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THE  
**BLACK  
MUSLIM**  
EDITION

Northend Agent's  
presents





*In the name of ALLAH Most Gracious, Most Merciful.*

*I’d like to start by saying I really appreciate the opportunity to be the guest editor of the Northend Agents Newspaper. I believe I was told that I am the first editor that is not a member of the Allen family. Thank-you Sasha and Yolanda for the honor.*

I have been a Muslim for as far back as I can remember. As a child, I remember getting up on Sunday mornings and piling in our silver Toyota minivan, 12 deep to take the hour-long drive to Malcolm Shabazz Masjid in Harlem from White Plains, NY. On the radio, we would be listening to “The Propagators” a Muslim singing group ask the question in rhythmic soul “Who are you?” and the smell of Egyptian Musk from my father’s beard, hands and back of his neck would fill the cabin of the car. My siblings and I would play various car games as we drove into the city in our Sunday best clothing to pass the time or sleep. When we arrived at the masjid, we would climb the steps to the musalla and take off our shoes before entering. Sometimes we would place our shoes in a see through plastic bag and bring them in with us.

At Malcolm Shabazz, by the time Taleem started there could easily be 300 or 400 Muslims in the masjid and that was on a regular Sunday! If Imam Warith Deen Muhammad was going to be in town for one of *his* khutbahs there would be 1000 plus Muslims in the masjid to hear him speak. (Imam W.D. Muhammad was the son of Elijah Muhammad, the man who led the Nation of Islam from 1934 until his passing in 1975. After his father’s death Imam W.D. Muhammad led a large majority of African-American Muslims from the Nation of Islam to Sunni Islam.)

I remember one Sunday when *the Imam* was going to be in town. The family was up early so that we could assure we could get a spot in the musalla and not have to listen over the speaker system downstairs. The masjid was packed and there was a buzz in the air. Following the Islamic tradition, all the men where in the front, the boys were behind the men and the women and girls sat behind the men and boys in the musalla. My father sat about half way to the front on the edge. I was in the back with my brothers. I was responsible for watching over my brothers because they were still little. At the time, I may have been 9 or 10. Imam Warith Deen Muhammad was giving a powerful khutbah; I could tell by the many Takbirs and Allahuakbars coming from the Muslim brothers and sisters that he was speaking truth to them.

The Imam had been speaking for probably three hours when I noticed a man behind my father playing with his ear. What was this man doing? Didn’t he know he was in the masjid? Didn’t he know that he wasn’t supposed to be fooling around in the masjid and that the Imam was there? As I watched him intensely distracted by his behavior, I thought, “There he goes again playing with my dad’s ear and my dad!” My father was swatting at his ear like a bug was buzzing around it. I thought to myself, “That man is going to get in trouble. He is breaking the rules.”

The rules my father established for us when we were at the masjid were:

1. No fooling around.
2. No talking.
3. Sit quietly.
4. Don’t play with your brothers.
5. Most importantly, listen to the khutbah!

I started thinking I should go tell my father that the brother behind him was messing with his ear and breaking the rules of the masjid, but there were probably 400 brothers between him and I. Plus, I was responsible for my little brothers. As I contemplated my move, totally distracted from the powerful information being shared by Imam Warith Deen Muhammad I continued to watch the man behind my father fooling around. “There he goes again messing with my father’s ear!”

I notice the Imam began to end his khutbah because he was reciting a pray and the other believers were joining in. I make the decision that I must go tell my father about the brother behind him before the khutbah ended and everyone gets up and starts greeting each other so he can get in trouble. I start making my way to my father along the side of the wall. Quietly, moving around the brothers while checking back on my little brothers. By the time, I got to my father, the Imam was giving the greeting of peace,” As Salaam Alaikum” to the community of Muslims. Before my father could rise, I whispered in his ear, “The man behind you was messing with your ear”. As I spoke to my father I looked over his shoulder at the man behind him, I noticed a familiar face...it was Muhammad Ali! Muhammad Ali was right behind my father in the masjid and he was messing with his ear! Muhammad Ali the boxing champion that everyone loved! Muhammad Ali...WOW! My father stood up and turned to shake the champs hand and greeted him with a hearty, “As Salaam Alaikum”. I could not believe my eyes! I too was able to shake hands with Muhammad Ali. What an amazing coincidence!

Years after, whenever we talked about this wonderful moment, my father always joked that he was right about to knock Muhammad Ali out! We always had a good laugh when he said that. In my mind, I always thought if he did that, he would definitely be breaking one of the rules.

*"May ALLAH grant both my father, Abdul-Rahmaan Muhammad and Muhammad Ali paradise." They will be missed greatly and always remembered in our prayers.*



This issue of the Northend Agents is the continuation of the growth and transformation of the legendary community paper. By dedicating an entire issue to the Muslim community, the Northend Agents Newspaper has given us the opportunity to share our stories, our thoughts and experiences. In this issue, you will hear from Imams, sisters and brothers that practice the faith of Al-Islam. I thought I would start this issue out with one of my favorite memories as a child growing up as a Muslim. I’m sure the additional articles will be both thought provoking and informational. I look forward to the feedback.

Sincerely,  
Abdul-Rahmaan I. Muhammad

# Northend Agents, LLC

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**Sasha Allen Walton**  
**Managing Editor**

- The **Northend Agents, LLC** newspaper is designed to focus upon the urban region of CT, and will be used as a vehicle for business organizations and residents. Due to the problems we face economically, it is our objective to inform and assist our readers of buys within and out of the community, and of upcoming events.
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**Why I Wrap My Hair**  
By Jamilah Muhammad

I wrap my hair up high  
sensing my predecessors  
congratulate my effort  
recalling images in books,  
of sisters from the motherland  
observing me, as I observe them on pages  
cloth on my beans  
introduces me as queen  
before words are spoken  
curiosity of my modesty  
conceals what’s been undone  
permitting the sensation of accustomed,  
customs to seep thru threads interlaced with memory  
of a former me, lost found nations, family legacy  
I wrap my hair in scarves, hijabs, turbans and hats  
covering to emulate what’s now imitated on purpose  
With purpose a force field to shield eyes from sons that shine  
in the directions of sweet smells soft smiles coupled with femininity  
Quranic verses and hadith have taught me  
meaningful pulls, tugs, knots, drapes, twist to create  
what complements  
warmed skin tones, strong shaped noses, cheekbones and full lips  
colorful fabric adorned upon our heads, necks and décolletages  
decorative protection from eyes that stray  
the higher pile the better  
height displays virtuous posture  
pride in our stride as what they think is hiding is saving  
My wrap is linked to faith  
My garment, my garment  
a state of mind expressed in dressed  
dress coded in verse  
A visible sign of faith, respect, morality  
My Dean be tested  
colorful fabric rolled around my skull,  
Wrapping me into submission,  
guiding each position as I pray.

**Striving for a More Diverse Representation of Islam to the General Public**  
By Samia Hussein (President of Muslim Coalition of Connecticut)

According to the United Nations, there are 7.5 billion people around the world. Theoretically, that means there are 7.5 billion thoughts, opinions, ideas, beliefs, and forms of self-expression just to name a few. If there was an opportunity to bottle up all of these and use them when needed depending on the topic of interest, wouldn’t that be an enriching experience?

According to a 2015 Pew Research Study, Islam is one of the most diverse world religions. The Quran (a holy text Muslims follow) states, “Oh mankind. We created you from a single pair of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know one another” (Chapter 49, Verse 13). This verse highlights the importance of diversity and God’s divine wisdom to make us different so that we make an effort to get to know what is different and celebrate it. Imagine a life where all of us look the same, talk the same, sound the same, it would be boring, right? Life would not be rich of language, culture, religion, etc. When I think of Islam, I think of an array of diverse backgrounds all with one goal in mind, to become closer to God.

