

WITH ALLAH'S NAME, THE MERCIFUL BENEFactor, THE MERCIFUL REDEEMER



Imams with the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed

COMMUNITY PROGRESS REPORT

2012 - 2017

**Progressing from Dependence, then Independence,
to Interdependence**



Loving Respecting Connecting Progressing

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ ١٦

"So I swear by the afterglow of sunset"

وَالَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ ١٧

"And by the night as it envelops"

وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ ١٨

"And the moon when it comes full"

لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ ١٩

"You shall surely travel from stage to stage."

(Qur'an 84: 16-19)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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As-Salaamu-Alaikum!

Dear Believers and Community Leaders:

On behalf of the *Conveners of Imams*, it is our pleasure to present this first ***“Community Progress Report: 2012 thru 2017, Progressing from Dependence, then Independence, to Interdependence.”***

Over the last six years, the Conveners have traveled across the country and participated in community planning sessions; numerous Imams meetings and roundtable discussions; and personal interactions with Community leaders and Believers. As a result of our travels and interactions, we are pleased to report on the notable progress we are making together in the area of developing our collective community life. However, an honest assessment reveals, that as we look to the future, we have a number of challenges to address to fully realize the excellence of our collective potential.

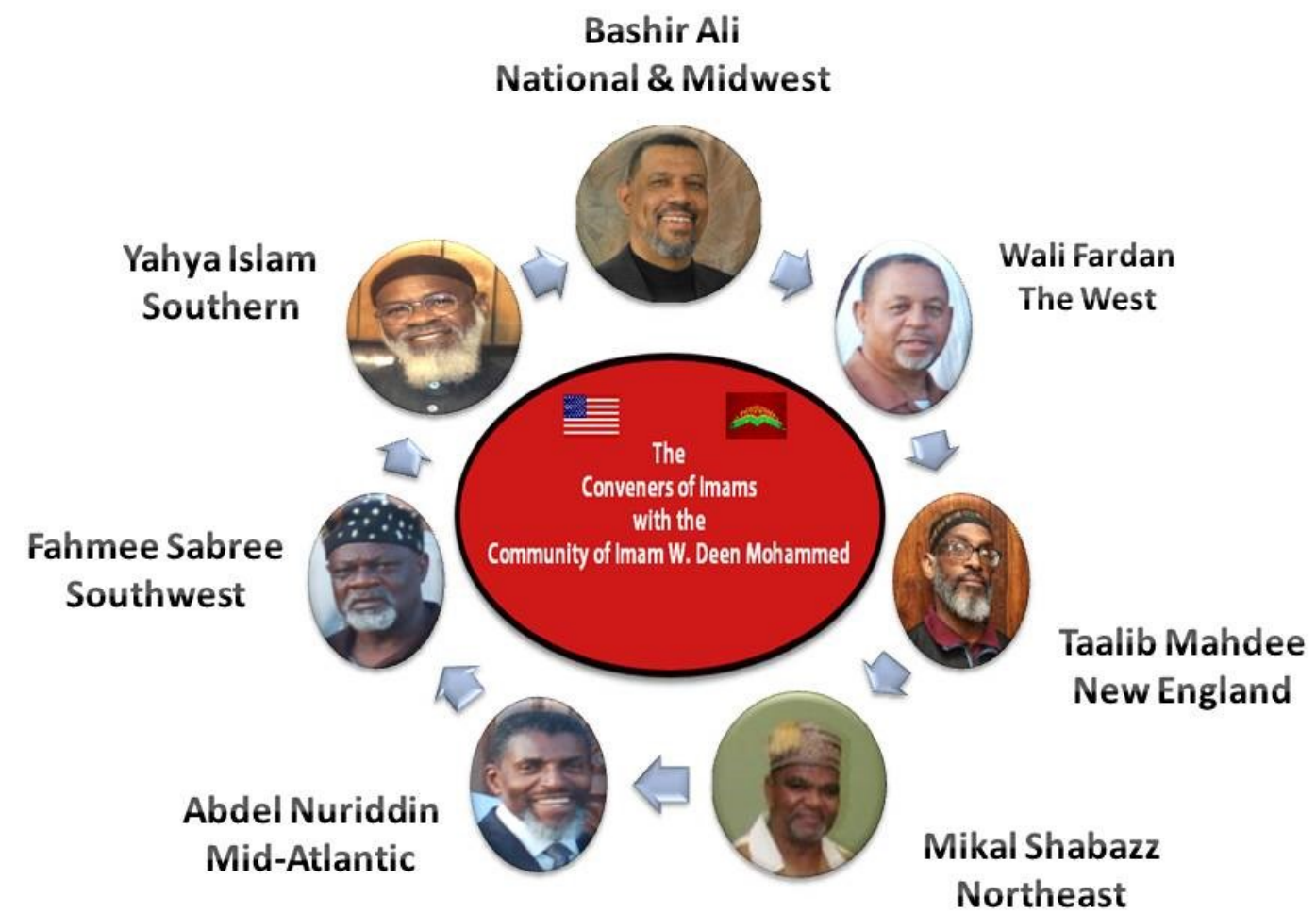
We pray that you find this report both inspiring and insightful as we continue to address our challenges and develop our community life!

