



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

RACISM IN ISLAM

Racism is an acquired disease that has been enhanced with culture, environment, social class and habit. ALL CHILDREN IN NURSERIES, if you observe them in school, has no clue what is racism.

Allah Informed us that He Created us into many nations and tribes in order for us to get to know each other:

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa [i.e. one of the Muttaqun (pious - see V.2:2)]. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware" 49: 13

"O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], 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) the wombs (kinship) . Surely, Allah is Ever an All-Watcher over you." 4: 1

"The believers are nothing else than brothers (in Islamic religion)...." 49: 10

Islam is known as a faith for all people and for all times. Muslims come from all continents and backgrounds, encompassing 1/5 of humanity. In the heart of a Muslim, there is no room for arrogance and racism. Allah tells us that the diversity of life, and the various languages and colours of human beings, is a sign of Allah's majesty, and a lesson for us to learn about humility, equality, and the appreciation of differences.

"And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours. Verily, in that are indeed signs for men of sound knowledge." (Quran 30:22)

"See you not that Allah sends down water (rain) from the sky, and We produce therewith fruits of varying colours, and among the mountains are streaks white and red, of varying colours and (others) very black. And of men and Ad-Dawab (moving living creatures, beasts, etc.), and cattle, in like manner of various colours. It is only

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those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah. Verily, Allah is All-Mighty, Oft-Forgiving.” (Quran 35:27-28).

“And among His Signs is this, that He created you (Adam) from dust, and then [Hawwa' (Eve) from Adam's rib, and then his offspring from the semen, and], - behold you are human beings scattered!!” (Quran 30:20).

EXAMPLES IN THE TIME OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SALLALLAHU WA ALAYHI WA SALLAM)

Prophet Muhammad’s SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam anti-racist views are seen in his friendship with Bilal ibn Rabah, a black slave who rose to a leading position within the Muslim community of 7th century Arabia. One story relates how Prophet Muhammad SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam defended Bilal after Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari, one of the Prophet’s companions, called Bilal “the son of a black woman.” Annoyed with this emphasis of identifying people by skin color, prophet Muhammad SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam criticized Abu Dharr by stating “you are the man who still has the traits of ignorance in him.” The Prophet’s SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam reference to Abu Dharr’s ignorance refers to the “pre-Islamic” state of jahiliyyah, an Arabic term meaning “the state of ignorance of Divine guidance.” This period of Arab history before Muhammad’s arrival was marked by “barbarism” and “lawlessness,” as described in the Quran. The Prophet’s anti-racist mentality helped lead Arabs out of this darkness and into the light by guiding them onto the path of justice and equality.

Bilal, who other Muslims referred to as “master” because of his knowledge and grace, became the muezzin of the Prophet, meaning that he was responsible for calling Muslims to the five daily prayers. In choosing Bilal for this honourable role, prophet Muhammad SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam demonstrated that social exclusion and subordination based upon skin color was not to be permitted in an Islamic society.

Before prophet Muhammad SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam revealed his message, Arabs were overly proud of their tribal and ethnic identities, so much so that tribes and ethnic groups became the social standard of society. The Prophet’s teachings changed all of that. He emphasized the importance of piety as the hallmark of respect. In challenging Abu Dharr, prophet Muhammad SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam showed that he was willing to rebuke even his closest companions if that person denigrated someone because of his or her ethnicity. The Prophet SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam

believed that this form of "tribalism," or al-asabiyyah in Arabic, was cancerous because it drove people to ethnic loyalties even if that meant they supported oppression and injustice.

THE LAST SERMON OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD SALLALLAHU ALAYHI WA SALLAM

The Prophet's SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam Last Sermon at Mount Arafat in 632 AD is perhaps his most noteworthy manifestation of anti-racism. The Last Sermon is the culminating point of Muhammad's life. He challenged a disunited population that was constantly engaged in warfare by calling on people to unite under a banner of humanity. By distancing himself from the tendency to categorize others based upon ethnicity, the Prophet preceded the words of Martin Luther King Jr., whose "I Have a Dream" speech called for African Americans to be judged not by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character.

In the last sermon on prophet Muhammad SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam:

"...All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a White has no superiority over a Black nor a Black has any superiority over a White except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly...."

"Do not therefore do injustice to yourselves. Remember one day you will meet Allah and answer your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone."

THE ARABS

The Arabs held the same belief and viewed themselves as superior to all other races of people. They crowned themselves as Arabs, referred to other races as "non-Arabs", and considered them worthless. The Prophet SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam clarified to them the mistake of their ways and the fallacy of this belief. He SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam said to his Companions:

"It is not appropriate for one to say that I (the Prophet Muhammad) am better than Younus bin Mat'ta (the Prophet Jonah)." (Bukhari)

The Prophet's words are like guiding lights both for the Arabs and for all nations, to show how one is to respect all others.

