

Reweaving Our Social Fabric
A Muslim Conference for the 21st Century
Granada, Spain
June 2019

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PREFACE

*Everything is everything
What is meant to be, will be
After winter, must come spring
Change, it comes eventually*

Lauryn Hill 'Everything is
Everything'

This booklet contains a series of talks that formed part of "Encounters for Change" that took place in June 2019 in Granada, Spain.

The scope of our conference was ambitious and the substance of these talks is of vital significance to all freethinking men and women. Since then, our situation has changed.

We are now all witness to an unfolding of events that is predictable, yet alarming. The themes of resilience, internet surveillance, health and autonomy, the increasing authoritarian nature of governments, social welfare, the removal of the Divine from society, economic devastation and civil unrest are no longer theoretical suppositions, but questions that require our reflection and action in ensuring our survival.

The modern world has been left no choice but to examine its myriad of unresolved contradictions. This plunge into chaos has awakened in

many people the need to re-evaluate the structures we are complicit in upholding and the values upon which our lives are constructed. This means that conversations which were once deemed abstract and severed from the common sense realities of everyday life, are now vital in ensuring a way out of the toxic miasma of an age characterized by violence, social decay, nihilism and a disregard for the dignity of the human being.

This has made the publication of these talks absolutely crucial. Our hope is that this contribution is a means of beginning a dialogue around alternatives and creating a vision for a different future. The purpose of the publication is to share the analysis of our speakers – some of the contents presented will find resonance with the reader and others will not. Similarly, proposed solutions might also be different. But the goal has not been to achieve systematic uniformity; rather it is to begin a journey of questioning, self-reflection and commitment to action.

In this way, what we have done with the Encounters Conference is what the woman who is connected

with the Divine has always done – she holds up a mirror of what she sees around her and provides counsel on how it can be changed. The Final Messenger ﷺ said, “The deen is nothing but good counsel.” He ﷺ also said that if the end of the world

should come upon you while you were planting a tree – continue to plant the tree.

IBTISAAM AHMED
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
JULY 2020



Khadija Martinez and Ibtisaam Ahmed

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Firstly, I want to welcome everybody and thank you for the effort you have made to be here, especially those who have travelled from far away. It is an honour to have you all here, and it is such a pleasure that we can all come together. We have among us two non-Muslim guests, both professors of Anthropology and old friends of mine. We thought it would be beneficial for them to attend this conference, and for us to have them here with us.

The idea for this meeting arose at the last moussem in Cape Town, during a conversation in the kitchen among a large group of women as we prepared a women's breakfast. We ate in a beautiful place with views of the sea, and perhaps that is what inspired us.

Although the viewpoints during that discussion differed greatly, it was clear to us that there was a need to come together, talk about the issues and reach common positions.

I want to thank Ra'is Abu Bakr Rieger, who immediately supported and encouraged us when we presented him with the idea, and also Amir Umar of Granada who offered full access to the mosque when we

came to him with the idea and has given us his unconditional support.

The main thing that I got from that initial discussion in Cape Town was that, as Muslim women, we are living in a socially complicated time, and it's very important for us to have a clear approach to be able to tackle the challenges of our time. We are going to have discussions after each talk, and, naturally, we will chat in the corridors and over lunch and so on – in other words, there will be plenty of exchange to get ideas flowing! Please note that we have women from all five continents here with us. It is a unique opportunity for us to create bonds with each other and hear different perspectives, which will benefit us all.

This conference is highly significant – not only for those who have worked hard to organise it but for all of us – and your presence here confirms that these are topics of interest. We need to establish positions which will help us to practice our deen correctly in the times we live in, and to best transmit it to a decadent society immersed in nihilism and in which so many are desperately seeking an alternative so that they can live in harmony.

I'd like to share with you an experience we had a few months ago. I and members of our community were invited to a conference on Islam, and this was attended by members of other Muslim communities. What surprised me the most was the unfortunate discourse into which the umma is falling – it is defensive, meaning that the kuffar are setting the terms of the debate. We cannot be apologetic. We cannot get trapped in a negative discourse in which we begin by saying “Islam is *not* this” or “We Muslims are *not* that”.

I was also surprised by the prevalence of the term

“Islamophobia”. Wasn't Islamophobia really born as soon as the message of Islam was revealed? Because the first person to be attacked for being a Muslim was the Rasool ﷺ in Mecca. Even his own family attacked him. His people persecuted him to the point that he had to run away because they wanted to kill him. Isn't this Islamophobia?

The problem is when we Muslims assume that the narrative of the kuffar is real, because if we believe their assertion that they are democratic, open and tolerant, then we just end up running after them, asking them to

fulfil those claims, and we forget that in the Qur'an it says the kuffar will not stop until they make us abandon our deen. In addition, the wars and the conflicts in so many Muslim countries are leading us to adopt a victim or beggar mentality, utterly contrary to the spirit of the deen!