Peace and Blessings,
Your Brother,

Bashir Ali

Imam Bashir Ali
National Convener,
Imams associated with the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed

The Section Conveners (2016-2017)





Community Progress Report: 2012 thru 2017

*Progressing from Dependence, then Independence,
to Interdependence*

Background and Introduction

The *Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed* has a history and legacy in America dating back to 1930. Since that time, the community has evolved in three major stages.

The first stage (1930-1975) represents the “*Nation of Islam*” experience. During this time, believers were introduced to the basic concepts and language of Islam in a community structure that was designed to “build a nation” while improving the moral, social, and economic condition of the early believers. As a result, the community of that time was highly centralized with a *top-down governance system* and the community’s direction and decisions were determined by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and his national leadership team. This was a time when the believers and local communities were **dependent** on “headquarters” to sanction their local activities.

The second stage of development (1975-2008) represents the leadership of Imam W. Deen Mohammed. This period represents our development into the fullness and purity of Islamic life. Imam Mohammed transitioned members of the *Nation of Islam* into a new Islamic consciousness based upon the guidance of the Qur’an, life example of Muhammad the Prophet (ppbuh), and the principles of natural thinking (*Deen-ul Fitra*). A result of this new thinking was the transition from a nationalistic, hierarchical community structure to the development of natural community life. Inherent in this transformation was the “freedom” to develop a natural Islamic community life from the bottom-up. As a result, the Imam “freed” local communities and believers to develop **independent and autonomous** governing structures and hold ourselves accountable for the leadership and governance of community life. The Imam also introduced the concepts and models of “*Islamic Democracy*” and “*Amruhum Shuraa Bayna-hum*” (*governance by mutual consultation*) to guide our ability to make collective decisions.

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Understanding that the critical element of community life is the **unity of purpose**, Imam Mohammed also expressed his vision of *“Ummatul-Islameeah” (Islamic Community Life)* as the direction for our community and gave us the Qur’anic metaphor of the *“four birds” (defined as education, economics, culture, and government)* to develop the institutions of community life.

The third and current stage of our development (2008-present) represents the natural growth and maturity of Islamic community life. In this natural progression, autonomous and independent leaders and local communities have been blessed with an eighty-seven year legacy of leadership, guidance, and evolution of community life. As we continue to progress, the Qur’an, example of the Prophet (ppbuh) and thinking of our Imam should guide this development.

Allah commands that we must move from our individual or local interests to oneness of purpose and interests (*Qur’an 3:104*). *“Let there be from you (plural), community (singular)...”* In order for Believers and their local leaders to achieve this command from Allah, the individual and local interests must come to the final stage of social maturity, **interdependence**. We must recognize that we have to **work together** to achieve the larger mission of developing community institutions.

