We praise G-d to cherish and sustain all the world. We witness that He is One and Muhammad is His servant and His messenger, the last prophet coming in the tradition of the great prophets, the Seal of the Prophets mentioned in the books of the people we call Jews and Christians.

Dear Muslims, CPC (Collective Purchasing Conference) is a concept that Allah has blessed us with because we struggle to do what pleases our G-d, Allah subhanahu wa taala highly glorified and praise is He, and in the fashion that we think respects the way of our prophet, Muhammad, peace be upon him. It’s a very simple concept and with it, or I should say before it, was the vision. A vision of having Muslims in America, African-American Muslims, build a model society, not in one place but in several locations wherever we find suitable circumstances, or favorable circumstances for building ourselves up in our neighborhoods.

The vision sees us coming from no establishment into establishment. The vision has us as the poor community, moving from poverty, with our own small resources together in unity for the same aim, the same goal. Moving together with our small resources from poverty to business establishment, from no representation in our neighborhood to representation in our neighborhoods, from no contribution to tax base, to a situation where we'll become a strong contribution to the tax base of the city. This is the vision.

The vision is important to us because we are Muslims with our Muslim life. We can’t have this Muslim life, now that we know we should have and that we want, because we don’t have the money to finance the building of good schools, private schools, private preschools for our children and our adults. We would like to have schools for our adults, too.

Other religious communities, other denominations in Christianity, other religious communities, they have their schools, their private schools, funded by them. Preschool, elementary school, high schools, colleges, universities. This is the way education began in this country, by religious communities giving contributions from the private sector and building fine universities.

Many of them had to struggle. Many of them sought business as a way to realize the goal of having good schools, quality schools, paid teachers, paid staff, and fine equipment. They saw business as a help and they entered business. And many of them are still existing today because they respect business life. Their institutions, their operations, et cetera are supported by monies from businesses. That’s the way we want to grow.

CPC is going to do that. Again, we don’t pressure anybody. We don’t pressure anybody to come into this organization. We don’t pressure anybody to give or to donate to us. We simply tell you what we’re all about and we invite you to get more information from us. We will mail more information and to see if you would like to become a member of CPC, Collective Purchasing Conference. The members are all equal. To become a member, we only have to come up with $2,000. $2,000 represent one share. That share puts us on equal basis with the person who comes in with $50,000 and has 25 shares to our one share will equal to him in this respect.

We can buy, if we want to purchase the products that we buy collectively. The individual who puts $2,000 in, he can get $2,000 worth of products at the same price to him that the individual who has $50,000 invested against that product, same price. This is kind of unusual for business. But I think this is the way the big corporate world works, is that right? Yes, that’s the way of the big corporate world. It works just like that. The man who puts the $50,000 in, his advantage is his return, his gain, over the man who puts just $2,000 in.

We want to help the small man in business, and that’s all us. Most of us in business, we’re small business people, very small business people. We want to bring life, help, assistance, and life to those small business operators, so that they will be able to compete. You can’t compete if you’re paying a terrific price for an item, and the man on the corner, he’s not a Muslim, he is not to you, he is not even from the neighborhood maybe. He doesn’t even live in the neighborhood but he has more money so he’s buying in volume, he’s buying in quantity, and you’re just buying to survive. He puts you out of business. You can’t compete with him. Your prices are too high. Your overhead is too much for you. You go out of business.

If we cooperate with each other, together we will be one powerful, rich entrepreneur. We are many poor people but if we could cooperate with each other, we’ll be one big, powerful entrepreneur. Then we can compete with that man who comes from the uptown or downtown. We can compete with him. We are really at an advantage and he’s at a disadvantage because he is in our waters. He’s in our waters, while we establish ourselves in our own waters. That’s pretty easy to do.

This is not the, I would say, the program of Marcus Garvey. This is not the program even of Hon. Elijah Muhammad, but it’s very close to his program. His program was centralized. He believed in centralized operations and it worked for him very much like the federal government works for the economic world of America. We know the government is not a good businessman.

The government is not a good businessman. We know that. The Nation of Islam is not a good businessman. Because it centralized everything, it depended upon a national staff that didn’t have experience most of the time in business but was dictating to those who had experience in business. Just like our government, so it didn't work. It hurt more than it helped. This is not the same, this is different. We see more clear now, the life that G-d wants for us. We are in Islam all the way. We are not half way into Islam. We are not standing in something else and got our fingers sticking in Islam, or standing in something else with a toe sticking in Islam. We are all the way in Islam now. We are much better situated to be successful, and we want to stay in control and we will. Inshallah, we will stay in control.