The Muslim Coalition of Connecticut (MCCT) is a non-profit organization established in 2004 by CT Muslim leaders in the Greater Hartford area in response to the hate and rhetoric experienced among American-Muslims post 9/11. Our mission is to promote American-Islamic values through education, outreach, and community service. We strive to represent a diverse group of Muslims, from Sunni to Shia, native-born to foreign-born, men and women, black and white, born into the faith or a convert, and everything in between. Our board is an example of this diversity. When we plan our events such as our annual Taste of Ramadan Interfaith dinners or our annual Leadership Banquet, there is a conscious effort to ensure that speakers are diverse and that we are encompassing of all backgrounds. It is important to be inclusive of all backgrounds as that brings a connection with the audience we are serving.

As a Muslim Woman who wears the hijab (headscarf), I sometimes feel excluded from general discussions about women’s issues. It’s not just being excluded because I am a woman but also because I am Muslim, I wear the headscarf, and I come from Middle Eastern decent. There can be many who identify the same as I do, however, each of us have learned through our own personal memories, experiences, and upbringing. All of these must be considered when deciding on a panel of American-Muslim speakers providing education in the community. But to get to that level of inclusivity, we must be willing to reach out to those outside of the circle we may identify with. We must be willing to being open to other thoughts and beliefs of our own in order to deliver a message that can bring different perspectives. When multiple representations of life experiences are expressed, it is only at that point that we as a society can look into the lives of those before us through their own lens.

**YWCA Hartford Region  
Seeks New Chief Executive**

Hartford, Connecticut – YWCA Hartford Region is now formally conducting an executive search, with the assistance of Third Sector New England (TSNE), for the organization’s next Chief Executive Officer. The current CEO, Deborah Ullman, who has ably led the organization for 13 years, will retire at the end of June. The Board of Director’s Executive Transition Team has been working with TSNE, thanks to a grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, to complete an organizational assessment, finalize the position profile, and position the organization for a successful executive search.

The Board of Directors looks forward to working with the new CEO to continue YWCA’s focus on services to women of all ages and their families by offering a broad array of programs, ranging from early childhood education and empowerment of young women, to supportive housing and financial literacy. In addition, the new CEO will continue to serve as a leader in the community on issues related to the YWCA’s mission of empowering women and eliminating racism. The new CEO also will carry forward the organization’s strong financial stability and manage and lead its strategic growth. The search is now formally open and posted on TSNE’s website at <http://tsne.org/chief-executive-officer-ywca-hartford-region>. Those interested in the position or with any questions about the search should contact lead Transition Consultant, Catherine Bradshaw, at [cb.cadenceconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:cb.cadenceconsulting@gmail.com).

Established in 1867, YWCA Hartford Region celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> year in 2017 as the third oldest affiliate of YWCA, a women’s membership movement dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. YWCA Hartford Region provides programs and services in the greater Hartford area including child care, supportive housing, teen leadership development, racial justice awareness, financial literacy, and economic empowerment. For more information, visit [www.ywcahartford.org](http://www.ywcahartford.org) and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

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## Flint Crisis Environmental Racism

By Charlie Costict

April 24th, 2017 marked the third year that residents in Flint, Michigan have been without clean water. What many call genocide has proven to be yet another case of Black people’s welfare being systematically ignored and the neglect turned into full-blown abuse. The majority has always found ways to marginalize groups throughout history using legalized loopholes to continue oppressing those too poor, tired or uneducated to fight. Flint is a perfect example of environment racism, where a predominately Black (nearly 83%) and poor community faces a health crisis due to negligence and budget cuts all too familiar in urban areas. Misinformation continued the denial of lead poisoning levels and how toxic the water really is in Flint despite cases of long-term effects on its residents hindering remedies to the ongoing crisis. With a breakout of Legionnaires disease which can lead to pneumonia (lung infection) and the mental/physical effects of lead water poisoning (irreversible damage in child development including brain damage), residents are left trapped without clean water, restitution and now are even asked to pay pending water bills or face foreclosure.

Recently the head of Michigan’s health department, Nick Lyon, has been charged with involuntary manslaughter along with four other officials so far amounting to 15 officials in total. Failure to right the wrongs and actively obstructing justice couldn’t possibly be ignored any longer when u place the bottom dollar before human lives. To save money, people in charge have put its residents in grave danger by switching water sources which lead to the disgustingly damaged pipes despite complaints from experts, scientists and doctors. The denial was real. One official even resigned after saying the Flint water crisis was caused by “N\*ggers Not Paying Their Water Bill”. But we have seen these incidents countless times from Katrina to the Dakota Access Pipeline leaks in which the government failed the people during environmental disasters due to political chess or financially motivated counteractions. These failures of emergency response usually center around Black people or people of color especially in areas below the poverty line. This country has a history in various communities of color of where hazardous waste is dumped or left sitting adjacent to where kids play and freshwater sources.

Politicians have shown their greed along with what corporations and billionaires lace their pockets to support environmental destruction in our lawmaking in favor of stockholders and revenue. Even our Commander-in-Chief has stake in these companies like Energy Transfer Partners that are willing to harm and displace the locals to satisfy investors. While celebrities and the like have pitched in to help Flint’s citizens during this crisis, water bottles only go so far when a family can go through over 150 bottles in a single day for cooking and bathing. A court agreement was reached to where 18,000 water pipes would be replaced by 2020 but how can a family or FAMILIES get by during that waiting period? Many can’t afford to move, houses are unsellable in these conditions and the donations aren’t that overwhelming especially when coverage isn’t placed as high priority. It is dependent on us the people to get the word out, keep our people in Flint in our minds and hearts and do what we can to help stop this genocide. We can’t sit by and allow the rich to bankrupt what little resources we have as the world remains quiet to our struggle. We need to address environmental racism more.

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## NAACP President and Muslim Pioneer

Imam Kashif Abdul Karim met with Imam Muhammad Ansari First Muslim President of the NAACP Hartford Chapter {Senior Muslim Pioneer Historian} to chat briefly about Islam in Hartford and the NAACP.

Kashif: How long have you been president of NAACP?

Ansari: 2010

Kashif: How long have you been a Muslim associated with the African American Community.

Ansari: 1960

Kashif: During this time period have you found similarities between African American Muslim and the NAACP.?

Ansari: Yes. Both organizations were built on addressing the civil rights of people of color. In Islam all people are equal and should be treated as such. We are all the children of Adam, from a single soul. We’re taught there’s no superiority of one race over another. That’s what the NAACP advocates also.

Kashif: How did Islam start in Hartford?

Ansari: It began in Hartford with Malcolm x, with the Nation of Islam with a civil rights focus. So many people work seeking solutions to deal with the abuses facing African Americans. The Nation also addressed the lack of good paying jobs and other inequalities. When Malcolm X came to address the Moorish Science Temple many people invited him back to their homes to discuss these concerns and solutions. He emphasized we should unify and be dependent of ourselves and not of others. This appealed to us especially with Malcolm X leading the charge. This resulted in eventually the start of temple #14.

Kashif: So we see Although there is a faith base in our origin as Muslim African Americans the Civil rights struggle played a major part in our origin. Is this true for the NAACP. It seems similar

Ansari: NAACP was founded in 1909 due to the oppression of African Americans. We were dealing with lynching across America especially in the south. 50, 60 a year. A white social worker, Mary White Operton, WEB Dubois and others met to discuss the need to do something to stop this and the NAACP was born. You’re right, it started in a way, in the same way, a way to fight oppression.

The Nation of Islam however advocated separation at the time. If we can’t get along we should separate and get our own. This was before the civil right movement.

Overtime. We began a transition towards orthodox islam with imam WD Mohammad. We made a move toward Inclusivity of of all humanity, and a focus on religious rights, civil right issues and human right.