As we approach this obligation, Allah (through the Qur’an) has given us the principle of *Amruhum Shuraa Baynahum*. Our Imam also encouraged us to evolve this principle into an *Islamic Democracy*, in order to guide the development of our community into the future. Following this guidance, Imams convened in 2009, after the passing of Imam W. Deen Mohammed, and formalized a basic leadership structure for our community, in line with these principles and traditions.

In conjunction with this legacy, the **Conveners of Imams** have issued Annual Reports to the Community highlighting activities in the seven *Sections* (regions). This report offers a different and broader perspective and attempts to identify major accomplishments over a six-year period while also identifying the continuing and future challenges for the growth and development of our collective community life.

The Mission

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْعُرْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُقْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

“Let there be from you a community inviting to the goodness/prosperity; commanding universally recognized human excellence; preventing influences that debilitate the human nature. Those, are they, who will be the successful.” (Qur’an 3:104)

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Strategic Planning for Community Development

- Beginning in 2012, the *Conveners of Imams* began discussions on the possibility of a national leadership summit of community leaders to identify and address critical areas of community development.
- Planning for the leadership summit began in April 2012 and continued throughout the year.
- The first ***Community Leadership Summit (CLS)*** took place in March of 2013 in New Medina, Mississippi, with a second follow-up session in June. The Conveners invited recognized community leaders and leaders of all national organizations within our community. The purpose of the CLS was to assemble representatives of institutions/organizations within the community that identifies with the leadership and language of Imam W. Deen Mohammed to:
 - ⇒ Strengthen relationships and lines of communication among the groups
 - ⇒ Identify ways to support each other for the common good of the Community
 - ⇒ Identify developmental needs of the Community
 - ⇒ Develop an agreed upon agenda to address shared concerns and developmental needs to include: Vision and Goals for the Community; Defining the Role of Leadership; and Developing Ongoing Communication Strategies.
- Activities for the CLS included:
 - ⇒ Reports from the Section Conveners and each national group represented
 - ⇒ Strategic planning activities
 - ⇒ Group discussions
- ***Community Leadership Summit (CLS)*** outcomes included the development of objectives and action steps in five priority areas:
 - ⇒ Economics
 - ⇒ Education
 - ⇒ “Youth” (i.e. *Next Generation*) Engagement
 - ⇒ Culture
 - ⇒ Government/Shuraa
- As a follow-up to the initial CLS, the *Conveners of Imams* also traveled to three additional cities (and Sections) to seek input from Imams and other community leaders.

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These cities/Sections included Houston, TX (Southwest); Cleveland, OH (Midwest); and San Diego, CA (West).

- The *Conveners of Imams* met on March 12, 2016 at *Masjid An-Nur* in Columbus, GA to assess progress and continue the strategic planning process. Based upon feedback from national and Sectional Imams meetings and discussions, the Conveners established the following priorities for the years of 2016-2017:
 - ⇒ Utilize the framework of the “*Four Birds*” (i.e. ***Education; Economic/Business Development; Culture;*** and ***Government***) to get input from each Section on the four critical areas of community life and development.
 - ⇒ Address other priorities identified for discussion, input and action in the Sections over the next two years including: ***Marriage and Family Life; Next Generation Engagement; Developing the Skill Sets of Imams;*** and ***Prioritizing Our Health.***
 - ♦ *Marriage and Family Life and Next Generation Engagement will be discussed in conjunction with the “Four Birds” in each Section.*
 - ♦ *Two of the Section Conveners will take a lead role in convening a group of noted scholars/professionals and resource people to address the remaining priority areas. Imam Mikal Shabazz will take the lead on Developing the Skill Sets of Imams and Imam/Dr. Abdel Nuriddin will take the lead on Prioritizing Our Health.*

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Progress Toward Community Development Objectives

In conjunction with the above-mentioned strategic planning events and activities, the following outcomes have been achieved to date:

