

a. رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي وَاخْلَعْ عُنُقَهُ مِنْ لِسَانِي يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي

- b. *My Lord! relieve my mind. And ease my task for me. And remove the impediment from my speech so that they may comprehend what I am saying:*

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ نَحْمِدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا، مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يَضِلَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ. وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

Indeed, all praise is for Allah. We praise Him, we ask for His help, we beg for His forgiveness, and we seek refuge and protection with Allah from the evils of ourselves and from the evil consequences of our sins. Whoever Allah [SWT] guides to the straight path, no force in the universe can misguide him. And whoever Allah [SWT] misguides, no one can guide them to the Truth. I bear witness that there is no deity, no object worthy of any act of worship except Allah [SWT], the One without any partners, associates or equals. And I bear witness that Muhammad [SAWS] is His slave and messenger.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ
(3:102)

O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and die not except as Muslims.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا
(4:1)

O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person, and from him He created his wife, and from them both He created many men and women; and fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual rights, and do not cut the relations of kinship. Surely, Allah is an All-Watcher over you.

I'm going to be honest with you all the topic I'm about to explore is one that whole departments and epistemologies are dedicated to but as black history month comes to a close it is imperative that we discuss the intracommunal reality of race relations in american muslim communities.

But before we discuss that lets first look at the life of muhammed (s), before prophethood

The prophet muhammad (s) lived for 40 years prior to the revelation of the quran, an age that doubles many of the lives in this room and yet many are so quick to dismiss the history of who Muhmmad (s) was prior to being a walking quran. We forget that long before he was ordered to “read in the name of Allah” he was Al-ameen. The trustworthy.

Around the time the prophet was 35 the ka3ba was undergoing renovations. In the process of rebuilding it the local tribes began to debate who would have the honor of returning the blackstone to its designated space. As arguments built up it was decided that the arbitrator would be the next to enter Masjid Al-haram. The first man to enter the mosque was none other than Muhmmad (s). After deliberating the issue at hand the prophet laid down his robe, placed the stone in the middle, and had each tribe leader grab an end so that they may all partake in the honor of replacing the black stone to its rightful place within the ka3ba.

Muhammad’s grasp of fairness and equality was also exhibited in his business relations with merchants. It was this same trustworthiness that Khadija (RA) saw in Muhammed (s) while working with him (and in the future decided to propose).

His relationship with his khadijah was healthy. It allowed room to express deep sentiment and vulnerability. When the prophet was shaken by his encounter with angel jibril Khadijah she did not scold him for his lack of “macho-ness” and he did not approach her as one would with a fragile masculinity. “Zamelloni, zamelooni” Cover me, cover me. She embraced the prophet and saw to him with care and compassion.

I relay these stories to emphasize the qualities that laid the foundation of prophet Muhammad (s)’s character. To elucidate that before he was dictating the specifics of islamic ruling he was concerned with the sanctity of justice. That before he had traveled to Hajj he had completed half his deen. That before the thought of identifying as muslim ever entered his head he was a well known proponent of equality within political, business, inter and intrapersonal spheres of life. He served as an exemplary and just member of his society and more immediately, his community. He was acutely aware of the sociopolitical reality that existed around him and as a result was morally resolute.

Surah Ibrahim ayah 4 Allah (SWT) says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ

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And We did not send any messenger except [speaking] in the language of his people to state clearly for them, and Allah sends astray [thereby] whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

Allah sent messengers who were aware of the social atmosphere and histories of their respective societies. He sent people who could be could fairly apply god's commands.

So I ask myself and all of you here today, who are we to not question the foundations upon which we practice our islam? Who are we to prioritize the aesthetics of our religion over its core tenets of justice. To seek order in stead of a “positive peace.” To brush aside the deeply rooted issues that are pervasive in our communities?

Racial formation in the United states is of political origin and consequently the ways in which race forms and reforms is politicized by its very nature. An example I have witnessed of this in muslim communities is what I have come to refer to as “the politics of Assalamualikum.” The distancing of black muslims in many ways is predicated by the simple relation or lack thereof of “salams.” Whole swathes of black muslims are completely otherized by this particular deed alone. And it speaks volumes. One of the most rudimentary aspects of our religion has and continues to be politicized in a way that excludes other muslims.

It is often said that religion in the opium of the masses but my dear brothers and sister it is power the infects our difference. It is conceptions of racial hierarchy that shape the ways we form as communities. We must take a step back and reexamine the foundations upon which we practice our islam. And ask ourselves: would my community refer to me as “Al-ameen”? Am I anywhere near as just as the prophet was before the blessing of the quran was revealed?