We also saw the NAACP transitioning too. The organization that was making Laws was now trying to enforce laws. We made laws against discrimination on the books but that doesn’t mean discrimination didn’t exist.

Kashif: We find discrimination in the media as well, especially among African Muslims not being able to address our opinions, can you address that.

Ansari: That bothers me. We find in our stories more truth. No favoritism towards one side or the other. You would find the opinions not often against America, because this is our home. The media tends to want to solicit the input from the foreign Muslims. Some immigrants who come to America from other countries have their feelings about this country that are not the same as Muslims who have been living here their whole life or of African Americans. Some foreign Muslims align first with their country before ours. It depends whom the media selects. If you pick a person to interview from the country that was just devastated his story is going to be very different from mine. You will therefore get a picture if islam with sentimental attachments. The representation of islam is short-sided when the African American side is left out. It does a dis-service to everyone.

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# Employment Opportunity

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Please email resume and cover letter to [kzager@mercyhousingct.org](mailto:kzager@mercyhousingct.org).



**Execution by Firing Squad: The Militarized Police State Opens Fire**

By John W. Whitehead

“It is often the case that police shootings, incidents where law enforcement officers pull the trigger on civilians, are left out of the conversation on gun violence. But a police officer shooting a civilian counts as gun violence. Every time an officer uses a gun against an innocent or an unarmed person contributes to the culture of gun violence in this country.”—Journalist Celisa Calacal

Legally owning a gun in America could get you killed by a government agent.

While it still technically remains legal to own a firearm in America, possessing one can now get you pulled over, searched, arrested, subjected to all manner of surveillance, treated as a suspect without ever having committed a crime, shot at and killed.

This same rule does not apply to government agents, however, who are armed to the hilt and rarely given more than a slap on the wrists for using their weapons to shoot and kill American citizens.

According to the Washington Post, “1 in 13 people killed by guns are killed by police.”

Just recently, for example, a Minnesota jury acquitted a police officer who shot and killed 32-year-old Philando Castile, a school cafeteria supervisor, during a routine traffic stop merely because Castile disclosed that he had a gun in his possession, for which he had a lawful conceal-and-carry permit. That’s all it took for police to shoot Castile four times as he was reaching for his license and registration. Castile’s girlfriend and her 4-year-old daughter witnessed the entire exchange.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit ruled that Florida police will not be held accountable for banging on the wrong door at 1:30 am, failing to identify themselves as police, and then repeatedly shooting and killing the innocent homeowner who answered the door while holding a gun in self-defense. Although 26-year-old Andrew Scott had committed no crime and never fired a single bullet or lifted his firearm against police, he was gunned down by police who were investigating a speeding incident by engaging in a middle-of-the-night “knock and talk” in Scott’s apartment complex.

As attorney David French writes for the National Review, “Shooting an innocent man in his own home because he grabs a gun when an unidentified person pounds on his door or barges through it isn’t just an ‘unreasonable search or seizure.’ It’s a direct violation of his clearly established right to keep and bear arms.”

Continuing its own disturbing trend of siding with police in cases of excessive use of force, a unanimous United States Supreme Court recently acquitted police who recklessly fired 15 times into a backyard shack in which a homeless couple—Angel and Jennifer Mendez—was sheltering. Angel Mendez suffered numerous gunshot wounds, one of which required the amputation of his right leg below the knee, and his wife Jennifer was shot in the back. Incredibly, the Court ruled that the Los Angeles County police officers’ use of force against the homeless couple was justified as a defensive action, because Angel was allegedly seen holding a BB gun that he used for shooting rats.

In yet another case, a Texas homeowner was subjected to a no-knock, SWAT-team style forceful entry and raid based solely on the suspicion that there were legally-owned firearms in his household. Making matters worse, police panicked and opened fire through a solid wood door on the homeowner, who had already gone to bed.

In Maryland, a Florida man traveling through the state with his wife and kids was stopped by a police officer and interrogated about the whereabouts of his registered handgun. Despite the man’s insistence that the handgun had been left at home, the officer spent nearly two hours searching through the couple’s car, patting them down along with their children, and having them sit in the back of a patrol car. No weapon was found.

In Philadelphia, a 25-year-old man was confronted by police, verbally threatened and arrested for carrying a gun in public, which is legal within the city. When Mark Fiorino attempted to explain his rights under the law to police, police ordered him to get on his knees or else “I am gonna shoot ya.” Fiorino was later released without charges.

What these cases add up to is a new paradigm in which legally owning a gun turns you into a target for government sharpshooters.

Ironically, while America continues to debate who or what is responsible for gun violence—the guns, the gun owners, or our violent culture—little has been said about the fact that the greatest perpetrator of violence in American society and around the world is the U.S. government.

Government violence is the missing link in the gun control debate.

Violence has become the government’s calling card, starting at the top and trickling down, from the more than 80,000 SWAT team raids carried out every year on unsuspecting Americans by heavily armed, black-garbed commandos and the increasingly rapid militarization of local police forces across the country to the drone killings used to target insurgents. The government even exports violence worldwide, with one of this country’s most profitable exports being weapons.

Thus, any serious discussion about minimizing the violence in our society needs to address the manner in which the government and its cohorts (the police, the various government agencies that are now armed to the hilt, the military, the defense contractors, etc.) use violence as a means to an end, whether domestically or in matters of foreign policy.

You want to reduce gun violence? Start with the government.

Except that the government has no intention of scaling back on its weapons. To the contrary, the government’s efforts to militarize and weaponize its own agencies and employees is reaching epic proportions, with federal agencies as varied as the Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration placing orders for hundreds of millions of rounds of hollow point bullets.

Talk about a double standard.

The government’s arsenal of weapons makes the average American’s handgun look like a Tinker Toy.

Under the auspices of a military “recycling” program, which allows local police agencies to acquire military-grade weaponry and equipment, more than \$4.2 billion worth of equipment has been transferred from the Defense Department to domestic police agencies since 1990. Included among these “gifts” are tank-like, 20-ton Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles, tactical gear, and assault rifles.

Ironically, while gun critics continue to clamor for bans on military-style assault weapons, high-capacity magazines and armor-piercing bullets, expanded background checks, and tougher gun-trafficking laws, the U.S. military boasts all of these and more, including some weapons the rest of the world doesn’t have.

Included in the government’s arsenal are armed, surveillance Reaper drones capable of reading a license plate from over two miles away; an AA12 Atchisson Assault Shotgun that can shoot five 12-gauge shells per second and “can fire up to 9,000 rounds without being cleaned or jamming”; an ADAPTIV invisibility cloak that can make a tank disappear or seemingly reshape it to look like a car; a PHASR rifle capable of blinding and disorienting anyone caught in its sights; a Taser shockwave that can electrocute a crowd of people at the touch of a button; an XM2010 enhanced sniper rifle with built-in sound and flash suppressors that can hit a man-sized target nine out of ten times from over a third of a mile away; and an XM25 “Punisher” grenade launcher that can be programmed to accurately shoot grenades at a target up to 500 meters away.

In the hands of government agents, whether they are members of the military, law enforcement or some other government agency, these weapons have become accepted instruments of tyranny, routine parts of America’s day-to-day life, a byproduct of the rapid militarization of law enforcement over the past several decades.

This lopsided, top-heavy, authoritarian state of affairs is not the balance of power the founders intended for “we the people.”

The Second Amendment, in conjunction with the multitude of prohibitions on government overreach enshrined in the Bill of Rights, was supposed to serve as a clear shackle on the government’s powers. As 20th century libertarian Edmund A. Opitz observed in 1964, “No one can read our Constitution without concluding that the people who wrote it wanted their government severely limited; the words ‘no’ and ‘not’ employed in restraint of government power occur 24 times in the first seven articles of the Constitution and 22 more times in the Bill of Rights.”