We are going to go out and search for honorable Christian investors to invest with us. We are already encouraged by a couple we're looking that's got money. They have some money. If they willing to invest, I understand that there are some businessmen in Saudi Arabia too, who are looking at CPC and they are thinking about investing. If they can invest and accept the way the CPC operates, we can't change anything, then they will help us in a big way and we will help them in a small way. And we will all grow together. We will all grow together. So that is CPC. Very simply put, very simply described to you, that is CPC. It is a limited liability company. Its essential activity is purchasing from companies in America or anywhere. We love to purchase from Muslim countries too.

We hope to buy sardines like the nation of Islam under Elijah Mohammad. May G-d forgive him, his errors and sins and given peace, paradise. He used to purchase from Morocco, large quantities of the excellent sardines that they have in Morocco. Morocco has excellent sardines, skinless and boneless. I never stopped eating them.

The nation of Islam hasn't imported any of those sardines in about 30 years or more. But I have never stopped eating those sardines. I found them. They're in the stores of America, and they are the leading skinless and boneless sardines in the stores of America. No other sardine is selling like the sardines from Morocco. China now has some sardines and they are very good. They are very good too. They're new in the market, -- Pretty soon they will be competing with the Moroccan sardine. And that's good because I'm going to tell the Moroccans, "You have a competitor now, and we are going to be a buyer." So they will take up the slack. Inshallah. I've given you a picture of what it is. It's essentially buying and selling. That's all.

Buying collectively by putting all our small moneys together and directly from factories. We want to feel that we know the factory and we know where the source is. We want to feel that we are getting factory prices, so we can bring the cost down for our wholesalers, retailers and the peddlers. If you are a peddler, get a license. Every city got a license for a peddler. Get your license and we will sell to you if you're a peddler. But you have to have a license for us to sell to you.

Thank you. We have one brother who has invested $50,000.

Audience member 1: Mashallah.

Imam Muhammad Yes, $50,000. I assured him that when he'd invested that his return, his gain with CPC would be more than his gain would be had he invested in mutual funds. We haven't really begun to operate. We just started. We sold a few products at the convention, we're getting requests for the products. We only have two products but they're those same substance, same product. It's called Shea Butter. It's a hair and skin beauty care product.

It's terrific. It fights dryness. It fights skin dryness. It's very terrific. It makes your hair so nice. I was convinced of the quality and value of this product after using it myself for about seven months or more. I again ran out of it, and I forgot the brother that gave me a sample of it. So I'm desperate. I go and ask the operator. I said, "I want to find this company says Chicago Atlanta Paris. I only have a name here." She found it. She found the company. It was in Chicago on 12th Street.

Audience member 1: [inaudible 00:15:37]

Imam Muhammad: Yes 1255 South Wabash. She's found the company. So I went to this company and had to be told by the Christian wife of this Muslim brother. She said, "You don't know where you got this product." I said, "No I don't." She said, "My husband gave it to you." Her husband is Muslim. We have another brother who was a hard worker in the community ever since I've known him way back as a young man. Hard worker. He was a lieutenant, first officer in the Fruit of Islam, the militant unit at the time of Hon. Elijah Muhammad.

He was always a hard worker and salesman. He told me, he said, "I'm getting this shea butter, and I have a business." He said, "I can sell to CPC." I said, "You can?" I said, "How come? How're you going to do that?" I said, "We need factory prices." He said, "I know the family who owns the land and the trees are there, the trees belong to them." The tree that produced this product is called a karite tree. The product is extracted from the seed of this tree. I said, "Okay what can you get it for?" He ended up giving me a slighty better price than the sister who was married to the Muslim Brother. She has her partner, her cousin. Two impressive women. They sell in several-- They sell jewelry, they sell clothing and cosmetics. They are two terrific African-American women, both Christians, one married to a brother that we have been knowing for many years. At least for 30 years, I've been knowing him. I thought this was a good situation. I thought Allah had blessed us to have contact with these people. We love to see them grow and we want to grow our self.

Inshallah, the plan is not to just go and buy a product and see if you like it. That's not the plan. Very seldom will we be buying products like we bought Shea Butter and like we plan to buy these sardines. We're buying the sardines because we knew those sardines were very popular. They went very well in time of Elijah Muhammad. We know they'll go. They went well then, they'll go well now.

The way we going to do this, we're going to have what we call catalog sheets prepared. We go find products that we think the community needs and would like and we'll have pictures taken of them and make catalog sheets. And we present the catalog sheets to the distributors all throughout the country. They present these catalog sheets to the Muslims in the city and the towns and take orders.