The Companion, Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), related that the Prophet SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam said:

"I saw in my dream many black sheep gathering together with white ones.' He was asked, 'What is the interpretation of this dream O Prophet of Allah?' He said: 'Non-Arabs will share in your Deen (The word translated as religion is "Deen", which in Arabic commonly refers to a way of life) and your lineage.' The Companions exclaimed, 'The non-Arabs!' The Prophet SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam then said: 'If Iman (faith) was tied to a star, it would have been claimed by men from the non- Arabs.'" (Haakim)

People come from many racial backgrounds and have their individual moral elements.

Every person has unique characteristics, and perfection belongs to God Almighty alone. Imperfection is an inherent nature in man, except for the Prophets and Messengers, for they perfectly conveyed the Message of God to their respective nations. The message of Islam had a great effect on humankind with the result that they began to treat one another, in varying degrees, with respect.

Al-Mustourad Al-Qurashi (RA) said, while I was with Amr bin Al-Aas I told him that I heard the Prophet SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam saying:

"The Final Hour will not be established till the Romans are the greatest people in number." Amr said, "If this is the case, it is because they (the Romans) are merciful to their kind. When an affliction befalls them they are the quickest to regroup. They stand together and fight fiercely. They are good to the orphans, poor, weak, and do not tolerate the wrongdoing of their rulers." (Muslim)

PREVIOUS OTHER EXAMPLES

Who will enter the Kaba first with the Prophet (Year 629)

Ponder this: when the Muslims conquered Makkah, victorious after years of persecution, then war with the non-believing Quraysh, the Prophet went straight to the Kaba.

This was the height of the victory of Islam. He brought some other Muslims with him. He could have chosen only Muslims from the Quraysh, people of his own ethnic and tribal background. He also could have chosen only Arabs or only those of the old noble classes.

But two of the people who entered the Kaba with the Prophet were Bilal ibn Rabah and Zaid ibn Haritha. Bilal, an African and a former slave. Zaid was also not of high status from the tribal Quraysh point of view. Then entered a Qurayshi, Abdullah bin Omar, may Allah be pleased with all of them.

On this day of victory, success and happiness was for all Muslims, no matter who they were or where they come from.

This black man is our leader (Year 634)

When the Muslims conquered Egypt at the time when Omar ibn al Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) was Khalifa, a Muslim leader who happened to be a black man named Ubaydah ibn Thamiyah, took a party of the Muslims to meet Muqawqis, the Christian leader of Egypt.

When the Muslims came to Muqawqis, with Ubaydah in the lead, Muqawqis was frightened by the colour of his skin.

'Get this black man away from me and bring someone else,' he demanded. The Muslims refused. They insisted that Ubaydah was the best among them and was their leader who they obeyed and whose judgment they deferred to. They told Muqawqis that the colour of a person does not matter to them. Finally Muqawqis had no choice but talk to the leader of that Muslim delegation.

These Muslims were practicing an Islamic principle that individual character is the base of preference not color of skin.

The Conquests of Jerusalem - a Study in Contrasts

Jerusalem and its surrounding territory were and remain holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews. It was during the Caliphate of Omar ibn al-Khattab (634-635) that Muslims first gained leadership of this territory. May Allah be pleased with him.

The Muslim reaction to this victory is something to remember.

Omar entered Jerusalem in humility. He walked in with not he, the Caliph, but his servant comfortably riding on a camel. They had been taking turns walking and riding.

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At one point, the Christians asked him to pray in their church but he declined. He refused saying that he is afraid that in the future Muslims could use it as an excuse to take over the Church for building a Masjid.

The Christians gave the key of the Church of Resurrection to Muslims to be responsible for its safety. This key is still with the Muslims today.

In contrast, during the Crusades (1095 until 1291) European Christians attacked and occupied this holy land. They oppressed the Muslims, the local Christians and the Jews. These Crusaders killed over 200,000 innocent civilians.

It was in response to this horrific oppression and the need to free the area of Crusader control that Sultan Salah el Deen Ayyubi (Saladin) liberated Jerusalem from them in 1187.

His arrival brought relief for the local Christian population, who helped him, after the oppression they suffered at the hands of their co-religionists, the Crusaders.

Not only did Salah el Deen treat the Crusaders with kindness, and ensured that Muslim and non-Muslims live in peace and harmony with each other.

One particular story about him recounts that some Muslim soldiers were besieging a Christian fortress. Many Christians were seeking shelter inside, including a young couple who was planning to get married, but whose plans had been stopped by the fighting. They decided to get married anyway, even though they were trapped inside the castle.