To founders such as Thomas Jefferson, who viewed the government as a powerful entity that must be bound “down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution,” the right to bear arms was no different from any other right enshrined in the Constitution: it was intended to stand as a bulwark against a police state.

Without any one of those freedoms, we are that much more vulnerable to the vagaries of out-of-control policemen, benevolent dictators, genuflecting politicians, and overly ambitious bureaucrats.

Writing for Counterpunch, journalist Kevin Carson suggests that prohibiting Americans from owning weapons would be as dangerously ineffective as Prohibition and the War on the Drugs:

“[W]hat strict gun laws will do is take the level of police statism, lawlessness and general social pathology up a notch in the same way Prohibition and the Drug War have done. I’d expect a War on Guns to expand the volume of organized crime, and to empower criminal gangs fighting over control over the black market, in exactly the same way Prohibition did in the 1920s and strict drug laws have done since the 1980s. I’d expect it to lead to further erosion of Fourth Amendment protections against search and seizure, further militarization of local police via SWAT teams, and further expansion of the squalid empire of civil forfeiture, perjured jailhouse snitch testimony, entrapment, planted evidence, and plea deal blackmail.”

This is exactly what those who drafted the U.S. Constitution feared: that laws and law enforcers would be used as tools by a despotic government to wage war against the citizenry.

This phenomenon is what philosopher Abraham Kaplan referred to as the law of the instrument, which essentially says that to a hammer, everything looks like a nail. As I explain in my book Battlefield America: The War on the American People, we the citizenry have become the nails to be hammered by the government’s battalion of laws and law enforcers (its police officers, technicians, bureaucrats, spies, snitches, inspectors, accountants, etc.), and we’re supposed to take the beatings without complaint or reproach.

Now don’t get me wrong.

I do not sanction violence, nor do I believe that violence should ever be the answer to our problems. As John Lennon warned, “When it gets down to having to use violence, then you are playing the system’s game. The establishment will irritate you—pull your beard, flick your face—to make you fight. Because once they’ve got you violent, then they know how to handle you.”

Still there’s something to be said for George Orwell’s view that “that rifle hanging on the wall of the working-class flat or labourer’s cottage is the symbol of democracy. It is our job to see that it stays there.”

The Second Amendment serves as a check on the political power of the ruling authorities. It represents an implicit warning against governmental encroachments on one’s freedoms, the warning shot over the bow to discourage any unlawful violations of our persons or property.

Certainly, dictators in past regimes have understood this principle only too well.

As If Hitler noted, “The most foolish mistake we could possibly make would be to allow the subject races to possess arms. History shows that all conquerors who have allowed their subject races to carry arms have prepared their own downfall by so doing.”

It should come as no surprise, then, that starting in December 1935, Jews in Germany were prevented from obtaining shooting licenses, because authorities believed that to allow them to do so would “endanger the German population.”

In late 1938, special orders were delivered barring Jews from owning firearms, with the punishment for arms possession being 20 years in a concentration camp.

The rest, as they say, is history. Yet it is a history that we should be wary of repeating.



Muslim Voices  
By Jamilah Rasheed

"It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity." W E B Dubois

"But what of black women?... I most sincerely doubt if any other race of women could have brought its fineness up through so devilish a fire." W E B Dubois

"If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing." El Hajj Malik al Shabazz

"We need more light about each other. Light creates understanding, understanding creates love, love creates patience and patience creates unity." El Hajj Malik al Shabazz

Two of the most powerful men of the twentieth century spoke truth to power every chance that they could. They had the foresight and wisdom to know that the destiny of the African American rested on our own ability to have control over our story. The above quotes are very relevant to the story today of the Muslims abroad and in the USA.

As a Muslim of African American descent and a woman, I relate totally to the above quotes. From them I have derived three points that resonate in today's climate of fear mongering and hate towards Islam.

First we need to understand that at least 35% of those brought to this country as slaves were Muslim. Muslims were instrumental in the development of this country's infrastructure and hence Islam played a vital role in the American landscape. African women were brought here enslaved, bearing the brunt of the brutality of a system that allowed her to be raped and physically tortured. Having her children, whom she bore with her legitimate husband, taken from her and sold into slavery certainly ripped from her the last vestige of family and worth. Then to be used as a sex object by a master who denied her existence as a human being placed her in a position which was worse than death. Dr. DuBois' acknowledges that the strength needed to survive enslavement and to accomplish success in many fields is a testament to the endurance of the African American woman. Only with determination and hard work could she have broken through the barriers that were constructed to keep her in a servile position.

Secondly, we should not accept the definition of who we are through the eyes of others when we are more than capable to verbally express our concerns. The essence of a woman of color vibrates with a different reality. We want it to be known that we are not satisfied with how Islam is being portrayed and that our religion cannot be relegated to sensational headlines of deception. The history of Islam in America found African-American Muslim women on the front lines with African-American men standing up for truth and justice in the face of threats to life and liberty. During the turbulent 60s El Hajj Malik al-Shabazz, known as Malcolm X, spoke what people of color had been feeling since the abolition of slavery. Due to the surge in conversions to Islam worldwide, we knew then as we know now that those who control what is printed and aired on television and radio can and will place the blame for all of the chaos that is happening around the world on the Muslims, creating an atmosphere of hate and fear toward Islam. This attempt to turn Islam into an evil belief system has its roots in the religion's history from its inception. Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, fought verbally as well as physically against the enemies of Islam over 1400 years ago. The media has to abandon the misnomer, the Islamic State, which is used to defile Islam, and we the citizenry must voice our concern about those governments that deny human rights and in turn create human states that are full of anguish and frustration.

Thirdly Muslims are not vicious, blood thirsty murderers. Nor do Muslims have the authority to force conversion to Islam on anyone. Terrorism is anti-Islam. It is a mechanism used by a cowardly mindset to place people in a state of submission to tactics that terrorize and maim others. Malcolm's quote about the need for light is a direct challenge to our human condition. Islam has a verse that portrays light as that essence from Allah that guides us from within.

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knower of all things." (Holy Qur'an, chapter Nur(light), verse 35)

Within each and every one of us there is a strength which is ignited by the light of guidance that only comes from the Creator. When we as human beings turn to the Creator for guidance then there is understanding. True understanding opens the door to what our purpose is on this earth, which is to guide others with love through positive words and deeds. That is the essence of Islam and that is what we are missing in our current discourse.

The relationship between the main stream press and the African American community has from the beginning been wrought with misinformation and deception. From the invasion of African lands through slavery up to the present the real story of African people portrayed us to be a people with no worth. What has been presented in the press has given a picture of a race of people who were criminals and murderers.

As founder of the NAACP, W E B DuBois edited their monthly magazine, The Crisis. The magazine was a tool for change during The Jim Crow era when lynching of African Americans was common.

El Hajj Malik Shabazz was a minister of the Nation of Islam. His view about the press was that it would twist the truth against the oppressed. His famous quote, "The press is so powerful in its image making role, it can make the criminal look like he's the victim and make the victim look like he's the criminal," highlighted what he perceived to be the fundamental problem for resolving the race problem in America. He created the newspaper, Muhammad Speaks, in order to uncover the lies that were written in the media during the early 60's. It was an attempt to teach African Americans, who were denied equal rights under the laws established in this country, about self-worth with dignity.

These two men were examples of what we need to do as people of color. We need our own instruments of communication in order to redirect attention toward our upliftment and to destroy the lies that continue to separate us.

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**Hajj**  
**By Anthony Griffin**

I was asked to write an article about my journey to Mecca, Saudi Arabia to perform the 5th pillar of Islam, obligatory for all Muslim’s who are financially and physically capable of making the journey at least once in their lifetime called the Hajj pilgrimage. With sincere intentions to complete the Hajj, I and millions of others became the Guest of Allah/GOD at The Kaabah.