This will be a first step in the progression. We hope to progress to have home buying on television. That's the goal. To have home shopping on television, where our members and the public will be able to shop from us right on television. That's not too far in the future. I hope you are impressed as I am. I'm so excited. I know Allah is with us. I know we couldn't have done this without Allah loving us and helping us. Thank you very much, As-salaam Alaykum. Now I will accept questions if you like.

Audience Member 1: Yes [unintelligible 00:18:53].

Audience Member 2: We would like to ask some questions about [inaudible 00:18:56]. And I would like to ask that, some of the people also might have the opportunity so they can get involved Inshallah with the CPC, with your permission of course. I have a couple of question of my own. Excuse me just for me to walk [unintelligible 00:19:14] in here because I've been sitting for the last three months for 16 hours a day behind my desk and on the phone and so just I get freedom of moving around like I'm moving now.

With the CPC concept, which we desperately need some of the efforts that you're doing, but that's a start, but alhamdulillah in the right direction. Did you consider selective of the type of products that we need to pursue and there is a line on that agenda, or there is just an initial products and development of any other requirements might come later? Is that is that available options now?

Imam Muhammad: We are open to any I would say suggestion or advice or interests that you may have. Someone to be interested in something and it might be just the thing we need to do, that we need to look at to consider for purchase. We're open but we do have a plan. And the plan is to, as much as possible, supply our community with items that won't tax us too much right now. Items that will require storage because that's more money.

Items that won't require storage, that we can keep in the normal temperature or normal situations, and items that our sisters feel embarrassed, and we feel embarrassed to know that our sister has to go to someone outside and ask them for items that are intimate. Intimate items. Lingerie, sanitary napkins, these things- a toothbrush would cost nothing to keep. It's very easy to keep and very easy to ship. Tooth brushes, toilet tissue, napkins. These things, they're easy for us to have them, and not a big risk. Storage risk and all the other risk.

We'll be looking at those things first but we're also looking at cosmetics because we all use it. We all use cosmetics. And we're looking at some clothing items. As I said, we want to find these items where the location-- This supplier, the supplier we want, is in Canada, in Mexico, no matter where he is, this the a supplier we want. Is he giving us the deal that we want and are we satisfied with this product? When we find that, we want to take pictures of the product and start making these catalogue sheets.

Audience member 2: Yes. Now part of the marketplace I believe looking at the communities itself because that's consuming market.

Imam Muhammad Well, our first in the market that we should be looking at is the Muslim. Right. The Muslim market because that should be ours, there's no other market is ours. It should be ours. The Muslim market should belong to Muslims. And if anybody else comes into it, they should come in and get what we leave.

Audience member 2: Alhamdulillah, at least I know I am not married now but whenever I used to go to the stores and my ex-wife gives a long list of stuff to bring back home including tampons. That's something I was embarrassed to take to the counter with [unintelligible 00:22:53]. But one other question, you mentioned something about the sardines.

Audience Member 2: Yes. And I know there is a lot of companies especially in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia that are fisheries and do have the willingness to participate in joint ventures in terms of fishing products. Did CPC consider that type of a venture with them?

Imam Muhammad Yes, we have considered that. We do consider that kind of it. Yes.

Audience Member 2: Has that been approached to you yet?

Imam Muhammad No. Not yet.

Audience Member 2: Okay. Because I would like to help you with that arena, by all means.

Imam Muhammad Yes. We are open to that, and we have considered that and we do expect-- I am invited now to attend the meeting of religious leaders of America, that's going to be hosted by the king of Saudi Arabia in America, in Washington D.C.

Audience Member 2: Mashallah.

Imam Muhammad And I understand that there are going to be some business people there too, and I hope that that might be an opportunity that will result and some meaningful relationship for our CPC and Saudi Arabian investors. It's possible.

Audience Member 2: Now with CPC--

Imam Muhammad You speak fluent Arabic too, do don't you?

Audience Member 2: Yes I do.

Imam Muhammad You should be my partner.

Audience Member 2: I'll be there.

[laughter]

Audience Member: And I know you got my 2,000 dollars.

Imam Muhammad All right. Very good, thank you.

Audience Member 3: As salaam Alaikum brother Imam.

Imam Muhammad. . Asalaam Walaikum

Audience Member 3: [unintelligible 00:24:25], son in law, and this is step daughter [unintelligible 00:24:28] California. I heard you mention about having interest in church products or somewhat of that nature.

Imam Muhammad Yes, I do.

Audience Member 3: Yes. What I want to present to you, I want to invite you to a meeting tonight. Me and my wife is having Inshallah at six o'clock at the Western Inn hotel, Inshallah. I'm going to bring this to you and show you what it's about. Shukran brother. All right, thank you.