Salah el Deen was in charge of the Muslim troops at this time. When he heard about the wedding, he ordered his soldiers not to attack the castle where the couple was staying, so that they could enjoy peace and quiet. In return for this respect, the bride's mother sent out trays of food, so Salah el Deen and the Muslim army could share in the wedding celebrations.

Indeed the best period of peace and justice for all in Jerusalem has been the period when Muslim were in control.

Muslim Spain versus Christian Spain: Civilization versus Inquisition

Many Muslims look back at Muslim Spain with pride. But few people know that Jews also call it their "golden era".

Spain became part of the Islamic world at the beginning of the eighth century. Under Muslims Spain became the center of civilization. Although many local Spaniards embraced Islam, Christians and Jews were free in all aspects of

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their lives. The Muslims respected their religion and institutions. The result was the birth of the first true cosmopolitan culture in the West.

Christians studied alongside Muslim scholars to such a degree that in 854, a Christian named Alvaro of Cordoba complained that these students were forgetting their own religion and culture.

Muslims and Christians of Spain did not live in their ghettos, isolated and not cooperating in various aspects of daily life together.

One manifestation of this cooperation can be found inside the Great Mosque at Cordoba.

Skilled Christian craftsmen, who were trained in Constantinople (which is the city of Istanbul in Turkey today), made beautiful mosaic panels for the walls of the mosque. The Christians worked along with the Muslims to decorate the interior of the mosque with colors and design.

Cordoba was not just the pride of the Muslim world though. The city under Muslim rule was famous throughout Europe.

One Christian nun named Hrosvitha who lived in the 10th century described Cordoba from her home in Germany as the 'jewel of the world-a city well-cultured, rich... abounding in knowledge.'

It's not surprising that Hrosvitha described the city in this way. Muslim Spain was the center of science and arts. Muslims and Jewish authors wrote many important treatises about science in Arabic. Many ancient Greek texts also survived because Muslims translated them into Arabic.

For example, Aristotle's works on physics and natural history were translated into Arabic from Greek in Muslim Spain. Historians generally acknowledge that the Muslim world proved to be a major conduit of ancient scholarship into the West, especially through Muslim Spain.

It wasn't just Muslims and Christians who thrived in Spain, though. Jews, who were reviled and hated elsewhere, were not only living safely and peacefully alongside non-Jews in Muslim Spain, they were learning and contributing to its culture and knowledge which Muslim scholars had established.

One instance of this is the famous Spanish Jewish scholar, Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) who wrote in Arabic as well as Hebrew.

But this success in wealth, knowledge and co-existence came to end in a violent and very sad way.

As Christian Crusaders of Spain expelled Muslims, civilization that took centuries to build was destroyed. Muslims and Jews were either expelled or forced to convert to Christianity. Millions died as tolerance was replaced by the Inquisition. A suspected Muslim was to be killed for the smallest act resembling Islamic tradition - such as taking a bath on Friday.

PROBLEMS USUALLY FACED BY PEOPLE, EVEN MUSLIMS, IN RELATION TO RACISM TODAY:

1. Employment
2. Marriage
3. Shopping
4. In the mosque during acts of worship
5. Education

HOW TO REMOVE RACISM

- 1. Seek knowledge - on the Qur'anic verses and hadeeth above**
- 2. Justice in Islam**

In a hadeeth Qudsi, Allah spoke to His Messenger in this manner: "O My slaves, I have forbidden injustice for Myself and forbade it also for you. So avoid being unjust to one another." (Saheeh Muslim) Thus, justice represents moral rectitude and fairness, since it means things should be where they belong.

The importance of justice

The Qur'an considers justice to be a supreme virtue. It is a basic objective of Islam to the degree that it stands next in order of priority to belief in God's exclusive right to worship (Tawheed) and the truth of Muhammad's SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam prophethood. Allah declares in the Quran:

“Allah commands justice and fair dealing...” (Qur’an 16:90)

Therefore, one may conclude that justice is an obligation of Islam and injustice is forbidden. The centrality of justice to the Qur’anic value system is displayed by the following verse:

“We sent Our Messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Measure in order to establish justice among the people...” (Qur’an 57:25)

The phrase ‘Our Messengers’ shows that justice has been the goal of all revelation and scriptures sent to humanity. The verse also shows that justice must be measured and implemented by the standards and guidelines set by revelation. Islam’s approach to justice is comprehensive and all-embracing. Any path that leads to justice is deemed to be in harmony with Islamic Law. Allah has demanded justice and, although He has not prescribed a specific route, has provided general guidelines, on how to achieve it. He has neither prescribed a fixed means by which it can be obtained, nor has He declared invalid any particular means or methods that can lead to justice. Therefore, all means, procedures, and methods that facilitate, refine, and advance the cause of justice, and do not violate the Islamic Law are valid.