**The Kaabah, “The Cube”**

The Kaaba was the First Mosque on Earth and is known as The Holy House constructed by Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael...its amazing once you really start to understand the lineage of humanity and how we all come from our parents Adam and Eve. All the world division does not make any sense, which was one of my reasons for my accepting the faith of Islam, because it just made logical good sense to me that we are one humanity regardless of color or language barriers. The Quran states this idea really precisely (49:13): *"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah/GOD is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah/GOD has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)."*

In February 2003, I departed JFK and flew to Cairo Egypt once there and settled into a brief layover where you change into you Ihram clothing garments worn by Muslim’s male and female during the pilgrimage. Ihram, often consist of two white un-hemmed sheets (usually toweling material) and are universal in appearance. The main objective is to avoid attracting attention. Everyone is equal, no superiority, no rank just plain garments wrapped around the body shedding all signs of wealth or social status. The ihram is a symbol of purity and equality and trusts me... I wore it well. Till this day, I still have them and would like to be wrapped in them upon my death.

Upon arrival in Jeddah preparing to final clearance into Mecca the Holy Precincts, one thing I noticed immediately was the human brotherhood! The people of all races, colors, from all over the world coming together as one! It was evidence to me the power of the One GOD! All ate as one, and slept as one. Everything about the pilgrimage atmosphere accented the oneness of man under one GOD. This is what the Hajj translated to me first and foremost. I also noticed there is also no gender separation during the Hajj. The Hajjis (males) and Hajjahs (females) unlike in mosque, at Hajj men and women pray together, not just in the same area but also on the same prayer line. This is to remind everyone that on the Day of Judgment, both men and women will be standing together, side by side, in the same rows.

I spent 21 days in the Holy Land, at first Mecca and then several days in Medina, met people from all over the world, prayed on the marble floor at one instant got close enough to touch the black stone while making the ritual circulations (tawaf/laps) around the house. Visited the Prophets Mosque the building architectural structures was magnificent. I was in the company of nearly 3 to 4 million people worshipping Allah/GOD the creator of the world, this was no little thing and my heart and mind completely opened up and surrendered as gratitude flowed through my veins. The feeling was indescribable. Me, from Barbour Street in Hartford, CT having the opportunity of a lifetime, completing and fulfilling the 5th obligation of the faith I believe in was amazing.

- Several rituals must be performed to complete the Hajj:
- The rituals that are performed are the circling of the Kaabah seven times in a counter-clockwise direction/laps
  - Kissing or touching the Kaabah itself and even the black stone
  - The running back and forth (“sa’ee”) between the two mountains of Safa and Marwah to commemorate Prophet Abraham wife Hagar relentless search for sustenance for herself and her son, (she subsequently was blessed after 7 laps to have her patience and prayers answered when Allah/GOD sent the Angel Gabriel, to strike ground and the well of Zamzam was the reward and their sustenance. The refreshing Zamzam water is still available today; it is like no other water.... trust me).
  - The stoning at the heads of the devil, and climbing the mountains at Arafat: sacrificing an animal and feeding it to the poor and a few other practices, makes one Hajj complete.

These experiences helped me personally to get closer to Allah/GOD, my understanding of what Allah/GOD intends and requires for mankind...total reliance on Him through prayers and patience, He is near!

Amazingly the 9<sup>th</sup> day is called Arafat and everyone must assemble on this mountain not far from Mecca, the common meaning of the word Arafat is “to know”. After being taken out of paradise and placed on earth, here is where Adam (upon him be peace) and Hawa (upon her be peace) met up. Standing on Arafat is essential part of the Hajj; whoever misses the standing on Arafat has missed Hajj, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said: *"Hajj is Arafat"*.

On Mount Arafat, as much time as possible is devoted to prayers, repentance for sins, and in seeking the forgiveness of Allah. I was asked to lead the chanting inside our tent on Arafat, this was and is the most holy of times when the pilgrim stands alone with Allah/GOD. Facing towards the Holy House in the Holy City of Makkah, hands should be raised and prayers offered to Allah/GOD with all one’s heart, even in one’s own language.

In the largest gathering of mankind, each of us was like a speck of dust. Again, every single one of us pilgrims was invited by GOD to be His guest. Bearing this in mind, I remember being prudent of my every act and of how I spend every second in the holy land. The market places were very familiar to me, thought about my beginning on the tables on Barbour Street, people were selling all kinds of product blankets/sheets were spread out on the ground and the vendors were trying to provide for themselves, which made me feel right at home.

I engaged in business started distributing these neat prayer rugs that folded and zipped up into a pouch. I was not prepared to handle all the challenges, and situations, the long walks.... who could possibly be prepared to encounter something of this magnitude? But my faith, and wanting to fulfill my obligation made the difference, pleasing Allah, Almighty, along with the reality every Muslim will be fortunate enough to fulfil this act of worship got me through. So, I embraced with gratitude the opportunity to visit Him, and be His guest.

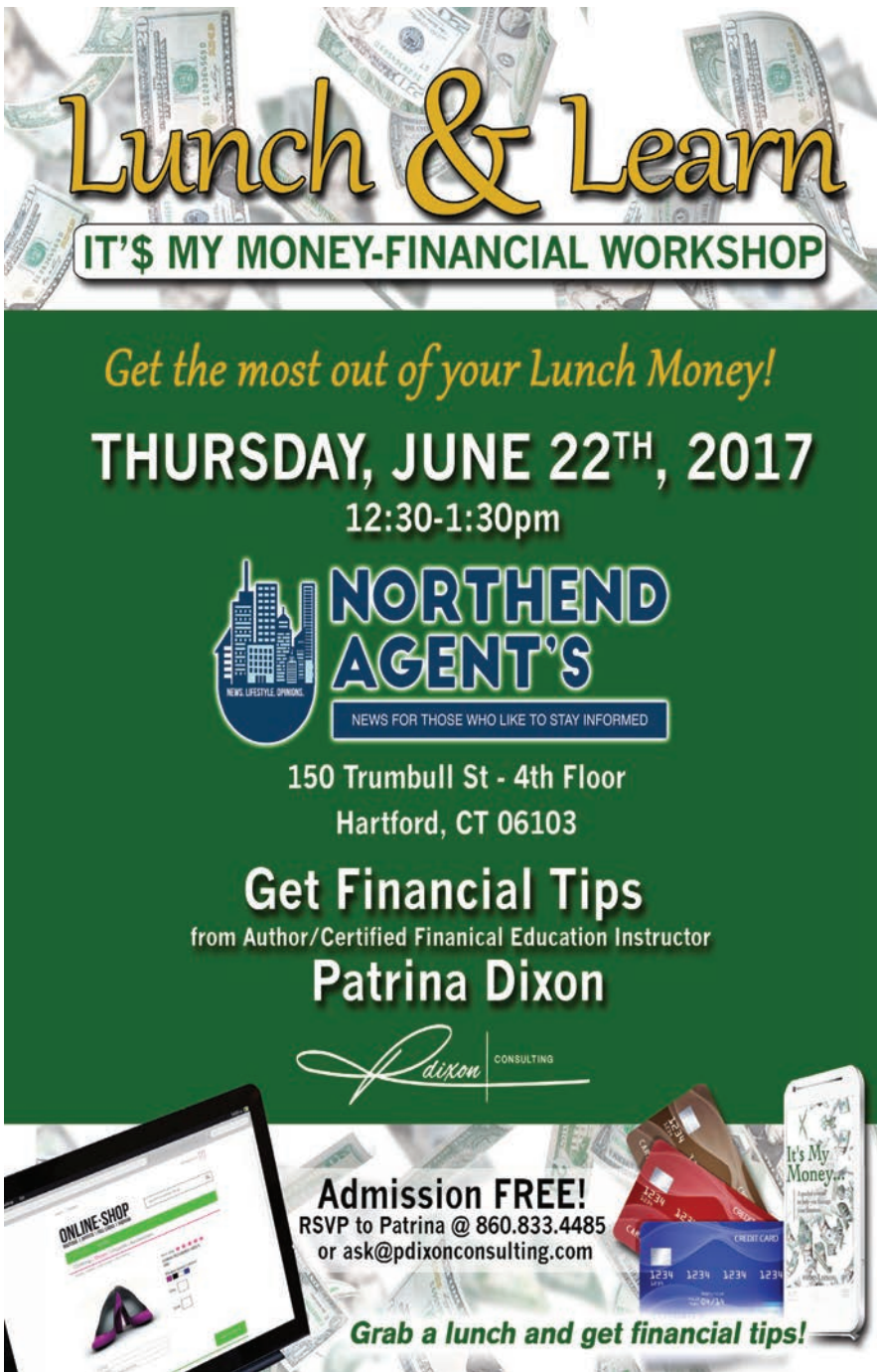
My heart recited the glorious greeting in His name, “Labbaik Allahumma labbaik.” I am ready to obey your orders, O Allah/GOD. It was a journey of a lifetime...Thank you Lord.