We just established offshore accounts and one establishment in our offshore account is a fish processing plant that opened up in Gambia and these type of investments, we're not actually investing, we're contribution for the namesake has opened up jobs for Gambians and we have other commodities that's involved and we would like you to attend tonight Inshallah, and go over further detail if you are available.

Imam Muhammad All right. Thank you, I have your numbers here, let me look at this and get back to you.

Audience Member 3: Shukran.

Imam Muhammad [unintelligible 00:25:35] and that's Eric.

[laughter]

Audience Member 4: One question Imam, before we go to the next question, did the CPC considered working with any of the other major Islamic organization at the development of CPC?

Imam Muhammad We most certainly do. That's what we want more than anything else. We are all Americans, but more importantly we're all Muslims. And we live in America, that's our circumstances. As citizens, our circumstances is that we all here in America, and we all want our children to fair better than we are fairing. So why shouldn't we work together? We can work separately and we have to work separately, but we should have some ties. We have to work together also. I would like to see the leaders from the other ethnic groups in this country who are Muslims.

I'd like to see us have a Business Committee or a business organization. Business Majles where we come together and we look at our circumstances, we look at our situations and we discuss these situations together as citizens of America and as Muslims and see how can we cooperate, how can we work together? How can we benefit from each other? That's the way we should do in America and anywhere to be honest, especially in America. America has competition, that's the way the world works and everybody is out for himself. And the more you have with you, the better your circumstances are going to be. So we need each other.

Audience Member 5: Salaam Alaikum Imam.

Imam Muhammad: Wa Alaikum As Salaam.

Audience Member 5: I hope you'll also consider furniture [unintelligible 00:27:27]

Imam Muhammad Yes we have. Yes furniture you mean home furniture?

Audience Member 5: Right.

Imam Muhammad The wood. Made of wood? Made of wood or plastic, whatever they're using now.

Audience Member 5: Make it wood.

Imam Muhammad Yes. We are considering it, we have considered it. We have a furniture Store business operator in Chicago who has been operating. He has a nice store and he just brought- he already had a huge facility and now he got even a bigger facility. And we were looking at him only. But if we know the needs of all our brothers, and we work and we do it together, we can right now buy from Malaysia. They have an abundance of wood, and abundance of trees. They have too many trees. Most of the world has forest problems.

They have wood shortage, tree shortage problems. Malaysia got too many trees and I've already talked to Malaysian people, the Chamber of Commerce, the Government people and I was introduced by The Malaysian youth organization. I was introduced to them, we had a good meeting and I really questioned them to see what we could do together. Could we have joint ventures? Can we have training here in Malaysia? They agreed to everything.

Abundance of wood, we could bring the wood straight in. I said "Well, bring the logs then." He said, "Yes." I say, "What about prefab furniture where we bring it to our factories and we have nothing to do but just to put it together and varnish it or finish it with the paint or varnish. They said, "Sure, anything." So we have situations for many things, but we just don't have the people to come in with us, with the courage to act as our brother said. We need to do. Not to just be here in America, but we need to do things in America.

Audience Member 5: [foreign language] Imam, actually that was just a side comment. My question was, not really a question. I have been part of the economic development conference, and we did one here in Detroit several years ago together with ISNA. It was the Memorial Day week, and the turnout was pathetic. That conference also lost a lot of money as well, but that doesn't feel bad. Unfortunately, we Muslims, and I mentioned that at one of the conferences that, the only other profession the prophet had, other than being a prophet, he was a businessman.

Audience Member 5: We follow every sunnah on earth, except for that one sunnah, where the economic development is the key to the Muslim community's development. You have taken Alhamdulillah a good step [unintelligible 00:30:20] I'll look into it and hopefully I'll also invest in your program, inshallah. But I need some response from you and-- This year, ISNA Convention, we had 20,000 Muslims. I know you also-

Imam Muhammad: In Chicago.

Audience Member 5: -have a convention at the same time in New Jersey. You've talked about a combined Muslim market. If we could have one conference together with 100,000 Muslims and you bring a proposal like this, then I think it will be very successful.

Imam Muhammad: We're working for that.

Audience Member 5: I've spoken to ISNA leadership as well, that they have every other workshop in the conference. They have estate planning, they have political. They don't have any that is on economic development.

Imam Muhammad: That's too bad.

Audience Member 5: One of the other issues that came up, and Imam Siraj Wahhaj mentioned that his intention is to get together with the rest of the Imams in this country and have one leadership. That's part of a big problem, we don't have one leadership. We don't have one gathering. We don't have presentation of these projects at that sort of a gathering. Now, we don't have enough people here unfortunately, but this subject and topic should be brought up where we have a large group of Muslims so we can really take advantage of the market that Muslims have in this country. The number is growing and it's going to continue to grow, inshallah.

