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Ahead of you are days which will require endurance, in which showing endurance will be like holding hot coals - Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings upon him)

« Racism, feminism, and the Sharia debate
"The French Riots: Rebellion of the Underclass" »

December 1st, 2005

≈ THE PRE-COLUMBIAN PRESENCE OF MUSLIM AFRICANS IN AMERICA IS NO MYTH! Justice

Imām Al-Hājjī Tālib 'Abdur-Rashid



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Once at a pre-Sept. 11, 2001 national meeting of leaders, this writer was asked something like, "Why is it that Muslim African American men so often seem angry when dealing with other Muslims?" I answered the questions on various levels, but was recently reminded of the exchange while reading a Muslim newspaper. One reason that we Muslim African American men often express anger or resentment to our fellows of other ethnic backgrounds, is because we have too often tolerated from them for a long period of time, attitudes and behaviors that are un-Islamic, and that we would not tolerate from non-Muslims. As time has passed we have learned to "speak directly to the point", and "straighten them out" - politely but firmly.

Some of the offensive attitudes and behaviors that we encounter from Muslims would not be displayed towards us by at least some people of other faiths, out of either sensitivity and awareness, or apprehensiveness. But some of our Muslim brethren of different ethnicities feel that they can say anything to or about any Muslim, and that it is fine for them to do so, whether they know what they are talking about or not. A case in point is the opinion column written by Adem Carroll, "Between East & West: Reflections of an American Muslim - Afro-Centrism and the Chains that Bind" (The Mirror International, November 9, 2005).

After spending the first half of his article making appropriate comments on the violation of the human rights of prisoners at home and abroad (which is something he has some knowledge of, as a New York City- based human rights activist), the author of that column then ventured off into an area in which he is absolutely devoid of knowledge, and is therefore ill-equipped to comment on - the history of African people generally, those who are Muslim particularly, and our historical relationship with the Original (Native) Americans of this land.

That writer is otherwise a sincere worker who often aligns himself with good causes. Nonetheless, he made comments in the second half of his column that can best be described as culturally arrogant, attitudinally condescending, intellectually lacking, historically ignorant, academically deficient, and Islamically offensive.

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comments in the second half of his column that can best be described as culturally arrogant, attitudinally condescending, intellectually lacking, historically ignorant, academically deficient, and Islamically offensive.

He should have followed the naseeha (advice) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who said, "He who keeps silent will be safe," as well as "A man speaks a good word not realizing its worth for which Allah records for him His good pleasure till the day he meets Him; and a man a speaks an evil word not realizing its importance for which Allah records for him His displeasure till the day he meets Him." What is the good word that pleases Allah? Surely it is truth. What is the evil word that displeases Him? Surely it is falsehood, and recklessness of the tongue.

In his column, the misinformed activist characterizes the "evidence and reasoning" of those whom he calls "Afrocentric Muslims" who assert the pre-Columbian presence of Muslim Africans in America, as "poor," "circumstantial," "weak," laughable," and "truly embarrassing." He states further that this popularly growing recognition amongst Muslims in America, finds its roots in the "very shaky pseudo-science" of scholars such as Professor Ivan Van Sertima and Shaykh Abdallah Hakim Quick, and articles in various Muslim publications beginning in 1996. To his comments I say "rubbish!"

The misguided activist obviously thinks more of his own unlearned opinion than he does of the oral traditions, scholarly writings, and academic research of experts ranging from centuries ago in the ancient world, to the present. The truth is that there is such a constantly growing, extensive body of cultural, archaeological, anthropological, and linguistic evidence of Western and Northern African Muslim pre-Columbian American (and Caribbean) presence, that those who study the evidence and continue to deny the obvious, reveal themselves to be rooted in old, racist, European renditions of American history.

It is one thing to read about towering figures in the ancient Muslim world like Al-Idrisi, Al-Biruni, Al-Mas'udi and many, many others whose contributions laid the foundations of the modern sciences of history, geography, cartography, and sea navigation. It is another to actually study their work. Both Idrisi and Mas'udi wrote of Muslim African trans-Atlantic excursions to the Western world. Al-Idrisi did so around 956 C.E. Al-Mas'udi wrote in the 12th century. These accounts were written centuries before Columbus' voyages!

To read about the existence of West Africa Muslim scholars and monarchs like Mansa Musa and Abubakari II, is titillating. To study translations of manuscripts from their era is illuminating. Mansa Musa gave clear testimony in 1324 C.E. of such voyages financed by his predecessor.

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These references and more all point to what the non-expert activist dismissed as "wish-fulfillment". On the contrary, ancient Arabic language maps, Native American tribes with African names and words clearly embedded in their languages, statues, diaries, artifacts, etc. destroy European imperialistic notions of history rooted in White Supremacy. One such notion is that African peoples' history in America begins with slavery.