During the conference in Seville, Nietzsche was quoted. He said that when we act as a reaction to what someone else does, we are acting as slaves. Only when a voice is born

from a very clear intention and from a clear and positive will is it the action of a free being. With that in mind,

I just wanted to

We cannot get trapped in a negative discourse in which we begin by saying “Islam is not this” or “We Muslims are not that”.

remind us to be very aware of what we have. Not only has Allah gifted us with the deen, He has also given us clear guidance for the times we live in. Shaykh Abdalqadir has given us a clear methodology and tools. We are part of a community whose history encompasses half a century and four generations. We have achieved many things, on a personal level as well as with regard to our families and the social arena. We have also made a lot of mistakes; I hope that we have learned from them and that they will not be repeated in future generations.

Alhamdulillah wash-shukrulillah, many people are coming to the mosque. I've had the opportunity to meet many people from all around the world – when they come asking about the deen, I get called because I'm just around the corner! I would like to share with you another experience of mine. A lady who had come from a different continent contacted us, said the shahada and then stayed on to live with us for a time. One day, with tears in her eyes, she said to me, “Khadija, what you have is a reality, it is not theory. And the proof of this is the generations who have come after you and who are continuing the

work. Please, please take this out to the world because there are so many people who are in dire need of what you have!” The ball is in our court, we have no option but to play it.

Please, let's play like women and bring out that femininity which is sorely missing in our world today.

I ask Allah that nobody leaves this encounter without having learned something new, and that each one of us has renewed energy and a firm commitment to implement what she has taken from these discussions. Amin!

KHADIJA MARTINEZ



THE COLONIALISATION OF THE DEEN

We could start this talk with a history of western powers colonialising Muslim regions and imposing Western values on them by force or by indoctrination and educating their upper class to emulate them as the English did, or through blatant force and exploitation in the case of other colonial powers, all of which would be historically interesting. There was the replacement of Shari'a with secular law, relegating religion to a private matter of secondary importance, and changing what is of primary importance in the course of exploitation of natural resources. There was a diminution of the position of women, reflecting the European attitudes at the time – particularly the Victorian English – and this has endured for a long time. All of this is true, but in the current situation focusing on the wrongs of the past results in blaming the situation in which we now find ourselves on the past and thinking that there should be reparations for these injustices. And this results in our ignor-

The business facing us is, in fact, much more profound and more acute than memories of past injustices because the colonialists themselves have now been 'colonialised' by their own system.

ing, or at least passing over, the more pressing problems of the present.

The business facing us is, in fact, much more profound and more acute than memories of past injustices because the colonialists themselves have now been 'colonialised' by their own system. The old adage of the 'Revolution devouring their own children' still holds true. This is not

a conspiracy theory based on a sinister cabal plotting in a darkened room. It is simply based on what inevitably results from ruthlessly exploiting people to make money and this necessarily

results in a small group of people being in control. It is market logic. Another group have replaced the older power nexus – as is the normal course of things. There was no plotting to make it so – it just resulted logically from a system fuelled by usury. It is the logic that stems from the acceptance of usury that provides the impetus in the current economic system.

The definition of colonialisation is: 'seeking to extend or retain authority

over other peoples or territories, generally with the aim of opening trade opportunities.’ By authority or control now I mean having the ability to influence and shape people’s behaviour. Examples of this are sending you an ad when you are full of endorphins at the end of a run and therefore ready to click on ‘buy’, or putting a particular phrase into your Facebook news feed which acts as a trigger for you, or micro-targeting based on your Facebook profile.

There are several vectors of this colonisation, the internet and education being the most evident of them. Education has already played its role in providing the moulded receptors ready for programming, and now social media is progressing with the process at a very rapid pace and reinforcing it. Perhaps even our neural patterning is being rewritten.

Things are now moving on in a manner that had not been planned or foreseen by anyone. We are now in a system which was initially called digital capitalism which now has moved into what is designated as ‘surveillance capitalism’. Its function, as we said, is dictated by the logic of economic interests. It has been a process which has brought us to where we are by a series of decisions, all based, of course, on capitalist financial goals, which are based on

a system fuelled by exploitation. Shoshana Zuboff has written on this in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* if someone wants to read all the details.

It has been said that we are now living through the most profound transformation since Gutenberg’s invention of printing in about 1439. What did that, at the time, a seemingly innocuous attempt to facilitate access to information, result in? The Reformation, the undermining of the power of the Catholic Church, the Enlightenment, the rise of modern science, the demise of the old order, new industries, and a profound change in how we view ourselves. We are now living through just such a time.

The shift to where we are now stems from the dot.com bust in 2001 where the prices of internet-based companies reached a peak and then crashed. Due to investor pressure, or panic, Google’s leaders decided to stop being hostile to the idea of advertising, which they had been in the past. After that they decided to boost their ad revenue by applying Google’s ability to analyze its cache of behavioural data to make ads relevant to users, and hence more valuable to advertisers. Before this decision, that information was basically considered to be waste material. A seemingly innocuous decision had far-reaching consequences. They increased their