Imam Muhammad: Thank you very much. [clears throat] Well, I think we can start selecting persons, finding persons and bringing them together, so that we can have a consultant group for economic planning and business planning in America for us, for Muslims in America. They can call it business Measures for America, Muslim-American Business Measures or whatever. Measures for Muslim-American Business Future or whatever. We can come up with some language. We need something like that.

I know I need it. I need to see my brothers, who think like I'm thinking. [chuckles] Or I think they would be thinking. Thinking in a practical way to better our condition and our future, more importantly, our future. So that our children will have a better situation in America than we have. I'm desperately in need of sitting in a situation where I can talk to my brothers who have same interest, experience and know-how and want to see change for the better.

Audience Member 6: Assalamu alaikum, Brother Imam.

Imam Muhammad: Wa alaikum as-salam.

Audience Member 6: You answered my question to some extent, just I would like to know how to become involved like you were saying. And working with those people who share interest with somebody who has a interest but not the other facilities that go along with the interest.

Imam Muhammad: We have a packet that we put together. I think it's about four sheets. Essentially, four sheets. We can mail that to you and you can look at it and see if you interested in becoming an investor. I don't have Brother Rafah, he's supposed to be working with me, but he had to go to a meeting that they schedule monthly for the propagation, dawa here in Detroit. Property fundraising for the park so that we can have a center built here, inshallah, in Detroit in the near future.

He's with that group. He's supposed to be here now. He should have returned by now. But we have someone at this table here, I believe. If you can come to this table, they can give you my number, someone right here. There is Imam Plemon. Raise your hand Imam Plemon. Imam Plemon will give you a number for you to call. Can you give him the Wacker Drive number? If you call them, ask for CPC, they'll connect you.

I have the CPC number too but I can get it. He has a number, same office on Wacker Drive. Allah blessed us. We're poor, we couldn't afford an office downtown. I prayed to Allah, I said, "Allah, we can't afford an office downtown. Help us." Allah, through a young business brother, who's been struggling in business and he's doing very well now. He has about five million dollars contract business. He's five million dollars in contracts.

He's rehab. He rehab homes and sell them to Chicago Housing and also to HUD. He told me, he said, "I have to expand and I'm going to move downtown. Would you like an office down there?" I said, "Sure, I would." I said, "How much you have to pay?" He said, "You don't have to pay anything." He said, "I write it off. I says, "Ministry Office. WD Muhammad's Ministry Office," I'll write it off my taxes."" I say, "Thank you very much." So now we are downtown.

[applause]

Imam Muhammad: Allahu Akbar. Alhamdulillah. Very nice office, downtown Chicago.

Sayid Hak: Assalamu alaikum, Brother Imam.

Imam Muhammad: Wa alaikum as-salam.

Sayid: My name is Sayid Hak. I have talked to you and previously before, also, on this subject. No political achievement could come unless and until we achieve the economical benefit what America offers. The caution is for in-- Just to give you, I think Brother [unintelligible 00:36:09] was alluding to that, is that in ISNA Conference, we had two very good businessmen there. One of them is worth almost a billion. He is coming. His sales is almost $800 million dollars. He is in a healthcare business. The other one was Shafi Qureshi, probably you know him.

Imam Muhammad: Yes. I know of him.

Sayid: His business, almost $600 million to $700 million dollars. What my suggestion is, and of course Brother [unintelligible 00:36:41] has alluded to it, that why not we establish a bayt al-mal, or some kind of a organization, or some board where money could be deposited. Then, the businesses could start through a loan on the basis of-- I think ISNA has something like that, but it's not very viable. It's not practically working on it. Of course, it has to work through different committee. I myself has a plastic recycling business, which I started, and Alhamdulillah, it is growing.

Imam Muhammad: Alhamdulillah.

Sayid: So, essentially, what I'm saying is that gradually it will work out. But I think there has to be some kind of a bank or some Muslim bayt al-mal where the money should be from different sources. From there, you can divert the money to different areas. What's your thoughts about that?

Imam Muhammad: I enthusiastically endorse that idea. I support that idea. [clears throat] Right now, we see ourselves in a situation where we're going to need partners right away. [clears throat] We have friends in Chicago area and many other places. We're going to have to go to our friends who are financiers. We're going to have to go to their financial institutions to have our needs served. If we had a Muslim institution to take care of that, that would be the ideal situation. So, I support it and I will join you in whatever we have to do to promote that. Thank you.

Audience Member 8: Assalamu alaikum, Imam Muhammad.