In closing, I would strongly encourage that you make the intents, work hard, save your money and pray to Allah/GOD to facilitate your situation, so that you can make and be a-part of what has been declared the largest pilgrimage known to man.

Stay tuned...GOD willing, I am preparing to write on my experiences, after being appointed as a personal business consultant for Imam W.D. Mohammad, how I was sent with a delegation several times to the far-east on his behalf to conduct business of what later came to be known as Business Tie Clothiers a division of CPC Graceline.

Respectfully your Brother in the faith,  
Anthony Griffin/Mujaheed Sahih Muslim

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**The Plight and Legacy of Black Muslims**  
By Demetrius Dillard

Out of all the major world religions, Islam seems to be viewed as the most ignominious by dominant Western society, including U.S. president Donald Trump.

Sadly, to be a Muslim is to be a part of what is portrayed by hegemonic society as a disreputable religion. Even more regrettable is to be a follower of Islam and a Black American, which means the vile stereotypes that come with being Black in America are now coupled with the negative labels of being a Muslim – this, in part, can serve as the basis for the plight of Black Muslims in the U.S.

More particularly, there’s a distinctive group of Black Muslims – the Nation of Islam, or NOI, or “the Nation” – who has been presently and historically considered by the hegemony as one of the most aggressive and violent groups in recent American history.

Though the NOI is a Black separatist group, it is also nonviolent. Yet, leaders of the organization have been targeted by agencies like the FBI. Correspondingly, a large portion of the religious community, in many ways, has stigmatized and ostracized NOI ministers like Malcolm X and Khalid Muhammad.

Deplorably, fierce critics of the NOI have characterized the organization as nothing more than a group of hatemongers, homophobes, anti-Semites, racists, sacrilegious bigots and abrasive orators. A number of followers of mainstream Islam even consider the NOI heretical, and in many instances as non-members of the religion.

Notwithstanding, there is a mountain of scholarly and journalistic work which vividly discredits any notion that the NOI is somehow equivalent to true hate groups like the Neo-Nazis or Klu Klux Klan.

According to an NOI webpage, a writer for the now-defunct *Washington Star News* (published in Washington, D.C.) wrote a story commending the philanthropic efforts by the NOI in the Black community. "The Black Muslim Mosque has been called by high police officials a stabilizing influence in the community," read a part of the article.

An NOI webpage also features a quote by Russell Simmons, a noted hip-hop mogul and co-founder of Def Jam, saw the Black Muslim organization as a highly influential group in the inner city.

"The Nation of Islam secured our housing projects, promoted dignity and transformed men," said the Queens, N.Y., native.

Susan Sanderson, a scholar and independent writer who specializes in fiction writing, wrote a detailed essay examining how long-time NOI minister and political activist Malcolm X, despite the fiery rhetoric, fulfilled the image of the classic American success story.

"The general reaction among the white community in the United States to Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam in the 1950s and 1960s was one of alarm. He [Malcolm X] and the Nation were painted as fomenting violent revolution just as many whites and some more conservative blacks believed that life was beginning to get better for African Americans," she wrote.

Sanderson added, "In a sense, the public perception of the Nation of Islam was that its members were aliens. Their separatist philosophy argued that the solution to America's racial woes was an independent black nation, and their strict moral codes, ultra-conservative demeanor and dress, and dietary restrictions offered to many Americans a frightening snapshot of radical discipline."

Similarly, Dwi Hesti Yuliani-Sato, a Muslim scholar, noted that the Nation of Islam has been historically perceived by mainstream American society as a racist and anti-white organization, which is flawed according to his research.

Yuliani-Sato accentuated some of the most critical components of the religion of Islam, along with the intent of the NOI, in his master’s thesis titled “A Comparative Study of the Nation of Islam and Islam.”

"It must be understood that Islam as a universal religion for all people never suggests hatred (even less terrorism) and superiority of a people (race) over the other(s). At the same time, however, it is necessary to understand the Nation of Islam’s insistence on black power, pride, and self-reliance when the American system is not in favor of many poor blacks whose voices are unheard."

Jason Muhammad, an avid member of the Nation, wrote an op-ed in the March 8 issue of *The Challenger*, a newspaper serving and covering the Black community of Buffalo, N.Y. Muhammad’s piece was headlined, “The Nation of Islam is NOT a Hate Group.”

The opening words to Muhammad’s column shrewdly addressed the antagonists of the Black separatist group who felt it necessary to essentially

demonize the NOI: “Let me be clear. The Nation of Islam is not a hate group,” he wrote.

“But the local, so-called mainstream media in Rochester has maliciously chosen to regurgitate the slander of the Southern Poverty Law Center, noting with disconcertion that the city is now placed on the center’s annual ‘hate map’ of the country.

“This is the habitual misnomer used to discredit, and isolate a religious group with an impeccable track record of good works and service, particularly to the black community and other oppressed and marginalized communities throughout the country, as well as the Caribbean, Europe, and Canada,” Muhammad continued.

Norm R. Allen Jr., a stark critic of the NOI, wrote an essay in direct response to Muhammad’s, which was entitled “The Nation of Islam is A Hate Group.”

Allen, a well-respected Black writer, author and humanist, was quite critical of some of the most visible statements, assertions and beliefs of the NOI, including the “White man is the devil,” along with some supposed homophobic and anti-Semitic rhetoric.

“The NOI has had some positive messages and talked about love for Black people. However, love of Black people and hatred of White people are not mutually exclusive positions. To suggest that they are is ignorant or dishonest,” he wrote.

In addition, Allen’s harsh words clearly implied that the Black separatist group was duplicitous in word and in deed.

“Hate is always wrong. Anyone can hate – be they rich or poor, powerful or powerless. All religions teach that hate is wrong, regardless of one’s socioeconomic position, even though some religions paradoxically promote hate in the name of love... The best way – the only way – to be able to condemn it [hate] is to first be able and willing to recognize it. This is what the NOI’s defenders need to understand,” Allen concluded.

While most of the aforementioned writers acknowledge that the NOI may appear overly abrasive, pugnacious or intimidating because of racially and emotionally charged rhetoric, they still recognize the undeniable and substantial influence the NOI has had in Black America, politically socially, economically and culturally.

Despite the separatist ideologies, the blistering outspokenness, or even the seemingly Black supremacist teachings -- it is increasingly evident that some of the most prominent leaders and passionate members of the NOI have been among the leading advocates for radical social change, and for upward economic mobility, with the ultimate goal of combating the plight of Black America.