- The “**Four Birds**” (i.e. **Education; Economic/Business Development; Culture; and Government**) plus **Marriage and Family Life**:
 - ⇒ The *Conveners of Imams* created the ***annual Imams’ Conference*** beginning in 2015 to continue the process of identifying community development issues and coordinate and partner with national organizations that have been established to address these areas of community development. Examples include:
 - ♦ The ***National Education Team*** gave two presentations at the 2017 *Imams’ Conference* on their progress in developing a national education agenda and curriculum template for the Sister Clara Muhammad System;
 - ♦ The ***National Business Council*** has made presentations on their activities and organizational progress.
 - ♦ The *Conveners of Imams* also introduced the ***Economic Development Task Force*** at the 2017 *Imams’ Conference*. The Task Force is composed of believers with business and economic development expertise in the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed. Its goals are to develop both micro and macro-economic development strategies for our Community including:
 - Micro-Economic (Personal and Family)
 - ◇ Money as a resource
 - ◇ Budgeting
 - ◇ Money Management
 - ◇ Utilizing Financial Resources
 - ◇ Not spending above our needs
 - ◇ Identifying Investment Opportunities
 - Macro-Economic (Local, Regional or National)
 - ◇ Identifying Economic Opportunities and Strategies for Collective Investment (including traditional, niche, new, and emerging markets)
Examples include:
 - * Group Collective Buying
 - * Halal Market Opportunities
 - * Community Owned Credit Union(s)

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- * On-line malls for Muslim Business (i.e. *webuyblack.com*)
- ◇ Creating Economic Development Templates for Local Communities (including proven models of accomplishment).
- ⇒ Sectional teams (i.e. Midwest) have also been created to develop goals objectives and on-going initiatives to address the *Four Birds* with an additional emphasis on **Marriage and Family Life** and **Culture**. These priorities are discussed with regional input at the annual Sectional conference. The long-term goal is to give year-round regional and local attention, leadership and coordinated action to address these priorities.
- **Developing the Skill Sets of Imams; Prioritizing Our Health and Next Generation Engagement:**
 - ⇒ Subsequent to the 2016 *Conveners of Imams'* Planning Session, an **Imams' Continuing Education Team** was created to provide training and leadership development for Imams in conjunction with the annual Imams' Conferences. At the 2017 conference, the team presented a draft **Imams Training Needs Assessment** to begin the process of assessing the skill level and needs for on-going training and skill development. The team is currently refining the assessment tool and developing plans for more comprehensive and in-depth training for Imams and next generation leaders.
 - ⇒ Presentations on the *Value of Holistic* (individual and community) *Health* have been included in the *2016 and 2017 Imams' Conferences*. Over the last year, a national **Health Work Group** has also been formed and plans are underway to have a **Community Health Conference** in 2018.
 - ⇒ Subsequent to the *2017 Imams' Conference*, the *Conveners of Imams* are forming a **Next Generation Leadership Task Force** to identify, engage, and mentor our next generation leaders, talents, and resources and answer the following questions:
 - ◆ *What should be the knowledge, skills, and abilities of Islamic community servant leaders to serve next generation believers and masajid in the 21st century?*
 - ◆ *What kind of culture should our masajid and Community demonstrate to attract and include the ideas, talents, and resources of our next generation believers?*
 - ◆ *How do we bridge the intergenerational gap to connect the legacy of learning and experiences of the incumbent generation with the aspirations and talents of the next generation believers and servant leaders?*

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Establishing Mechanisms for Communications