Imam Muhammad: Wa alaikum as-salam.

Audience Member 8 :I’m Sister Intisari. I need one question for clarification. If a capital investor should decide to be a purchasing investor, do they have to purchase at a share rate or in general or a specific product, is there a minimum amount that they can purchase? Or will it be necessary to purchase at a share rate?

Imam Muhammad: No, if you are a capital investor or a purchasing investor and you want to change, you just change. You don't have to do anything but just change. Just inform us that you want that change.

Audience Member 8: Okay, but what I'm not clear about, should you decide to purchase a product for resale, would you have to purchase at a rate of a share or is there a [unintelligible 00:39:25] share amount? [crosstalk]

Imam Muhammad: I see what you're saying now. You can either purchase it at the share rate or you will purchase it at the advertised minimum purchase. That's in the paper, it's in the journal. I think it's about five- I'm not sure about $580 something I think. That's the minimum you need for a purchase.

Audience Member 8: Thank you.

Imam Muhammad: You wouldn't have to use the whole share, no ma'am. You'd need to keep a minimum of $500 in your account.

Audience Member 8: [unintelligible 00:39:53]. Thank you.

Razali Baba: As-Salaam Alaikum Imam Muhammad.

Imam Muhammad: Alaikum As-Salaam.

Razali: My name is Razali Baba, a question I have is actually a follow up on-- about the say you has stated earlier. It's a common observation that in this country, richest institutions are banks and insurance companies and probably some media organizations, they control information, they control money. Now, we don't have any Islamic banking system in this country. Islam obviously, has it's clear Islamic principles, economic principles which are different than what the banking system is based upon over here.

So to gain some kind of economic power in this country, would it not be proper to address that right head on, and have alternative Islamic banking system, providing Islamic financing? And there are a lot of people who would have a lot of interest in that. And that is simply untouched in this country at this time. So, I would just request you to comment on that, to see what CPC are, the concept, banking is a service also, people purchase banking every day, everybody does it. And they are forced to do it in a haram way, so to speak. So would there be even in the cause of Islam, it would be a tremendous contribution to provide an alternative so people can do banking in a halal way.

Imam Muhammad: Inshallah. We know of some examples of Islamic banking, or at least a good start toward developing Islamic banks. But most of them are outside. Malaysia, as a country, that has a very good start toward developing strong Islamic banking system. But in America, I doubt if they have any, I hear that there are some real desire and attempts really to establish it, but we don't have it.

In our situation that we are in, my situation, speaking to you as a poor member of my community, in our situation we can't wait until the professionals get together and do things. We have to use the few professionals we have, and the best thinking people we have and get something done. So what we are looking at, we are looking at becoming financiers ourselves for our community. We're looking at the insurance, fire insurance for homes, we're looking at health insurance plan for our teachers of our schools, we're looking at insurance. Eventually auto insurance, we're looking at these things and at these insurance needs.

If we can have our insurance needs taken care of as much as possible by us, that's a lot of money. And from there, we can go into savings institutions. A savings institution or a saving and funding institution for saving and funding institution. It could be set up first, and then eventually into a full bank. We can move into a full bank eventually. By just starting taking care of our needs in a practical way as much as possible, we will eventually have our own banks.

Well, I don't think we should go right to trying to have a bank right away, we should first build funds and make money by supplying our community needs; self serving the needs of our community and accumulating money. And maybe we'll have to invest some of this money in American banks for a while. But in time, we'll have our own banks.

Razali: Inshallah. Part of the-- problems my understanding with some of the restrictions that is available through the general bank charter, I don't think under the federal law the present, that it provides for an existing bank-- Or to open a new bank as an Islamic institution or as Islamic bank, the closest we can do is a credit union I believe.

Imam Muhammad: Yes brother, but what I was trying to say is this, we don't have to go to a bank right away, to that kind of institution right away. We can have an institution that is not called a bank, that's not a bank serving our needs, lending us money, like a credit union, putting our money together. And if we just agree that these monies as they grow, we are going to agree that these monies can be used to finance a new masjid, a new school, a new business establishment, whatever. That will be up to us.

So we actually can get the benefit of a banking-- of having a bank without really having a bank; having funds that are accessible and are controlled very wisely, and invested very widely, so that they grow, the funds grow. We can do that. So the whole complicated world began with necessity. Is that right brother?

Razali: Yes.

Imam Muhammad: This complicated world, it begun up on necessity and that's where we should start.

Razali: And we have the ability, and I extend my invitation to you, took the initiative with CPC--

Imam Muhammad: I need you very much and you know that.