***Demetrius Dillard is a recent graduate of Winston-Salem State University and a North Carolina-based freelance writer. He can be contacted via email at [demetriusd33@gmail.com](mailto:demetriusd33@gmail.com).***

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**Hypervisable**

By Bulaong Ramiz-Hall

Where do I fit in a world where all the Muslims are Arab and all the Blacks are Christian? I am a Black American Muslim woman, one of many. I don't say this to negate the experiences of Arab Muslims or first/second generation immigrants but I am the descendant of enslaved people brought here from Africa, many of whom brought with them the religion I would one day call my own - Islam.

A more urgent national conversation has been happening about Islam and Muslims since the presidential election season. With an attempted and unconstitutional anti-Muslim travel ban, anti-Sharia protests, and everyday reports of hate crimes and violence against Muslim people, our country has become more and more hostile and less and less informed. Calls to ban Muslims from entering the United States, to proclamations that Muslims should leave as an issue of national security is missing the historical fact that Muslims, specifically Black Muslims have always been here. We too are American, we too are Muslim, we too are Black and it is in those intersections that we experience hypervisibility and simultaneous invisibility.

I feel hypervisible as a Black Muslim who is, more often than not, the only one in any given space outside of the Mosque. Growing up in the Hartford area, I spent most my time around other Black people, most who identified as Christian and all who tossed confusing side eyes towards my refusal to pork at their cookouts. I, looking at them with confusion as to why they would identify with the religion of the oppressor, they felt superior to me and I to them.

You see, Black Muslims have always had a place in this country and yet fall to the margins when talking about blackness and when talking about Islam. We see it in the erasure of Islam as a religion during enslavement and the erasure of Muslim leadership during the Civil Rights Movement. We exist on the margins of the margins, that is to say, we are on the fringe of society, both existing within and outside of the America we all have come to know.

Because of our intersections, we are at risk two-fold - both as Black people and as Muslims. It is up to our Muslims siblings, our Christian brethren, our friends in the resistance, to stand with us as we fight injustice, dehumanization, and Islamophobia in the U.S. and beyond. You must see us, stand with us, fight alongside us for freedom, justice, and visibility.

The more invisible we are, the easier it is to look away when we are being harmed. I urge you not to look away. I urge us all to be invisible no more.

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AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD**

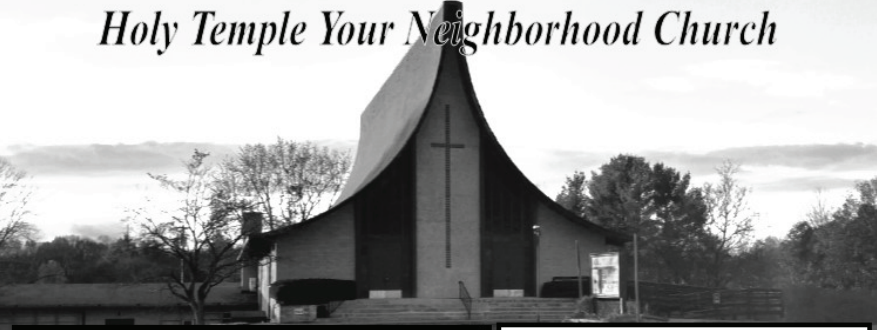


### HOLY TEMPLE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

691 Windsor Avenue - Windsor, CT - Telephone: (860) 688-HOLY (4659)

Dr. Robert A. Young, Pastor

## Holy Temple Your Neighborhood Church



#### SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday School - 9:30 a.m.

Sunday Worship Service - 11:00 a.m.

Monday Prayer - 12:00 noon

Tuesday Bible Study - 7:00 p.m.

Thursday Bible Study - 7:00 p.m.

Thrift Store open - Saturdays 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

#### MOTTO:

Holy Temple is the church where:

Love abides, (Ephesians 1:4, 15, 16; 4:16),

Strangers meet friends, (Ephesians 2:11-19),

Sinners find God, (John 3:16, 17;

I Timothy 1:15, 16), and


The Word of God is made plain to all, (Nehemiah 8:8; Acts 8:26-35).

### HOPEWELL BAPTIST CHURCH

280 Windsor Avenue, Windsor, CT 06095

Church: 860-522-4321 ~ Pastor’s Study: 860-522-7647

Visit our website @ [www.hopewellbaptistchurch.net](http://www.hopewellbaptistchurch.net)



#### SUNDAY

Sunday School ~ 9:00 a.m.

Sacred Worship ~ 10:45 a.m.

Baptist Training Union ~ 5:30 p.m.

#### WEDNESDAY

Prayer Meeting and Bible Study ~ 7:00 p.m. ~ 9:00 p.m.

#### SATURDAY

Discipleship and Catechism ~ 10:00 a.m.

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Pastor

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Prophetic Apostle  
Ecclesiastes MarQuez



~Servant Leader~  
Prophet  
Orlando Marquez

## LATTER RAIN CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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860.560.6700 or 860.951.4520

### Pastors Hubert & Jacquelyn Powell



#### ORDER OF SERVICES

Sunday Evening Glory	6:30am— 8:30am
Sunday School	9:30am—10:40am
Sunday Morning Worship	10:45am— 1:30pm
Tuesday Night Bible Study	7:00pm — 9:00pm
Thursday Night Pastorial Instruction	7:00pm — 9:00 pm
Noonday Prayer Monday thru Friday	12:00pm—12:45pm



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*FOR LOVE AND SOUND  
TEACHING*

**Order of Weekly  
Services**

Sun: 9:30am Sunday School  
11:15am Morning Worship  
6:00pm Evening Worship  
Wed: 7:00pm Bible Class  
Fri: 7:00pm Evenagelistic Services

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**Bishop  
Arlonzo Boswell,  
Pastor**

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Office (860) 247-0496

**Shiloh  
Baptist Church**  
Hartford, CT

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HARTFORD, CT 06120  
PHONE: (860) 247 - 3767  
FAX: (860) 246 - 1608

**SUNDAYS**  
SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:15 A.M.  
WORSHIP 10:30 A.M.  
**WEDNESDAYS**  
HOUR OF POWER 7:00 P.M.  
(BIBLE STUDY)

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MONDAYS  
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MANCHESTER CH. 15 2:00 P.M.  
WEDNESDAYS  
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860-904-5750

Dr. Cedric Roberson, Senior Pastor  
Evangelist Kathy Roberson, Co-Pastor

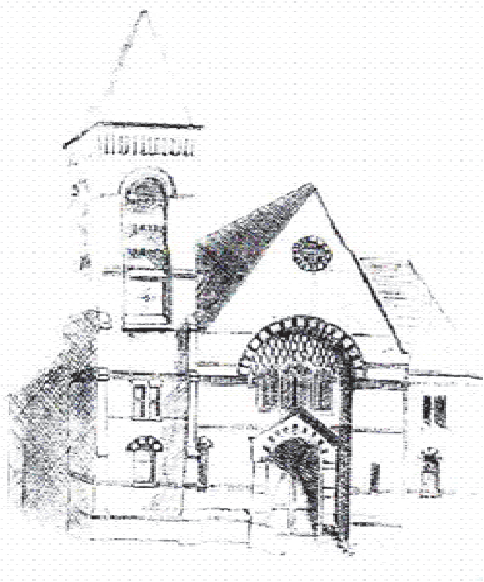
**For We Walk By Faith, Not By Sight**  
2 COR 5:7

Sunday School  
9:30 AM  
Sunday Worship  
10:30 AM  
Wednesday Night Prayer & Bible Line  
7:00 PM  
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[WWW.TRUEFAITHCHRISTIANMINISTRIES.ORG](http://WWW.TRUEFAITHCHRISTIANMINISTRIES.ORG)

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DIV17-2-203-AA-\$79TPsale-A2



# Uniquely Muslim American

By Imam Kashif Abdul-Karim

Resident Imam of Muhammad Islamic Center of Greater Hartford

“Go back where you came from” is the phrase that shakes the emotions of every immigrant Muslim who feels they have earned the right to be called an American. It is ironic that this same group says to the American Convert “Where are you from?” They assume, that if you are Muslim you must not be American. If you say you are American, then the questioning begins. They want to find out if you are a “Real Muslim.” I tell them I’m an imam and they’re amazed. They think; “How can that be?” They see a black American imam and then they ask me the most basic things. “Do you know how to do Ramadan” I tell them I have performed Ramadan for 32 years.