- **Community Website:** To promote better communication, both internal and external to our Community, the *Conveners of Imams* created a community website (www.iwdmcommunity.com) in 2012 as a virtual portal for community connectivity, important announcements, and to promote the process of community-wide shuraa.
- **National and Regional Imams' Meetings:** Since 2009, Imams associated with the leadership of Imam W. Deen Mohammed have been meeting on a regular basis. These meetings include several forms:
 - ⇒ **Annual Imams' Conferences:** Beginning in October of 2015 and continuing each year, Imams from across the country have gathered to promote Imams' education, community leadership skills, and community development. Recently, the conference has served to showcase partnerships with other entities in our Community that promote the development of community-life. The conference has also emphasized the inclusion and development of next generation leaders.
 - ⇒ **Sectional/Regional Conferences and Meetings:** Several of the Sections hold annual conferences that promote Islamic education and community development initiatives and allow Imams within the region to meet. Additional regional meetings of Imams occur as necessary to discuss issues of importance to Imams within each Section.
 - ⇒ **Monthly Conference Calls:** The *Conveners of Imams* have monthly and special conference calls to discuss and prioritize the many issues that surface from Imams, other community leaders and local communities. Sections also have monthly or regular conference calls to discuss similar issues from a regional perspective.
- **Annual Reports:** In the interests of accountability and transparency, beginning in January 2014, the *Conveners of Imams* issued Annual Reports summarizing progress in the Sections and on national priorities. The reports have been distributed to Imams in each Section and are available on the community website.
- **Public Statements on Issues of National Concern:** From time to time the *Conveners of Imams* are asked to issue statements on important national or international issues that impact Muslims and/or Americans. These statements have included:
 - ⇒ Extremist Groups (including ISIS, Boko Haram, etc.)
 - ⇒ Orlando Shooting

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⇒ Proposed Muslim Travel Ban and Future of Democracy in America

⇒ Hurricane Harvey

- **Statements to the Muslim Community:** Additional statements to the *Community associated with Imam W. Deen Mohammed* have been issued relative to anticipated moon sightings beginning the month of Ramadan and the Eids via the community website.
- **Partnering with Established Community News Media:** The Conveners have also partnered with established Muslim community news media such as the *Muslim Journal* and *AM360 Blog Talk Radio*. *Muslim Journal* support and partnership has come with informative articles, public statements and event advertising. Support and partnership for *AM360* has come with numerous interviews, the national broadcast of Jumuah khutbahs, and program sponsorship.

Developing Amruhum Shuraa Baynahum

- **Community Governance Concept Papers:** In February 2015, the *Conveners of Imams* published and distributed the *Community Governance Concept Papers* on “*Establishing Islamic Democracy*” and “*Government: Agreements, Standards, Accountability by Way of Mutual Consultation*.” The primary purpose of the concept papers was to examine the language and thinking of Imam W. Deen Mohammed relative to collective decision making and community governance and encourage discussion within the Community. The papers identified *ten principles* promoted by the Imam and supported by the Qur’an and life example of the Prophet (ppbuh). These principles include: *Authority, Accountability, Diversity, Amruhum Shuraa Baynahum, Freedom of Speech, Transparency/Openness, Standards, Justice and Conflict Resolution, Responsiveness, and Progression*. The papers also examined the evolution and application of these principles in our Community.
- **Amruhum Shuraa Baynahum Presentations:** As a follow-up to the publication of the *Community Governance Concept Papers*, Imam Bashir Ali made a presentation entitled “*Developing Community with Shuraa Baynahum: Principles, Practices, and Challenges*.” The presentation was accompanied with a companion document: “*Selected Tafseer and Comments from Imam W. Deen Mohammed on Amruhum Shuraa Baynahum, 1997-2008, Regarding: Muhammad the Prophet (ppbuh), Community Shuraa, Leadership, and Local Shuraa*.” The initial presentation was made to the Imams at the first annual *Imams’ Conference* (October 2015) in Philadelphia, PA. A subsequent presentation was made to the Community at the “*Fountain of Abundance Conference*” in Kansas City, MO, later that same month.

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- **Adoption of Community Moon Sighting Process:** In conjunction with the second annual *Imams' Conference* (October 2016), the Conveners of Imams presented a written action item for approval of the Imams in attendance entitled: ***“Community Moon Sighting Process.”*** The action item outlined the process, tradition, and methodology of the Community moon sighting process consistent with Islamic principles and tradition. Imams present at the conference ratified the process. The process was also presented and confirmed by Imams present at the Imams Meeting held in conjunction with the *Muslim Journal*, *“Time to Be Grateful Weekend”* (December 2016). This process represented the best example of *Amruhum Shuraa Baynahum* with action supported by research, consultation, deliberation, and the principles of *Islamic Democracy*.

