

A History of Muslims in America Webinar – July 15, 2020 **Summary and Timestamp of Conversation**

(Maha Elgenaidi)

- Introduction (0:0)
- Why should Muslims who are immigrants or children of immigrants care about this topic (of African American Muslims)? (2:55)

(Imam Faheem Shuaibe)

- Being Muslim implies there are certain expectation of your behavior, regardless of your ethnicity (3:48)
- Therefore, you should care about this because Muslims of any ethnicity and people of any ethnicity are your sisters and brothers and you need to care about them (5:30)
- That is for our own good; “help me help you” (7:10)

(Maha)

- Why be concerned about history specifically? (7:35)

(Dr. Bilal King)

- Because African Americans’ 500-year experience of white supremacy is available to Muslims who are encountering white supremacy much more recently (7:55)
- The cost of ignoring the African American Muslim experience is that your children and grandchildren will be Muslims in name only and will be as racist, militarist, classist, etc. as anyone else in the dominant culture or else atheist socialists (8:36)
- But if recently immigrated and African American Muslims internalize one another’s histories, that will give them the power not just to resist, but to kill white supremacy (9:36)

(Imam Faheem)

- Without history, you don’t know when you are and where you are and thus who you are (10:35)

(Maha)

- It works both ways; knowing the history of African American Muslims starting with the slavery era helps me to feel American, and African American Muslims can draw strength from being part of a universal ummah (13:00)
- Ishaq, give us an overview of our History of Muslims in America presentation (14:15)

(Ishaq Pathan)

- History of American Muslims overview (14:28)
- Muslims in Americas before Columbus (15:40)
- Enslaved West African Muslims (19:35)
- African American Rediscovery of Muslim Roots (24:35)
- White and Latino Muslims (27:23)
- Muslim Influences on American Culture (27:44)
- Muslim Immigrants (28:32)
- Access to this presentation (30:05)
- American Muslims need to root themselves by internalizing the long history of Muslims in America (30:30)



(Maha)

- Is there a direct link between enslaved African Muslims and the later rediscovery of Islam by African Americans? If not, how did that rediscovery happen? (31:49)

(Dr. King)

- Difficult to say whether there is a direct link or not (32:19)
- To explain why, I'll talk about three people (32:30)
- Edward Blyden, the first person to link Islam and Pan-Africanism who wrote an influential book in 1887 and spread his ideas in talks in the US, Caribbean, and Africa (32:48)
- Blyden is generally not cited by later writers and leaders but the combination of Islam with Pan-Africanism and Black nationalism that he pioneered is influential (34:24)
- Satti Majid, a Sudanese immigrant, reintroduced Islam to descendants of Muslim slaves (35:15)
- Duce Mohamad Ali worked with Marcus Garvey, the most influential Black nationalist of early 20th century (35:28)
- Then several people introduced African ways of understanding Islam to African Americans (36:53)
- In the early 1980s, African American Muslims, at the instigation of Sheikh Hassan Cisse, began sending their children to Senegal for Islamic education, the area from which many slaves had come (38:23)

(Maha)

- Imam Faheem, as a person who entered Islam through the Nation of Islam and then moved to orthodox Islam under the leadership of Imam W.D. Mohammad, please tell us about the Nation of Islam (40:25)

(Imam Faheem)

- The Islam I and many other African American Muslims practice comes from the same root as the Nation of Islam, so I have to respect that, though there are significant differences in creed (41:36)
- Farad Mohammad took ideas from Marcus Garvey and others to create a powerful "potion" that produced respected leaders like Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali (43:30)
- The Yaqub myth, of which the name Shabazz is a part, is the active ingredient that produced the success of the Nation of Islam (45:30)
- Farad Mohammad in creating the Nation of Islam borrowed from Noble Drew Ali, Marcus Garvey, Father Divine, Booker T. Washington, and others; he took ideas from the Black church that at the time was steeped in white supremacy and "painted them Black" (46:00)
- W.D. Mohammad's thought he was put out of the Nation of Islam for rejecting the divinity of Farad Mohammad (49:30)
- The Yaqub myth was powerful and important for identity, but could trap you if you didn't know how to interpret it. W.D. Mohammad showed how to interpret it figuratively not literally; that made him successful for people transitioning from the Nation of Islam (51:25)

(Maha)

- When I took up Islam, Imam Faheem's mosque was familiar to me as an American (53:25)
- Dr. Bilal, why is Islam not bigger among African Americans?



(Dr. Bilal)

- Early in the rediscovery of Islam, Black Muslims saw eye-to-eye with Black non-Muslims on issues of Black nationalism, uplift, etc., but then Black churches that were the basis of the autonomous organization of Black communities feared losing members and influence and started to resist; Black Muslims were associated with working class, poor, and imprisoned Black Americans but also with Black liberation; by the 2000s, Islam is hit with fallout from 9/11 and Islamophobic or Black Orientalist associations of Islam with misogyny and social conservatism. (55:10)

(Maha)

- What do you say to immigrant Muslims who though viewed through a national security lens continue to believe that their wealth and education will get them through this challenge? And what do African American Muslims have to offer immigrant Muslims? (58:48)

(Imam Faheem)

- You have to ask yourself to recognize your imbibing of white supremacy. The Quran presents Satan as making victims of those who pride themselves on wealth and education. They need to contact people who have suffered 400 years of oppression and nonetheless risen. (59:40)

(Dr. Bilal)

- Islam in America has been racialized, making all Muslims vulnerable. Wealth won't protect you, see Tulsa 1921. You have to build to protect yourselves. (1:04:10)

(Maha)

- Thanks and conclusion (1:06:00)

(Ishaq)

- Future webinars in this series (1:06:30)