Other Assumptions are, “Did you become a Muslim in prison?”, “Did you become Muslim through The Nation of Islam?” Not disrespecting any of these great ways of finding Islam, but many Muslim Americans have entered the religion in a diverse manner of ways.

This diversity makes us uniquely Muslim and Uniquely Muslim American.

Many Muslims who come to America are Muslims by circumstance, (demographics and birth make them Muslim) converts are Muslims by choice. For the most part Muslim converts have journeyed through other traditions before they settled into Islam. Muslim Converts have experienced Christianity, and other popular faith traditions. Muslim Converts are therefore familiar with, or have lived these practices. Muslim Converts have also been actively involved with the many aspects of American life. Muslim Converts are American citizens before adding Islam to their Identity.

As African Americans, we also have added perspectives on the way we see the world. We see the world as a people overcoming oppression and facing unique challenges. While at the same time we also see ourselves as gifted and talented.

I continue to believe our diversity is our superpower.

WEB Dubois said one of the great challenges we face as “Negros” is the struggle of dual consciousness. The struggle for us to be “American” and for us to be “Negro”. We waiver back and forth between our identities and cultures. We are trying to find a middle place where we can be comfortable with these two different personalities.

What does it mean to be Black in America? Is it possible to be too Black? Can a person not be Black enough?

Among our peers today, we hear; “he’s trying to act white”, or “talk white”. We will use the expression “that’s the proper way of doing things.” Is it their way or our way that’s “proper”?

This is the struggle that WEB Dubois saw years ago. It is still present in a different form.

I believe this idea of dual consciousness is existing among the Muslim community too. Many new Muslims are struggling to be American and Muslim. This struggle is especially difficult among immigrant Muslims.

Convert Muslims are already American. Converts already know Islam is compatible with their country naturally. American institutions, the constitution, etc., are in our nature and Islam pulls the best of America out of us and leaves the worst in us.

Some new Muslims arriving in America don’t understand how you can be Muslim in this country. They think It’s too hard.

Muslims who have settled into America, especially second and third generation Muslims are more American than what they call themselves. They have chosen for the most part to assimilate into whatever group gives them the most comfort. When you meet the generational American Muslim, they could be a Muslim from Brooklyn, on the line with you for black lives matters or they might be from semi valley trying to advance themselves via the American dream without controversy. Again, uniquely Muslim.

With all this diversity to choose from in the Muslim community why does the popular media neglect the African American Muslim from giving their perspective or view. African American Muslims have been entrenched in the American fabric longer. The African American Muslim has experts in every imaginable category. Their perspective would often give evidence the viewers could identify with. Instead the media chooses a person far removed from subject to be the spokesperson.

This is like the feeling African Americans have when something devastating occurs in our community and the popular media chooses a hip-hop star to represent our view. This is not to disrespect the many learned artists we have, but regardless of the topic, they are chosen as the authority. The issues may be the black economy, social justice, education, poverty, black on black crime, gun violence, etc. regardless of the topic personalities are often chosen as the authority.

We have PhDs, people who have dedicated their lives to studying these devastations, and grassroots people who are living these concerns daily. These leaders could speak with authority, but instead the media chooses a personality that’s going to sell papers or ads. This is often a person we recognize.

As African Americans, we often cringe when a person speaks for us. We think sometimes the media picks the worst in the crowd. It’s embarrassing.

Muslims feel this same way. We quite often hear views that do not represent sound religious views. We wonder why did the media choose that person to speak. Well I think it ties to the same notion of what sells papers and ads. The media looks for an image of a Muslim that America identifies with. Also, unfortunately in some cases an image that America paints as a threat. This sells.

America is obsessed with images. This is true also in Islam. Muslims want a woman in media in journalism to be recognized in full hijab. We want her to be a reporter or an anchor. This would be a great visual conquest. Ironically most of the female leaders the media chooses, to speak for women, don’t wear hijab. They are speaking for women rights, etc., and the women and men watching cringe in silence.

Certain images cause fear. Men with big beards draw fear in America. We have a ways to go before we look past images and color.

The image of Muslims in America has changed.

Prior to 911, Muslims in America were termed Black Muslims. They were called militant Muslims like “Malcolm X and Min Louis Farrakhan.” This was the historical image ingrained in America. After 911 the image of Muslim shifted to “Arab” like. Terrorist. The Muslim American “Arab” has been successful in creating a paradigm shift to remove this false picture of Islam, but it has not brought the African American Muslim with them.

A false narrative about Islam in America was written leaving out the contributions of African American Muslims. Only recently after African American Muslims spoke out loudly were some of these stories adjusted. Immigrant Muslims were saying they were the first to do everything in this country. Some immigrant Muslims ignored the work of African American Muslims who were doing many activities during slavery and also since the 1930s.

As we work with mass media and try to capture proper stories and presentations today we realize, Muslims must do our own reporting. As an African American I realize we must do this as well. Often our unique circumstances cause us to have a common voice. We live together and face the same problems. Our children attend the same schools. We don’t know if the police stop us because we have on a kufi or we’re black. We have the same problems with housings, gun violence in our communities, and all our young people in our families are dying.

If the media won’t capture our voices correctly, we should not be silenced.

## Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Announces New Current Use Funds

“Spark Funds” Targeted to Support Children and Families, Workforce Development, and Resident Engagement

In an effort to more closely engage the community in its strategic work of supporting education, family economic security and vibrant communities, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving has launched “Spark Funds,” three new three current-use funds, to better connect current and prospective donors to this work.

Since 1925, the Hartford Foundation has worked with donors to address needs in Greater Hartford’s 29 cities and towns. Over the years, the Foundation has recognized that with the popularity of online giving sites and an increasing desire to support specific causes rather than organizations, people are changing the way they give. In response to these cultural shifts, the Foundation has developed the “Spark Funds” to help residents exercise the power of collective giving to affect change in their communities. Learn more at: [www.SparkFunds.org](http://www.SparkFunds.org). By giving through this vehicle, donors are able to make a more immediate and directed philanthropic impact.

Grants from the Spark Funds will support work in three focus areas, which are based on the Hartford Foundation’s three strategic priorities:

Resident Engagement – Support and encourage residents to become active participants affecting meaningful change in their neighborhoods. This fund will provide small grants for specific resident-led projects, leadership trainings and meetings that bring residents together to achieve their community goals.

Children & Families – Promote the success of Greater Hartford families and their children, in school and beyond. The Foundation has identified specific programs including early literacy initiatives, training for home-based child care providers, and workshops that promote early learning and parent/child engagement.

Workforce Development – Support workers to acquire the skills necessary to launch successful, family-sustaining careers and help businesses attract and retain the workforce they need to remain competitive. This fund will support programs that provide new skills training, placement and retention services for those with low literacy and limited employment opportunities.

“This exciting new initiative gives members of our community the opportunity to more closely engage in our strategic work and augment our existing efforts in these areas,” said Deborah Rothstein, the Hartford Foundation’s vice president for development. “By contributing to these funds, donors will be connected to a larger community of people who share their philanthropic interests and see how their gifts have impact.”

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, established in 1925, is the community foundation for Hartford and 28 surrounding communities. It is dedicated to putting philanthropy into action to create lasting solutions that result in vibrant communities within the Greater Hartford region. The Foundation’s grantmaking is made possible through generous gifts from individuals, families, and organizations. It has awarded grants of approximately \$700 million since its founding. For more information about the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, visit [www.hfpg.org](http://www.hfpg.org) or call 860-548-1888.



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