Continuing and Future Community Development Challenges

Community in Transition/Natural Progression

As previously mentioned in the Introduction, the *Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed* has a history and legacy in America dating back to 1930. Since that time, the Community has gone through three major stages of development. As the Community goes through a natural process of reaching maturity and developing the institutions of community life, a number of challenges must be faced and overcome.

- **Demographic Challenges**

One of the most profound challenges facing the Community is the “*demographic time bomb*.” Currently, in most masajid, there are more “*pioneers*” (*individuals aged 60 and older*) than persons aged 40 and under. This is a prescription for a *dying community*. As a result, a major challenge for local communities will be the attraction and inclusion of next generation membership and leadership. In conjunction with this priority will be the challenge of maintaining *intergenerational cohesion and continuity*, encouraging our next generation leaders to build on a legacy and foundation of learning and experiences of the current pioneers. Another factor associated with this phenomenon is the challenge of identifying and eliminating *toxic or killer community cultures* that inhibit and discourage (either consciously or sub-consciously) next generation participation and leadership.

- **Infrastructure Challenges/Development**

- ⇒ **Physical:**

As communities decline in population from diminishing demographics and its resources, a resulting condition is eroding infrastructure. A more serious threat is *disappearing masajid and Islamic centers*. These are symptoms of *dying communities*. As our masajid and Islamic Centers fall into disrepair, disappear, or are taken over by other communities, the fabric of our larger Community is weakened. Serious thought and intervention must take place to reverse this trend. In addition to attracting next generation members and leaders will be a critical emphasis on developing the “*four birds*” or institutions of community life.

- ⇒ **Developing Community Institutions**

Imam W. Deen Mohammed pointed our Community to the importance of developing community life and institutions. This task must be taken seriously. In order for communities to thrive they must develop the institutions of ***Economics, Education, Government, and Culture***. Also, a foundation institution is that of ***Marriage and Family Life***. Serious, sustained, and on-going efforts have to be made at the local, regional (Sections), and national levels to develop these institutions. This includes organizing around these critical areas; developing goals,

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objectives, action steps; and measuring progress. Our community is also blessed with several national organizations that are devoted to promoting these areas. We must feel obligated to help them realize their full potential, support their efforts, and challenge them to publish progress reports to our Community.

- **Realizing the Mission and Vision**

In the Qur'an, Allah has given the Believers a mission (3:104) as stated above: ***“Let there be from you a community inviting to the goodness/prosperity; commanding universally recognized human excellence; preventing influences that void the human nature. Those, they, will be the successful.”*** Imam W. Deen Mohammed also commented: ***“G-d has given us a purpose. The highest purpose is to fulfill community life, not personal life. The highest purpose for man is to fulfill community life under G-d as He intended...”*** (February-March 1986, *Progressions Magazine-Community Transformations*). During his thirty-three years of teaching and leadership, the Imam also helped us to understand this mission with statements and **concepts that would define his vision**. These included:

- ⇒ “Remake the World”
- ⇒ “Islamic Democracy”
- ⇒ “Model Muslim Communities”
- ⇒ The “Four Birds”
- ⇒ “New Africa”
- ⇒ Developing Intra and Inter-Faith Relationships
- ⇒ “Ummatul Islameeyah” (his stated vision consistent with the above Qur’anic verse), and
- ⇒ “Shared Freedom Space”

Each of the afore-mentioned concepts has a rich meaning and gives depth to the Imam’s vision of Islamic community life. As we progress into the future, building the critical institutions of community life, understanding and realizing these concepts based upon the Qur’an, example of our Prophet (ppbuh), and thinking and vision of our Imam will be critical.

Assessing the Culture of Our Masaajid and Community

The health and productivity of an organization or community is directly related to its culture. Leaders help define both our local and national culture. As a result, local communities and leaders will have to assess the culture of our community. In light of our demographic challenges, creating the right cultural environment to attract and nurture next generation participation and leadership will be essential. Outlined below are several areas for reflection and assessment.