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*Aqulu Qawli hadha wastaghfirullaha li wa lakum
Wa lisaairil muslimina fastaghfiruhu*

Innahu huwal Ghafurur Rahim.

“AlHamdulillah was Salatu Wassalamu ‘ala Rasulullah”

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One night Umar ibn Al-khattab (RA) was walking through the streets of Medinah in silence, as he often did, observing the state of his people. As he passed by home, he couldn't help but overhear the conversation between and mother and her daughter.

“Tomorrow, when you take the milk to sell,” said the mother “Mix it with water. We’ll make more money for less milk. Because today when you finished selling the milk you returned with only a small profit.”

“Mother!” the the daughter exclaimed. “We cannot do such a thing. Did you not hear that Umar ibn Al-khattab prohibited everyone from doing that?”

“And where is the Umar ibn Al-khattab now?” replied her mother.

And so the daughter replied firmly, “Ithaa kaana umar la yaraana, in allah yaraanaa”

“Even if Umar cannot see us, Allah surely sees us,”

While this story speaks to honest trade we can extrapolate the importance of god consciousness and the core tenant of being fair and just in our endeavours. We learn that at every moment of our lives we must be aware that Allah (sw) is ever acquainted with the decisions we make, the stereotypes we perpetuate, and the violence we are complicit in.

Not only is diluting injustices a form of dishonesty, doing so also creates room for them to persist.

When we address intracommunal racism it cannot simply begin and end with quoting the prophet Muhammad (s) last sermon. “A white has no superiority over a black...”

This reductive strategy dismisses the complex relation of operating power dynamics. It flushes away history and replaces it with mushy feelings of brother and sister hood. It is the equivalent of placing a band aid on cracks in a foundation...a foundation to a building only a select few are allowed to enter freely.

We need to stop watering down the milk.

Bilal (RA) should not be our political scapegoat. We dishonor his legacy as a companion of the prophet when we reduce him to nothing more than a racial crutch for the muslim community.

Abu Umamah reported: Abu Dharr reproached Bilal about his mother, saying, “O son of a black woman!”

Disrespected, Bilal went to the Messenger of Allah (s) and he told him what Abu Dharr said.

Hearing this, the Prophet (s) became angry in a way he seldom did. When Abu Dharr (unaware that bilal relayed their interaction) approached The Prophet he turned away from him and Abu Dharr asked, “O Messenger of Allah, have you turned away because of something you have been told?”

The Prophet said, “Have you reproached Bilal about his mother?” Then the Prophet said, “By the one who revealed the Book to Muhammad, no one is more virtuous over another except by righteous deeds. You have none but an insignificant amount.”

Abu Dharr, understanding the weight of his actions returned to bilal and...put his face on the ground.

Tell me, have any of you felt this level of remorse? He we felt the need to put our faces to the ground? Have we built our characters on foundations that care for the dignity of our black sisters and brothers? Do we go beyond simply paying lip service to racial justice and support actual initiatives that serve to deconstruct these blinding powers engulfing our communities?

Malcolm X is often quoted to have said the following: “America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met, talked to, even eaten with people who in America would have been considered 'white,' but the 'white' attitude had been removed from their minds by the religion of Islam.”

The question I am here to pose to you all today and one I hope you leave deeply considering: Have you removed the “white attitude” from your minds or are we complicit in prolonging the blasphemy that is anti-black racism?

I’m not expecting you all to leave this room today and magically be freed of your long learned notions.

What I do expect however is that you leave this room with a sharpened understanding that your apathy aids in the relegation of my humanity, your black sisters and brothers humanity.

I do expect you to make HONEST efforts to counter the racially oppressive structures in your community. I do EXPECT you to start dialogues at your dinner tables, your mosques, and your halaqahs about anti-blackness and why it antithetical to islam.

I expect you...to take the first step.

DU'ua

Oh allah aid us in truly understanding that all black lives matter and strengthen our efforts to eradicate the supremacy of whiteness.

May Allah continue to give us the courage to love radically, the strength to bear the burden of loss, and the power to turn grief into meaningful action.

Oh allah give Deah, Yusor, and Razan and all those unjustly taken from us the highest places in jannah. Aid us in carrying on their legacies and honoring their names.

Give us the strength to move forward with faith and show us mercy when we in the hardships the plague our ways.

Allah swt protect us. Shield us when we lose the ability to do so ourselves. Grant us success in our ways and justice in the spaces we inhabit. Line our perceptions with an iron honesty and guard our conclusions from the inebriation of laziness and the rashness of our egos. Give us patience. Patience and the wisdom to know when we no longer owe it.