Ancient map of the world by Al-Mas'udi (10th Century C.E.), "Ard Majhoola" refers to the Americas

Modern scholars and experts reveal the meaning of this material. They include not only Muslim African Americans like Clude Ahmad Winters (who wrote a series of brilliant articles in the magazine *Al-Ittihad* in the

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The list of distinguished Non-Muslim African American scholars who have written on the subject is long, stemming from as far back as the 1930s. They include the writings of John G. Jackson (*Introduction to African Civilization*, 1937), J.A. Rogers (*Africa's Gift to America*, 1961), Carter G. Woodson (*The African Background Outlined*), Harold G. Lawrence (*African Explorers of the New World*, 1962), and too many others to list here.

Professor Ivan Van Sertima is an internationally acclaimed historian, linguist, and anthropologist. His book *They Came Before Columbus* (1976), which Adem Carroll denigrates (has he truly read it?), won the Clarence L. Holt Prize in 1981. It is a literary prize awarded every two years "for a work of excellence in literature and the humanities relating to the cultural heritage of Africa and the African diaspora." Van Sertima's later compilation, *African Presence in Early America*, is considered a definitive work on the subject. On July 7, 1987 Dr. Van Sertima appeared before a Congressional Committee to challenge the "Columbus myth". In November 1991 he defended his thesis in an address to the Smithsonian Institute.

These scholarly, ground-breaking works, focusing upon African Muslim (as opposed to European Viking) pre-Columbia exploration of North America, include those written by what is believed to be the first Western author to write on the subject, Harvard Professor Leo Weiner (*Africa and the Discovery of America*, 1922). Weiner heads a list of historians and social scientists who were neither African nor African Americans (including Basil Davidson, Robert Silverburg, Cyrus Gordon (*Before Columbus*, 1971), Legrand H. Clegg, Lewis

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America is the land of those indigenous inhabitants, called "Indians". It was their God-given custodial land - the land of the "Red Man", before the "White Man" stole it, committed genocide against its true people, stole the "Black Man" from Africa and brought him to the stolen land against his will, and it was he, "The White Man", who populated the land from Europe. To this day "he" grants reluctant access to "his" country, to the "Brown and Yellow Man" of Asia, and all other peoples, Muslim and Non-Muslim. That is the historical fact. To cite the history of Muslim Africans' pre-imperial, pre-colonial, pre-genocidal presence amongst the Native Americans, is not to diffuse the history of the original "People of the Land". It is to add to it!

Secondly, this author, as leader of the Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood in Harlem, New York City, had the honor of hosting a meeting in 1991 (I believe it was) of members of the International Human Rights Association of American Minorities (IHRAAM). Amongst them were the leaders of many clans and nations of Original (Native) American leaders from across the country (see below photos).




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MUSLIM AND NON-MUSLIM NATIVE AND AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERS MEET AT THE MOSQUE OF ISLAMIC BROTHERHOOD IN HARLEM (photo circa 1991)

Near the end of the meeting this writer, who is himself a Muslim American of African descent, with relatives descended from the Cherokee (Native American) nation in North Carolina, U.S.A. made specific reference to that same pre-Columbian diplomatic and social relationship between Muslim African explorers, and the original "People of the Land". When this was said, those modern Native American leaders and descendants of the truly indigenous Americans, all nodded their heads in agreement. Some of them said aloud, "Yes", "That's right", "Um-hum" and the like. Perhaps that surprises the activist.

Further, each year at our mosque for more than a decade, when many other Muslim Americans are celebrating so-called Thanksgiving (Where's the *daleel* for that?), many members of our congregation, who are aware of and openly acknowledge our African and/or Native American heritage, gather in order to listen to talks and lectures, eat food, and get to know each other. We have done this for a more than a decade, as an act of cultural affirmation of our true history, beyond European colonial misguidance.

Why do we do so? Because Allah has said to us, "...We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into Nations and tribes, that you may know each other (Not that you may despise each other)". Further, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said "**Learn your genealogies and maintain your family ties**". Thus when one considers the reality of the unjust severance of the family ties of Africans forced into slavery, and their African American descendants, we have a lot to learn and much reconciliation of family to engage in.

At our annual M.I.B. gathering we pray in jamaat, eat in jamaat, and practice brotherhood and sisterhood, as this is the way of Al-Islām. We speak truth to each other -teaching our shared history, sharing personal narratives, and affirming as well as learning to recognize the Nations and Tribes that Our Creator made us into. However we do so acknowledging and ever remembering Allah's words, that "**Surely the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-fearing of you, and Allah has full-knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)**". (Q 49:13) It seems that like many other people, the activist needs to get to

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Imām Al-Hājj Tālib 'Abdur-Rashīd (third from the right, rear) is the spiritual leader of The Mosque of Islamic

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7 Responses to “THE PRE-COLUMBIAN PRESENCE OF MUSLIM AFRICANS IN AMERICA IS NO MYTH!”

