

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Conveners of Imams



Associated with the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed

Leadership, Lies, Laws, and Lives

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾

O you who have accepted faith, reverence Allah and speak a word directed to the right. (Qur'an 33:70)

In Al-Islam, Allah teaches us to speak a word directed to the right. This admonition from Allah reminds us of **the power of words and language to shape our thoughts, minds, lives, culture, and society.** Words and language can even shape our reality. Imam W. Deen Mohammed understood this concept over forty years ago when he taught **“Words Make People.”**

Our words and actions do not simply confine themselves to one point in time. They can resonate in the souls of people, take root, and create a cultural reality that perpetuates itself long after individuals have faded into history. Truthful words, rooted in mercy and compassion, nurture the healthy development of communities and societies. Lies and mythologies may have short-term utility by those who use them, but over time, they take root and manifest themselves as a cancer in the society.

Recently, we have witnessed two examples of this reality. In Atlanta, ten individuals were victims of a gunman who targeted Asian American massage parlors. Eight of these victims were Asian women. About ten days later, the state of Georgia passed, and the Governor signed *(in front of the painted image of a plantation)*, new legislation designed to place tighter restrictions on voting. This was widely interpreted to be a puntative response to increased rates of voter participation from the African American community.

What do both of these events have in common? A long history of America's struggle with **the myth and lie of "White Supremacy"** and the resulting desire of adherents to that myth to maintain and project their power and dominance over others (*considered non-white*). These lies have produced the genocide and repression of indigenous peoples, the enslavement, injustice, and inequality of African Americans, and mistreatment and stereotyping of other non-European ethnicities (*i.e. people of Asian and/or Hispanic descent*).

These sentiments (*based upon the myth and lies*) were transformed into laws and public policies, adversely impacting their victims for decades. Examples include: the "*Black Codes*" (*instituted after Reconstruction, lasting for over 100 years*); racist immigration acts (*targeting Chinese and other non-Europeans*); the internment of Japanese Americans (*during World War II*); and the recent caged detention and family separations of South American immigrants, seeking asylum in the U.S.

In the last four years, a new low has been reached. People in leadership positions at the national, state, and local levels promoted an age-old narrative of "*white*" *insecurity* about a loss of political power in a growing multicultural America. A *critical mass of lies and misinformation* from a disgraced former president, his political enablers, and amplified by a select media echo chamber, opened the door for the old demons.

This *new political order of lies and racial resentment* has allowed the long standing forces of hate and intolerance to move from the shadows of shame into the light of normality. As a result, hate crimes against ethnic and religious minorities increased. When the former president repeatedly used racial slurs relative to the Coronavirus, hate crimes against Asian Americans spiked. According to *Politico*: "*Over the past year, anti-Asian hate incidents nationwide have jumped from roughly 100 annually to nearly 3800 reports.*" When he lost the presidential election, his "*big lies*" enabled his political party to introduce more than 250 bills in 40 states to suppress and restrict voting. **Words have consequences in real life.**

Moral and ethical principles require that leaders tell the truth to their constituents. **As Muslims, we are required to seek and speak the truth.** This *Haqq* (*Truth in the Qur'anic language*) means something that conforms to a *higher reality*. **Al-Haqq is a sacred concept for Muslims because it starts with the concept of Allah. Muslims also believe in the seen and unseen dimensions of reality.** We remain humble because we are always growing in the knowledge that leads us closer to truth. In our collective Muslim life we are obligated to establish a *Model Community* reflecting these principles.

Moral and ethical leaders must be conscious of the power of the unseen consequences of their words. The power of truth can transform our individual and collective lives. It can also be a healing power for the society.

We pray that America’s leaders begin to understand that “*a more perfect Union*” can only be realized with *LANGUAGE AND ACTIONS* rooted in a “*higher truth*,” and that “*among these truths*” *all people are created by G-d as equals*. These American aspirations should manifest *A NEW AMERICAN REALITY*. We condemn the hate that leads to violence against Asian Americans and all people. We also condemn the actions (*based on lies*) that marginalize and undermine equal voting opportunities for all Americans. We pray that a new era of healing can begin that puts America on a path, reconciling itself with *TRUTH*, and realizing the best of its human potential.

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