Razali: Inshallah. And we-- to start a credit union, Islamic credit union, that is associated with the number of the communities because really, there is a hunger for this. And we do have the financial capabilities to begin with that. And CPC provides really the good foundation to begin within the structure of credit union that really provides the Muslim needs. To that, is there something that is open for?

Imam Muhammad: Sure it is. Sure it is wide open.

Razali: Then I'm your partner in this, inshallah

Imam Muhammad: And here is another thing that we're looking at too, these big religions, big churches, they take advantage of the not for profit concept too. And we intend to also take advantage of that. So we are going to have for profit and not for profit economic interests. For profit and not for profit, both. And many things we can do with the not for profit, that we can't do with the for profit.

So we're going to have them both. Our schools, we shouldn't worry about the poor members of our community, they shouldn't have to pay tuition if they can't afford it. We should have the business sense to make money, to grow money, so we won't have to ask them for money.

Razali: Alhamdulilahi.

Imam Muhammad: And that's what we're going to do.

Razali: Inshallah. Thank you very much.

[applause]

Rashida Muhammed: As-Salaam-Alaikum Imam Warithu Deen. I'm Rashida Muhammed, and I put together some information that I thought that may be a point of interest to CPC. And the information is basically products through a company based here in Detroit and is called Natures Options. And the product line basically deals with health care products like bio kidney cleanse, bio liver cleanse, bio heart cleanse and a number of other products that I thought that, inshallah, if you got a chance to view the materials it's something that you might find as a point of interest, that you may be able to air with the products to CPC, and I have it here.

Imam Muhammad: Yes, we appreciate you getting that to us, you could pass it to the Imam sitting right here in front of me, Rabani. His name is Rabani, he's here to take it.

Rashadi: I also spoke with the president and CEO of the company and I shared with him the idea of sharing this information with you and I also shared with him the concept of CPC. And he told me that if there was any products that you would be interested in, that he would be willing to set up a conference call with you, inshallah.

Imam Muhammad: Thank you. So I hope you have a contact number in that package and we will get back with you. This is to Muhammad right? Thank you.

Audience Member 10: As-Salaam-Alaikum.

Imam Muhammad: Wa alaikum as-salam.

Audience Member 10: You mentioned the credit union, is there anyone who might be giving some consideration to having payroll deductible for those of us who work and we could just have our monies taken out of our payroll check and automatically deposited into that credit union?

Imam Muhammad: Yes, in fact, I've been offered that kind of service already by one of the banks that we are dealing with and I haven't accepted it. I'm a very sensitive person, and I know sometimes you might say, "Yes, I agree to that," and you get in some problem then you have to change. That's a concept that I wouldn't want to push too much. It's good but it worked well for us, for the business, but I wouldn't want to push that too much because I know my people. If I say yes to something they believe in me and they'll say, "Okay, let us do that," and some of them will be getting themselves in fact more financial straits having so much taken out of their small check. When our checks get a little bigger then I'll let you know.

[laughter]

The check is a little bit too small now.

Audience Member 11: As-Salaam-Alaikum again brother. There are-- I work also for Chrysler Corporation. They take every year lots of money from the charity for charity organizations and they will force actually every member of the organization to donate. In that respect, you can also name the charity which this charity could send the money too. There is one other way also we can take advantage of it which we have not taken advantage before.

Imam Muhammad: Inshallah, we'll meet together and we'll make sure that the communities are aware of that, and we'll give them the information they need so they can do that.

Audience Member 12: The same follow up on the same [crosstalk]

Imam Muhammad: You always having your money go where you want it to go.

Audience Member 12: That happens I think you're referring to United Way and United Foundation and they have a list of approved charities which should be first handled at the national level. To make that happen first of all, Muslim organizations have to come on their list. Several years ago, I made a very concerted effort to do that but it was almost impossible because those organizations are essentially dominated by Jewish and Christian people who actually do designate a lot of Christian and a lot of Jewish organizations were beneficiaries of those funds. And they collect billions of dollars and corporations over here, essentially force their employees, Muslim or non Muslim ,to pay into those funds.

I think this effort needs to be taken on a national level, where somebody goes and talks to the leadership and says that there are so many Muslims in this country about five, six, seven million Muslims right now, why Muslim organizations are not included in that list of approved charities? Then I think if we can do that, then Muslims can designate those. But otherwise, right now if you go and name Muslims organizations, the money will not go to them because it's not on the list.

Imam Muhammad: It has to come on a United Way.

Audience Member 12: It has to come on the list of the United Way. That is the process which on a national level can't-- I tried to handle this in Michigan and I know that it became almost an impossible thing. They will not even consider that idea. I think some clout has to be brought into that, some political clout.