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- **Valuing the Diversity of Our Community Life**

Recognizing that healthy community diversity includes demographics (*i.e. men/women, and a balanced age distribution of membership with an emphasis on next generation engagement*); thoughts/opinions; interests; and specialization of effort. The following benchmarks may be helpful:

- ⇒ Is our community culture one that is inviting to the diversity of women, youth, young families, and next generation interests and concerns?
- ⇒ Are they included in community decision making (i.e. Shuraa process)?
- ⇒ Does our community offer a diverse array of activities and programs that are of perceived value to all members of the community?
- ⇒ Does our community have mechanisms that promote and develop **intergenerational cohesion** so that each generation can **nurture and learn both from its predecessor and successor generation**?

- **Governing and Leading with Integrity and Competence**

Local and Community governance are critical elements of community life. Governing is also a function of leadership. In Al-Islam the ***servant-leader*** model is **exemplified by Muhammad the Prophet (ppbuh)**, a man of **exemplary character and integrity**. These are the foundations of leadership in the Al-Islam. Secondary qualifications are knowledge, skills, and abilities. As we assess our ability to govern community life, the following benchmarks may be helpful:

- ⇒ **Bylaws:** Does our local community have bylaws that govern the operation of the organization? If so, are they up to date and has the larger community had a discussion and come to agreement on major provisions of the bylaws? How often are the bylaws reviewed?
- ⇒ **Strategic Planning:** Does our community engage in periodic Strategic Planning activities to guide the operations and activities of the masjid/Islamic center? If so, when was the last community Strategic Planning session? What were the outcomes and success measures? Do we have periodic Progress Reports?
- ⇒ **Islamic Democracy and Amruhum Shuraa Baynahum:** Do we have a community culture that understands and practices the principles of *Islamic Democracy*? Do we openly practice the principle of *Shuraa Baynahum* as we make group decisions? Is our Shuraa broad-based and inclusive, representing the diversity of the local community? Does the leadership of our community represent our interests in statewide, Sectional, or national Shuraa deliberations?

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⇒ **Holding Each Other Accountable:** Does the culture of our local community promote freedom of expression and self-assessment? Does the culture of our local community promote freedom of expression and collective self-assessment?

- **Avoiding Divisive Behaviors; Trusting, Loving, and Forgiving Each Other; and Working Together to Build Community Life**

Do we promote a **culture of *Loving, Respecting, Connecting, and Progressing*** in our local community (Qur'an 3: 103)? Are we able to resolve disagreements and differences of opinion in an honorable and respectful way? If not, do we seek **Islamic Arbitration** within our community structure to assist us? Are we aware of the *Islamic Arbitration* process developed by the *Conveners of Imams* for local communities?

- **Larger Community Impact**

Does our community impact the larger community around us? Do we have activities and programs that serve the larger community? Are we recognized and respected by other community leaders? If our Masjid/Islamic Center would disappear tomorrow would we be missed by our larger community?

Next Generation Leadership Development and Succession

As previously stated, one of our most important challenges for the immediate future of our Community (next 5-10 years) will be the outreach, recruitment, inclusion, and engagement of next generation talent and resources. This will require us to 1) *Mine the Hidden Treasure* of our next generation talent and resources and integrate them into our community life; and 2) develop enhanced communications strategies utilizing social media platforms to attract them:

- **Mine the Hidden Treasure**

The eighty-seven year history of our Community has produced four-plus generations of Muslim life in America. Each succeeding generation has been blessed with an accumulating legacy of education, talent, and resources. This has resulted in Muslim-American professionals taking a leadership role in all levels of the larger society. This includes next generation leaders in government, military, business, education, and culture. Unfortunately, many of these individuals represent a **hidden treasure of talents, skills, and resources** for our community. Some of them have grown or walked away from our community for a variety of reasons. We must **1) seek them out; 2) have serious discussions with them; 3) identify their issues; 4) find ways to integrate them into the fabric of our community life; and 5) develop succession strategies for our next generation leaders.**

- **Develop Enhanced Communication Strategies Utilizing Social Media Platforms**

As we begin to outreach to our next generation we must be aware of those media outlets that they use. This should result in us collaborating with them to **develop new outreach and communication strategies** utilizing current and future social media platforms to connect with our next generation talent.



The Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed



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