Equality in justice

The Qur’anic standards of justice transcend considerations of race, religion, colour, and creed, as Muslims are commanded to be just to their friends and foes alike, and to be just at all levels, as the Qur’an puts it:

“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, and your relatives, or whether it is against the rich or the poor...” (Qur’an 4:135)

According to another Quranic passage:

“Let not the hatred of a people swerve you away from justice. Be just, for this is closest to righteousness...” (Quran 5:8)

With regards to relations with non-Muslims, the Qur’an further states:

“Allah does not forbid you from doing good and being just to those

who have neither fought you over your faith nor evicted you from your homes..." (Qur'an 60:8)

The scholars of the Qur'an have concluded that these rulings apply to all nations, followers of all faiths, as a matter of fact to all humanity. In the view of the Qur'an, justice is an obligation.

3. Accountability on the Day of Judgment - infringing rights of others

4. Be confident in who you are

This might seem counterproductive, since the crux of racism is too much pride in oneself. However, pride and confidence are completely different things. Pride is the belief that your country/ethnicity/language makes you more entitled to goodness than others. If you're confident in your roots, in your struggles, and who you are today, then insecurity will never become a problem. Most times when someone is degrading another, it's because of deeply rooted insecurities of their past. Be confident in your background, be content with how Allah created you, and how He situated you in the world.

5. Acknowledge each other and say Salam

This cannot be stressed enough. Muslims are given this immensely unique gift of a greeting, which no other nation has. And this simple greeting can bring together hearts like no other phrase can. If you're in the grocery store and you know that the other person is a Muslim, if the sister is wearing hijab, or any other attire/action that makes them look Muslim, then don't hesitate. You don't have to spark up a conversation. Just smile and say Salam.

6. Don't generalize

If a native of a certain country or race was ever rude to you, don't assume that all people from that country behave the same way. It's an elementary statement, but if you analyze yourself on a daily basis, you might find yourself guilty of this. We're enraged when the media lumps us all into one category, that the mentally unstable individuals who claim to be Muslims and commit heinous crimes somehow reflect all of the world's Muslims. So why do we do that to our own brothers and sisters?

7. Say no to racial slurs

In our separate cultures, we've come up with names to describe people of other races and countries – and most of them are quite offensive. Train yourself to rid your vocabulary of these terms, because not only is it demeaning to your brothers and sisters, you're degrading the beauty of another person, of whom Allah is the artist. If, in order to make someone laugh, you need to resort to racial slurs, that speaks volumes about your character.

8. Step out of your comfort zone

It's understandable that if you're newly married and just moved from another country, you'd want to find some familiarity. That's completely fine. It's nice to be able to relate to someone who is from the same country/city. But don't constrict yourself. You'll be amazed at how much you learn just by sitting next to a new sister/brother in the Masjid, during a potluck dinner, or maybe even a brief introduction at a store. Allah made us all different so that we can recognize each other, learn from one another, better ourselves, help others, etc. (Quran 49:13). If you've been going to the same Masjid for a decade, but you still don't know the names of the majority of people, then there's a problem. If others don't approach you, get up and be the one to initiate a nice gesture. You'll see what a difference that small action makes.

9. Arrange multicultural events

Persuade your local Masjid or community center to arrange an annual culture day, where people showcase their different cultures, cuisine, clothing, etc. You might be surprised to see how many different countries and cultures your brothers and sisters represent. Once you see all aspects of each culture, you'll be more likely to see your community members in a positive light.

10. Stand with each other in times of grief and sickness

It's nice to partake in someone's joyous occasion, but it's crucial to offer support when any of our brothers and sisters is in need. Whether it's financial, physical, or even just emotional, your contribution will most likely never be forgotten. It's our obligation from Allah to seek out those who need any kind of assistance. Whether it's a death in the family, or an illness, you should be the first one at their door. Respect their wishes, though, and don't burden them. Some welcome the extra attention and care, and some don't want a big fuss, so understand the needs of each person and treat them accordingly. The way to make room in someone's heart for you, is to show that they can rely on you during their dark times.

11. Humble yourself - in every way

A Muslim who recognizes that he or she is but a slave to Allah, nothing more, nothing less, knows that pride and arrogance have no place in his or her life. In every moment, whether we're living in meager conditions or luxurious lives, as an Indian or a Malaysian, in the U.S. or Canada, our beginning was the same, and our end will be the same. The moment you feel yourself acting a bit pretentious, seek refuge in Allah from Shaytan, and make Dua for humility. According to the Quran, a person with arrogance the size of a mustard seed will not be allowed to even enjoy the fragrance of Jannah.