Imam Muhammad: That's a problem we yet have to work out. But we can meet and work it out, inshallah, with your help, with your advice, your help we can solve the problem. I know there's a way we can get around it, there's a way to get around everything, but Allah.

Audience Member 13: As-Salaam-Alaikum brother Imam.

Imam Muhammad: Wa alaikum as-salam.

Audience Member 13: Just a comment not really a question, but we have a nice setting here. We would like to encourage our brothers and sisters who may not be directly affiliated with the leadership of Imam Muhammad to look at the need of having a leadership, one leader. Imam would not say this and that's why we should look at him and say it because we shouldn't look for someone who's looking for the leadership position.

But for the many things that you're bringing up, we just have to have a leadership, we have to have a leader, we have to have someone we can identify with. I encourage other brothers to promote in their circles Imam's leadership a little stronger. Because really, he is the kind of leader that we need as Muslims in America and he will not do any of us or you wrong. He will be considerate of your circumstances and your situation and that's what we need.

But it's not good for me to go to ISNA and say that, it's not good for me to go to ICNA and say that. But those who do frequent the ISNA convention, they should bring that up. That's part of our problem is we can't identify as strong as we need to with a leader. We have the Shura and we know that Shura is the way we govern things, but many of these things you're talking about to be on United Way's list needs to be one group, one organization.

We have to trust somebody and he has a history that shows he can be trusted. I encourage you to look at that, think about that, and promote that because it's not for us to go into other communities and promote that. Because then, we are looking like we are trying to get this leadership, we're campaigning and we're not campaigning.

Imam Muhammad: I would like to respond to that myself. I believe that G-d has blessed me to have every Muslim's interest at heart, every human child at heart, and not to treat anyone different than I treat the other. G-d has blessed me to want to see all Muslims in a good situation. That's a blessing, I could have been a different person, that's Allah. It's my spirit, my desire is to be of service to all Muslims in this country. I do think I know myself, I'm not a person who is ambitious and that's in the negative sense.

I'm not ambitious, I'm not after something myself. Myself is the whole community that's myself. My own interest can't be served unless the whole community's interest is served in the right way, that's myself. I want to be used, I want you to use me, you're professional people, I want you to use me. Believe me, the Jews are going to use me if you don't, and the Christians are going to use me if you don't. They are already asking. Please, if I can be of service use me. I'll be a leader to sit down with you, and if you say, "He should have the last word," I'm listening., I'm open minded person, I know my limitations, I can be advised, I can change my mind, you can change my mind.

I'm not somebody who had a dream, I'm not a dreamer. I don't think I'm any special creature, I'm not a prophet, I'm not a G-d, I'm not an angel. I'm just a human being with a lot of mistakes and a lot of weaknesses that I'm trying to overcome. I'm just like a common, but I have this desire in me and I will not betray you if G-d keeps me like I am, I will never betray the interest of anybody that trusts me with something. I follow our Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam.

[applause]

Imam Muhammad: So I'm ready to serve, I'm ready to serve you, I'm ready to serve this community. I'm ready to serve Muslims of America. I'm ready for that and I believe I can represent you very well, I believe I can assist you in a very fine way. If you want to try me out, he invited you to try me out, I'm ready.

Audience Member 14: Imam, I'm going to try you out.

[laughter]

Imam Muhammad: All right. I'm ready thank you.

Audience Member 14: Imam Dawood and some of the other brothers and brother Yaya from CAIR were talking, and we were talking about some of the issues that took place this year. And we talked about developing an honorary committee that is going to rule this conference for the next year.

Imam Muhammad: That's what we need, we need to organize the best minds, the best of our people, and resources, those that have resources too; we need to organize for this; material resources and business resources.

Audience Member 14: Inshallah. And in part of that role is to bring out the Islamic leadership in this country to build the economic benefits for their organizations as they may look at it individually. And that collectively, that's going to benefit us all.

Imam Muhammad: Certainly.

Audience Member 14: I invite you to be the chairman of that committee. We're going to use you, we're going to abuse you for the good benefit of our Muslim world.

Imam Muhammad: Your vision and our vision are compatible. Your vision and our vision are very much the same.

Audience Member 14: Inshallah.

Imam Muhammad: I feel very comfortable with you.

Audience Member 14: We have a lot of work to do with [crosstalk] but if you are, then we are going to launch that beginning from today, inshallah.

Imam Muhammad: I'm like the business world give it to me in black and white and I'll answer you in black and white

Audience Member 14: [laughs]. Thank you [unintelligible 00:59:32].

?Imam Muhammad: Takbir.

Audience Members: Allahu Akbar.

[background conversation]

[01:00:44] [END OF AUDIO]