This entry was posted on Thursday, December 1st, 2005 at 2:39 am, and is filed under **Justice**. You can follow any responses to this entry through the **RSS 2.0** feed. You can **leave a response**, or **trackback** from your own site.

- nizar manji Says:**
December 3rd, 2005 at 2:46 am

Salaam

I am truly blessed to have reached your site today and amazed about the lies of the white man about colombus etc (He lies every where and every day, he even kills without any shame and has no religion, even Christianity. Because even christianity or for that reason any religion is nothing but love.

But please I want you to explain this paragraph but **SPECIALLY** where it is said “he who keeps... is safe” Does this mean we are not supposed to say anything about Bush and his policies and Israelis and their atrocities and other injustices done in this world or what. Please explain and i would be happy. I had always believed that if you keep quiet, it means you are also supporting the bully. But I will wait for you esteemed answer and then inshallah, Allah will help me follow it.

“He who keeps silent will be safe,” as well as “A man speaks a good word not realizing its worth for which Allah records for him His good pleasure till the day he meets Him; and a man speaks an evil word not realizing its importance for which Allah records for him His displeasure till the day he meets Him.” What is the good word that pleases Allah? Surely it is truth. What is the evil word that displeases Him? Surely it is

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Thanks, salam and may Allah bless you all....ameen
nizar manji

2. *altaf* Says:
December 3rd, 2005 at 5:26 am

Salaam

we had a discussion recently on a similar topic - here are a few links that were provided, that folks reading this article might follow up on:

[Native American Cultures vs. Islamic Cultures](#)

[Yes We Still Exist - Native Americans Today](#)

[Native American Resources: Suggested Readings](#)

[Goodness outside of Muslim Cultures?](#)

3. *Imam Al-Hajj Talib Abdur-Rashid* Says:
December 4th, 2005 at 7:20 pm

As-Salaamu 'Alaikum, and thanks for asking about "He who keeps silent." This is a hadith that admonishes the believer that it is better to be quiet than to tell lies, back-bite, slander, or speak ignorantly, all of which constitutes "vain speech". Allah tells us in the Qur'an that the believers

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Native American Cultures vs. Islamic Cultures

Yes We Still Exist - Native Americans Today

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-Imam Al-Hajj Talib 'Abdur-Rashid
mosqueofislamicbrotherhood.org

4. *abdul-halim* Says:
December 7th, 2005 at 2:05 am

Great piece. It totally fits with the kind of things I discuss in my blog.

5. *C.S.M.* Says:
January 30th, 2006 at 6:16 pm

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Great piece. It totally hits with the kind of things I discuss in my blog.

5. *C.S.M. Says:*
January 30th, 2006 at 6:16 pm

Hello. I don't dismiss about the possibility of Arabs or Africans crossing the Atlantic. But you go a bit far by complaining so unilaterally about the evilness of the white-originated slavery and the idealizing of the Muslim culture. Your dear Arabs obliterated a lot of peaceful cultures which did no wrong to them and took a lot of African slaves too, long before the Europeans, and long after them: after all "Sudan" should ring some bells...

6. *Imam Al-Hajj Talib Abdur-Rashid Says:*
April 11th, 2006 at 10:18 pm

Dear C.S.M.

It may seem to you that denouncing the evils of the Atlantic Slave Trade goes "a bit far", but have you ever heard the expression "two wrongs don't make a right"? One evil doesn't excuse another. If I seem fixated on the former rather than the latter, it is because I am an American of African descent whose very presence in the U.S.A. as a member of a people, is the result of the evil of the Atlantic Slave Trade

7. *Mustafa Al-Kanemi Says:*
February 20th, 2007 at 12:55 pm

As' salaamu alaikum,
ya Imam,

Enjoyed your blog. Insha' allah, I'd like to write a book possible titled "Who Named America" from an article I wrote some years ago in a Baltimore based publication called AS'SALAAM NEWS. In it I argue that the word "America" was originally "Amir Ka" and that it was during the reign of Mansa Abubakari II (He sent Malian expeditions out from the tip of South America to what is now known as Canada. He was headquartered in Brazil), that the name was carried throughout the land thus the entire land mass became known as "America(Amir Ka)". There is a report that the Caribs, the first people who Columbus encountered told him the name "Amir Ka" and pointed westward toward the land

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ma salaams

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